Title: The Jew

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Release date: October 4, 2011 [EBook #37621]

Language: English

Credits: Produced by Charles Bowen, from page scans provided by google books

Transcriber's Notes:

1. Page scan source: http://books.google.com/books?id=f_kMAQAAIAAJ&dq
2. Alternate spelling of author's name: Józef Ignacy Kraszewski.

THE JEW

TRANSLATED FROM THE POLISH OF JOSEPH IGNATIUS KRASZEWSKI

BY

LINDA DA KOWALEWSKA

NEW YORK

DODD, MEAD & COMPANY

PUBLISHERS

PRESS OF
Rockwell and Churchill
BOSTON

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CHAPTER I.

SESTRI-PONENTE.

On a warm afternoon in the autumn of 1860 the best, or rather the only, inn of Sestri-Ponente was full of people. Firpo, the host of the Albergo e Trattoria della Grotta, was little accustomed to such a crowd, except on Sundays and fête-days. As this was only a simple Thursday, his sunburnt cheeks reflected a smile of satisfaction.

Sestri-Ponente is situated an hour's distance from Genoa, on the sea-shore "*in vincinanza del mare*" and on the grand route from Savona to Nice. Sestri, beside dock-yards for the construction of small merchant-vessels, which is its chief source of wealth, possesses also a fine beach where it is possible to bathe in safety. It has this one superiority over Genoa "*la superba*" which lacks sea-bathing. Genoa has all else; even her trees seem dwarfed near her stately edifices; she has a magnificent harbour, and if one is determined to bathe in the sea he can hire a boat to take him some distance from the quay, where the water is not full of all sorts of *débris*. Once in clear water a rope is tied around his waist, and he can seat himself on the steps fixed to the back of the boat. If he slip, the honest boatman draws him out of the sea, by the rope, at the end of which he looks like a new species of fish suspended on a hook. Those who dislike this method are at liberty to bathe in the saltwater of the port or in the marble bath-houses of the Piazza Sarzana; but to bathe where the beach is more or less rocky one must abandon Genoa for the fashionable Livourne, the charming Spezia, or the modest Sestri. The wealthier classes congregate at the former resorts. Sestri is patronized more by quiet people who wish to economize, who prefer a peaceful life to the distractions of the gay world, and the fresh sea-breeze to the feverish gayety and gossip of a crowded watering-place. The scenery is somewhat sombre, but not altogether deprived of the picturesque; in grave and classic lines, like that of Poussin, are delineated vineyards, groves, gardens, and luxurious villas, to-day used chiefly as country-seats for the Italians. Here and there the spires of little churches and of convents rise to heaven and complete the panorama. The steep banks extend on one side as far as Genoa, on the other to Savona, and are then lost in the immensity of the sea, a mighty space of blue and green.

From a distance the Albergo della Grotta makes a good appearance. This pretty little palace was formerly the villa of a rich noble, and was never intended to be an inn. Its approaches are lined with laurels, pomegranates, and orange-trees, and it is reached by a steep path with steps cut in the solid rock. Everywhere traces appear of the fastidious taste of some former owner, and in the midst of all this beauty, without regard for the neighbouring nobility, is a prosaic inn. This shows that the conditions of life are changing everywhere. It is not only in Italy that one meets edifices which do not respond to the exactions and the needs of actual society. How many palaces are changed into breweries, how many villas transformed into inns, how many beautiful private gardens have become plantations! The opulent *parvenus*, only, have preserved some remains of the noble dwellings of the extinct or ruined nobility. The great lords have built for the bankers. The shell still remains, but the mollusk has departed.

The principal ornament of our villa was that which its name indicates, a grotto constructed with great skill, recalling the time when the Roman Cæsars established oyster-parks on their roofs and forced nature into every extravagance. This grotto formed a vast *salon* occupying an

entire wing of the house, and, thanks to the *bizarre* ornamentation of stalactites, had every appearance of a natural cavern. The walls were of gypsum of all colours. A labyrinth lighted from above led to a fish-pond and a fountain, from which the water flowed slowly, its musical plashing being a genuine refreshment on a hot summer's day.

On entering this subterranean place for the first time one experienced a sense of melancholy, but gradually the eye became accustomed to the twilight and the illusion disappeared, and was followed by a delicious feeling of refreshment and enthusiasm.

To-day this grotto serves for the dining-room of the inn. Tables are set in the middle and in the dark corners, and on the rocks surrounding the fish-pond is placed a table where at times the workmen employed in the neighbouring forges eat, drink, and sleep. When they cede this place, it is only to tourists or to English families.

Here all classes fraternize over their wine and macaroni. The host serves with the same zeal the lords or the drivers. Who knows that he does not prefer the latter, for the lords seldom return, while the post-drivers, like an intermittent fever, come back every other day. The cuisine of this inn was no better nor worse than any other Italian cookery. The wine was agreeable enough to a palate that was not too *blasé*, and a grateful freshness made the grotto a delightful retreat during the day, for no brawling crowd or discordant music ever disturbed the place. Over the skylight the pomegranate and orange trees intermingle their branches, and when all was still could be heard the murmuring of the sea, a fine view of which might be had from the flat roof of the grotto.

Sestri is a village which is animated only at times by travellers, and to which the railway gives but a fugitive vitality. Few people stop here, for before them near at hand appears the vision of Genoa, and each one hastens to reach "la Superba." Only the visitors of the Villa Palaviccini, which is near, meet at Sestri with the occasional tourists who do not dislike the *brodi* of Signor Firpo.

The inn, as we have said, was, for a sultry afternoon, unusually full of people. Two diligences painted blue, as well as other vehicles, had arrived from Genoa and Nice. The host naturally conducted his guests to the grotto, which he loved to show off as a wonder. The tables were soon taken by the travellers, who, once comfortably seated, began to examine each other with a certain distrust.

Near one of the tables was seated a young man of medium size. At the first glance one would judge from his expressive face and regular features that he was an Italian; but examining him more closely certain characteristics of the Oriental type would be discovered. Sorrow or labour had prematurely furrowed his high forehead, and the energy of his glance denoted a strong character. He appeared like one who had conquered himself after long internal combats.

His was a sympathetic face and drew men to him. His costume, not extremely elegant, yet comfortable and in good taste, attested, if not a great fortune, at least a fair competency. Before him were spread the remains of a frugal repast of fruit, wine, and cheese.

A short distance from him was a group of three persons, one of whom was a woman. She was a clear brunette with red lips, and had passed her first youth, but was still very attractive, almost beautiful, and the natural gayety of her manner was augmented by a charming air of good-will toward all. She appeared to be the idol of the two men seated near her. One of fine physique, dark complexion, and quiet manners was evidently her husband, or else a very intimate friend. The other cavalier was blonde, slender, and timid as a young girl, blushing on every occasion. The trio ate slowly, and seemed to try to shake off the melancholy impression produced by the singular dining-room.

On the other side a man sat smoking, with a bottle of wine before him. Under his long black disordered hair he knitted his brows. Although still young he bore the traces of a dissipated life. His bronzed complexion, his thick lips, his low, square forehead which made him resemble the sphinx, indicated that he was the descendant of a non-European race. He looked like a carving in basalt, but in basalt worn by the storms of passion, to-day extinct but formerly tumultuous. One was reminded on regarding him of those lakes which, agitated in the morning, are calm under the soft breeze of evening.

Farther off lounged two Italians, easily recognized by the carelessness of their attitude in spite of the presence of a lady. Their nationality was furthermore betrayed by their olive complexions and long black hair falling over their shoulders. The younger wore a mustache *à la Victor Emmanuel*, which gave him a military air. The second and stouter man was an artist. They both had that air of content worn by men who are at home and breathe their native air.

Separated from them by an empty table a pale, blonde young man seemed to seek solitude. This was a son of Germany. Despite his phlegmatic manner and apparent indifference one could divine nevertheless that he had experienced some misfortune.

Clad poorly and with a certain negligence, forgetting his bread and cheese he looked dreamily at the grotto and his neighbours, absorbed entirely in awaiting the morrow, yet as though he dreaded it.

All the company was silent and a little sleepy. From time to time could be heard voices at the table where the only woman of the party was seated; at times the clinking of glasses and of bottles; then the silence became more profound.

Suddenly a stranger entered by a little back-door. All eyes were turned toward him. There was something in the sudden appearance of this man that was startling. He was very pale and thin. His garments, gray with dust, proved that he had travelled long on foot. Fatigue had marked his visage, and imprinted on his features that melancholy beauty which interests at first sight all men truly worthy of that name. His eyes were sunken, but their expression was soft as the glance of a woman, and attested almost superhuman, sufferings. His haversack, his staff, and his miserable appearance showed that he travelled on foot rather from necessity than from preference.

He sought timidly with his eyes an obscure corner; then, seeing that almost all the tables were occupied, he moved slowly to a seat near the German; but scarcely had he taken off his straw hat and wiped the sweat from his brow, than his figure contracted under frightful suffering. He seized the table convulsively to steady himself, but his strength gave way and he fell unconscious to the ground. In the fall he overturned his chair, and it was a miracle that he did not cut his head on the stalactites of the grotto. He remained stretched at full length, pale as a corpse, and retaining on his features that expression of calm which death gives. All the travellers, led by the lady,--we must do them that justice,--rushed to his assistance. It was the lady who showed most presence of mind, and she proved a veritable sister of charity. In every woman there is a mother and a sister. She seized a carafe, and wetting a napkin applied it to the temples of the unknown, who sighing deeply opened his eyes, and soon came to himself. At first he seemed ashamed of his accident. He leaned on his elbow, his eyes timidly lowered, and stammered some unintelligible words of thanks.

Short as was the time of this little scene the landlord had already heard of it. He hastened, speechless from fear of the formalities which would follow a sudden death in his inn, and he had already decided to beg the invalid to go and die elsewhere, when he was reassured by seeing the stranger again conscious.

This first thought of Signer Firpo was characteristic of our age, which, in place of giving the hand to the unfortunate, repulses him, and does not recognize in the poor the right to be ill. The first sentiment experienced to-day when men meet is that of suspicion or distrust. Indifference has replaced the ideal. Society has turned its back on the unfortunate, and its motto is egotism.

The innkeeper felt a little ashamed when he saw the solicitude of all his patrons for the unfortunate man. Nevertheless, he had no idea of harbouring during the night a traveller who fainted so easily and who had no baggage. Genoa is not far off. There are hospitals there, thought he. I must see that he leaves as soon as possible.

What would have been the exasperation of the honest Firpo if he had known that hunger was the cause of the fainting?

For the present he did not announce his charitable intention on account of his guests who gathered around the new-comer. A common feeling of compassion and charity drew these strangers to each other. They fraternized like old friends, conversing now in French, now in Italian, in order to understand each other.

The woman sought with her delicate hands the wound on the young man's head, whence flowed the blood which stained his temples. The men talked in low voices about the accident, and with a forced smile the stranger muttered feebly:--

"It is nothing! Pardon and thanks! But the heat--fatigue--" "Or rather hunger," added the spectators, looking at the poor fellow whose sunken cheeks showed that they were right.

Gradually calm was again established. Some one advised the invalid to take a little wine, and the woman brought him her own glass after having filled it. He raised it to his lips, thanking her timidly.

"Will you come and sit with us, monsieur?" said she drawing near him; "after a little rest this weakness will pass away." Then she added:--

"These accidents are sometimes succeeded by another, and it will be prudent to be near us. We can watch over you. And if the question is not indiscreet, will you tell us whence you came and where you are going?"

"I go to Genoa, madame," replied the unknown.

"And you come from a distance?"

"Quite a distance, from France. I have travelled on foot, and am very weary."

There was a short silence. But the woman was curious and continued the rôle of interrogator.

"Then you are not a Frenchman?"

"No, madame."

"I knew it by your accent."

The other travellers approached the table where the stranger was seated, and the conversation became general. They talked of their travels, and during this time the invalid became stronger. His extreme paleness diminished as the blood circulated more rapidly in his veins. The woman fixed on him a maternal gaze.

"You are truly unpardonable," continued she. "Being subject to fainting, you ought not to have undertaken such a long journey alone and in such heat. Although Italy is safe in the vicinity of Naples, and has lost her legendary brigands, who no longer exist except in romances, you might have been assassinated or at least robbed in some lonely place on the route that you have taken."

The young man smiled sadly, hung his head, and replied in a low voice, "It would have been impossible, madame, to have followed your excellent advice. I had not the means to do so."

"Poor boy," murmured his fair questioner, "this is frightful!"

"I am an exile," continued he raising his head. "I am a Pole. I left my country on account of some college pranks for which I would have been sent to Siberia, with my future ruined. I hoped to find a warm welcome from compassionate nations. I sought it in Germany, in England, and in France. Everywhere beautiful words concealed a cold indifference. At last I thought of Italy. It has a people whose destiny not long ago somewhat resembled ours. Outlaws, they also sought from the world a little aid and sympathy. Alas!" He interrupted this involuntary confession, which had produced different impressions on his hearers.

He had at first somewhat chilled the company, who, however, soon submitted to a more generous sentiment, and felt themselves captivated by his frankness.

"We are, then, in a measure compatriots," said in Polish the blonde young man seated near the beautiful lady. "I am a little Polish, but Galician." The "but" sounded coldly on the ears of the outlaw, who nevertheless saluted him, and took in silence his outstretched hand.

The dark man with majestic features arose in his turn.

"I, also," declared he in a slightly ironical tone, "have the honour to present myself as in a measure your compatriot. I am Polish, but a Jew."

The Galician turned quickly toward the last speaker, who was warmly shaking the hand of the exile.

"In this general recognition," added the lady's second cavalier, "permit me also to consider myself as somewhat your countryman. We are brother Slavs, for I am a Russian, but outlawed. Give me, then, your hand."

"Outlaw or vagabond, it is all the same," said the man with the bronzed skin. "Permit me, then, as a brother in exile and vagabondage, as a pariah, to fraternize with you. I am a Tsigane, but a rich Tsigane, and that is a rare thing. It is the only reason why I am not rubbing down horses, and why I do not rob hen-roosts. Yes, messieurs, I belong to that condemned race who in the Middle Ages were driven out at the bayonet's point, and who are to-day under the supervision of the police. The only exception made is for our sisters under twenty years who have white teeth, a sweet voice, and *la beauté du diable*. To reassure you, I repeat, messieurs, that I am very rich; that, surely, is a corrective for the worst reputation. I am not, however, a Tsigane king. I am only an idler by profession." He laughed sardonically, watching the effect of his words, then continued: "I bear on my face the indelible witness of my origin. No magic water can whiten my skin. No cosmetic can conceal my race."

"Listen, messieurs," interposed the lady with vivacity, "if banishment and a nomadic life are the standard of your good-will, you can admit me to your society. My father was Italian, of that Italy which was not yet a country, but a 'simple geographical expression,' to quote Metternich. He emigrated voluntarily to England. My mother was of an old Irish family. My husband, Russian; and if that be not enough, my grandmother was Greek."

A little man suddenly advanced from the midst of the circle brandishing an enormous parasol. He was dressed with great care, and wore a pair of spectacles, with shoulder-straps crossed on his breast from which hung on one side a lorgnette and on the other a game-bag.

"Bravo! bravissimo!" cried he, taking a part in the conversation. "Pardon me for interrupting you, madame, but I desire to participate in this general introduction, and I flatter myself that I have rights which give me the priority. I am a Dane by birth. My mother was Scotch or English, my grandmother an Italian. I have long lived in France, and I believe that I am even naturalized. I hope, then, to have the right to dine in a company from all the world. What think you, my friends?"

There was a general laugh, and he was admitted with frank and joyous cordiality.

"I solicit the same honour," said the German with a heavy air; "I, also, am an exile." With these words he bowed and seated himself.

"The question of country," said the Dane, "is today a simple question of money. With a full purse one is everywhere received, everywhere naturalized; with gold one has everywhere the right of citizenship. No money; no country! No money; move on! The only real outlaw, the true pariah, is he who has nothing. With money one can buy as many countries as he desires. That is why I do not feel the want of one."

With these words he shrugged his shoulders and was silent, and one of the Italians arose.

"My friend and I," said he, "do not wish to be excluded from this charming circle, and we have both a title to be received among you. In the first place, we are artists, who are always nomads in body and spirit. And though we are Italians, one is a Roman, the other Venetian. And we can tender the hand to the Pole, for we are brothers in poverty."

"No! no!" cried the Pole. "You are not like us, despoiled of all. You know whither to fly from persecution. All Italy is open to you. You have a country, a king, and a government. We have only police, spies, executioners, and persecutors. We are always menaced with Siberia or death. Europe does not recognize even our right to exist."

These words, vibrating with despair, threw into the conversation the dramatic note. All the men in this motley society--Italians, Poles, Jew, Dane, and Tsigane--gathered around the little tables, and even those who were least inclined to make new acquaintances could not resist the general impulse. The ice had been broken by the fainting and the confession of the Pole.

We very often hesitate to make new acquaintances when travelling. The motive is usually a selfish one. Each encounter costs us some words of politeness, some courteous concessions, if our ideas are not in accord with those of our new friend. And all these concessions are a total loss, because before long we part at the next station. It is an expense that one can easily avoid. It is much pleasanter to be silent and to stretch one's legs without caring for a neighbour who will be gone in a few moments.

For once the guests of Sestri-Ponente forgot all considerations of personal comfort. The woman had communicated to all the sentiment of charity which had seized her.

Everything is contagious in this world, even virtue. A half-century ago, when there was less travelling, men were much more accessible to each other. To-day there passes before our eyes such a procession of specimens of human kind, from the prince without a crown to the *prolétaire* without a shirt, that one reflects that caution is necessary.

Man has become cosmopolitan, and he avoids sympathetic persons for fear he may become attached to them.

The landlord, concealed behind the door, felt reassured on seeing him whom he thought dying, under the protection of the whole company. This protection relieved him from obligations, the very thought of which was terrifying.

As a good action reacts on those who are the cause of it, the lady was radiant. She chatted with the Venetian and the Roman, interrogated the Pole, argued with the Dane, said some words to the Tsigane, even smiled at the phlegmatic German, and so charmed the whole company that each one commenced to dread the hour of departure. The conversation continued gayly as it had begun.

"I am not altogether a cosmopolite," said the lady; "man needs a country, and he who has none has one joy the less in his heart, one love the less in his life, and in his thoughts a hope and a consolation the less. Rather than want a country one ought to choose and create one to love, for it is necessary for a young man to have an ideal love if he has not a real one. However, love of one's country does not imply hatred of others. It is a beautiful thing this human brotherhood."

"Very well said," agreed the Dane, who, in order to put in his word, had left his macaroni. "But unfortunately, madame, this fraternity belongs only to fabulous and Utopian days, like the English republics and the patriarchal monarchies. It is a dream, like the imaginary cottages of lovers with idyllic roots and herbs for food, and the clear water of the rushing brook for drink; it is an idle dream, like any other nonsense that men have invented in this age of beefsteaks, of business, of bank-notes, and comfort. It is thousands of years since men coined the word 'fraternity.' Eh! madame, ask the Muscovite to love the Pole, and the English to love the French; demand, then, of the German to renounce his disposition to assimilate all the neighbouring provinces and to demand their ground for the cultivation of his potatoes; ask him then to cease singing the praises of his mother-country wherever he may be."

"Oh! oh!" said the peaceable German shaking his head. "Behold already a satire on the most inoffensive of men." Then he resumed between his teeth, "Oh! Schiller!"

"I have had the pleasure of reading all his works," replied the Dane, returning to his macaroni, "in a translation. He has written many beautiful things. But beautiful verses do not characterize a people, my dear German. I call you very dear, because I love exceedingly men in general,

although I hate a few in particular. Well, very dear son of blonde Germany, I tell you, without remembrance of your monopoly of Schleswig and of Holstein, two principalities to which I do not belong,--I tell you frankly, Schiller, Goethe, Kant, Herder, and Lessing are not Germans."

"How is that?"

"Listen, peaceable son of industrious Germany; do not fly in a passion. I know you, that is why I maintain that neither Schiller nor the others belong to you."

"To whom do they belong, then?" demanded the German, striking his knife on the table.

"They are geniuses like Shakespeare. They belong to the whole world, and not to His Majesty the King of Prussia. They are not as well known in the country that has produced them as in other lands."

"That is perfectly true," added the young Pole. "I feel that I understand Schiller better than most Germans, who go into ecstasies over his genius, and raise statues on all the street corners, and throw a flat contradiction over the poet's ideal by shutting themselves up in a narrow and egotistical nationality."

"Enough, young enthusiast!" interrupted the Dane. "You are twenty-one or"--

"Twenty-two," said the Pole.

"I will not permit you to discuss the subject of egotism yet. Wait a few years, until you become an egotist yourself. '*Nemo sapiens nisi patiens*.' I admit, however, that you have comprehended my meaning very well, and that you have argued fairly."

A general laugh seized the whole company.

"With your permission," added the Dane, taking up his lorgnette, which he had placed on the table, "this threatens to become a rather long international conference. It is necessary that I should reinforce the inner man to sustain the discussion. Macaroni is very 'filling,' but does not nourish overmuch. I shall send for something more substantial. Decidedly, these Italians for many generations of stomachs have cultivated an exaggerated taste for macaroni."

"Do not trouble yourself about us!" replied the lady smiling.

"Monsieur Pole," continued the loquacious Dane, "do not be offended if I invite you brusquely to dine with me. It is simple egotism. When I eat alone I am not hungry. To see any one eat gives me an appetite, and I divine in you a Polish stomach."

The young man blushed deeply and murmured, "But--but"--

"No *buts*. It is a service which you can render me. Eat like a wolf; I will enjoy looking at you in coveting your appetite."

With these words he sighed with regret and knocked on the table. A waiter in his shirt-sleeves came running in. Each one ordered his dinner. The conversation flagged, and the German, gloomy and indignant, went and seated himself in a corner.

"Monsieur is provoked," said the Dane to him; "but monsieur is wrong. I esteem your nation very highly, and I render justice to all its general qualities. The Germans abound everywhere, like the trichina; and like it, the hardier they are the more surely they provoke the death of those who have received them. It is a credit to the people, though it be an offence in the trichina. If you dislike my opinion read Heine, who justifies me in all points."

The German made a gesture of contempt.

"Heine, a Jew!" said he in a low voice.

The Dane alone heard him, and leaning towards his companion added, in an undertone, "I fear you will soon be obliged to seek your future where Heine saw it." Then lower still he pronounced this word, a title in one of Heine's works,--"Hammonia!"

After a short colloquy the two men evidently came to an amicable understanding, for they shook hands.

The *menu* for the principal meal at the Albergo della Grotto was as follows: First a thick brodo, a soup that alone with Italians supersedes their beloved macaroni. Then a dish of fried fish and one of stewed meat; that, to say the least, was a little suspicious, for it had come from Genoa in the heat of the day, and was certainly somewhat fatigued by the journey. Afterward a roast, then cheese and fruit.

The Dane grumbled, and said that the cooking was unworthy of the least of scullions; but the travellers were hungry, and they excused many shortcomings.

The Pole had overcome his embarrassment and ate with evident enjoyment, although he

feared that his new friends would divine his long fast. His companion was not hungry, for he had eaten at Cogoletto. The unfortunate young man considered this meal a Godsend, for he was saving his last sou to return home. Having lost confidence in "human fraternity," he relied only on his own strength and economy.

"Am I permitted to ask where you are going?" said the lady, looking around the tables.

"As for me," said the one whom she had succoured, "I go, or rather return, to Poland. It is two years since I left it, and I return impelled by suffering and hope. Aged by my trials, I have left on the way all my illusions."

"I also return to Poland," added the Jew. "I consider it my country. Permit me to call it thus, for I love it, and that gives me the right."

The two men pressed each other's hands like brothers, whilst the Galician seemed to be looking for something under the table, and feigned not to hear them.

"I," said the Tsigane, "believe that I will go to Hungary. I say *believe*, for it is not yet decided; it is only probable. I have relations established there. They have left the tents of their tribe for more substantial dwellings. I wish to see them once more and to salute them in our ancient language. But for me every place is the same. I am never in haste; I have money, and wander where I will. My country is any spot that suits me, for there does not exist for us a country in the sense in which you use it. We have forgotten our land since we left it, and if we should return, she would not recognize her children. We should be like Epimenides when he returned and found that no one knew him."

"Well," said the Dane to the Pole brusquely, "you have made a wonderful journey, and in the most agreeable way. Necessity is often a blessing in disguise. How often have I wished to be obliged to go on foot, but, unfortunately, there has never been any urgent reason for doing so, and I have always listened to the voice of sloth."

"You wish for everything," said the Jew; "but at the same time you lack the will to obtain the object of your desires."

"That is true. But that which I long for most is youth!" replied the Dane.

"The route is truly charming enough to make one forget hunger and heat," said the Pole. "Walking along the shores of the blue sea, it seemed to me that the world was finished in emeralds and opals and sapphires. It was like Paradise,--an ideal land. What a poem is the ocean!"

"The ocean is not at all poetical," said the Dane; "it only seems so in your youthful enthusiasm. To me the sea speaks only of oysters and fish."

The lady smiled at this prosaic remark, and softly quoted,--

"*O primavera! gioventù de l'anno!*
O gioventù! primavera della vita!"

"I intend to visit Italy, and I am going to Genoa," remarked the German laconically.

"I, also," added the Dane.

"We go anywhere," replied the Roman and the Venetian.

"As for me," declared the Muscovite, "I am obliged to wander, because I cannot return to '*la sainte Russie*' until"--

"Until the tempest explodes there," finished the Dane. "Was not that what you intended to say?" added he.

The Moscovite made an affirmative gesture.

"As for me, I shall prolong my voyage," murmured the Galician. "I wish to see Italy thoroughly."

"Then we are all bound for Genoa," resumed the lady; "this Genoa '*la superba*,' that we can already catch a glimpse of here, and which I am anxious to reach."

"Madame, do not complain of the length of the route," observed the Jew. "The true happiness of life is in knowing where one aims to be, and then going slowly toward it. Genoa the beautiful is more beautiful at a distance than when near. The journey from here is ravishing."

"I know something of it, for I have come on foot from Marseilles," said the Pole.

One of the Italians launched out into enthusiastic praise of Italy "*la bella*."

"I am not surprised to find love of country even among the Esquimaux, but I cannot comprehend an Italian that does not love Italy. Where else can be found so beautiful a country? At your feet eloquent ruins of past ages, overhead a sky of unequalled beauty, and everywhere wonders, with a climate which restores life to the dying. Italy reigns queen of the world; they have plucked the diadem from her brow, but she still continues calm and majestic. Barbarians have chained her beautiful hands, but she will soon rise again and shake off her fetters. Tell me, do you know a more beautiful land?"

"I know one," replied the Pole mournfully. "A gray sky envelops it; its soil is stained with blood. The cemeteries alone speak of the past, and through these burial-grounds pass often despairing groups of chained men. It has no sapphire sea,--nothing but the cold, icy wind. But it is the altar of innumerable sacrifices,--it is my country."

The Italians nodded their heads, and the Tsigane smiled ironically.

"What matters it to a man," cried he, "whether he be here or there! Life is short, and death will soon oblige him to return to the darkness whence he came. Let us not become attached to anything or anybody. It is not worth the trouble."

"What an error!" interrupted the lady; "it is by the heart that one lives. All else is the bitter peel of the fruit."

"In that case one must become accustomed to the peel," said the Tsigane shrugging his shoulders.

A servant came to announce to the lady's cavaliers that their carriage was ready, and he believed it his duty to add that the diligence was also waiting at the door to take the other travellers to Genoa. This interruption had the effect of a cold douche on the company, and a cloud passed over their countenances.

"Thus," said the lady sighing, "we must separate. Destiny pushes us on again like the galley slaves who wish to stop on the way, and are relentlessly forced onward by their keepers. God alone knows if we shall ever meet again!"

"No, we cannot tell," rejoined the Dane, adjusting his lorgnette; "but we shall certainly meet again the types which we resemble. As for myself, I am convinced that I have seen you all already somewhere, and that I shall meet you again, but perhaps under a form less attractive."

This odd idea did not please the lady, who was no doubt offended at the thought of being considered an ordinary woman.

"As for me, monsieur," said she haughtily, "this is the first time in my life that ever I saw you, and I tell you that"--

"That you do not desire to see me again?"

"That is not exactly what I was going to say. However, your belief in types and not in individuals shocks me, I acknowledge. For what man has then a perfect ideal?"

"Men are but men, be certain of that, madame. I affirm more: to believe in a variety of men is dangerous; there are only certain types many times repeated. We often think to find a new man, an unknown; but we soon recognize an old acquaintance who, between you and me, does not amount to much."

"In the abstract you are right, monsieur," said she, glancing at the Russian, who smiled, and at the Galician, who appeared not to listen. "But," added she quickly, "we will not grieve about it. *En route* and *Au revoir!*"

"*Au revoir!* but where?"

"At Genoa."

"At what place?"

"At Aqua Sola," said one of the Italians; "there is good music there, and there we may easily find each other."

Every one arose and saluted the lady, who held out her hand to the young Pole and wished him better health.

The rest of the company prepared to leave, wishing each other a pleasant journey. The Dane took the diligence and the Tsigane an omnibus. The Italians went on foot. The German found it economical to glide into the vehicle of the *propriétaire*, in the midst of tomatoes and fruits.

"We will go together," said the Jew to the Pole. "I do not wish to part with you. I have a carriage, and if you will not come willingly I shall employ force."

"But I have no right to trouble you."

"On the contrary, you will do me a service. Solitude fatigues me, and your company will distract my thoughts. It is a genuine favour that you will grant me. Come, no more doubts. Give me your hand, brother, and think no more about it."

From the threshold of the inn the landlord saw the departure of the invalid with great satisfaction. And his joy was augmented by the fact that all had paid well, and that his first care now was to prepare a second dinner.

"What good luck," said he to himself, "that that young stranger should have fallen into the hands of those people. If it had not been so he might perhaps have committed suicide here, and I should have been obliged to bury him at my own expense, for he did not appear to have a heavy haversack, and I do not believe he had a sou. May God deliver me from any more such tourists! Yes, I have had a lucky escape."

CHAPTER II.

JUDAISM AND POLAND.

The two men traversed in almost uninterrupted silence the short distance which separated Sestri from Genoa. The route is simply a continuous line of straggling hamlets. On one mass of rock arose the ruins of an old tower; above the door was the image of the Virgin, patroness of the city. The light-house appeared in the distance, then the harbour, like an amphitheatre around which Genoa la Superba is built. This beautiful city is seen to best advantage from the sea. It is a city of palaces, with its colonnades, its porticos and staircases, its streets climbing toward the sky or sinking in sudden precipices. It has been likened to an enormous shell thrown up by the waves of the sea. The marine monster who lived in this shell has been replaced by a miserable spider; a life full of littleness has succeeded the life of grandeur of past ages.

In this marble city the inhabitants to-day are somewhat embarrassed. The shell is too large for them,--this shell, in the bottom of which the turbulent Genoese Republic vied with Venice in its traffic and its aristocracy. New peoples are there, new ways. The Balbi and Palaviccini palaces now have the appearance of tombs, while at the port the modern Italian struggles for precedence in a new form of existence, perhaps as full of pride as in the vanished past.

The carriage rolled softly through the streets which led to the interior of the city.

"Permit me to alight," said the young Pole suddenly.

"Why?"

"To go in search of lodgings."

"I thought it was agreed that we travel together?"

"Yes; but I wish to live alone. I tell you frankly that I have scarcely enough to finish my journey. It is necessary for me to seek cheap lodgings."

"Have you not accepted my fraternal offer to stay with me?"

"Yes, perhaps; but poverty has its pride, as wealth sometimes has its humility. Do not be angry because I wish to retain my independence. It is so good to be free, when liberty costs only a bad dinner and a wretched bed."

"I understand your scruples," replied the Jew. "If they were of any value I would heed them. I do not dream of chaining you to myself. My offer amounts to little, but it is made with a good heart, and if you find life with me insupportable you can leave me. In asking you to share my lodgings, if only for a night, I do not make any sacrifice, and you owe me no gratitude. Do not refuse. I can share with you without inconvenience, and it is you who will do me a favour. I am sad-hearted; solitude oppresses me, I do not wish to be alone. Come with me to my hotel. I do not ask you to amuse me, but only to be near me. My heart longs to overflow into the heart of a fellow-man. If I weary you, you are at liberty to leave me to my sufferings."

"It would be foolish for me," said the Pole, "to refuse such a courteous invitation. Pardon my too susceptible pride. It was owing to my poverty."

"I honour the sentiment," replied the Jew smiling. Then he cried to the driver, "To the Hotel Féder!"

The Hotel Féder, like most of the hostelries of Genoa, of Venice, and of other Italian cities, is

an ancient palace appropriated to this new service. The structure, half antique and half modern, has a strange appearance. At the foot of the court, obscure and abandoned, trickles an old fountain; a narrow path passes under the windows of the chambers, and on every side can be discovered traces of former grandeur, relics of a romantic age now superseded everywhere by the plain practical life of to-day, whose chief end is money-getting.

The companions obtained a large room on the third floor with two beds, the windows of which commanded a fine view of the port, bristling with masts, like a garden of shrubs despoiled of their leaves by winter. In the distance the Mediterranean could be seen stretching away to the horizon.

They had hardly entered the room when the young man fell exhausted into a chair, and seemed about to swoon for the second time. Some cologne revived him, and a slight repast soon dispelled his weakness, the result of long fasting and excessive fatigue. His strength returned with rest and nourishment.

"And now," advised the Jew, "lie down on this couch, or perhaps it would be better to go to bed."

"If you will permit me?" asked the young man timidly.

"Nay, I beg you to do so."

"And you?"

"Oh, I will see Genoa this evening. Never mind me. I will amuse myself; all I ask of you at present is to sleep; and, mind, you must not even dream."

He took his hat and cane and left the room. The young man fell like one dead on the bed, and was asleep before his head touched the pillow. Fatigue is not the same in old age as in youth, for then sleep soon restores the exhausted energies.

The young traveller was awakened from his profound slumber by the discordant braying of the asses grouped under the windows of the hotel. He had forgotten the events of the past evening, and threw an astonished glance around the luxurious apartment. He who had for so long a time been accustomed to sleep in miserable lodgings now awoke in a pleasant room, and saw a simple but abundant breakfast spread out on the table beside him.

The Jew returned from a sea-bath, prepared to do it honour.

"Is it then very late?" murmured the Pole, rising from the bed.

"No, not very late. I arose early to enjoy the freshness of the morning. Have you slept well?"

"I know not."

"How is that?"

"I fell like a piece of lead. I rise as I fell without having stirred, without having moved even. I have slept the sleep of the dead."

"And how do you feel at present?"

"Strong as Hercules, thanks to you."

"Ah, bah! thanks to youth. Does your head ache still?"

"Not at all."

"Then let us attend to breakfast."

"You treat me too well, dear Amphitryon. This is a breakfast worthy of Lucullus and of the Sybarites. I have contented myself for a long while on awakening with a glass of sour wine and a piece of bread with cheese. A similar repast in the evening, and that was all. I cannot permit myself luxuries. I, a poor orphan, without future or friend, have never been pampered."

"It is not necessary that this should hinder your eating," interrupted the Jew gayly. "I am hungry, and will set you an example. Let us begin. We will become better acquainted."

"That is true; we do not even know each other's names."

"Very well. I have the honour to present you Jacob Hamon."

"And I," said the Pole in his turn, "my friends have christened me familiarly with the name of Ivas. In reality I am called Jean Huba. Huba, and not Hube, which is a German name. You will learn it if you know Poland a little, for I am from a Russian province, in the language of which Huba signifies champignon. It is like the Polish Gzybowski or Gzybowicz. This name became later an addition to the family name of the Pstrocki who came from Masovia to gain their living in a more fertile land. In full, I am *Jean Huba Pstrocki ex Masovia olim oriundus, in Russia*

possessionatus et natus."

"Have you any kindred there?" asked Jacob.

"Neither kindred nor an inch of ground. I am an orphan in every sense of the word. My father, after losing his last cent, and seeing his little farm in Volhynie devastated by hail and other plagues, died, leaving me to the charity of men. From pity they sent me to school, where I passed the examination and entered the university."

"Why did you leave the country?"

"Because with us college pranks are considered as a crime; because we are not permitted to love our country, neither in its past nor future; because those who stifle seek the air. For writing some simple patriotic verses I was threatened with banishment to Siberia."

"Always the malady of the oppressed," remarked the Jew. "Where veterans are seen tearing up all their rights, the young try to reconquer, and, in their unreflecting enthusiasm, often find exile, misery, and death."

They both sighed, and Jacob asked:--

"Why do you dream of returning to a country from which you were obliged to flee?"

"I know not myself" replied Ivas sadly; "I only know that I return to my native land. Suffering has pushed me to it. I have not learned to live in any other country, and exile is to me intolerable, morally and physically. I left home believing that ideas of liberty, concord, light, and justice vibrated in the hearts of other men as in mine. Alas! society is not what I thought it. It has no place for the oppressed, no hand to hold out to the dying, no consolation to offer to the afflicted, no shelter to the proscribed. I return, then, to the country I have left. There, at least, beat some generous hearts, while in Europe"--

"Europe has grown old," interrupted Jacob. "She is afraid of quarrelling. The world is in the hands of charlatans who profit by the sufferings of martyrs. Truth is no more comprehended. They mock at her. Men who are crafty and unscrupulous profit by everything in these days. Self-interest is the only spring of human interest. The heart has given out its last spark of generosity, and the world is drifting towards scepticism and intolerance. Men pride themselves on unbelief, for liberty has degenerated into an unbridled license. Revolution has set up a pedestal for the ambition of impostors, and the apostles of progress make money out of their dupes. Fortunately humanity will grow better."

While he was speaking, the sun rose high in the heavens, and the heat, which was great, made it uncomfortable to walk abroad. The Jew closed the shutters, and the two companions continued their conversation in a subdued light and comparative coolness.

"I ought to make myself known to you," said the Jew, after a short silence. "We understand each other already, but my exceptional position requires explanation. Our acquaintance, which commenced near Genoa, will not end here, I hope. You can tell me more of yourself later on, but it is right that I should be the first to make a frank confidence. It is a courtesy that I wish to show to our new-born friendship.

"The word 'Jew' contains all my history. It tells my destiny, it divines my character. This known, the consequences are certain. The Jew, even while he has ceased to be a pariah in society, still remains no less an enigma. For several thousand years he has borne engraved on his forehead his holy mission,--a mission of, suffering, humility, and abasement. But from this deep abasement he comes out greater, to go forward toward the universal power he lends to the entire world. He builds and tears down thrones, dominates over governments, makes laws, and reigns in an invisible manner. It is with pride that I say it, the word 'Jew' has immense significance.

"Pardon me if I forget myself in speaking of the Jews. I feel myself a child of that great family on the foreheads of which the finger of Moses has inscribed the mysterious name--Jehovah.

"Before being a man I am a Jew. This word recalls much suffering, the first legislation worthy of humanity, the most ancient morals emanating from divine wisdom in the Ten Commandments.

"As God is eternal, so are his laws. When nations were wandering and lost in the by-ways of polytheism and of anomalism (if I can by this word express the absence of laws), the one God is manifested to us; and to us is communicated the sacred fire, which we have preserved during all ages.

"We are spread over the whole world, holding fast the word of God. During two thousand years we have not made proselytes: we have guarded the treasure for ourselves. The world is busy, toils and labours; and we live on, absorbed entirely in guarding this treasure. We are preserved in all our suffering, a distinct people, bearing everywhere our country in our hearts, in our holy books and our religious services, and in all the minute circumstances of life. But to-day, I fear, alas! that we have thrown from our shoulders this dear burden. The Jewish idea seems to have diminished with the cessation of persecution. But to return to my personal history.

"I was born of one of those Jewish families scattered in the Polish villages. You probably know something of the Jews in Poland, a country that I love as well as you do, and on which I can cast only one reproach. The Poles, though deeply imbued with the idea of human dignity, refused the name of man to all those who were not noble. Poland, like the Republic of Venice, has not known how to reform herself. Caste prevailed to so great a degree that she has preferred to perish sooner than adopt a new mode of existence, and risk all in the defence of liberty. Nevertheless, in the lives of these people I recognize a great and brilliant spirit like our own. In speaking of Poland, I do not call myself a Pole, for I am a Jew, and we are a distinct people, it matters not what land we dwell in. In judging Poland's past impartially, one can perhaps criticise, but must acknowledge that it is full of poetry; it is a Homeric epoch."

"Stop!" cried the young Pole, "you are a son of the present; do not excuse the past."

"Why do you speak thus?"

"Why? Because I was born in the midst of new ideas. I condemn the most brilliant epochs of our history, for they were the veritable cause of our ruin. We who are descended from those guardians of our rights are now their judges, and we justly consider as the greatest kings those who tried to crush the nobility to establish their own power."

"You are partly right. Nevertheless, when I meditate on Poland, she seems to me strange, frightful, at times almost savage, but always grand and magnificent, chivalrous and noble. No one has a better right than the Jew to condemn the Polish nobility, yet it is necessary to judge a nation without personal prejudice."

"We will discuss this subject at another time," interrupted the young man; "but there is really something strange in the fact that I, a noble Pole, should condemn the past more than you, a Jew. You are truly magnanimous!"

Jacob smiled, and said, "I am older than you, dear brother, if not in years, at least in experience. Suffering, labour, and meditation, and perhaps, also, the sorrows of bygone generations, have prematurely aged me."

"That is true; but tell me more about yourself."

"Do not be impatient. I cannot do otherwise. We will travel over a rocky road, like the mineralogists. Every time that we encounter a curious stone we will strike it with our hammer to find out what it contains. So we will pause to discuss different subjects. But do you not remember that it will soon be time to go to Aqua Sola?"

"Ah, yes! It is true that we shall meet my beautiful benefactress, who, like the Samaritan, gave me aid in my distress."

"This Italienne who bathed your temples with water, and at the same time, perhaps, lighted a fire in your heart. But between yesterday and to-day there is an abyss. Who knows how many will keep the rendezvous at Aqua Sola?"

"Do you think many will fail to put in an appearance?"

"Experience has taught me to count very little on engagements twenty-four hours old, and not at all on those dating back several weeks."

"The evening is still far off," said the Pole.

"Very far. The sun is yet high in the heavens."

"Then pray continue your autobiography."

CHAPTER III.

EDUCATION OF JACOB.

"Who does not love to recall the occurrences of youth, however sad? I cannot boast of happiness in my childhood, yet the memory of those days brings tears to my eyes, and I repeat that which is written in one of our books: 'Youth is a garland of flowers; old age, a crown of thorns.' Even in comparison with maturity, full of power and intelligence, those years seem to me strewn with flowers, although they were unhappy.

"My parents were descended from an important and once wealthy family, whose fortunes had

declined for several generations. They found themselves for a time in the lowest degree of society, working in the village inns or occupying themselves in some little business or petty speculations in wheat or cattle. To speak frankly, my father was an innkeeper in a little village. He was a quiet, studious man, loving his books, and little calculated for business. My mother took care of everything. She was the second wife of my father, Joël, who had lost his first after the birth of a son, Joël, who was already well grown when I came into the world.

"Joël, the elder, was of a gloomy character, silent, concentrated, a dreamer. He was absorbed in abstruse speculations, and was happy only when he was left in undisturbed possession of his books. He was generally esteemed on account of his learning, but his family suffered from his inaptitude for business, which was for us a question of life.

"It has been, and is still, with the Jews, a traditional duty to amass wealth. This does not proceed from the character of the race, but from the conditions under which they live. The only rights accorded, or, rather, dearly sold, to the Jews can at any moment be revoked, suspended, or torn in shreds by the tribunal of the clergy. Where can justice be found? To whom can they complain? The Jew has been forced to seek in gold, which is worshipped by all nations, the means of obtaining justice, rights, and consideration. The poor Jew has no defence, no protection, but the head of the community to which he belongs. The Christians have, in a measure, made a religious duty of avenging the death of Christ on us; this Christ who was a Jew also. We are therefore obliged to cling to our money as the only safeguard, though the law of Moses condemns severely this love of gold. (Exodus xxii. 25.)

"My father could not be accused of enriching himself at the expense of others. In the end, plunged as he was in metaphysical studies, which made him forget the affairs of this world, he lost even the little hoard that had been saved with so much difficulty. All the care and labour fell on my poor mother, who was much younger, and therefore interested in the future. I had two sisters younger than myself, and my half-brother was much older.

"Our rural establishment consisted of a rented farm, and a tavern situated near a highway. The locality was much frequented. We were brought up in a continual bustle, which, however, did not disturb my father, who was too absorbed to notice it. My mother and two servants worked hard to satisfy their guests. It would have been a most profitable business, in spite of a neighbouring rival, if fortune had only smiled on us. But that which was made by the sale of brandy, hay, and oats was lost in other ways. In his transactions with the dealers in hides and cattle, my father always came out worsted. He attributed this ill-luck to the will of God; but my mother grieved bitterly over his lack of business tact. We grew poorer every day. The family jewels, my father's furs and clothes, all that we possessed of any value, were gradually parted with.

"The owner of the tavern was a noble. Fat, hearty, always gay and good-humoured, he was a *viveur*; a heart good enough, but terribly dissipated. He cared not for the morrow, provided that to-day was passed agreeably. At all times he required money. He was our plague, although he was not wicked. Every time that he sent for Joël my mother wept, for she knew that he would have to take money with him.

"At the manor-house, which was about half a mile from the tavern, there was always a gay company. When he was alone a single day, Micuta almost died of *ennui*. If no one came to amuse him, he ordered his horses, and went to visit his neighbours. His wife wept then, like my mother. She could not prevent his dissipation nor correct his faults, but, womanlike, she loved him in spite of all. To procure money with which to amuse himself was the sole object of this nobleman, and when he was told that he would ruin himself, he replied carelessly, 'Ah, bah! Providence will provide. I will die as I have lived.'"

"Such types," said Ivas, "are common with us. Every district possesses several Micutas."

"At the same time that he sent for Joël to bring him money," resumed the Jew, "his wife, Madame Micuta, sent to my mother, and begged her not to give him any. But how could she resist when he was determined to have his way at any cost? Joël always yielded to his demands. For his continual banquets it was necessary to have fish, meat, sugar and vegetables, spices and wine. And that was not all; the accounts increased, and my father was obliged to give his note and pay usurious interest.

"Naturally I, too young to understand the state of affairs, looked on the world around me, and found it wonderful. The tavern was always full of travellers. Behind our garden was a forest of oaks, where I loved to wander, listening to the warbling of birds and the rustling of the branches overhead. Now, I cannot interest myself thus in nature; human beings interest me more. It is not given to every child to grow up in such a turmoil, and in the midst of a crowd of strangers continually going and coming. From it I learned that there were many people in the world, and at the same time that many of them were strangers. I realized that all these people were preoccupied, and cared nothing for us. My mother, in these early days, could pay little attention to me, occupied as she was, while my father prayed and read. We knew that she loved us, but she had no time to caress or to amuse us. I became accustomed at an early age to live alone. My thoughts were my companions, and a secret mistrust separated me from men. I loved, however, to observe them and to penetrate their characters.

"I was still quite young when my father died, after a short illness. That day of mourning and lamentation is engraved on my memory. It was then that I pronounced for the first time the words, as is the duty of all Israelites whom the hand of God has stricken, 'Glory to Thee, equitable Judge, may Thy will be done.'

"After the old man's death, which left me an orphan, our landlord turned us out of the tavern in spite of my mother's entreaties. She rented a little inn situated near a mill, on the border of a forest. This place seemed pleasant to us, but here began hardships which children only do not feel. Instead of the incessant noise of our inn, full day and night, we now seldom saw any one, save that occasionally an individual came to the mill, and this ran only six months in the year, on account of lack of water.

"During this dull season we scarcely sold a barrel of brandy."

"Around the little cabin murmured the pine-trees, and the narrow path which led to the mill was overgrown with trailing vines and herbs. We lived in this solitude on black bread and vegetables furnished by our little garden. My mother grew more despairing every day, and appealed to her relatives and to those of my father, but in vain. We were in rags, but yet we children were not unhappy. Presently I reached the age for study. My mother grieved over her inability to have me taught, and I remember that one day she left us under the protection of a poor Jew of the neighbourhood, and was gone for some weeks. She returned a little more tranquil, kissed my forehead and said, 'Rejoice, my son, thou shalt soon have some one to instruct thee!'

"I realized so little the importance of this promise, that I was much more pleased with the sweet cakes which she brought me. You know what care the Israelites take in the education of their children, for it is in that way that we learn the laws and traditions of our people; it is, in a word, the shaping of our souls. From the rabbi, at five years, every boy ought to learn the Bible; at ten, the Michna; at thirteen, the Divine Ordinances; and at fifteen, the Gemara."

Seeing an expression of incredulity spread over the lips of Ivas, Jacob paused. "I am aware," said he, "that these books have been ridiculed to you by men who are antagonistic to us. They know only the outlines of their teachings, and that very superficially or by hearsay. It is, however, to these customs which appear ridiculous to you that we owe the fact that we have not disappeared from the face of the earth, nor become absorbed by other nations. Obscure as the text is, it merits our gratitude.

"I remember, as if it was yesterday, the arrival of my tutor. I was at the door of our cabin, when from a miserable vehicle alighted a being so deformed and of such a frightful appearance that he scarcely seemed human. The body of this creature was so bent by long study that he could not stand erect. He was hump-backed, and from his curved chest arose an enormous head, with a high forehead, from which shone a pair of piercing black eyes. His glance terrifies me even now in my dreams. It seemed as if he could penetrate one's inmost thoughts. The outer world was nothing to the owner of these eyes; he lived for books alone. Lame in one foot, he walked with difficulty, leaning on a cane. It was more of a hop than a walk.

"Such was my mentor. He came from the village, was called Moché, and was celebrated in the vicinity for his great learning. His knowledge of sacred literature was most extensive. He recited by heart long passages of the Talmud and of the Kabala, without omitting a word, without forgetting an accent. His life was devoted to the instruction of children and to self-culture. The world did not interest him; he lived entirely in the past. No doubt he would never have consented to come to us, had he not been attracted by two boxes full of rare books, the heritage of my father.

"Moché was a strict teacher, and insisted on the observance of all religious rules and traditions. He was a travelling encyclopedia which moved mechanically. I doubt if there ever was a more severe teacher. He fulfilled his functions without pity, almost with cruelty.

"Deprived so suddenly of my liberty, I was forced to embrace so many studies that I thought I should lose my reason and become a fool. But, at any cost, I must learn to be a Jew, or perish. Mechanically my head was filled with words, with long tirades which I had to repeat without stopping, each intonation of which, required by the sense of the phrase, had to be learned with care. In spite of the brutality of this method, it was a spur to my intelligence, which gradually opened and put itself in motion.

"I commenced to study with some understanding. It is difficult to determine what influence on the mind of a child the study of past generations has. It is certain that, on commencing the study of the Bible and the history of my people, I believed myself awakened from a dream after a long slumber. Once the first difficulties vanished, I applied myself so ardently to study that Moché was astonished. It was not his custom to encourage children by pleasant words, but he showed himself less severe toward me, without, at any time, becoming affectionate. The only thing that annoyed him was when I asked explanations of the passages which we studied. Then he was cross, and rapped my fingers with a little rod which served him for pointing out the letters. He wished to chase from my brain that which he considered premature pride. Moché often repeated to me, to pique me into emulation, that, following the rabbins, the world rests on the breath of children who learn the law of God, and not on the intelligence of savants.

"Laugh, if you will, but these remembrances have a great charm for me."

"That does not prevent me from laughing at your club-footed Moché," said Ivas.

"I do not dream of poetizing him. I even say that his severity rendered him almost a savage. Although he was always polite to my mother, he did not hesitate to reproach her for not keeping up our customs more rigidly. Then he would threaten to go away.

"For us Moché was a sort of bugbear. Yet when he was roused he became almost grand. Then the brightness of his soul became so apparent that you did not think of his body. When he recited to us the sufferings of Israel the tears rolled down his cheeks, he was excited almost to frenzy. His voice was broken with sobs, and he often sang the verses in an inspired voice. In these moments his hair was pushed back from his forehead, and his body shook with a nervous tremor, produced by extreme susceptibility and appreciation of the subject; his memory was prodigious.

"Such is a brief sketch of my master, not flattering, but very like him.

"It was he who made me read the first books of the Bible, or rather who made me weep over them. He was so conscientious that, having recognized in me a certain ability, he advised my mother to send me to a neighbouring town to finish my education.

"Thanks to him, at thirteen, following our custom, I read publicly in the Synagogue passages from the Holy Scriptures, and I was made one of the ten officiants of the temple, the number necessary for the assembly to be considered complete.

"It was exceedingly difficult for my poor mother to remove. But she resolved to use every effort in my behalf. Miserable as our existence was near the mill, it had some advantages, for our rent was very low, and we had fuel, thanks to the woods which surrounded our cabin, and vegetables from our little garden. In the town we should have had to pay for everything, even water. How could we live? How could she do it? How transport her children thither? And after getting there, on what resources could we subsist?

"While my mother racked her brain to find an answer to these questions, my half-brother, having already amassed a little fortune by selling hides, came to pay us a visit.

"This unlooked-for event was of great importance to us. We had not seen him for a long time. He was nearly thirty years old, and was married. His wife's marriage portion and a little heritage from my father formed a small capital, which he had known how to increase. The first year of his married life he had lived at the expense of his wife's parents, who were willing to do anything in their power. Afterward he established himself separately, and little by little increased his business. Fortune, which had frowned on our father, smiled on the son. This gave him courage; economical, cold, prudent, he devoted all his intelligence to the success of his projects. To be rich was his aim, and he was convinced that he should succeed. He was not yet well enough off to draw money from his business to aid us, but he brought us news of relations of my mother's, who, touched at last by her sad situation, sent her a small sum of money to invest in some business, the profits of which might educate my sisters and me. My mother wept with joy. We children were sad when we heard that we were to leave the mill and the forest, but we soon became accustomed to the life of a town.

"The elder brother was received with great affection. My mother asked him if he knew of any way for her to invest the money. Joël, who wished to increase his business, proposed that she invest the sum with him and share his house. She agreed to the proposition, and the next day, impatient for the change, sent for a vehicle to remove from the cabin.

"Here commenced the second period of my life. You have seen that my childhood was not cradled on a bed of roses, that I have suffered, and that suffering was the sun which hastened my development. As the sun's rays make the flowers blossom, so hardship forced my character to unfold. Those years have left me memories, for the most part disagreeable. Memories of ruin, of labour, of fighting against hunger, cold, and the contempt of men which paralyzed the intelligence, and prevented one from rising above bodily occupations. It is permitted to poets, or rather to those who give themselves out as such, to exalt in nature an impossible idealism and to rebel against materialism. But, alas! on regarding actual life, how many needs we have, and how much is required for mere existence!

"Man in full strength can battle with nature and poverty and come out conqueror. It is, nevertheless, very difficult to rid one's self of the cares of each day, the rock of Sisyphus which rolls back on us continually. The Jews were very numerous in our town; indeed, they formed the larger part of the population. We had a synagogue with which I was very much impressed, for until then I had seen only the miserable cabins which we used for places of worship. I could for the first time form a just idea of our religious ceremonies, and of the sabbath which draws us away from the world, restores us to God, and brings us nearer, in a measure, to our lost country. The baking of bread, a part of which is given to the poor, the setting of the table, the prayers in common, the blessing of the wine, all the customs recall the patriarchal epoch when God was with us, and took, in a way, part in human existence.

"To-day you Christians and we Jews have driven God from our presence, and we have forgotten him. Man made by the hands of the Creator believes himself a god, and anthropology is

the contemporary religion.

"In my brother's house we dwelt in unity as one family, of which he was the head. The women prepared in common the evening meal, and what was needed for the morrow. When the hour for prayer in the synagogue arrived, an old priest rapped on the shutters three times with his mallet of wood, and we set out toward the temple bearing our books under our arms. The synagogue was an old building, dating from the sixth century. It had cost the community much money, for when they were building it the proprietor of the place, who was a Catholic, the Prince K----, had little toleration. The Jews, who had for worship only a little wooden house with a worm-eaten roof, solicited permission to build a new temple; which was granted to them only because money was needed by the proprietor, and it was not plenty just then, there having been a war. The Jews profited by his necessity to buy from the prince a plot of ground and the right to erect thereon a brick synagogue. The traditions of the neighbourhood speak of a colossal sum paid for the privilege. During the construction the workmen were ordered to undo their work, and to pull down the carved balls which ornamented the roof and made the synagogue more imposing than any of the surrounding buildings. However, such as it was, with its style much less Gothic than was planned, it seemed to my childish eyes fully equal to Solomon's Temple.

"I continued my studies with ardour. My teachers found in me much aptitude, and I had an insatiable desire to learn.

"Our little town, except on market-days, was not one of the most frequented, although it ranked among the most important. It was traversed by a thoroughfare on which a continual procession passed to and fro. Our co-religionists had founded a school here. As the Catholics had an important church, and the principal population was composed of the government employés, it was necessary, in order to remain unmolested, to pay without ceasing.

"I soon learned to conduct myself differently toward each person, according to his position on the social ladder.

"In general the Jew owes tribute to every one, commencing with the door-keepers of the Lords, and the wives of their door-keepers.

"One day returning from my class I found the house in a commotion. I feared at first that there had been an accident. The smiling faces reassured me. They awaited the arrival of an important person. My mother pulled me into the house, and ordered me to array myself in my best. My brother was already dressed. On the table there was brandy, with sweets, honey cake, white bread, spiced bread, and even a bottle of wine. I learned that he whom we were to receive with so much ceremony was my mother's cousin, a rich merchant from Warsaw. He was coming to decide about my future.

"I imagined in my childish brain a man of imposing figure with a long beard and a biblical costume recalling patriarchal times. I was still in this dream when a man appeared that I should have taken for a Christian. He was dressed differently from us, wore spectacles and a round hat. He had passed his first youth, had heavy eyebrows, large features, black eyes, and a smooth face. His complexion was rosy, his figure corpulent, and he evidently considered himself a man of importance.

"My mother told me to kiss the hand held out to me so majestically. Afterward he examined me attentively, caressed my chin, joked about the cap that I wore, and finished by blowing a cloud of smoke in my face from the cigar he was smoking. After the preliminaries, he said in German, in a patronizing voice, 'I think we can make a man out of this boy.' We all listened to him as to an oracle, because he was enormously rich, and my future depended on him.

"'What think you?' added he addressing my mother. 'I will take care of him, but not in your way.' Then turning to my brother he continued: 'There are already enough Jews employed in little ways, keeping taverns in the villages. The cause of it is our ignorance.'

"'Nevertheless,' replied Joël, 'this boy is not ignorant; he has been well taught, and he is now learning to read in the Gemara.'--'Ah! What does he want of the Gemara? Do you think of making him a rabbi? It is necessary for us in these days to go everywhere, and not remain in a corner! Why these ear-rings in the ears? Why that iarmulka? These are all remnants of the Middle Ages. The time of our persecution is almost past. The world opens to us. We must be ready to play an important rôle. The Jew has good sense and judgment, which he has preserved through hundreds of years of suffering. Why can he not enjoy the same advantages as Christians? Why is not our education as well developed as theirs? With that we can remain Israelites in the bottom of our hearts.'

"In spite of their respect for this wealthy kinsman my mother and my brother could not agree with him, for his remarks shocked their traditional ideas. Without noticing this impression he continued:--

"'I ought not to forget that I am a Jew, and to keep my faith in the citadel of my soul, but outwardly appear in the world on an equal footing with other men, as all sensible Jews do, in strange countries, and even in the kingdom of Poland. I have examined this lad attentively. He is worthy of Israel. I will occupy myself with his education, but we must send him to the Christian

schools. He must commence to go to them here. Afterward send him to me, and I will take care of him.'

"'You are our benefactor!' cried my mother. 'But you know that many of our people have abandoned their belief, and are equally despised by the Jews and the Christians. How, then, will he preserve his paternal traditions?'

"'And why should he not preserve them? You must banish your puerile fears, otherwise he will vegetate like a good-for-nothing in rags and misery, where you are, instead of being like me. I still remain a Jew. I go to the synagogue, and I observe the law, but no doubt less strictly than you.'

"All this conversation is engraven in my memory, and it fixed my destiny.

"Having learned that our kinsman had arrived from Warsaw, Abraham Machnowiecki, the oracle of the Jews in our town, came to pay us a visit. His was a common type in our community; he was a Polish Jew of the old school, a Polish Israelite, though he could not give so complete an account of his descent as Mickiewicz has so well set forth in his Jankiel. Abraham was an important man in his part of the country. He had continual relations with all the proprietors. He knew their families, their situation, their business, in a word, all that concerned them. He was much interested in electoral meetings. He was consulted on all subjects, and in the most delicate affairs he was often chosen arbiter. He was esteemed because he was worthy of esteem; he was received everywhere with courtesy, and offered a place of honour, while his co-religionists were left standing at the door. Without Abraham nothing of importance was done. His bearing was full of dignity; he was very tall, and wore a white beard, which fell almost to his girdle. His ordinary costume was a black redingote, a czapka of sable, and in summer a wide-brimmed felt hat. A silver-headed cane completed the dress, by which he was recognized from a distance.

"In his dwelling, which was one of the best of the neighbourhood, there were always visitors on business. He was the banker of half the proprietors, and he lent or procured money.

"The science of Abraham went no further than that of most Jews, but he had a quick intelligence and a great knowledge of men. His predominant quality was an imperturbable calmness. He was never annoyed, never gave any signs of impatience, and showed in all things an undisturbed moderation. He was not communicative, words came slowly from his lips, and he was thoroughly trustworthy. Very much attached to his faith and its customs, he was yet not a fanatic.

"This oracle so generally respected was absolutely devoid of pride. He did not demand the consideration which was naturally given him.

"The appearance of Abraham at our house was rare, and you may infer that this extraordinary circumstance was owing to an invitation from my mother, who felt the need of his advice. Our elegant kinsman seemed less sympathetic before the grave Abraham. His somewhat frivolous manner became more offensive compared with the conduct of the other Israelite, who was, at the same time, dignified and amiable. The meeting of these men--one of whom, a free thinker, had lost almost all traces of Judaism; the other, a biblical character--was very interesting and aroused my curiosity.

"Our relative, in all the pride of a man full of his own importance, was hardly polite to the old man. My mother's cousin did not abandon his cigar, and began to laugh on regarding the Jew's long curly hair, iamulka, the old-fashioned costume, and gigantic cane.

"It did not take Abraham long to recognize in our kinsman a type of modern Jew that he had often met before.

"'It is very kind of you,' said he, 'to take an interest in this unfortunate family. Would to God every one would do the same! The book Nedarin says: "Honour the sons of the poor who are the brightness of our religion."'

"'I wish to do so truly,' replied the Varsovien carelessly. 'I wish to make of this young relative a sound and healthy branch of our community. That is why I have proposed to send him to school with the other children.'

"'You will cast him in the fire to see if he is gold? If he be gold, he will remain gold; if he be of base metal, he will melt.'

"'They tell me he has good faculties. It is necessary to develop them.'

"'Provided that he does not lose his faith. That is why I think that it will not do to remove him from our schools until he is well grounded in his religion. When the potter wishes to make an impression on a vase of clay, he sees that the vase goes to the studio soft and plastic.'

"'How old is he?' asked our cousin.

"'Thirteen years.'

"'You have probably,' continued he, 'a good common school here; he must go to it.'

"'Why not?' replied Abraham; 'but the poor child will suffer much.'

"'Who, then, has not had trials? You see me. I am worth to-day two millions, perhaps more, and I commenced by selling blacking and matches in the streets.'

"The old Abraham murmured in a low voice a text from the Book of Judges which said: 'One must endure the sun's bursting rays because it is indispensable to the world.'

"Then he put his hand on my head and blessed me, praying in a low voice, reassured my mother, and the conversation became general. Child as I was, I remember this scene very well. It was shared by many listeners, for the Jews had come from all sides to see this great personage who honoured us with a visit. Our cousin entered into the development of his ideas, which were that the time had come for the Jews to go out and mingle with the world, and to leave the narrow circle where they had remained so long from an exaggerated fear of losing their faith and nationality.

"'We have suffered long enough,' said he. 'We ought to enjoy ourselves to-day, and occupy the place which belongs to one of the most ancient peoples of the earth. We possess rapidity of conception, facility to acquire all the sciences and arts; we have money, which levels everything, and at the same time we are united, and this cohesion can accomplish great things. Why then stagnate scattered in these little country towns? Why not strike out? See the Jews of other lands. You find them in the ministry, the parliament, and in high positions. They march to the conquest of civil and political rights, wherever these rights are still refused them.'

"Abraham listened without contradiction, and appeared sad and thoughtful; as to our other co-religionists they heartily agreed with our kinsman. He finished by citing as example a celebrated Jew.

"This was an epoch which was not soon forgotten in our little town. It provoked a movement which swayed the whole community, with the exception of a few old conservatives. I remained at home the rest of that year, then I entered the common school. It was the first time that a Jew had seated himself on a bench beside Christian children. I knew beforehand what awaited me, but that which I endured surpassed my worst fears.

"The larger part of the scholars were the children of petty nobles or of the bureaucracy, students well grown. Their instincts were more than cruel. It was a veritable torment,--torment unceasing. I grew accustomed to continual attacks, and passed in silence the insults which were showered on me. Jokes about pork were met with, even in the mouths of the masters; what could I do but keep silence? My humility and silence were a sort of defence, The first days were intolerable; but, little by little, I became accustomed to my comrades, and they to me. After a while they left me in peace on my solitary bench. The new method of teaching was strange to me, but awakened in my mind a desire to excel. The knowledge that I had accumulated increased. I resolved to continue my studies, and to wait until the strength of science and of the truth enlightened my mind."

CHAPTER IV.

AQUA SOLA.

As he finished his sentence, Jacob perceived that it was growing late. He remembered the rendezvous at Aqua Sola.

"I feel," said he, "that you are bored. Excuse me, kind listener. It is the only mode of recital that I understand. I cannot be brief, but must digress. To render my story intelligible, it is necessary to infuse life and colour."

"No excuse is necessary," replied Ivas. "I am in no hurry to know the end; let us go slowly."

"Yes, we will finish it later on; but now it is time to go to Aqua Sola."

The evening had brought with it a little freshness. Many had already left old Genoa for the new part of the city. The streets called Nuova, Nuovissima, Balbi, and Aqua Sola were full of people. The men were dressed more or less in costume, and the women were enveloped in floating white veils which only partly concealed their graceful figures.

The companions walked through the dark, narrow streets until they arrived at the hill, which

is the only point of verdure in that city of marble.

"I am very curious," said Ivas, "to know if we shall find many of our late companions at the rendezvous."

"Well, we shall see presently," said Jacob. "A day is long, and human nature changeable." They soon came to the steps which led to the promenade, in whose centre murmured a fountain, near which a fine band sent forth its inspiring strains. The crowd was compact: a Genoese crowd composed of soldiers, workmen, and priests, of sunburnt women, and tourists, among whom were many English. Aqua Sola is not much frequented by the aristocracy, who shut themselves up in their palaces or villas, nor by the bourgeoisie, who have their gardens at Nervi. One, therefore, meets at Aqua Sola two classes only,--the tourists or the regular *habitués*.

Jacob and Ivas strolled slowly along the principal walk, talking of the country and of the future of humanity. They had not yet noticed the arrival of the phlegmatic German, who had been distinguished for his silence at the Albergo della Grotto; but he soon approached them, and smilingly said: "I am very happy to meet you again, messieurs, and to be able to inquire for our invalid of yesterday. At the same time, I will excuse myself for not remaining long in your society. I have a chance to hire a veturino at half-price to Pisa. I shall have for a companion the privy councillor, Zuckerbeer. We leave to-day."

"What a pity!" cried Jacob in German, not wishing to inflict the French language on his interlocutor, and desiring also to escape torture himself from the execrable pronunciation of the compatriot of Goethe.

"What a pity! We should have had such a pleasant time together this evening."

On hearing his native language, the German beamed on him and smiled; but, in spite of the temptation to remain, he sacrificed pleasure to duty. Order and economy were his two predominant virtues, and the society of the privy councillor would be a consolation.

"The Councillor von Zuckerbeer," said he, "counts on me. I have given him my word; I am, therefore, absolutely obliged to go."

Jacob no longer urged him. He saluted, and said farewell, in the valley of Jehoshaphat. The German said adieu to his acquaintance of the day before without much regret. At the bottom of his heart he feared that the Pole was a dangerous revolutionist, a republican conspirator, an admirer of Garibaldi and Mazzini. If so, he was wise to renounce in time such a compromising acquaintance.

He had hardly disappeared when the Tsigane presented himself; smiling as ever, he fanned himself with his handkerchief; his waistcoat was unbuttoned, but the heated temperature seemed, nevertheless, very agreeable to him. He was in good spirits, and his expression was as joyful as was possible to one with such features.

"Well," cried he, "how do you like Genoa? For my part I find too much noise, too many asses bearing casks, and too few men by comparison, and the air is full of bad smells. It has the colour of the Orient, but the Orient is lacking. I will concede to you that Genoa possesses the perfumes of Constantinople. Oh! my poor olfactory nerves! What torture! Were we presented to each other yesterday? I have a bad memory, but you already know that I am a Tsigane, and, perhaps, my race will inspire you with aversion."

"You are wrong there," said Jacob, "for I have no aversion to any race."

"My name is Stamlo Gako," said the Tsigane. "My father was at the head of his tribe. But I have abandoned the collective wandering life for solitary vagabondage. I am thus, as you see, alone in the world. I would have been still using the same old pans and kettles had it not been for my beautiful bass voice, which gained me a place at the theatre. I saved some money, and invested it for the first time in the lottery. I won a large sum of money. Some of this I scattered in extravagance, but I kept enough to place me above want for the rest of my life. It is agreeable to me to live in idleness. I go or I stay, as I choose, but my forehead is marked indelibly. No one sympathizes with me, and I am indifferent to the world. A stupid life, if you will; but I would not change it for any other, for I am attached to it. I have no duties; that is to say, I am freed from everything,--from all belief, all hope, and all occupation. I weary myself comfortably, and my idleness is well ordered. In winter I go north; one suffers less there from the colds, on account of the houses being well warmed. I live in hotels, I eat well, I make passing acquaintances, I frequent the theatres, and in summer I go to Italy and sometimes return to my people in Hungary. There are yet there some individuals of my race and of my blood, but fortunately I have not a single near relative to persecute me. Hungary is for me a sort of home. I have learned to read, and a book with well-turned phrases serves me admirably to kill time, but in general I consider literature as useless. The best books contain more folly than reasonable thoughts. All human wisdom can be written on the palm of the hand."

"I am without country, like you," said Jacob, who had perceived that the Tsigane had drunk a little too much, "but I look on life differently. I have an aim, for I have brothers among men. You, who are better-informed than other Tsiganes, you can do much for your people if you will. It would be a grand thing for you to become a reformer and benefactor to your people."

"What would you do with the Tsiganes?" replied Gako showing his white teeth. "We are only a handful of living beings that God or the devil has thrown on the earth. What would you do with a cursed race without ambition or place? At least, do not ask me to conduct them to the Ganges, whence it is said they originally came. 'You shall perish!' such is the sentence against us. And we are perishing slowly. We shall disappear in time. Look at our women! At Moscow, singers and dancers, fortune-tellers and jades, always among the ragamuffins and beggars. In what language shall I speak to them of the future? Do the brutes understand anything? Like fruit that falls from the tree, we are a decayed people without root."

"Then change your nationality."

"Petrify myself! never! We will be Tsiganes as long as it pleases God. In the night of the ages," added Gako in a mysterious voice, "there was a terrible crime which we expiate, some fratricide of which we cannot wash our hands. I possess all that can make man happy on this earth, yet I shall never be happy. I have counted the number of days that I have to live. I will submit to my destiny."

Just then the two Italians arrived--Alberto Primate and Luca Barbaro.

They had a contented and satisfied look. They breathed their native air voluptuously, trod the soil of Italy, and viewed with joy the tri-colored flag floating in the breeze.

Luca Barbaro carried a sketch-book in his hand, Primate, a roll of music.

"Greeting, brothers," said the first. "How is your health? This delicious temperature ought to completely cure you. What do you think of good old Genoa?"

"She reminds us somewhat of the Middle Ages," replied Jacob.

"Does she not speak to you of the future?" asked one of the Italians. "Do you not then feel that delicious breath of springtime which promises to all nations a garland of flowers?"

"Utopist!" interrupted the Israelite sadly. "The springtime comes not at the same time for all lands. Men are brothers in words, but not in deeds. Each one is ready to become a fratricide in self-defence. Little by little humanity will perhaps come out of the shadows of servitude, of charlatanism and egotism, which stifle all generous tendencies in order to satisfy the thirst for gold and grandeur."

"Do not blaspheme!" cried Luca. "I believe in humanity. It is possible that there is a handful of vile reactionists and a band of miserable charlatans, but in general men are the sons of God. By music, painting, literature, and devotion, souls will open, all hearts will be purified, intelligence will develop, virtue will spread abroad, and soon a luminous springtime will brighten the world."

"Amen!" cried Primate; "amen! But I have a question to ask you. We have come here to rest, have we not?"

"Yes! Yes! Certainly!"

"Very well; for once let us leave the subjects of philosophy and politics. Leave all that to the reactionists. Let us amuse ourselves with art and with life."

Luca kissed his compatriot's forehead. "*Poverino!* he is wearied by me, for I have given him no rest. He bears in his heart three things only: woman, love, and music."

Just then the group was augmented by the Dane.

"Plague take it!" said he; "if I had known that *la belle dame* would not be here, I would not have tired myself out to join you. I had a great desire to go to the theatre; primitive and barbarous as it is, I might have passed an agreeable evening there. I have been drawn to Aqua Sola by the remembrance of two lovely eyes, a little faded, perhaps, but full of expression. If she had been coming she would be here by this time. I have been deceived."

"You have yet time to go to the theatre," said the Tsigane indifferently, as he lit his cigar.

"Very true! But if, by chance, she should come. She, the unknown. She? Who is she?"

"A retired artiste singing only occasionally, as she has told us herself," replied the Tsigane; "a priestess of Thalia. I doubt if she is a Vestal. Hum!"

"Widow," added Luca.

"A widow! The title is appropriate. But she is escorted by two admirers," said the Dane: "a Russian and a Pole. Who are they? Are they rich or poor? How long has she known them? *Chi lo sa?*"

"*Chi lo sa?*" repeated Primate.

And Barbara added: "We know that the Russian is a refugee. If, in leaving his country, he has

brought his purse with him he is a dangerous rival, for the Russians are said to be fabulously rich. It is said that each noble receives from the Czar his share of the gold mines of the Ural Mountains. But if in saving his head he has not saved his purse, and if he has no private resources, he becomes much less vulnerable. As for the young Galician, he has his youth, which is a capital. But you, messieurs, as Poles, can better judge of the worth of your compatriot."

"The Galician nobles," said Ivas, "ordinarily bear the title, more or less authentic, of Count. Many of them have been rich, but since 1848 they frequently give themselves an appearance of riches. I do not believe that the young man is a dangerous rival."

"Behold her! Behold her!" cried the Dane suddenly, perceiving the brunette at the end of the street, looking more attractive to-day than yesterday. "What do I see? She is alone with the Russian! A bad sign! The Galician was evidently in the way. The plot thickens! Yesterday when there were two gallants there was room for a third; but when there is only one it is difficult for another to get a foothold."

"He is very wise in the art of loving," remarked the Tsigane.

The charming Lucie Coloni approached. She was, in reality, in the full height of her beauty, and she had had time to augment her many attractions by the toilet. Her eyes were humid without having wept, and a sweet smile played on her lips. The Russian accompanied her, appearing melancholy in contrast with her gayety. She went up to Ivas, and held out a little hand, elegantly gloved, asking with much solicitude, "*Va bene?*"

"Thanks, madame. No trace of yesterday's illness. The scar which remains on my temple will be for me an indelible souvenir of your goodness."

"Flatterer!" replied she, shrugging her shoulders.

The Russian affected an exaggerated politeness to show his ease of manner.

"We are not complete," said he.

"One is lacking," replied Jacob. "We shall see him no more. It is the German. He has found a cheap way of going to Pisa with a privy councillor, and he has profited by it. One does not travel every day with dignitaries, lately granted a *von* who knows for what secret service? This *von*, fresh and new, comes out of the bandbox with the perfume of a half-blown rose. But you also, madame, you have lost one of your companions."

"Yes, the count. He was obliged to leave this afternoon for Spezia."

"Yesterday he did not speak of this project," said the Dane.

The Russian seemed to be looking at the sea, a little of which was visible from where they stood. The lady bit her lips to avoid laughing, fanned herself negligently, and said:--

"I really do not know what has taken him. He was perhaps frightened by his compatriots. It is for you, messieurs, to clear this mystery."

"What country is this Galicia? The youth assured me that he was neither Polish nor Austrian, but a Galician."

Ivas and Jacob exchanged a smile, without replying.

"We will not wear mourning for him!" cried Ivas.

"I regret him, however," replied Lucie. "He would have become a very agreeable man, but as yet he resembles those Italian nuts shut up in a bitter shell."

They all laughed.

"Aqua Sola! How sweet the words sound!" continued she, walking at the head of the procession. "But how little it is, shabby, and even tiresome. What trees, what drops of water, a disagreeable crowd, plenty of dust, and only in the distance a glimpse of the sea! *Povera Geneva!*"

"And yet," observed the Muscovite, "what marvels were promised us."

The cosmopolite Dane profited by an opportunity to place himself beside the lady. This was too significant, and she gave him a haughty look which he did not perceive. This look seemed to say: "No use. No hope for you!"

Lucie occupied herself more with Ivas than the rest of the company. In a sweet voice she asked: "You go to Poland?"

"Yes, madame," replied he smiling.

"I am very superstitious," said she; "and as I also go to Poland, I consider it a good omen to

have made the acquaintance of a Pole on my way."

"Poland, madame, is to-day an abstraction. There is no Poland, and yet there are several: Russian Poland, the Kingdom of Poland raised up by the Congress of Vienna, Prussian Poland, and Austrian Poland."

"I really do not know to which Poland I am going. Tell me, where is Warsaw?"

"It is, in a way, my native city. One of the ancient capitals of Poland, and the last; to-day the capital of that ideal Poland which is yet to be established."

"I lose myself in all this geography! Do you also go to Warsaw?"

"Yes, madame. But I do not know whether I shall arrive there, and whether, on arriving, I shall not be sent much farther toward the Asiatic steppes."

"You are very unfortunate, you Poles."

"Our misfortunes pass all conception. But do not let us speak of it. How is it, madame, that you go to Warsaw?"

"From curiosity only," replied she, lowering her eyes. "It is possible also that I may sing in some theatre."

"Oh! You are sure to be admirably received. Colonel Nauke is very fond of Italian music, and as soon as he knows"--

"You will introduce me to him?"

"I, madame, it is impossible! I shall be obliged to conceal myself. To be seen would be for me death or exile."

"If I could at least meet you there!"

Ivas sadly shook his head. The Dane, very attentive to the conversation, concluded that she intended to leave the Russian, who, of course, as he was a refugee, could not return to the land of the Czars.

This idea did honour to his acquaintance with political geography, of which nearly all European journalists are absolutely ignorant.

"And you go alone?" asked he.

"No, not alone. But, monsieur, you annoy me with your questions. Really I do not know yet what I shall do, and I do not like to speak of the future. That will be accomplished in one way or another. *Chi lo sa?*"

"I am ready to follow you to the end of the world!" cried her cosmopolite adorer enthusiastically.

"You are jesting, monsieur, and I do not like jests of this kind. In any case, I do not count on you as a companion."

"What a pity that she is so savage!" said her admirer to himself.

The Russian listened passively, without mingling in the conversation.

"I am very curious to visit Poland and Russia," said Lucie Coloni. "They say that the Poles and Russians understand and love music, that they are enthusiastic dilettanti."

"There have been such instances in Poland," said Jacob. "In regard to Russia I know nothing. But monsieur can tell us that in his country they love art less than the artistes. In Poland there is now room only for a single sentiment. The future has but one aim. Do the witches of Shakespeare watch at the dark cross-roads, or will the angels lend their aid? God alone knows. From Warta to the frozen sea the earth is in travail, hearts beat with violence, the battle is preparing, there will be something frightful which will shake the very foundations of the earth. What song, sweet though it be, can be heard by ears which await a signal which will sound like a thunderclap?"

"Perhaps," said Lucie, "I shall have the happiness of singing your song of triumph."

"Or a death hymn," added Jacob sadly.

"Or rather a song intermezzo which makes one forget the tragedy of life," replied la Coloni. "I grant to you that this Europe, cold, dull, dead, worn out, *blasé*, has for me the effect of a withered bouquet picked up out of the dust. It has no longer a spark of vitality."

"Behold a sally that astonishes me, coming from you," cried the Dane. "Europe when she was young was frolicsome; maturity has arrived, but has not taken away all her charms. To-day children are born reasonable. The young man of nineteen has a drunkard's pride to drain the

enormous cup to the bottom. More barriers on life's grand highway! More toll-money! Go where you will, paths open before you. More proscriptions, more laws, more prejudices, binding us. Fresh surprises! Everything is possible."

"And nothing is worth much; nothing is good," added Lucie.

"Madame," cried the Italian musician, "before continuing your invective, deign to hear me."

"Very willingly, monsieur."

"Will you then be seated? My companion and I are children of two parts of Italy which have not yet united with their common mother. We seek a little relaxation after a long servitude. Very well. We cannot take a step without being persecuted by politics, political economy, or philosophy. Have pity on us, and speak of other things."

"Spoiled child of Italy," said the Dane, "your prayer cannot be granted. Our age takes her nourishment where it is found. It is useless to try to hinder me."

"Cannot we discuss music?"

"Music! She has followed the general route, and the music of the future, with her prophet, Wagner, is political music."

"Granted. And the other arts?"

"They cannot be separated from philosophy and history."

"Then let us speak of frivolities, of the times, of the weather, of the city we are visiting; remember I am young, and an artist."

"There are no more young hearts," said Jacob.

"What remains then for those who thirst for life?"

"Nothing," replied the Dane quickly, in a serious tone; "only to drink."

"And afterward?"

"Afterward? That depends on the temperament; to sleep or"--

During this conversation, the evening breeze brought from a neighbouring house the sound of sweet music, now gay, now sad. They all listened. It was not Italian music. A young and sympathetic voice sang, accompanied by the piano. The song was of profound sadness, rendered with good expression and method.

The Italian instantly recognized an inspiration of Mendelssohn. He took off his hat, and listened with an expression of pleasure. He took a few steps, and, with a sign, demanded silence.

In contrast to the light songs of Italy, full of harmony, this song was full of grave majesty. For the Italian who had not heard much German music it was a revelation.

The mysterious chords, coming from an unknown window, from an invisible mouth, had a fascinating charm and a melodious sadness, which made a lively impression. The woman's voice came from a house near the Academy of Medicine, and was carried to our hearers by the indiscreet breeze.

"It is fine," said the Dane, "but it is somewhat like the music of the future."

"Be silent, then, monsieur," said Lucie severely. "It is wonderful."

At that moment the song gradually grew fainter, and finally died away. The accompaniment ceased also with a few majestic chords.

They all drew near the house whence came the melody, and in the general preoccupation no one observed that Jacob grew pale, and seemed to recognize the voice. He pressed his hand against his side as if in pain. His emotion was almost terrifying, and his features had changed so as to be hardly recognizable.

Ivas perceived his friend's emotion.

"What is the matter?" asked he anxiously. "Has the music impressed you thus?"

The Jew, distrait and silent, thanked him for his solicitude, and motioned for him to be silent.

"Listen; perhaps she will sing again," said Lucie.

They were silent, but in vain.

After long waiting the door opened, and there came out of the house a young and elegant

woman accompanied by a distinguished-looking man, whose features were of the Oriental type.

They attracted at once the attention of the promenaders. The woman was about twenty years old; her features were delicate. She was a pale brunette, with black eyes full of languor, and she bore on her face an expression so noble and so sad that one thought she was an angel of death. Her calmness apparently covered some bitter chagrin and a profound melancholy. Her dress was sombre and bore out the grave character of her features, maintaining without heightening her beauty.

Her companion, in spite of his elegant appearance and gentlemanlike bearing, had, on close inspection, something pretentious about him. He played with too much affectation the rôle of fine gentleman to be real. In every line of his face could be seen pride and vanity, without human sentiment. His mobile eyes, his sensual lips, his strong physique, betokened exuberant passions.

Everything about him disclosed instincts, but not heart. In spite of his politeness, this man, cold, *distingué* at first, inspired a certain terror. One easily divined that in his heart there was no pity, and that he had made of his egotism a systematic rule of conduct from which nothing could make him deviate. A beggar meeting him alone would never dare to ask alms. He would hazard it only before witnesses. In spite of his courteous manner toward the lady, who was evidently his wife, there appeared to be a sort of weariness and constraint between them. He seemed to drag her along with him like a victim. Without looking around her, she walked (if I may say so) automatically, while her husband did not even try to conceal his indifference.

Our group knew immediately that this was the mysterious singer. Jacob, absorbed in himself, did not perceive that he was in their path; his haggard eyes were fixed on the woman, who had not yet noticed him. The husband did not see Jacob either, until he was near him. Then he frowned and bit his lips; but this expression was followed by a forced smile and a polite bow. The woman mechanically raised her head, recoiled, and gave a cry of surprise. Her voice recalled Jacob to himself. He took off his hat and bowed, standing aside to let them pass.

"What an astonishing meeting!" said the stranger, giving his hand without cordiality.

The woman had become calm, and added, with a sad smile, in a trembling voice: "It is true; the meeting is unexpected!"

"Very unexpected, and very happy for me," replied Jacob with emotion. "After a long absence, I am about to return to Poland. I desired to visit a part of Italy which has been so extolled. Chance has kept me in Genoa with other travellers. Your divine voice fixed us under your windows, for there is not another like it in the world."

The husband listened with indifference to this compliment. The wife blushed, and did not reply.

"But what are you doing at Genoa?" said Jacob.

"We go here and there," replied the husband. "Dr. Lebrun has prescribed a warm climate for Mathilde, for she has an obstinate little cough. That is why we are here in this bracing atmosphere."

"And how do you like Italy?"

"She impresses me," said the woman, "as a mirage of that Orient which I have never seen, and for which I long and dream as for one's native land. Italy is very beautiful!"

During this conversation the Jew noticed that he was the object of his companions' curiosity. He hesitated to make his adieux, and separate himself from them. The husband, always polite, relieved him from this embarrassment.

"Will you not come with us?" asked he, politely.

"Willingly, but permit me to take leave of my companions."

He called Ivas and charged him to make his excuses to the company, at the same time begging him to wait for him; then went away with his acquaintances.

"Ah!" cried the Italian on learning from Ivas that he had been requested to wait for his friend, "I also am willing to wait a long time to find out who this lady is. I am anxious to hear this marvellous singer again. Where are you staying?" said she to the Pole.

"At the Hotel Féder."

"That is fortunate. You are very near me. I am at the Hotel de France. Wait for your companion, and bring him to me, willingly or by force, to drink tea. I will not fix the hour, for so active is my curiosity about this woman that I cannot sleep until I have seen you."

She turned to the rest of the company. "Messieurs," said she, "will you also accept my invitation?"

They all bowed their acceptance, and Lucie took the Russian's arm, with whom she departed, chatting vivaciously.

Ivas remained with the Italians. The Dane and the Tsigane went away together.

"I perceive," said Lucie to her cavalier, "that this unexpected meeting betokens a mysterious romance. Did you see how he looked at her? Did you hear the cry she gave? The husband and the lover, that is certain. How I wish I knew their history! Will he consent to tell us? Provided he comes, I know well how to lead him on."

"Why should their story interest us?"

"Because it will be more curious than the books you read. I love reality better than fiction."

CHAPTER V.

A SIMPLE HISTORY OF LOVE.

Ivas, abandoned, seated himself alone on a bench, his head bowed. The sight of the men and women around him who had leisure to occupy themselves with sentiments of love, and their conversation, made a sad impression.

Hunger, misery, political passions, consumed him. He thought of his country and its future. He sought a remedy for his unhappiness and the sorrows of his countrymen. What mattered to him the sweet words of women, their tender glances, their whispered promises; women for him did not exist before the vision of his misery and his despair. An inexpressible sadness tortured him. Was he not going to risk his life in order to breathe his native air?

His melancholy thoughts were rocked by the sea breeze when some one clapped him on the shoulder. It was Jacob.

"Let us return," said he with vivacity.

"I am at your service, but first let me tell you that we are invited to take tea with the Italian lady at her hotel."

"No! I will not go! I need solitude. Have you accepted?"

"Certainly, for I do not enjoy being alone with my thoughts. And I believe, dear friend of forty-eight hours, that it will do you good to go also. We have not known each other long, but permit me to suggest that there are things that one had better bury in the bottom of the heart. Come, Coloni is very curious. If we do not go she is capable of coming after us. That would be worse still."

"It is true that we are recommended to cure old wounds by distraction. Come, then, we will forget ourselves in a foolish and gay society."

"You speak of old wounds. Then this lady"--

"Do not speak of her. Are there not other persons, other faces and names, which awaken old memories? You had better speak of man rather than of woman. This one is an unfortunate who slowly works out her destiny."

"Let us go, then!"

"Let us go! I will be gay in spite of"--

"Of what?"

"In spite of mournful remembrances."

They turned and walked rapidly along the dark streets which conducted them to the shore. Here were built two hotels. In the morning this part of the city was very busy on account of the bourse, but all was silent and deserted at this hour of the evening.

They entered the Hotel de France.

On the first floor Lucie reigned in a little *salon*, fresh and elegant. Here they found all the rest of the company. Seated in the balcony, the Russian smoked in silence. It was easy to be seen that this impromptu tea was not pleasing to him, for he shut himself up in complete reserve without

joining in the conversation.

The Tsigane, installed comfortably on the sofa, looked around him with supreme indifference. The Dane paid special attention to his hostess, and the Italians were in gay spirits. When the door opened and Jacob appeared, Madame Coloni went hastily to meet him.

"*Grazie tante! Grazie tante!*" cried she. "You are so kind to have come. It is a sacrifice for which I thank you."

"How can it be called a sacrifice to pass the evening in your charming society, and to have the pleasure of looking at you," said Jacob.

"Unworthy flatterer!" replied she, striking him softly on his hand. "No more compliments. You mock me! Seat yourself, sir, and tell me quickly who is our singer. Who is this beautiful lady with accents so sad that on hearing her we have tears in our eyes? Why was she so agitated on seeing you? Why did you grow so pale?"

Jacob had great control over himself. He laughed so naturally that he deceived his fair questioner, who began to lose the hope of hearing a romantic history.

"You have truly a vivid imagination!" said he. "You have already composed a sad song. You have invested me with the sufferings of the hero of your romance; but I am no hero, I assure you. The lady is a countrywoman of mine and a co-religionist. She and her husband are Jews and live in Warsaw. Our acquaintance is then very natural. Behold the truth in simple prose."

The Italian tapped her foot impatiently. "This truth seems a little false," said she. "I observed you closely when you first met her."

Jacob made an effort to smile.

"The real truth is that I might well have been grieved and astonished, for I know the sad history of this woman."

"Ah! there is, then, as I thought, a sad story?"

"Yes, but I did not figure in it."

Lucie looked at him fixedly, but he returned her glance without emotion.

"Oh! pray, monsieur," demanded she in a caressing voice, "relate to me this story. I am dying to hear it."

"I warn you, madame, that it is not remarkable, and as it is the story of a Jewess it will be less interesting to you than to me. I am afraid I shall weary you. I am a bad story-teller, long and tiresome."

"You take a long time to tell a story! So much the better, we have plenty of time to listen. But do not torment me. Begin."

"Permit me, madame, to collect my thoughts for a moment."

"If," said the Dane, "the story is as long as monsieur promises us, and there is in the story a sentimental woman encumbered with a beast of a husband and a noble lover, I will excuse myself from listening. I can guess it all in advance."

"I also," said the Tsigane. "It is always the same thing."

"Where can true love be found to-day?" cried the Dane.

Lucie protested against this atrocious blasphemy, but the Tsigane replied imperturbably:--

"You will grant that the times of chivalrous love have vanished. Only the turtle-doves are innocent enough to sigh still. Formerly, as we are told, humanity passed through a long epoch of exalted love. Today men have almost abandoned these ways. A hundred years from now they will laugh at such love-stories and wonder how it could have been. I speak of such loves as those of Leander and Hero, not that of Calypso for young and handsome warriors, nor of the love of Nero for Poppea. That kind of love lasts because it is natural. But love which is torture, which suffers for some ideal beauty, it is an old, stereotyped plate, out of fashion. Show me to-day some one who loves in this way or who would be disposed to make serious sacrifices for love. The young girls marry because the husband suits the father and mother. The men marry for settlements, or for charms more or less fascinating. They do not marry at all for love,--that fantasy has gone out of fashion."

"Why," said Lucie indignantly, "you cannot maintain such ridiculous assertions."

"I can prove them by facts. Look around you. Everywhere caprice, passion, love of excitement, etc., but true love nowhere."

Lucie sighed.

"Is this progress or decadence?" asked she.

"I know not. It is sad for you beautiful women to descend from the pedestal on which you were elevated, but how can you refuse the evidence of things?"

"Is it so evident?"

"Alas! I do not wish to impose my opinion on you, but reflect seriously. Where can you find as formerly two souls created for each other?"

"What you say," interrupted Jacob, "is true up to a certain point. But I hope the world has only temporarily renounced this poetry. If all ideality should disappear it would be a sad thing. I will add a commentary to your remarks, Monsieur Gako. Men do not love themselves as much as they used. That is why existence is in some sort lessened, and the number of suicides from weariness of life is daily augmented."

Madame Coloni clapped her hands and reminded Jacob of his promise to relate a history.

The Tsigane yawned. The Russian lighted a fresh cigarette, the Dane went out, and when it was silent the Jew commenced in a low voice:--

"In all the legislation of the world the most badly understood and the most badly judged is perhaps that of Moses. It belongs to me to defend it in my character of Jew. Our law is the fundamental base of yours. Do not forget that Jesus said that he came not to destroy the law, but to complete it.

"It is generally supposed that the Hebrew women were debased to the level of slaves. Nothing of the kind. Customs were sometimes swerved from the law, influenced as they were by the barbarity of the times, but it is not the law which abases woman.

"In the Jewish language she is called *Ischa*, the feminine of *Isch*, which means 'man.' This name alone indicates the perfect equality of the sexes. Deuteronomy xxi. 10-15 commends us to respect even the captives. Polygamy, exceptionally practised by the kings, is forbidden in a formal manner. The Bible reveals to us in more than one page the disastrous effects of this immoral custom. On a level with man, *Isch*, woman, *Ischa*, it is true, was not priest, but she was permitted to bear the offerings to the altar. No legislation of antiquity or even of later epochs can show us woman better treated or more respected than with the Jews. The mothers of the Maccabees and of Judith prove the importance of that rôle.

"A young girl of twelve years, *Ketannah*, could be promised in marriage by her father, but, above that age, become *Nairah*, she could marry to please herself.

"Pagan and barbarous usages, nevertheless, penetrated even among us at the epoch of the Kings. The sexes were more strictly separated. Sometimes, for example, the Jews cloistered the women in a harem, or, if they were poor, compelled them to do manual labour. There rests this stain against us, contrary to the true spirit of the Mosaic law.

"Pardon this digression, too grave, perhaps, for a love idyl between a man and woman. But you will see later on that it was necessary."

"I believe that your story will contain at least two men," said Lucie lightly.

"It suffices me to put only one in strong relief, although two or three men will find a place in this history, this idyl, or, if you prefer, this drama. Without them there could be no drama."

"Or simply a monodrama depending on one man."

"You have all seen this woman whose voice has so charmed us. She is the most unfortunate of women, because she is obliged to submit to a situation that is revolting to her.

"Her father, a rich Jew, belongs, or rather belonged, to those of his race who, owing to a European education, have sunk into a destructive scepticism, and regard as an imposture all religions, including his own. Entering early into active life, he attributed the success of his career partly to luck, but above all to his own intelligence and energy. Outside of these three forces, there was for him nothing else here below but a poetical Utopia for the amusement of simpletons.

"The mother of Mathilde was a devout Israelite, but she died young, and her child was left to the care of so-called Christians, who taught her their own unbelief in the ideal, and left her to form her mind for good or evil by reading without discernment. They taught her that there was neither virtue nor vice, but skill or stupidity, calculation or improvidence, decency or unseemliness. So that when the maiden entered society she looked on men as mere ciphers or figures, as they appear in one of the tables of Pythagoras. Such a society seemed unattractive to a youthful imagination which had an instinctive longing for the perfumes of life, and found only dead and withered flowers.

"At an early age she was deprived of these illusions. She was told that men were wicked,

heartless, and deceivers. It would not do to believe in their protestations; she must view them with contempt and aversion. It was a good thing to be honest, to spare one's self the trouble of embarrassment, and honesty is often the best policy. On this theory crime was only an awkwardness, and virtue without intrinsic worth unless it brought assured profits.

"As Mathilde might marry an Israelite, a Mussulman, or a Christian, she had access to the literature of all religious beliefs. She read the Bible, but her father ridiculed the most sacred passages. This critical raillery and the numerous books perused by her left her mind nothing but unbelief.

"Add to this the practical education which endeavoured prematurely to tear from her all heart, as one pulls an aching tooth to prevent further suffering, and you can form some idea of what they had done to this poor child.

"Mathilde entered this existence like an insensible statue, without taste for life. She foresaw that she would not be happy, for she well knew that there could be no happiness for noble souls. Her sentiments did not accord with the line of conduct that had been drawn for her. Her aspirations were pure, but she was taught that self-interest should be the only motive of all her aspirations, and that any other course was a morbid weakness, and would lead to ruin. Although she was ignorant of many things that had been concealed from her, she divined them, and each day she rebelled against this desperate reality. Her widowed father lived on, following his own whims without regard to moral law, and without belief in virtue. Coveting all that was accessible to him, he led a selfish life, and, although he was careful to observe the proprieties in his house, his practices were visible to the eyes of his young daughter, who was convinced that true affection had no place in the hearts of men. Her generous nature revolted sadly against this paternal materialism. Any other woman under the influence of such an example, in such an immoral atmosphere, would have been corrupted. Mathilde felt only a profound melancholy. Nature and study became her consolers. Art spoke to her of the great sentiments toward which she had wished to raise herself, but had been prevented.

"There is perhaps no torture more intense than a struggle like this between noble instincts and the animalism of the world. Mathilde in her fourteenth year was already as sad, as wearied, as she is to-day of this existence without future and without hope. Before her appeared the certainty of an advantageous marriage which would render her life a success in a worldly sense. Nothing more! Her father, with his wealth, was sure to find a young husband of good position, possessed of riches equal to his own. It was not to be supposed that he would seek for other qualities, and it was certain that he would not suffer from his daughter, whom he loved after his own fashion, the least remonstrance in regard to his choice.

"While the girl was growing up in this poisonous moral atmosphere, in the midst of every luxury, a young man came to the house."

"I have waited for him a long time with impatience," cried Lucie Coloni. "Behold, at last he is here!"

"Do not ask me to describe his character," said Jacob. "The heroes of true romances like this all resemble each other in general. They have external fascinations, all the virtues, all the grand and noble qualities, an affectionate heart and an exalted head, and so forth. But my hero, nevertheless, differs a little from the ordinary. He had some distinctive traits; he had been poor, and was little accustomed to *salons*. He had drawn all the forces of his success and energy from the school of humility; he was modest, peaceable, and little expansive, like all those to whom a premature sadness has proved that to ask sympathy provokes only raillery in this world. The father of Mathilde was a distant relative of this young man, and had taken him to his house to finish his education, having recognized in him a certain capacity. He intended to push his fortunes owing to a noble sentiment of relationship which remained in his heart, and was almost the only trace of old Judaism. He also felt some pride in protecting a young man who promised to do himself honour in the world. This promise was only partly fulfilled, for too precocious talents do not always produce the fruits that are expected of them.

"The young man, who had finished his studies and was preparing himself for business, lived in the house of his protector, who intended to send him to foreign parts to oversee his business. You may give to my hero any name you wish."

"Call him Jacob," said Ivas.

"No, no! let us call him Janus, the Polish equivalent for Jonas. I do not know, madame, if it is hardly worth while to relate the rest to you, for it is easy to divine. Two orphaned souls, aspiring to the poetry of life, could not meet without loving. Mathilde found in him a nobleness which responded to her ideal of a man's character, and he recognized in her his ideal of melancholy beauty.

"In his protector's house it was necessary to be on guard, lest he should suspect an inclination which would cause them to be separated, and should chase Janus from his Paradise. The young people well understood that they must feign indifference for fear of such a catastrophe. A few words exchanged in a room full of people, on the street, or near the piano, some furtive glances,--behold the relations of the young man with Mathilde!

"The father had not the least idea that this unfortunate youth could dare to throw his eyes on an inheritance worthy of a Rothschild. If such a thought had by chance entered his head, he would have put it away as a thing impossible.

"The English governess, mature but romantic still, was very fond of these Platonic friendships, and had herself even such a weakness for the young man that she hoped to fascinate him by the multiplicity of her talents. She put no restraint upon her pupil, and she even took it upon herself to assist them. His host, seeing the manœuvres of Miss Burnet, for he had for these things much perspicuity, laughed in his sleeve, thinking it quite natural for Janus thus to commence his virile career, and never dreaming that it was his daughter to whom the youth aspired."

Jacob paused, as if short of breath, and Lucie gave him some sherbet. There was a moment of silence, then he resumed his narrative in a weaker voice:--

"Recall, each one of you, kind listeners, your youth and the earliest flower of the springtime of your first love. Consider that angel of candour, chained unhappily to the earth, this most prosaic earth, while her wings unfold and open to carry her to heaven. The youth adored her as a divinity, and she saw in him a celestial messenger sent to her from the ethereal world. That is the romance which they held in their hearts, and which they would not manifest visibly. Two words sufficed to make them happy for a long time. A look, when they met during the day, gave them new strength to live.

"The word 'love' was never mentioned between them. The same chaste sentiment beat in unison in their hearts without inflaming their brains or their senses. For them silence even was a poem of happiness; the smile, a joy divine; and a flower was an avowal.

"These felicities, which appeared afterward like child's play, and which reason turned to raillery, passed unperceived.

"Neither Mathilde's father nor her governess had the least suspicion of anything serious. The father even thought that, at times, his daughter was too timid and too cold toward Janus, and Miss Burnet reproached her for the same thing. The want of theory or of practice, I know not which, deceived her, and she supposed that it was to herself that Janus aspired.

"Alas! this dream of the heart, this love without hope, vanished like a dream at the gate of Paradise. One morning, or rather one afternoon, the father ordered his daughter, with a very indifferent air, to dress herself with much care, as he expected a visitor. A short time before dinner there entered a young man, distinguished, well-bred, a perfect man of the world, and whom the father presented under the name of Henri Segel.

"There are presentiments! This black-eyed Antinoüs, with a perpetual smile on his lips, with an amiability so spiritual and so courteous, frightened the girl. She felt for him a violent repulsion, a strange sentiment which is explained by psychology only; she detested him, although she had nothing with which to reproach him.

"He loved music, and was himself a good musician, and he was said to be enormously rich.

"Three days after, the father said quietly to his daughter, without asking her opinion, that Henri Segel was her betrothed. In announcing this he said that she was to be congratulated on having pleased Monsieur Segel, and that he had fallen desperately in love with her. All this was in a tone which did not permit the slightest contradiction. The thing was settled; she had nothing to say about it.

"The marriage seemed to him so suitable that all hesitation or opposition would have appeared an unpardonable childishness. She ought to consider herself a very lucky girl.

"Mathilde did not reply, but she grew frightfully pale. She was congratulated on all sides, while she suffered in her heart. Her sad glance seemed to say to Jacob"--

"Pardon me," cried Ivas, "but you called him Janus."

Jacob blushed, drank a glass of water, wiped his brow, and seemed unable to continue his story.

"You are right," said he at last. "I was mistaken."

"Continue, monsieur,--continue, I beg of you," cried Lucie.

"It was," said the Jew, "a pleasant evening in springtime. The perfume of flowers was spread abroad, and on the leaves glistened drops of dew. Mathilde and Miss Burnet walked in the garden. Seated on a bench, Janus held a book which he did not read. The Englishwoman saw him and directed their steps toward him. Happily, or perhaps unfortunately, just then there came a friend of Miss Burnet. Chance willed that the lovers were left alone together. They were both glad and frightened at this unexpected circumstance. They walked together for some time in silence, trembling and hardly breathing. The two Englishwomen had a thousand secrets to relate, and left them alone a long time. The governess had even whispered to her pupil on leaving, 'Go as far as you please.'

"They strolled along in silence. She gathered flowers, among the leaves of which her tears mingled with the dew-drops. He, pensive, looked at her and man-like held back the tears that rose to his eyes. Suddenly Mathilde stopped. She raised her head proudly, as if she had gained a victory over herself. She put her hand to her side, and threw on her kinsman a strange look in which she gave herself to him for eternity.

"'Very soon,' murmured she, 'we must separate. You know what awaits me. It will be sweet for me to recall this evening's walk. And you, will you remember?'

"She spoke to him for the first time in a sad and solemn voice. Her expressive words went to Janus' heart, and he thought he should go mad. His heart beat violently, his hands were clenched on his breast.

"'Forget you, Mathilde!' cried he. 'Forget the happiness I have tasted with you! Oh, no, never! Never! I swear to you that I will never marry another woman, for I have loved you, and I love you still, as one loves but once in life. Why need I tell you all my love when you know it already!'

"'I have believed it, and I still believe it, but life is long and memory unfaithful. For you men, it is said that love is a pastime, for us it is existence. I have loved you, and I will never cease to love you!'

"Stifled sobs interrupted her words.

"'Love could never be a plaything to me,' said Janus. 'In my eyes it is the most sacred thing in life. It is the marriage of two souls for eternity.'

"'I believe it,' cried Mathilde, 'and that is why I love you. I feel that you are honest and sincere; you know what awaits me. They have sold me to a man for whom I have an invincible aversion. But I will not suffer long, for I shall soon die. May your soul be the tomb where my memory will not perish! My father will raise for me a monument, my husband will give me a fine funeral, but my grave before long will be covered with weeds; may a memory of me remain, at least, in your heart!'

"The Englishwomen were so absorbed in their conversation that they prolonged their farewells for some time.

"'To-day,' continued Mathilde, 'I have seen you so sad that I have wished, under pretence of saying adieu, to give you some words of consolation. Who knows if we shall ever meet alone again; let me then repeat that I love you; that I love and will love you until death.'

"'Mathilde,' cried he, rebelling against their destiny, 'if you have confidence in me, leave this house. Behold two arms which can procure you bread. Your father will forgive us, and you will be mine forever.'

"'No!' she answered firmly, after an instant of reflection; 'I love you like a child, but I can reason like a mature woman. I do not believe in a future; for me the future is a lure. I should bring you, perhaps, some moments of happiness, but afterward I should be a cause of weariness and remorse. You have no right to show yourself so ungrateful to your protector, who has done much for you. Who knows whether you would not be disappointed in me. I am already fading, having been poisoned from my cradle. My unbelief awakens. I hear a mocking laugh vibrate in my ears, even when tears are in my eyes. No, no! a hundred times no! It will be better for you to love the dead, for who knows if living, you would love me long.'

"She dismissed him with a sigh, and withdrew from him as if she feared that she might be persuaded.

"After a little, she returned to Janus, who was lost in bitter thoughts. He had remained where she had left him, with bowed head and clasped hands.

"'What do you think of my future husband?' asked she.

"'I detest him.'

"'Is it because he is to be my husband?'

"'No. He produced this impression at first sight.'

"'And why?'

"'I know not. He is odious to me, although I know nothing against him. He is rich, fashionable, very amiable. And with all that I cannot like him.'

"'I even fear,' added Mathilde, 'that he has nothing human in him. He is a being which appears to me to be utterly without heart, a sort of automaton fabricated by the nineteenth century. With all his knowledge, I am sure that he does not know how to weep, nor suffer, nor to have pity or compassion on the sorrows of others. If he gives alms, it is for ostentation or calculation; but he will not grieve for an unfortunate; he will never sympathize with him nor mingle his tears with his. Our epoch of iron has fashioned men worthy of herself. She has made them of iron, and the

blood that courses in their veins is no longer pure, but has grown rusty.'

"'Perhaps you are a little too severe,' said Janus. 'However, it is the same impression that I have formed of him. But love and a wife often transform a man.'

"'A man, yes, but not an automaton. His very look freezes me. This sweet smile, this perpetual gayety which cannot be natural, irritates me. He is always the same,--a being of marble. My God! have pity on me!'

"In saying these words she drew from her hand a ring and put it on one of his fingers.

"'I bought this expressly for you. Preserve it in memory of her whom you have loved. It is black; it is a mourning ring, the only kind appropriate to our unhappy love. After to-day any conversation between us will be impossible, so farewell, and forget me not.'

"She left him and joined her governess.

"These were the first and last words of love that passed between them. They saw each other every day, but as strangers. They bowed to each other, but neither of them ever sought another interview. Hereafter only shadows and silence would surround their passion.

"Mathilde accepted, without a word, the husband that her father had chosen for her. The marriage was celebrated with great ostentation. The victim walked to the altar robed in satin and lace and covered with diamonds.

"Her father was radiant with the joy of having so well established his daughter. Every one knew that he had given her a million for a wedding dowry, and that still another was promised, and that the husband possessed several himself, with expectations besides. All the mothers, all the fathers, and all the marriageable young girls envied Mathilde's luck. Behold, in all its simplicity, the end of my story!

"Two years have passed, and you have met this husband and wife. He is always calm and happy, she, sad. The only thing that ever troubles him is when he fails to receive in good time the reports of the bourse of Paris or London. To amuse him she sings, as you have heard, the music of Mendelssohn. Truly, it was hardly worth while to listen to my story. It is a romance which happens every day, and which has been related a thousand times before."

"And Janus?" asked the lady.

"Janus wears always the ring of his only beloved. He bears his sorrow, for in one hour he drained the dregs of despair. To-day he is only a body without soul."

"The story is heart-rending above all expression," said Lucie, "and I admit that I expected something more dramatic. The victim has all my sympathy. As for the lover, I am not anxious about him. This 'body without soul' will soon be consoled."

"I doubt it," replied Jacob. "Consolation comes only to those who wish to console themselves. Janus is resigned to a perpetual mourning of the heart."

"No one would believe," remarked Madame Coloni, "that this story was of our day; its character is so simple and so elegiac."

Jacob rose; the hour was late, and all the company prepared to retire. The Russian, who had remained silent all the evening, was the only one who did not hasten to depart.

"Then, if not in Genoa, we shall meet again in Warsaw," said Lucie to Ivas and Jacob.

"You are surely going there, madame?"

"It appears that it is decided," replied she, looking at her companion. "The hour of departure only is not yet fixed. You will, perhaps, be kind enough to come to see me."

Ivas and Jacob returned to the Hotel Féder.

"I believe," said Ivas, "that I will not hear the rest of your biography this evening. You are already too fatigued with your remembrances. Good-night!"

CHAPTER VI.

FROM GENOA TO PISA.

When Jacob awoke the next morning, he was astonished to find himself alone. He was told that Ivas had gone out before daybreak. He was at first alarmed about this matinal sortie, although he tried to explain it by a desire to bathe in the sea, or curiosity to see the city. The thought came to his mind that the poor boy wished to leave him, through excess of susceptibility, and had departed, counting on his restored strength. However, the sight of his little travelling-bag calmed his fears, and he was waiting calmly for breakfast when Ivas returned.

"I went out," said he, shaking Jacob's hand, "to take a little walk. I need air, solitude, and movement. I came on foot from Marseilles, and I am accustomed to walking. I have no right to soften myself with inaction. I must fatigue myself to feel that I live."

"You are a child," said Jacob smiling; "you distrust yourself, while so many others have too much confidence in themselves. You possess that which can vanquish all,--will. Strong as you feel in yourself you will overcome all obstacles. I know men remarkable in all respects who have never accomplished anything for lack of will, and I know other men who by their energy have attained, by sheer determination, a position far above that which their talents merited."

"You understand me," said Ivas, "and I fear to lose this will. I wished a short battle to convince me that I was not benumbed. I wrestled somewhat as Jacob, your namesake, did during his sleep, and I have conquered."

"Where have you been?"

"Almost everywhere. In the dusty highway, in the tumult of the port, in the deserted walks of Aqua Sola, and even under the windows of the beautiful Mathilde."

"And what took you there?"

"I know not. I found myself there by chance. I have seen Madame Coloni, the two Italians, and the Tsigane. We all met there to watch the departure from Genoa of the marvellous singer."

"What, the departure! Perhaps they only went out for a walk."

"No; if they intended to remain longer in Genoa they have changed their minds. The veturino told me that he was going to Spezia and Pisa. I do not think the husband would go alone, and from the baggage that I have seen I cannot tell how many travellers there are. The servant would not answer one of my questions."

"Why did you question him?"

"From curiosity."

"Then they are gone?"

"Probably, but I did not wait to see them go. I did not wish to be seen among the rabble which surrounded the carriage."

"Well," said Jacob suddenly, "what shall we do now? What do you desire,--to remain here longer, or to proceed on our journey?"

"As you will; but your journey has nothing in common with mine. I must go as soon as I have rested a little. You can do as you wish."

"Let me hear no more of this. Away with ceremony! It was agreed that we travel together. Refuse, and you will offend me. Give me your hand. We will go together. You can reserve your strength for something«better."

"But"--

"Where do you wish to go?"

"I should like to see Spezia and Pisa, if it is agreeable."

"Why?"

"Frankly, because Jacob wishes to go to Spezia, because Mathilde has gone that way, because Janus and Jacob are one and the same person. On his uncovered breast during his sleep I have seen a mourning ring suspended from a black ribbon."

"Even without that it was easy for you to pierce this mystery. Yes, that history is mine. Neither she nor I have any reason to blush. The relative who sent me to school was Mathilde's father."

"Then we will go to Pisa?"

"Yes, and I think we had better go on foot, if it is agreeable to you. The route is so beautiful that it deserves to be taken in detail. We will consign our baggage to the diligence, and we will take to the road like two wandering artists."

"An excellent idea. But let us depart before evening. I am anxious to get to my country. My

homesickness becomes each day more violent. I foresee great events; impatience consumes me."

"Confess! You are a conspirator?"

"How could I be anything else? All Poland has conspired for two hundred years. Oppression drives us to it; generations of martyrs have excited us. Where life cannot expand in liberty, conspiracy is inevitable. It is the natural result of despotism."

"I understand you. Unhappily, however, for a country which is in such a situation, its inhabitants have lost confidence in themselves, and recognize their own weakness. I can only comprehend a conspiracy like ours, which has lasted two thousand years and which has led us to a regeneration. It has agglomerated our forces in a solid and vigorous union. Your conspiracies have something feverish about them that can end only in morbid decadence."

"Do not say so, I beg of you! You have not the same love for Poland as we, and you have not passed through such martyrdom."

"Excuse me for contradicting you. The country that has sheltered us, where in spite of continual persecutions we have increased by labour, has become for us a second country that we have chosen. You will think as I do some day before long. I feel myself at the same time Israelite and Pole."

"Men like you are rare," said Ivas. "I say it without flattery. In general, your race is credited with little affection for the country which has been a safeguard against other persecutors, and has recognized you as her children."

"Softly! Review history without partiality. Religious fanaticism and the arrogance of the nobility have long been an obstacle to the admission of Jews as citizens. The fault is also with the Jews, who have not tried to adopt the language and the customs of the country. They have isolated themselves, made a state within a state, a nation within a nation, and have not laboured sincerely to obtain that naturalization which is obtained only by common bloodshed and devotion. The fault is on both sides; both sides also ought to ask pardon and forget the past. Our age is different from others. Civilization spreads everywhere. Humane ideas are general; everything to-day tends to bring us together and unite us. We tender you the hand, do not repulse us!"

"What! can our younger generation be capable of repulsing you? There will be for a long while yet prejudices and repugnances, and evil predictions, but the majority of the people accept frankly your hand. Be then our brothers, but he is in spirit as well as in words, in action as in appearance. Be our brothers, not in the time of prosperity only, but in times of trouble and conflict."

Jacob pressed his companion's hand.

"Enough for to-day," said he. "We shall agree very well together, we young men. The youth of Israel think as I do. However, with us, as with you, there will be prejudices, old hatreds, secular distinctions; we must not let ourselves be influenced by these remembrances of the past. Love only can appease and unite us as one. Let us endeavour to love each other. We shall have occasion to resume this subject; let us now prepare to go. Shall it be on foot or in a carriage?"

"On foot, by all means."

That afternoon, dressed as pedestrians, they went to say farewell to Lucie Coloni. They found her in the midst of preparations for departure, in the midst of bags and trunks. The Russian was arranging the books and papers. The lady was finishing paying bills.

Jacob and Ivas were going to leave, fearing to incommode them, when Lucie looked up and saw Ivas.

"Ah, you are there! We are just going. Be sure to come to Warsaw, and do not forget what I asked you. Let me hear from you; I shall be anxious to see you. To-day I cannot talk longer. Do not forget Lucie Coloni. At the theatre you will find my address."

The young Pole looked at her with astonishment.

"You go with Gromof?" asked he.

"Yes. He is an old friend. I do not know that he will accompany me all the way. That depends. There is nothing certain. I will remind you that you can be very useful to me. May that be a reason for our meeting again."

"But how can I be useful to you?"

"Do not ask me now, I pray you. That is my business. *Au revoir! Addio! Addio!*"

When they came down the steps which led to the narrow place that separated the two hotels, they almost ran against the Tsigane who stood gaping in the air, smoking his cigar, and gravely watching the asses transporting their enormous loads to the wharf.

"Where are you two bound?" asked he.

"We leave to-day, on foot."

"On foot?"

"Yes."

"How ridiculous, when you can travel so much more comfortably! It is good, however, to have whims. As for me I am no longer capable of them. Still, if I could have for a companion the charming Italian I might decide to go on foot with her. The Russian monopolizes her."

"I fear so!" cried the Dane, suddenly appearing. "She has made an execrable choice. They have gone together; I have seen them off. Where are they going?"

"We know not. Perhaps toward the south."

"It is the cheapest way," replied the Dane, "and perhaps that is why the Russian will take it. One hardly needs food when they have swallowed the dust on the way. That is why I have decided to go by water. I love to travel that way much better than by land. I came to say good-by to *la belle* Coloni. I hoped to cut out the Russian, and I still have hopes that when I meet her again she may be tired of him. In order to gain a victory one must try."

"He calls that a victory; droll idea!" said the Tsigane. "He ignores the fact that in Italy one can obtain as many Lucie Colonis as he wishes for travelling companions."

"I do not believe," said Ivas, "that there are many persons as good and as *spirituelle* as this Lucie."

"I forgot that she came to your assistance at the Grotto. That is nothing. It only proves that she has a good heart. Any other woman would have screamed, and profited by the occasion to swoon gracefully. But I do not see the necessity of spirit in women. What use is it to them? To bite? They have their teeth for that."

Then addressing Jacob, the Tsigane continued: "Will you accept me as a companion? I ask it as a favour."

The two men questioned each other with their eyes. Gako perceived it, and said haughtily: "I withdraw my request. Stamlo is too old and too tiresome. Then the heat, the dust, render the diligence preferable. Adieu!"

He took leave of them and quickly disappeared.

"That is much better," said the Jew. "We should have had a tiresome companion."

The sun was sinking into the sea when the two comrades left their hotel and set out for Spezia. The suburbs of Genoa were marvellously beautiful. There were cypress and orange groves, and vineyards; flowers bloomed on every side, and birds sang in the branches overhead. Soon their pathway led along the border of the sea; at each moment the scene changed like a panorama. In springtime or in autumn this route is overrun by swarms of tourists who pass by with such rapidity that they retain only a vague impression of its beauty. Less numerous are the travellers who know how to travel slowly, and make frequent halts to drink in the beauty of the country.

Our friends were of the number who hasten slowly. They were in no way troubled about their arrival at Spezia; they were sure to find a lodging somewhere, for it was not difficult. A rustic chamber, some fish salad and cheese, some wine of the district, more or less palatable, that was to be found everywhere; and for lights they could have primitive little lamps, the rays from which are agreeable enough, but too feeble to permit one to read and write easily. Civilization in Italy has introduced wax candles only in the large cities.

Before they were fatigued, Jacob and Ivas procured asses, whose easy gait permits one to sleep if one wishes. These useful animals are accustomed to carry men as well as the most fragile objects.

The day had given place to twilight when they came to the orange groves of Nervi, with the flowers of which is made a water for spasms, celebrated the world over.

Until then the friends had spoken on many subjects. "You promised me to finish your biography," at last said Ivas. "You have disarranged a little the chronological order by your love episode, but it will not be difficult to reëstablish and complete your recital."

"With pleasure. I have concealed nothing, and yesterday I was obliged to reveal the most secret part of my life. I believe we left off where I entered school. Persecuted by my comrades, I learned there to know life as well as grammar. There were no notable events during that period. It opened to me, however, the doors of science, which I embraced to a surprising extent. Until then I had read only the Bible, which comprised for me the entire world. Since then I have been interested not only in the development of a single people, but of humanity. My exclusive faith in the chosen people was shaken by these studies. They appeared to me under a different light. My

faith was troubled and my mind made more independent. Finally, I returned to the Bible more a Jew than ever, but of a different kind. Perhaps it is difficult for you to comprehend my Judaism. I will try, then, to explain to you how our society, strongly united by the remembrance of former persecutions, is to-day divided into several divergent factions.

"The Jew is no longer what he was when his absolute separation forced him to be himself,--to live, to reflect, and to instruct, within the narrow circle which hostile Christianity had traced for him. From time to time this circle sent out a Maimonides or a Spinosa, but it was largely composed of a compact body of strict and faithful believers. We grouped ourselves around the Ark of the Covenant. To-day the Jews are more liberal, less restrained, and walk in different paths. Many reject the ancient law, and accept in appearance another religion, while, in reality, they have none. My protector, the father of Mathilde, was one of this type. Educated by strangers, in the midst of indifferent men, he lost, at an early age, all respect for our traditions. Liberated from all ceremonious restraint, he was not a Christian, but had arrived at a stand-point, as you already know, where he reduced morality to calculation, and had taken reason for his guide.

"Man is only the most perfect animal. Above him exist other worlds, other beings, other conceptions; besides the body, there is a soul, which unites itself to the divinity, and can soar higher than the earth or stars. Materialism and atheism satisfy neither society nor individual. Their adepts are like flowers torn from their stalks: they wither rapidly. Take away God and the soul, and what would be the result with our refined civilization? An age such as ours, which subjugates the elements, pierces the mysteries of nature, but knows not how to distinguish good from evil. It is an age which worships only force, and where are heard in prolonged echoes the *væ victis*. There is nothing more sad than to see men who have overthrown tradition, and who have no other hope or aim but material prosperity.

"They are only too numerous in your communion as well as ours. The Christian who has ceased to be a Christian, the Jew who rejects Moses, have for a horizon only an earthly life consecrated to the satisfaction of their passions. Even when they appear to be happy, they are at heart miserable. They end in apathy or insanity. Man finds in Mosaism an intellectual nourishment sufficient for his reason.

"In order to decry the faith of Moses, which is the basis of Christianity, it is unjust to take advantage of certain singularities in the Talmud which are almost always falsely ridiculed. Even in the Talmud one finds a poetry of which any literature might be proud."

"I know nothing of this poetry," said Ivas.

"You have, however, read quotations from the Talmud chosen in such a way as to cast ridicule upon it."

"No; I know almost nothing of it."

"Are you curious to have some idea of it? Would you like to know the Paradise or the Hell after the rabbinical conceptions?"

"From preference the Hell, for human imagination is more apt to represent the tortures of the damned than the delights of the elect. Dante's Heaven is very inferior to his Hell. Probably it is the same thing with the Talmud."

"I do not know. The description of the abode of the blessed in the Book Jalkut (7. A.) is full of splendour."

"As for Hell in the book, Nischmas Khaïm, it is separated from Paradise by a very thin wall, symbol of the narrow bounds which often separate vice and virtue. The river which rushes through the Hell is boiling, whilst that which flows through Paradise is of an agreeable freshness. Three routes lead to it: by the sea, by the desert, and by a city of the world. Five kinds of fire burn continually in Hell, of which the extent is sixty times greater than that of the earth. It is governed by three chiefs. The most important of this triumvirate is called Dumah. This Dumah has three prime ministers,--Ghinghums, Taschurinia, and Sazsaris. The palace of this demon is situated in that part of Hell called Bor.

"Hell is full of scorpions and serpents, and is divided into several departments. The deepest and the most frightful serves as a sewer for the filth of the other hells, and for the poison of the old serpent that seduced Eve.

"The Talmud is varied. It contains dialogues, controversies, dissertations, allegories, and moral tales. It is a collection of the writings of several ages, through which one can follow the variations in the Hebrew language. They have tried to establish in this confusion a certain order. Maimonides, among others, has tried it; but his book on this subject, although very much esteemed, has not been accepted by all.

"In opposition to the unbelieving Jews like Mathilde's father, there are Jews who adhere blindly to the Talmud, and put several rabbis on a level with Moses. Others, like myself, put their faith in the Old Testament, and are content to respect the traditions related in the Talmud. At first by early Jewish education, afterward by my European education, I became an Israelite of a

special kind. The Talmud, from which I sought to draw lessons of wisdom, had not made me superstitious. At the bottom of my heart I guard as a most precious treasure my religious belief. I do not repel the light of reason nor the law of progress, a negation which would, in a way, separate me from actual humanity. My faith and my reason agree perfectly.

"When I was called to Warsaw by my kinsman, I had not the least idea of the true situation of my co-religionists. In the provinces I had met many kinds of Jews. Some were so faithful to their belief that they dared not depart from the most useless and inexplicable rules. Others, our brothers by blood, were no more ours in customs and spirit.

"I approached the capital of the kingdom with lively emotions, anxious for the future, and ignorant of the world I was about to enter.

"The provincial Jews live and have lived entirely separated from the Christians. Here I met them for the first time mixed and confounded, if not by law, at least by habit, with the population. At first I could hardly comprehend the thing. I met Jews who sought to conceal their origin, visible as it was on their Semitic brows, among whom some were believers, others complete sceptics. Our race, by wealth, education, and acquired importance, were in position to court and obtain political and civil equality. The old Polish nobles, imbued with bygone prejudices, saw with alarm this imminent fusion, and endeavoured to prevent or to retard it, considering always the children of Israel as strangers and intruders. On both sides hatred has been kindled, and the position is false in both camps. Those whom daily business brought together, whom necessity united, who had mutual interests, remained like armed foes divided by remembrances, prejudices, and fanaticism.

"However, victory for us is certain. Justice and the spirit of the times render it inevitable; but I digress, as usual.

"Mathilde's father, feeling sure of his pupil, introduced me into society. I had other kindred in the capital, and before long I had made many acquaintances.

"I was much chagrined by the sentiment of the greater part of my compatriots, a sentiment incomprehensible to me,--of shame at being Jews. In the houses of the wealthy there was not the slightest vestige of the faith and traditions of our fathers. The ancient customs had disappeared, the religious ceremonies were not observed. They concealed themselves to celebrate the Sabbath.

"I would like to describe some types of the community difficult to characterize in general, but it would take too long.

"We made evident progress; still we were in some sort dispersed and enfeebled, and what is worse, the country was indifferent to us. If we displayed any patriotic sentiments, they were rather affected than sincere. It was rather from pride than from duty. We had almost ceased to be Jews, and we knew not how to become Poles. We started, as it were, on a voyage without compass. Unhappy situation!"

Jacob sighed and ceased speaking. The darkness obliged them to halt at an inn near by. It was a small brick house built on a hill near the sea-shore. The sign bore the name, *Albergo di Tre Corone*.

Near the door, whence streamed the cheerful light from a crackling wood-fire, they saw a cart with two horses surrounded by men clad like sailors with their jackets thrown over their shoulders. A woman holding an infant to her breast was seated against the wall. Around the house were vineyards, aloe and fig trees, the whole scene being thrown out in strong relief by the glimmering firelight.

Our travellers relieved themselves of their bags, ordered supper, and in the interval of waiting went down near the sea, and, seating themselves on a rock, listened to the ebb and flow of its murmuring waters. Near them under the stunted bushes flew innumerable fireflies, seeming in the obscurity to be little sparkling stars. They rested mute, in the silence of the evening, the prayer of the tired earth.

CHAPTER VII.

VOYAGE ON FOOT.

Our companions were awakened early next morning by the coming and going of travellers at the inn, a noise which was only dominated by the braying of asses. Jacob and Ivas resolved to

depart immediately, and, profiting by the freshness of the morning, to make up the time they had lost the previous evening. Short stages, such as that of the day before, threatened if continued to render their journey interminable; but their excuse was that their route lay through an enchanting country where the beauties of the landscape made them forget the flight of the days.

They walked for some time without exchanging a single word. Both were absorbed in thought. Finally Ivas broke a silence which weighed equally on his companion.

"Well," said he, "have you finished your history? I have your life in general, but it lacks many details. You ought to have something more to tell me."

"It would be as easy," replied Jacob, "to finish my recital in two words, as to continue it for two years, without even then exhausting the subject. However, if you desire it, we will take it up where we left off.

"My kinsman observed me attentively. My reflections often astonished and displeased him. He found me too much of a Jew, and when on Saturday I announced to him that I wished to go to the synagogue, it was with surprise that he replied:--

"'Why? Do you wish to remain faithful to obsolete prejudices?'

"'Yes. I wish to remain a Jew.'

"'Do as you will,' said he, 'but know beforehand that the point in question is to be a man. After that, complete liberty in religious matters.'

"After this interview he looked on me as an individual on whom he could count only up to a certain point.

"One day he spoke to me of a person who, as he said, shared my convictions. He was an old man named Louis Mann, whom I knew by sight, and who passed for one of the deep thinkers of the city.

"The next day I went to pay my respects to him at an hour when I was almost certain to find him at home. He lived with his wife and three daughters in the first floor of a fine mansion. His apartments were richly furnished, and his son lived in a separate house near by.

"When I rang the bell a servant showed me into a little reception-room. A half-open door permitted me to look into the *salon*, and see a brilliant company of ladies and elegant cavaliers. I waited a long quarter of an hour. Mann then came in to see me; he did not deign to introduce me to his family or guests. I was received politely, but not as an equal. He made me understand that he did me an honour by receiving a homage which was due to him as a co-religionist, but that he had no desire to have any social relations with me.

"My position was embarrassing enough. On one side ladies dressed in the latest fashion surrounded the mistress of the house, who was clad in a magnificent robe of embroidered satin. I had not even been asked to sit down, as Monsieur Mann evidently disdained my unfashionable clothes. His pride did not hurt me; in spite of my poverty I had a most profound sentiment of self-respect, and it made me feel for this person puffed up with his own importance more pity than resentment.

"He began to give me advice, mentioning the names of many rich Israelites and dignitaries of the highest places, happy to let me see that he had intimate relations with these distinguished men. What did it matter? Wishing to dazzle me, he laid bare his littleness, and I remember perfectly the glitter of three decorations that ornamented his morning coat.

"'Young man,' said he in a solemn voice, 'I am rejoiced that your most worthy kinsman has tendered you a helping hand. By your assiduity and labour try to recompense him and render yourself useful to our race. We are all disposed to assist you, but you must make yourself worthy of us.'

"Still speaking, he looked at the door without even condescending to turn his head toward me. As he finished speaking there entered a lovely young girl who scanned me with half-closed eyes, then approached her father, put her arm around his neck and whispered something in his ear without granting me the least recognition.

"That was enough. There was nothing for me to do but retire as soon as possible. Mann, not thinking of detaining me, dismissed me coldly and entered the *salon*.

"I learned later on that he had done many benevolent actions, but, right or wrong, I have always attributed them to his extreme vanity. I ought to be grateful that in difficulties he has always put himself forward as the protector of the Jews. Far from being ashamed of his origin, he proclaimed it aloud and gloried in it. It was, perhaps, because he wished to pass as the representative of his people and be celebrated. Many times even he has agitated the subject in a perfectly useless and stupid manner.

"Mann was apparently a chief, but his followers were composed of a phalanx of adroit advisers

who knew well how to accustom him to adopt their ideas as his own.

"His house was always open to visitors who considered him, or pretended to consider him, as the influential leader of the Jewish population of the city. Never did an exterior so well correspond to the character of a man. Short and corpulent, with broad shoulders, he had the air of carrying the world on his back, a crushing weight for others, but insignificant for a person of his calibre. In private life he played willingly enough the rôle of querulous benefactor.

"In other respects an honest man, his Jewish orthodoxy, although lacking sincerity, was, at least, a satisfaction to his pompous vanity. Under a mask of religion he equalled my kinsman in scepticism. They both had one real sentiment,--hatred for the nobility; and as I did not look on things as they did, they seemed to me extremely unjust. They concealed this enmity as much as possible; they lived on good terms with many of the nobles, and even made them great demonstrations of friendship. It was a comedy on both sides.

"Would you know the Jews in their worst light, then ask a Polish noble. Would you learn the vices and follies of the nobility, question a Jew.

"The populous city was a large field of study for a curious observer like myself. I sought to learn the inmost character of the people of Israel. My attachment to them dated from infancy, and for a long while I hoped to consecrate my life to the amelioration of my race. Still weak, unknown, without influence and without knowledge, I could hardly believe myself equal to the rôle to which I aspired; but an interior voice encouraged me. I dreamed of regenerating the Polish Israelites. But in this dream I did not believe that the reform would commence in the higher classes. These were they who above all were an obstacle to my mission, through systematic indifference, always a thing more difficult to overcome than the most inveterate prejudice.

"The question being more complex than I had at first supposed, I found it necessary to acquire a more solid instruction in order to combat it. I consecrated anew all my leisure to reading the Bible and its commentaries. At the outset my sojourn at Warsaw was sustained by sweet illusions, and my daily meetings in the city were very profitable to my intelligence. Conversations with this one and that one showed me the urgency of a reform to purify the Talmud and affirm the Bible and its teachings. The enterprise promised to be no less successful with mocking sceptics like my cousin, than with sincere fanatics whose sins were only excess of credulity.

"I really do not know how the idea of such a gigantic project originated in my mind. Humblest of men, I only know that I had a confidence in myself which increased with difficulties. In place of discouraging me, obstacles only enlarged the circle of my activity. I was in no haste to set to work. I wished above all to discover the ground and the weak point of my adversaries. That which frightened me, without making me renounce my project, was the great number of atheists among the Israelites.

"Mann and my cousin were not the only leaders of unbelief. Always and everywhere in the ruling class I met counterparts of these two men. The lower class offered me some consolation. Among them, though belief might be extinguished, religious customs still existed. There was often an abyss between true religion and its practice whose corruption was great, but at times there appeared an instance of virtue, radiant and pure.

"Everything assured me that my idea of reform was a just one, and that the propitious hour was not far off when I should become the instrument of God for the advancement of the people of Israel."

Jacob arose from his seat on the rock as he spoke, and his face shone with a superb and devout inspiration.

"And the streets of Warsaw did not make you lose your illusions?" asked Ivas smiling.

"Not at all. The thought that I carried from my distant province I preserved in the Polish capital. I have published it in my journeys, and I will take it back to Poland. The thought is my life!"

"Alas!" cried Ivas, "you come too late. The days of the prophets and the lawgivers are past. Proselytism is not possible in an epoch where each individual feels himself as capable as his neighbour of reasoning, of reforming, and of advancing by following his own impulses. No one will permit himself in these days to be led by the hand like a child."

"You are mistaken. Prophets are of all times, and, as general education is perfected, a guide is necessary to indicate the end to be obtained, and to conduct the masses by the power of superior virtue."

"Have you, then, the hope of raising yourself to that position?"

"I know not. But the sentiment of this mission would not have taken such root in my soul if it came not from God. If I think to shrink from the task, a superior power orders me to advance."

"Poor dreamer!" thought Ivas.

"The burden is heavy," Jacob continued; "I do not ignore that. My personal worth has nothing to do with the thing. My object is so sublime that it awes me. But," said he suddenly, "you do not appear to comprehend me."

"No matter, I admire you!" replied the young Pole, shaking his companion's hand warmly. "I know very little of the Israelites, but I sympathize with them. Your race resembles ours. An ingenious Muscovite teacher, in one of his manuals for the schools where history is learned by questions and answers, has put the following question: 'Which are the nations without a country?' The official reply is: 'The Jews, the Gypsies, and the Poles.' I have never forgotten that wicked irony of a Russian teacher. Between you and me there is a likeness, and at the same time an unlikeness. Your oppression dates back to ages whose very antiquity is in one way an excuse for barbarism, while ours dates from an age that has taken for its device 'Fraternity, equality, and liberty!' Compared with other people in this nineteenth century, except, perhaps, the Irish, our destiny is a frightful anachronism. But to return to the Jews."

"You know me much better now," continued Jacob slowly. "You see before you a fanatic, an original, an eccentric, a man who believes, who hopes, who has a determined aim in life. I have undertaken my journey only to prepare myself better for the execution of my project. I am more convinced than ever of the necessity of the task which I have assumed. I have seen the Jews in almost every land. Everywhere I have found in them the two maladies which poison my co-religionists in Poland,--indifference or unbelief, which renders us cosmopolites; fanaticism, or ignorance, which puts on us the ban of humanity. These two dangerous elements threaten to extend. Israel will disappear from the surface of the earth, like all nations who repudiate their glorious past, like nations detached from the maternal breast of humanity, which live an exclusive life exhausting and extinguishing themselves. Israel has great need of regeneration."

"And you expect to be the regenerator?"

"I count only on indicating the work. What reason should hinder me from putting my hand to the task for which I have prepared myself with assiduity and perseverance. The will is an immense force.

"After my visit to Mann, my cousin asked me what impression I had formed of this man whom he knew better than I. He sought, no doubt, by this question to better understand my humble self.

"'I found him,' replied I, 'so occupied that it was a trouble to receive me.'

"'Did he not receive you well?'

"'Yes. But'--

"'Bah! You must not attach importance to his reception. He is a boor whose grossness is only partly concealed. At heart he is an honest and excellent man.'

"We arose from the table, the ladies passed into the *salon*, and my cousin led me to his study, where he drew from me a detailed report of my visit.

"'I am young,' added I in finishing, 'and I have therefore nothing to seek. At all events, I have no desire to see him again.'

"'On the contrary! On the contrary! You must go to see him often. Shake off your timidity. With men in general be bold without impertinence. The less you treat them with respect, the more consideration they will have for you. Abase yourself, and they will put you under their feet.'

"'You are right,' replied I; 'nevertheless I cannot change myself; I cannot be bold by reflection nor calculation, nor humble by interest. It is unfortunate to have so little control over one's self, but it would be in vain for me to attempt to change my nature.'

"'Then you will never amount to anything. In the world, in order to succeed, one must play a continual part; one must know how to be humble when one is really proud, and to show one's self valiant when paralyzed by fear. Otherwise one is exposed to impositions, dominated over and crushed. You must crush or be crushed; which would you rather do?'

"'So wretched a rule of conduct,' said I, 'will never be mine. My principles are absolutely different. I look on life as a grave and serious mission; as for yourself, excuse my frankness, it is not a rôle learned in advance for the theatre.'

"'Oh, I do not mind,' said he; 'but our two systems differ because you have too good an opinion of men. Yours is fine in appearance, detestable in results. Open your heart, unveil your inmost thoughts, it is to deliver them voluntarily as food for men whom reason commands us to despise as our natural enemies.'

"'I would rather,' cried I, 'regard them as brothers!' My cousin laughed ironically and stroked his beard.

"'My dear,' added he, 'it matters not what you prefer, but what really exists. I have never

supposed that you were so innocent. All the bucolic pictures of mankind are very well in paintings, tapestries, or screens, but in practical life to believe in Utopia is always to remain a dupe. At times man is good and honest, but he inclines more frequently to evil. Is it not worth while to lean on a normal state rather than on exceptions of short duration?'

"'But humanity will perfect itself.'

"'When? How? All nonsense! Industry will advance, implements will be perfected so that we may be nourished and clad, commerce will develop, but not man. That which makes life easy for the masses is a benefit, and yet the question is not determined whether all this progress corrupts or elevates mankind. The question is not settled. We must use men like tools to elevate ourselves, and not lose time by loving them as a whole. The useless ought to be put out of the way without pity. The capable we must learn to make use of. Behold my theory! Your's leads to nothing. Sensibility is a disease, a malady of the worst kind.'

"This terrible theory did not frighten me; I was prepared to hear it. This was for me a decisive and memorable day. It brought together, and at the same time drew apart, my mentor and myself. He continued, looking me in the face:--

"'As I wish you well, not from a morbid sensibility, but to make of you a man who may be useful to me, I will give you one more word of advice. You have a habit, as if to distinguish yourself, of boasting continually of being a Jew. It is ridiculous, and will injure you seriously.'

"'It would, I think, be still more ridiculous to wish to conceal it, and that I will never do,' replied I, 'for I am strongly attached to my race and to my belief. By simple calculation, even, would it not be a hundred times better to declare my origin than to conceal it, that it may afterward be thrown in my face as an insult?'

"'But why recall your origin everywhere you go?'

"'Because I am proud of it.'

"'Proud, and why? That is inconceivable. Judaism was, perhaps, in former times our shield and buckler, but it is no longer so.'

"'But our religion,' commenced I.

"'Our religion! What is it more than other religions? They are all alike. So much milk for babes. You believe, then, that it is wicked to yoke together an ox and an ass for labour, or to mix blood with milk, or silk with wool, and that whoever does not keep these old rules and reply Amen to them will go to hell?'

"'I respect even these old ordinances of my faith, difficult as they are to explain. I see the reason in the law of Moses of the order not to mix grains in the fields: it is a wise agricultural measure. To forbid two animals working together, one of whom is much weaker than the other, is a protection for the beasts. Not to mix blood and milk is probably a good hygienic law. Not to wear silk and wool at the same time can pass for a sumptuary law, designed as a lesson against superfluous luxury. In general, all these prohibitions against mixing species are symbols of the necessity that there is for Israelites not to mix with other nations. I respect these rules even when I cannot explain them. The 'Amen' in the schools is a duty, for not to assent to the rabbins is to show unbelief.'

"My cousin listened, astonished at the enthusiasm of my answer, then he shrugged his shoulders.

"'You had better get rid of these prejudices,' said he.

"'If they were prejudices, you would be right, but you cannot call respected traditions prejudices. It is to put our faith in danger."

"'What is faith?'

"'The definition is unintelligible to those who do not feel the need of it.'

"'It is easy to recognize, in listening to you, the teachings of your first fanatical masters.'

"'I do not dream of shaking off the teachings of childhood. They have made me a member of God's chosen people. Leave me my convictions.'

"'Keep them, if you will. Your whims will depart of themselves. All I ask is that you keep them to yourself. Actual society is tolerant, but it does not like fanaticism, for that always denotes a narrow mind or an unhealthy state. Truly none of us forgets that he is a Jew, but it is unnecessary and injurious for one to be perpetually clothed in his Judaism.'

"The life of my guardian conformed in all things to his principles. He was guided by cold reason, sometimes also by passion, which he knew well how to bridle, but never by sentiment, of which he was either destitute, or from which he strove to deliver himself. I know not if he was fashioned thus by nature or by education, but each one of his steps was regulated by self-interest.

He put calculation above all things. He loved his daughter, but in his own way; he had disposed of her, as he thought, excellently, and had brought her up to conform to his ideas.

"A terrible despot under a benign form, he had a conservative instinct to undertake nothing that was not certain to succeed. Fighting against obstacles, where to draw back would have been an avowal of his weakness, he almost always succeeded where other men failed.

"He now endeavoured to widen the circle of my acquaintances. In spite of my distaste to pushing myself on in this way, he did not cease to preach to me that I must take men by storm. He often took me to visit people who were odious to him; for these he reserved his most gracious smiles, his most cordial protestations. He turned a deaf ear to all offensive allusions, and did not appear to notice the indifference of this one nor the ostensible malevolence of another. He had such control over himself that things which completely upset me did not seem to make the least impression on him. He contented himself with biting his lips and smiling. But afterward the reaction was violent, and the more his irritation had been restrained the more violent was his hatred when he had taken off the mask. Reason, which always predominated with him, was the only thing which kept him from passing the bounds prescribed by prudence.

"From the first year of my sojourn in Warsaw he initiated me into the world of speculators, where one must know how to defend one's self in order not to be crushed. Every day I felt myself less adapted to such a life. What shocked me most was the continual lying; hardly any one thought of speaking the truth. I adopted a different line of conduct,--an audacious frankness.

"Men, who always judge others by themselves, imagined that I played an easy part, and that I acted thus by calculation. I succeeded well enough in business, but in the midst of rogues of all kinds I passed equally for a rogue, an impostor of a new school who played with truth. I acquired the reputation of being a good actor. This troubled me a little, but it gave me the measure of men of our epoch who have for their motto: '*Mundus vult decipi ergo decipiatur*.'

"Mathilde, in these early days, was my only consolation. You already know that I loved her; you know that our love resembled a flower concealed in the grass. For her, at least, I was neither a knave nor a comedian. A sentiment clearer than reason gave her confidence in my words. Our conversations were not like those of lovers. By an inexplicable mystery Mathilde's heart had not been chilled by her education. Many things were not alluded to in our discussions, which almost always took place in the presence of her governess. I did not like to let her know my opinion of her father, for whom she bore a lively affection, which it was not my wish to disturb. I also loved him in spite of his perversity. Some allusions from Mathilde made me understand that he also had suffered in his youth.

"My guardian knew how to gratify his desires without infringing the strictest propriety or the most severe decorum. It was known, perhaps, but no one ever saw the least impropriety in his conduct.

"For a year he spoke to me no more of religion. At the end of that period, accidentally, perhaps, rather than by deliberation, he renewed the conversation. No doubt he wished to know if my prolonged sojourn in Warsaw had modified my ideas and calmed my enthusiasm. Finding me absolutely unchanged, he abruptly changed the subject.

"Some days after, he mentioned to me houses where I ought to pay frequent visits, hoping that the influence of those I met at them would act on my sentiments and ideas. He recommended to me a family very important among the Israelites. This family was descended from the tribe of Levi, and numbered several members living together in perfect harmony, although one remained a Jew, another had embraced Protestantism, and a third had become a Catholic. My cousin approved this family as a model of indifference in religious matters. Pleasing to him, the spectacle scandalized me.

"The melancholy which reigned in Mathilde's soul I discovered also more or less developed in most of the women of her race, who can be divided into two categories: frivolous women without principle, and women obliged to conceal their noble instincts, knowing them forbidden."

The entire day was passed in conversation which gave Ivas much to think of, and although the friends rode on their donkeys, and two days had passed since their departure, they were yet not far from Genoa.

Night found them in a little village on the sea-shore, near hills crowned with cypress, palms, and orange trees; the huts were covered with ivy and surrounded by myrtle and laurels.

They sought a lodging, and engaged one in a narrow street whose houses were built over ancient arches sunk in the middle of a hillock. In the distance a travelling-carriage without horses announced a hotel.

"What a meeting!" cried Ivas. "Unless the Italian carriages resemble each other like drops of water, I swear that is the one which carried Monsieur and Madame Segel from Genoa."

Jacob stopped short at the same moment. He recognized Mathilde's husband standing at the door of the inn near a woman who, from her height and figure, bore no resemblance to his wife.

"It is a hallucination! It is not possible!" exclaimed the Jew.

"There is no doubt. It is Segel; it is he!" said Ivas.

Jacob's heart beat violently.

"Yet," added he, as if to explain the reality, "they should be far from here, even supposing some accident had happened to their carriage. It is singular.--Yes, it is Henri--perhaps she is ill, she--Let us seek another inn. It will be awkward for all. Ivas, go and assure yourself of this thing."

The Jew seated himself near a café bearing the motto, *Del Gran Colombo*. A quarter of an hour later the messenger returned. He seemed surprised.

"Well, how is it?" asked Jacob.

"Very strange. It is he, but--it is not she."

"You dream! Your eyes deceived you, without doubt."

"No, I never forget a face. This one is a young Italian, fresh and gay. Impossible to compare her with Madame Mathilde: she is heaven, this one the earth."

"Then the man cannot be Henri!"

"Certainly it is he."

"Are they alone together?"

"All alone, like turtle-doves. Madame or mademoiselle eats peaches, throws side glances at Segel, laughs and sings."

"I must see it with my own eyes," said Jacob.

The friends approached the inn, and Jacob soon assured himself that it was Henri, accompanied by an unknown woman with all the fascinations of an opera-dancer.

He was about leaving when Henri Segel saw him, saluted him gayly, and drew near.

"Is that you?" cried he. "You have caught me in *flagrante delicti*. Poor Mathilde is sick. She returned to Genoa after having accompanied me as far as Nervi. She will remain there quietly for a fortnight. As for myself, I needed distraction, and, by chance, I met an old acquaintance, la Signora Gigante, a French opera-dancer, who is the best of company. Bored and wearied as I am by the monotony of life, I seized this occasion to enjoy myself. One must laugh sometimes. Gigante is as simple-hearted and gay as a child. You have no idea how amusing she is. She has drawn me from the monotony of my existence."

He confessed all this naturally and without embarrassment.

Jacob, stupefied, could hardly believe his ears, and knew not what to reply.

"Mathilde," added the husband, "as you know, is the most beautiful and accomplished of women; but such ideal creatures are fatiguing. It is not always agreeable to talk of serious things in a solemn tone. A man occupied as I am needs sometimes to breathe easily. Gigante is an admirable clown in petticoats. Come, come, you will sup with us. You will laugh! You will be amused, I assure you."

Jacob felt a great wrath grow in him. He laughed savagely.

"I accept willingly," said he ironically; "life is made only for amusement."

Gigante, no longer able to repress her curiosity, drew near in order to ascertain who the two strangers were that examined her with so much curiosity. Her attention was bestowed principally on Jacob, as Ivas, poorly clad, promised little. She tripped toward them singing, and the refrain echoed in the street in bursts of gayety.

"Je suis seule depuis longtemps,
Seule, seulette.
Eh, je suis veuve en mon printemps,
Veuve et fillette;
Pas d'espoir d'horizon vermeil
Pour moi seulette,
Il manque à mon ciel ton soleil,
Veuve et fillette."

Segel began to laugh on hearing this couplet, which she accompanied with very expressive gestures. Without finishing the song she began to sing another, the melancholy words of which clashed with the joyous air.

"Elle a perdu son tourtereau,
Pauvre tourterelle!
Elle erre seule au bord de l'eau
En trainant son aile;
Elle fuit les nids aux chansons
Que l'amour épèle;
Elle fuit les fleurs des buissons
Sans attrait pour elle;
Et se baigné dans le ruisseau
Seule mais fidèle.
Quel tourment! plus de tourtereau!
Pauvre tourterelle!"

By a lively pantomime she acted the poor turtledove. The lost turtle-dove was, without doubt, Henri Segel, who almost burst his sides laughing. The signora after this exhibition drew near her cavalier, who presented the two gentlemen.

"Ah! Signori Polachi! I like the Poles exceedingly," cried she, turning toward Jacob. "*E Viva la povera Pologna!* Ah, ah, ah! Is it true that in your country it is so cold that sometimes the fowls freeze in winter, and do not thaw out until spring? Bologne--Pologne; same thing, isn't it? Have you been at Genoa? Did you go to the theatre? I dance and I sing at Carlo Felici. I am at the head of the chorus. I am promised before long the rôle of mezzo-soprano. Have you seen me play the sorceress? No? That's too bad."

"Dear Gigante," interrupted Henri, "if you tell everything at once there will be no more to say."

"I know more songs than any one else," replied she gayly. "I have a throat full. And if I can find no more to say, I can look at these gentlemen. That will drive you wild with jealousy."

"But I am not jealous."

"How! Not jealous? You ought to be if you love me. That is a part of the rôle."

"We will love each other--until Lucca."

"What matters it? Before we arrive at Lucca you will be dead in love. And you, messieurs, artists who go on foot, where are you going will you permit me to ask?"

"We go to Pisa."

"To Pisa? A dead city, a great cemetery. The Arno is like a dirty old ditch. You had better come with us to Lucca. There I will give you all three a fig and adieu."

Then she commenced to sing again a merry song.

Jacob listened, and a feeling of weakness came over him; his brow was clouded, and, without replying, he left this joyous company, giving a headache as an excuse, and leaving Ivas to listen to Gigante. He was overcome with rage and emotion.

The husband of the poor forsaken Mathilde giving himself up to such distractions! It was easy to guess from this scene what her life was. Jacob suffered for her, and experienced a sensation of chagrin that he had not remained in Genoa where he could have been alone with her.

But soon he blushed at the thought that he would have dared to profit by the absence of Henri. "All is for the best," thought he. "I ought not to trouble her repose by my presence, for that would open old wounds in her heart, as in mine. Destiny has separated us. Great duties are before me. Her sadness increases. We have no right to glide into a paradise the entrance to which is forbidden. Fate urges me with an implacable lash. Let us go!"

Ivas returned to his lodgings late that night, after copious libations and a thousand jokes with the coquette, Gigante, who could not conceive any one indifferent to her, and had tried to interest them both at the same time. Signer Enrico, during his little affair, had given himself the name of Don Fernando, so as to pass for a Spaniard. He was very proud of the conquest, and acted as foolishly as his companion.

Ivas carolled, as he entered, a verse of a song he had learned from Gigante. He was troubled and ashamed when he saw Jacob reading the Bible. It was his custom when he was sad to read the Prophets, the Psalms, and the Book of Job.

Ivas went to bed, but Jacob continued reading until at last the feeble light of the lamp forced him to cease. He arose and walked up and down the room, lost in deep and painful thoughts.

Ivas could not sleep. Sympathy with his sorrowing friend and a little shame on his own part kept him awake.

"Have you been in Dresden?" asked Jacob.

"Yes," replied he, without understanding the reason of this question.

"You have then seen a poem of Israel's past, a sorrowful poem of which the foolish debauchery of to-day awakened in me a remembrance. I speak of the 'Jewish Cemetery,' by Ruysdaël."

"I have seen that picture," replied Ivas. "It terrified me, but I could not comprehend it. It is an enigma that fills one with sadness."

"One can remain hours before the canvas," said the Jew, "contemplating it with an impression of wonder. It is so sad, and, like the story of Atrides, stamped with the seal of an inexorable fate. But I love better the tears that one sheds at the sight of this work of a great artist, than the laughter which came out of the mouth of the debauched Henri, representative, as he is, of a generation stupefied by riches, petrified by gold. Marvellous creation, this piece of canvas where nothing appears at first but sombre clouds and black trees torn by the tempest! Examine it more closely: a lowering sky, some rocks, a group of mysterious trees, a brook which forces its way over the uneven ground. The picture reproduces only common things, but with an inconceivable force of expression. This wonderful artist, Ruysdaël, this painter of rocks, ruins of convents and chateaux, of forests and lakes, has never better proved his genius than in his 'Cemetery,' where he rises to the height of an epic poem. No other painter has such eloquence, such beauty, such majesty; not even the brilliant Claude Lorraine, who plays so skilfully with light and shade; nor Salvator Rosa, with his striking caverns and brigands. The 'Jewish Cemetery' is like a page out of the history of a people who do not find repose even in the tomb. Two figures only are faintly delineated; nothing else but the oaks, and the torrent which carries away on its bosom the bones torn from the earth.

"Fate pursues the Jew even in his last repose. Wishing to give an idea of the misfortunes of these people, the artist could not have done better than by showing us this graveyard, where, praying in a dark corner, two men wait until the fury of the tempest shall cease and the sun reappear. A single white flower springing from the soil gives hope of the return of springtime.

"At the end of the seventeenth century, when this masterpiece was produced, the sun for us had long rested behind the clouds, and the poor flower, emblem of brighter days, had scarcely budded.

"The picture is a history of the Israelites in Europe in the past. To-day our history is the bourse, and it were better to weep over the tombs than over our waning dignity."

The next day Ivas awoke early in order to prepare for their journey, but did not find his friend. The woman of the house told him that he had gone toward the sea at daybreak with a book in his hand. The morning was superb. Over the tranquil sea glided the fishing-boats with drooping sails. The sun gilded the waves, whose brilliant azure transported the imagination to the land of fairies. Seated on a rock not far from the inn, Jacob, forgetting his book, pensively contemplated the beautiful scene.

Ivas felt some hesitation about interrupting a revery which drew him from the world, but the heat was already increasing, and it was necessary to set out before the morning was further advanced. After an instant of thought he wished his friend "Good-morning!" Jacob raised his head.

"What need is there," said he, "of such haste? Why not remain, at least, a day on this beautiful shore? We can rest here, and go on with fresh energy."

"As you will. Our journey will be only one day longer. You ought, like Antæus, to draw new strength from our common mother, Earth and Nature. I will not conceal from you, however, the impatience that grows upon me to return to that land whose sorrows I prefer to the delights of any other. There no one awaits me; there is nothing for me but shadow. Nevertheless, my soul is on fire when I think of my native land."

"The sentiment is not strange to me. I, also, love your fatherland."

"Why, then, do not your brothers think as you?"

"A difficult question. Think how sad was the situation of the Jews there in the last century, and even recently. Like lepers, we were distinguished by our costume, we were banished to the interior of the country, and all the rights of man were denied us. All Christians were at liberty to molest us without punishment; injuries and outrages were showered on us. Such conditions could not develop in the Jews, love of a country or its institutions. It even restrained in our hearts love of humanity in general,--that humanity which would not receive us, but set us aside as if under a ban."

"I am no admirer of the Middle Ages," said Ivas. "But tell me, where have the Jews had an easier existence relatively than in Poland? Nowhere; and the proof of it is that they are more numerous there than elsewhere. They come from distant lands to settle among us. Persecution has sometimes attacked them, but, in general, the law has protected them. Polish fanaticism has been intermittent, and not continual as in other parts of Christendom."

"I admit all that. But whence comes the abatement of persecution? It is because we are to-day much less Jews, and you less Christians. Extreme religious ardour produced horrible results; who knows if the complete absence of belief will not be more pernicious still for humanity. My desire

is to preserve the people of Israel from the malady of the age. Yesterday Henri showed us where freedom from all duty leads. This man deserts his sick wife, and runs over the country with a silly woman. A weakness, you will say, perhaps. No; for in that case he would have been ashamed of his conduct, and he did not even blush when, by chance, we met him with his Gigante. As he sees things, it is all simple and perfectly natural. A being capable of acting thus and affecting such cynicism is deprived of all moral sense."

After a moment he continued:--

"I have travelled over the Old World. I have visited Palestine and the Orient; I have slept in the tents of the Bedouins. I have visited the Musselmans in the cities. Irreligion is creeping in even among the pilgrims to Mecca. Many make the pilgrimage more from ostentation than from piety. Among Christians there are fewer believers than traders in beliefs. In France, Catholicism is the tenet of a lame political party, but is not carried out in their actions. Its defenders are the *condottieri*; they combat for a faith which they do not carry in the depths of the heart. They confess, perhaps, for the sake of example, but surely they do not pray. In revenge, they fling the worst insults at their adversaries, the advocates of free thought, all in the name of religion. Social order is in ruins. It will be replaced by something better, I hope; but while waiting, the old structures will waver, the columns will be overthrown, the altars will fall. Once the past is destroyed, we will need a Messiah, a Saviour!"

"You are pitiless," cried Ivas. "Ruins everywhere, it is true; I, also, believe there will be a new order of things. But it will come by progress and not after a cataclysm by a Saviour that you already see, and that you announce."

"Let us change the subject," said Jacob. "The future is God's secret. Our destiny, unfortunate mortals, is to live in an era of transition."

"To return to our journey. Shall we rest here or push on farther?"

"Remain here. I am fatigued to-day. I need to draw new strength from reading, talking, and thinking. I will listen to the dashing of the surf upon these rocks; the ocean, perhaps, will tell me something."

"You are ill. I am sorry; far from gaining, your malady increases; it is easy to guess the cause. You regret not having remained in Genoa, where languishes your beloved."

"That is to judge me very base. I could not have offered her my society. My sadness comes from the conviction that her husband is unworthy of her. I know how she must suffer, and what her existence is, chained to such an animal."

"Alas, there is no remedy!"

"Then it is better not to speak of it."

Jacob closed his book, and returned to the inn with his companion.

The day was passed in various discussions. They saw no more of Henri and his danseuse. The couple had left for Spezia, a new reason for Jacob to rest on his route so as not to encounter them.

In the evening they went again to sit by the sea.

"I am not yet," said Ivas, "completely satisfied with your history; have you no more to tell me? You have given me only the detached leaflets."

"Why? Because the book is not worth the trouble of being read entire. That would take too much time. There are many details that would fatigue you. Be content, then, with the principal facts and the reflections which they suggest; but I will go on, as you desire it.

"I worked in the counting-house during the greater part of the day. I found it necessary afterward to cultivate my relations with society, to extend my study of the world and of character. I went out almost every evening, and often Mathilde and her father accompanied me. A part of every night was consecrated to the study of the Bible and the Talmud. From the first days of my existence in Warsaw, one man attracted my regard and inspired my sympathy. This was my guardian's brother, Simon Borah.

"The brothers had no love for each other. Simon was not a practical man; he had lost a part of his fortune, and his business did not prosper. For the reason that he was obliged to aid his brother occasionally, my guardian disliked him still more. In a word, these two men had not one single point of resemblance.

"Simon, though incredulous like his brother, was sentimental, whimsical, full of heart. He formed attachments easily. Frivolous, and even at times childish, he redeemed himself in the eyes of the world by a sarcastic wit and caustic argument; his satire attacked every one, even his brother.

"Simon had been married twice. Both of his wives were dead. He was still gallant toward the

fair sex, and he was in great demand in the *salons*, for it was difficult to find a more charming man. He was feared a little also on account of his caustic tongue. Without religion himself, he sought those who were believers. He spared no one, but at heart acquitted all men, a tear in his eye and a smile on his lips. He let himself be ridiculed by men who were far from being his equals, and thereby carried his point; he resembled in these moments some monstrous animal which could not contain itself. Full of contradictions, he was logical with himself. Christian with the Jews, and Jew with the Christians, it pleased him to appear paradoxical. Impressionable in a high degree, he interested himself deeply to-day in things to which he was completely indifferent to-morrow. He had one great quality, that of never lying. When he could not answer frankly he covered his words with adroit sarcasm, or often was silent.

"My guardian, who observed all the proprieties minutely, wrangled continually with this original who revolted against all restraint.

"Small of stature, with mean features and yellow skin, with a quick step, he was very ugly, but of an expressive and intelligent ugliness; such is the physical portrait of Simon Borah.

"He took a great fancy to me in spite of my religious sentiments, which I did not try to conceal. I knew he watched me closely, and I wished to deserve his good opinion. Each day his friendship increased. His penetrating glances soon divined my love for Mathilde without my ever having spoken.

"One day when we were alone he suddenly turned to me and said he wished to ask me a question.

"'What is it, Father Simon?' said I.

"'You are sorrowful?' asked he.

"'No, I assure you.'

"'I can read love in your eyes. Who is the object? Is it the English governess, Miss Burnet? The thing is not improbable; they say that withered flowers exhale the sweetest perfumes. Still there is another charming person in the house.'

"He saw that the blood rushed to my face, and continued:--

"'Between ourselves, I know your secret. Let me recall to you an official phrase of our very august sovereign, Alexander II., in his interview with the Poles: "No brooding over the past!" Your guardian is a practical man and has high aims.'

"'It is you who dream, Father Simon.'

"'Don't try to deceive me! You are in love, my boy.'

"'Well, if I am, that will be--but that is not so'--

"'Very fine. I know what you wish to say. Believe me, the best thing for you is to get over it as soon as possible. Do not play with fire, for

> "This fruit so sweet
> Is not for you."'

"'Never has such an idea come into my head.'

"'I should say the same if I were you. You will be wise to renounce all hopes.'

"Our conversation ceased there. He left some days after for the baths, and when he returned he found Mathilde betrothed. When he saw me he looked at me out of the corners of his eyes, and read probably on my face the resignation and the suffering so well concealed, for he shook my hand without saying a word.

"Two days after he met me on the street, and whispered in my ear: 'The law of nature is that the most beautiful fruits shall be eaten by the worms.' Then he went away before I could reply. He loved Mathilde very much, and foresaw her fate, but he well knew that it was useless to speak to a brother who did not allow sentiment to interfere with calculation.

"I devoted myself to business assiduously, hoping to forget my sorrow thereby. In the mean while, an unexpected change came to me. I could at last obtain the independence so long desired.

"As I owed all to my guardian's bounty, I had been obliged to conform my life to his ideas, and to obey his orders. Study was full of attraction to me, but I had no time to devote to it except in the evenings. My cousin intended to send me soon to some foreign post, where I would be employed as a correspondent in the office for one of his partners. To travel, to observe, would instruct me, and I was not averse to going; but I would have preferred to travel at liberty. Therefore you can well imagine that it seemed like a special grace from heaven to be delivered

like a miracle from my chains, and to become master of myself and of my actions. It was near the time of Mathilde's marriage, when word came from my guardian to come immediately to his office.

"I feared some misfortune, when I saw him walking up and down the room with a cloudy face.

"'Do you know what has happened?' said he.

"'I have heard nothing new.'

"'Then I will be the first one to congratulate you. Your distant relation, Moses Hermann, of Berlin, who has no children, as you know, has died and left you all his fortune. Ought I to rejoice? No, I regret it, for I lose in you a man that I wished to form on my own ideas.'

"I remained stupefied.

"'What do you think of it?' asked he.

"'I can hardly reply. For a long time I have desired to travel, and I hope to set out soon.'

"'You are at liberty to do so. I am happy to have given you an education which renders you worthy of this unexpected fortune. It is wonderful! Moses saw you only once or twice.'

"He shrugged his shoulders, and I hastened to my room to think over my good fortune and to collect my thoughts. The news had already travelled abroad, and persons in the city who had never noticed me before received me now with cordiality, and proffered me the warmest friendship.

"Mann kissed me publicly on both cheeks and predicted a splendid future for me. He even invited me to breakfast, a thing he had never done before. Others tried to persuade me that they had loved me from the depths of their hearts from time immemorial. From a nobody I became a marked man and a welcome guest.

"The will of Moses had made a great change in my life. This Moses Hermann had been in Warsaw some months before. A near relative of my mother's, he was unknown to me, and I then saw him for the first time. My guardian, knowing that he was a widower and without direct heirs, had some thoughts of a marriage between him and Mathilde, but this union was distasteful to an old man of seventy years. During his stay in Warsaw I saw him every day. Under his reserve, I thought I had discovered in him an Israelite of the old school. Born and brought up in Germany, he was a type almost unknown among us, of an educated and polished man who was not at all ashamed of his Hebrew origin. In many respects he was a German. It is well known what an important rôle the Jews play in Germany, in literature, music, the sciences, and politics. He belonged to this group, grave, serious, a thinker, where thought is not stifled by practical life. He loved poetry; he even devoted some leisure moments to the muse himself, but did not write in the style of Henri Heine, whose genius he nevertheless admired. He informed me of the actual situation of our co-religionists, and of their waning faith. My guardian had recommended me to him ironically as an ardent Talmudist, which was an exaggeration. The visitor was curious to examine me on this subject. I answered him with entire frankness, and unfolded to him my convictions and my programme for the future. Irritated by the sneers of my guardian, I explained to him all my thoughts on Judaism, perhaps with some exaltation. Moses listened to me attentively, though he said nothing, and we did not resume the subject, for he left suddenly the next day.

"Great was my astonishment at this bequest. In the will there was not a single obligatory clause. The wording was short and concise. The motive which was inexplicable to others was clear to me. It was a sacrifice made to the ideas which he approved and shared.

"My guardian, who had expected this fortune himself, spoke of the deceased with bitterness and accused him of ingratitude.

"On this memorable day I met Father Simon.

"'It is too bad,' cried he, 'that the honest Moses did not die some months sooner. To-day it is the mustard after dinner, is it not? Nothing comes in time. However, perhaps it is for the best. I congratulate you, and I hope you will not be intoxicated by your sudden fortune.'

"Really the surprise did intoxicate me somewhat, in spite of myself. Men appeared to me from a new point of view; their baseness disgusted me, since now that I was rich they treated me so differently from when in poverty. It was impossible for me to accept all their invitations or to escape their attentions; I repelled them, however, with great interior contempt.

"As my guardian had told me that I was free to dispose of myself, I resolved to go abroad. Since then I have travelled, and I return home with the firm determination of serving my brothers and my countrymen."

Ivas sighed.

"You are happy," said he; "free, rich, and at liberty to do as you please. Your education, your

character, your force of mind, will enable you to accomplish great things."

"Listen," cried Jacob, taking his arm, "we will labor together to serve our countrymen. I am prepared for it."

A light shone in Ivas' eyes, but he repressed the transports of his soul.

"I thank you," replied he at last, with a sad smile on his lips, "but it will first be necessary to return to Poland. Our country is on the eve of important events. Impatience devours me."

"Me, also," said Jacob. "Yet I do not share your presentiments. There are some events that I would rather avoid than hasten. We will speak of this later."

The next day they continued their journey. Restlessness incited them. At Spezia they took the diligence and gained a railway station. They travelled quickly through Italy and Austria, and soon arrived at the frontier of what is called the Russian Empire.

It is to-day the only European State, if one can call it thus, where there exists no security for any one. If one goes on foot, one is exposed at the caprice of an administration, on the least suspicion, or from a false accusation, if not to death, to imprisonment of long duration, spoliation, or torture. It is better to fall into the hands of Calabria than into those of the functionaries of the Russian government. A country where, with the exception of the rights of the strongest, there are no rights; where reigns a band of beings, a little polished but not civilized; where the insatiable tools of brute force do not make any account of man, of his dignity, of his age, of his merits, of his sufferings; is it not rather an immense and frightful dungeon? The unfortunates who have escaped from its prison doors become the sport of the towns and villages. Before entering, a man was a man. He is now no more than the subject, the slave, not of a single autocrat, but of some hundreds of ferocious despots, each individual a greedy representation of the unlimited power of the Czar. On its Russian barriers one can read the inscription of Dante: "*Lasciate ogni speranza voi ch'entrate*." "Who enters here leaves hope behind."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SABBATH.

A small hamlet near Warsaw. A spacious, empty market-place, on one side of which is a modest church and long cemetery wall; on the other a row of old and new houses of wood and brick, inhabited chiefly by Israelites. One of these, more conspicuous, rises above the others with a certain arrogance. On the ground floor, a grocery. On the front two lions, recalling by their sculpture Assyrian art. In their paws a vase of flowers and the figures 1860, no doubt the date of the restoration of the house. An eating-house with an open door is at the side.

Almost all the business of the village centred about this dwelling, a sufficient proof that the proprietor was an important person. It was a Friday evening; on the upper floors preparations were being made to celebrate the day consecrated to God in the Old Testament.

Provisions of all kinds covered the kitchen table. Women kept watch over a roast goose, a baked fish, while pastry and other dishes were cooking in the blazing oven. The chambers were being set in order, brooms flourished everywhere, and the candlesticks were filled with candles.

Already the venerable Jankiel Meves had returned from the bath. He hastened to put on his best garments, although the sun was far from setting; he had eaten little during the day, so as to do more honour to the blessed supper. While waiting, he reviewed in his memory all the events of the past week, seeking any violation of the sacred laws so as to efface them by sincere repentance.

Jankiel was an Israelite of the old school. It would have been very easy for him to have gained a more elevated position, owing to his wealth, his intelligence, and his connections; but he refused to put off his costume and to abandon his religious observances. The noise of women's jests came to his ears from the kitchen below. His wife, Rachel, fat, mature, and rosy, kneaded three little white loaves, some of which she was careful to reserve apart for the Khallah. The good woman, after having washed her hands, had carefully taken a portion of the dough, whispering the prayer used on such occasions: "Praised be Jehovah our God, King of the world! It is from thee that we have received our sacred laws, and it is thou who hast ordered us to keep the Khallah!"

As there was only one family and one baking, Rachel threw only one Khallah into the fire. In another part of the kitchen was in preparation a stuffed pike, a favourite dish of the Israelites,

recommended by tradition for the Sabbath day. At the same time roasts and other dishes were cooking. On this day of rejoicing economy is not thought of.

The master of the house inspected himself the freshly washed dishes, the shining knife, and the clean stewpans.

The hour arrived for the preparatory prayers of the celebration, with the Ten Commandments in Hebrew and in Chaldaic, a chapter of the Prophets applicable to the day of the year, and the 93d Psalm.

What a profound impression can be produced on an oppressed people by this last song of the Psalmist, which commands patience, and promises God's vengeance against oppressors.

Jankiel recited the prescribed prayers, and, as he had yet time, he opened the Talmud and fell on a passage of the Book Berakhat. The reading plunged him in meditation. His thoughts went back to the days of intense persecution; he wept, and thanked God that, in spite of captivity, dispersions, tortures, and oppression, He had miraculously preserved His people until the present day. Whence came this miracle, from the observance of the law.

The time of prayers over, custom wills that the master of the house shall throw a last glance on the festive preparations; and, although he had entire confidence in Rachel, the Jew visited the kitchen, touched the dishes, and blessed in thought the nourishment about to be served. Then he returned to his chamber and read the Song of Solomon.

The sun disappeared, and the candles were lighted. The solemn hour of the coming of the Sabbath approached.

The table was carefully set, and Rachel appeared in a toilette of velvet ornamented with pearls. Her daughters were dressed less elegantly, but with much taste, and the servants even were in their best.

The time came to go to the synagogue, and Jankiel descended the stairs, Rachel following him with an enormous volume under her arm. Her daughters accompanied her, and behind came the servants. That no one from this house must miss service was the rule of this Israelite.

The crowd filled the court in front of the temple; rich and poor, devout followers of Mosaism, were mixed together, and the chorister intoned the prayer Achre.

The service was long. Jankiel's face wore an expression of sad preoccupation, and when he returned home he had, in spite of this day of rejoicing, a clouded brow and a discontented air. At times he looked at Lia, his younger daughter, who awaited with fear and trembling her mother's commands.

She was a charming girl, whose features expressed innocence and sensibility of heart. Her eyes sparkled with the fires of youth, though they were now clouded by recent tears, and she looked at her father as if frightened.

Rachel recited with her elder daughter the prescribed prayers while lighting the candles. Other prayers followed, some whispered, some uttered in a loud voice. The sacred songs echoed through the brilliantly lighted house, and the women read Hebrew books.

Jankiel absented himself to return to the synagogue, and Rachel assisted her daughters to finish the preparations for the feast. She placed on the table, covered with a white cloth, two white loaves made by herself wrapped in a snowy napkin, in remembrance of the manna of the desert, the napkin representing the dew.

Returned home, Jankiel pronounced several invocations, and his two daughters besought his blessing. He extended his hands to the elder, but when the time came for Lia he hesitated a moment, and his voice trembled faintly in pronouncing the benediction for the second time.

"May God make Rachel and Lia like Sara and like Rebecca!"

The mother in her turn blessed her children, embraced them, and shed some tears, which she tried to wipe off, unobserved, on a corner of her embroidered apron.

Before going to table a new prayer was addressed to the angels by Jankiel, then a second repetition of the Song of Solomon, and reading from the Talmud a verse chosen at random. Then followed the consecration of the wine and the blessing of broken bread, the pieces of which were distributed to the guests. It was thus they commenced the repast; but, in spite of the command of Moses to be merry during the Sabbath, the father seemed to be deeply afflicted. His glance sought Lia, and the young girl was so confused that she would have liked to conceal herself under the table.

Carried out according to tradition, the feast had a solemn character. The supper was half prayer, half offering, and bore no resemblance to the fashionable feasts from which God is banished and to which one does not dream of inviting the angels. Jankiel, a scrupulous observer of the law, pronounced a last prayer at the end of the repast. After that they separated. Rachel

went to her bedroom, where Jankiel soon joined her.

"I am alarmed," said she to her husband; "you appear ill. You are not in your usual spirits. You have not the tranquillity of the Sabbath. What is the matter with you?"

"Oh, it will pass away! Do not speak of it now. It would sadden this blessed and holy day."

His wife said no more.

It is thus that the Sabbath is kept in houses where the old customs are strictly observed. In most Jewish families the ritual is abridged, and this tends to destroy the ancient and patriarchal character of this consecrated day.

Opposite Jankiel's dwelling was a wooden house; it was comfortable and convenient, and belonged to David Seeback. It was toward the windows of this house that Lia, alone in her chamber, turned her beautiful eyes. She sighed deeply, and seemed lost in thought.

David Seeback, father and son, had for many years followed the profession of money-lenders, a business which was called usury until the moment when political economy decided that to profit by the need of another is legitimate; and that interest, mutually agreed, no matter how high, is a permissible thing. These financiers were neither Jews nor Christians. They kept in appearance the Jewish laws and customs, but they attached to them no real importance. David, the father, gave himself out as a believing Jew to his co-religionists, but ridiculed all their observances when he found himself with the *Khutars* and the *Goïmes*.

He ate anywhere that he happened to be, and travelled on the days set aside for prayer and repose. In a word, he had shaken off tradition and found nothing to take its place.

David the younger had received his education in Warsaw and abroad; he bore no trace whatever of his origin. Well educated, but very corrupt at heart, he found in his insatiable cupidity many ways of gaining money. The father was proud of his only scion, and predicted for him a high destiny; and this time the proverb "like father like son" was right.

While the solemn ceremony of the Sabbath was being kept in the house of Jankiel, the two Davids lighted their candles and ate their supper, but forgot the prayers and the offerings of bread and wine. They were alone.

Long time a widower, Seeback had no other child but David. A weak character, he jested under all circumstances, and loved to make a trial of wit with his son. David the younger sometimes lent himself to this paternal whim, but, in general, he assumed a certain gravity, so as to impose upon people by an affected wisdom. Hypocrisy was developed in the family from one generation to another.

With all his indifference to religion, David the elder felt, on the days consecrated by custom, a certain remorse for having abandoned the pious customs; he was uneasy and unhappy. Sometimes he glided into an obscure corner, and murmured a portion of a prayer that he considered ridiculous to repeat aloud. He believed that by these clandestine practices he might repel some imminent danger. He had lost all respect for Jehovah, but he feared him still. Several times on this evening he arose from the table, and, at the risk of incurring his son's sneers, muttered in his sleeve some prayer. He had even simulated the blessing of the wine when he presented it to his heir, who, with a certain tact, feigned not to notice all his grimaces. The younger David had a distinguished manner, but his features expressed pride and foppery.

The father increased these faults by praises, and his admiration almost reached idolatry. He asked nothing in return but filial gratitude. The young man made very little account of his father, and reproached him continually for infractions of the laws of good society and for his ignorance. The old man at first essayed to justify himself, but always finished by bowing to the superior wisdom of David, junior. This insolent coxcomb was seated at table in a dressing-gown, with a cigar in his mouth. He wore gold spectacles, though they really hindered him from seeing. Fish was served, the only vestige of traditional customs, then a roast and tea. The old man cut the bread, muttering some unintelligible words; but he perceived a look of disdain from his son, and did not finish the prayer. There was a long silence, which the father broke by asking the young man, who had stretched himself out in a chair:

"What do you dream of? Of the Sabbath?"

"All that I know of the Sabbath is," replied David the younger, "that formerly they celebrated it. Today it is foolish, a foolish custom, and it is old Jankiel alone who observes the ridiculous ceremonies. Unfortunately, ridicule makes no impression on him."

"Would you, then, mock him?"

"Why not? This wretched, vulgar Jew feels for us only malevolence and repulsion."

"What matters it? He cannot injure us. His ill-will cannot make us lose one thing or another."

"That is true. And I would not have even noticed his aversion had he not such a pretty

daughter."

"How now! What are you thinking of? Do not forget that you are already married, although you do not live with your wife. Do not plunge yourself in a love affair. There are plenty of girls who will suit you better than that lass. Even if you wish to be divorced, you must not dream of her. We can easily find for you the daughter of some Polish proprietor. If you take a second wife, you must look as high as possible, and for one not a Jewess. Am I not sufficiently rich to buy a property grand enough to make all the neighbouring aristocracy jealous?"

"I do not want land. Why invest in property that does not return four per cent., when we can now get twenty or thirty?"

"You are right, and you are wrong. Our capital brings in, it is true, the interest you name, but at the same time we run the risk of losing it. When one has acquired so immense a fortune as ours, it does not do to expose all of it in the same speculations. Land cannot run away. The banks give four and a half per cent.; but even the banks can fail. One cannot sleep easy with much money in the banks. The public funds? They are depressed. I continually fear a declaration of war. Land is really the safest investment."

"Not as safe as you think. The land can be taken from us."

"By whom?"

"We are not in France, or England, where property is sacred. Our government offers no security. No one is secure here."

"A very profound political thought, and one worthy of being remembered. I render homage to your perspicacity; but suppose even that half of the land was confiscated, the other half would increase in value. That is indisputable, while paper may be worth nothing to-morrow. Let us return to your future marriage. The first was unworthy of you; it must be dissolved. But why the devil do you dream of Lia? She did well for herself to fall in your way. She is a Jewess, and, though she is not bad looking, beauty is not everything. What a figure she would make in your *salon*, this country maiden who knows not how either to stand or to sit. Your second wife must be a woman who has received a refined education. She must be of noble birth, that she may shine at court. And could Lia do that? A simple country girl!"

"Nevertheless," objected David, "it is not for my *salon* that I wish to marry. I myself prefer a simple and innocent girl to all the fashionable ladies of Warsaw, who, having had eleven adorers, marry the twelfth."

"You talk foolishly. To think thus is the part of a common Jew, who only dreams of multiplying and filling the earth according to the command of the Bible. Your wife ought to push your fortunes. Through your education and your fortune you cannot fail to become a celebrated man. And what would you do then with Lia? Take her to a ball, or to the theatre? Truly, she would do you honour! If some great person noticed her, she would be confused and embarrassed, sucking her apron to hide her face. There are hundreds of Jewesses like that. You must take an educated wife, German or French. With your brains, and my money, you can aspire to anything. It would not be astounding for you to become minister, and then"--

He threw out his arm, and extinguished a candle. He arose to light it, but, suddenly remembering that this was the Sabbath day, a superstitious fear came over his spirit. He remained standing, not knowing what to do.

Seeing his father's hesitation, his son left his chair, and was bold enough to relight the candle. After this act of courage he reseated himself, and puffed his cigar with a malicious air.

His father loved to smoke, but, as he dared not infringe the law, he always deprived himself of that pleasure on the Sabbath, under pretext of some trifling indisposition. When the candle was relighted, an infraction of the Jewish law, he at first regarded it with fear, but soon regained his normal state, and continued to explain his theories on marriage.

"Lia cannot hope for a great fortune," said he. "Estimating Jankiel's wealth at its highest,--house, manufactory, and shop,--he scarcely possesses a hundred, or a hundred and twenty thousand roubles. What is that? A mere trifle to us!"

"And we," asked the young man, to tease his father, "have we not enough money?"

"How can such a word come out of your mouth? Has one ever enough? With money one does as he wills; without it, with all the intelligence in the world, one is only a fool. I will try to find you a rich wife. Think no more of Lia."

"What if I love her?"

"Love her? Your love will only be like a fire of straw; the faster it burns, the sooner it will die out. A sensible man does not marry for love and for the bright eyes of a young girl."

David, junior, burst out laughing, and his father was exceedingly proud of this mark of

approbation from one who was usually so disdainful.

Satisfied with themselves, they were about to retire to their rooms, when they heard loud knocks on the outer door.

The thing was so extraordinary at this hour of the night, that the old man experienced a sensation of anxiety and foreboding, which changed to one of surprise when he saw at the door a man of fine appearance and of commanding stature, whom he did not recognize at first sight.

"Messieurs," said the stranger, "I hope you will pardon this intrusion on a holy day, and at so late an hour."

"Why, this is Monsieur Jacob!" cried the old man.

"Our holy law," replied the new-comer, "forbids all business transactions on the day consecrated to God, but the law permits us, on such occasions, to succour even a beast in danger of death; how much more, then, a man."

"Dear Monsieur Jacob, we do not belong to that superstitious class who dare not touch the fire or sew on a button during the Sabbath. Be seated. What can we do for you? But pardon me; my son David, Monsieur Jacob, who is a distant relation, and of whom you have often heard me speak," added he, presenting his son to the visitor.

David, junior, only knew that Jacob had been the sole legatee of a rich banker of Berlin, but that was sufficient to cause him to receive him with distinction. They invited him a second time to be seated. Jacob excused himself with a certain impatience.

"Perhaps you have not yet supped?" asked the master of the house.

"I reached your town somewhat late, and hastened to fulfil my religious duties. I have been to the synagogue, then I ate a little at the inn."

"Ah, you go to the temple!" and turning toward his son, the old man said:--

"What a good example! Monsieur Jacob, well brought up and intelligent, observes the law!"

"Yes," said Jacob, "a Jew I shall always remain. No doubt in captivity and exile we have added many ceremonies to the Mosaic law. These are both sweet and bitter souvenirs. It is good not to let them be extinguished."

The elder David visibly rejoiced at these words; his son smiled and bit his lips.

"Every one ought to follow the dictates of his own conscience," said he.

"But tell us to what good fortune do we owe your visit?" asked the father.

"I come to you on account of our relationship, to demand a service. I met in Italy a young Polish exile who suffers so much with homesickness that I brought him here with me. He was poor and ill. My conscience urged me to aid him. He fled from Poland several years ago, fearing to be implicated in a political plot."

"Political affairs; bad business," grumbled the old man shaking his head, while his son said nothing.

"He has succeeded in obtaining a passport under an assumed name," continued Jacob, "and he was determined to brave the danger, and accompanied me to Poland. At the frontier he would not accept my offer to go on with him. For fear of compromising me if he was arrested, he preceded me so as to enter his native land alone. Honest youth! Happily he passed the frontier, as I learned on arriving two days later. Scarcely had I passed the custom-house when I heard that the police had discovered that he was travelling under an assumed name. I hastened to rejoin him at the station where he was detained, and secured his release. I come to ask you to shelter him in your house, which is not suspected by the police, until I can obtain amnesty for him or find some other means to rid him of his pursuers. Otherwise the unfortunate boy will be sent to Siberia, and perish like many others of his oppressed countrymen."

The silence with which the two Davids answered his request showed that they were not inclined to harbour the young Pole. The appeal to their sentiment of humanity fell on deaf ears. It was the elder who, with a frown, finally spoke.

"This is a most delicate business," said he, "and very dangerous. Why not be frank with a kinsman? This is not a Jewish affair. What have we to do with the Poles, or Polish complications? They have nothing in common with us. The government does not persecute us, or, at least, it could persecute us much more. We are believed to be loyal and devoted. Why, then, should we expose ourselves and alienate this favourable disposition, by aiding, our former oppressors, the Poles? Why should the Jews meddle with politics? It is not our business."

"You and I differ in regard to that," replied Jacob. "If we wish to enjoy the same rights as other inhabitants of this country, we ought to commence to take an interest in politics and in the

welfare of the land. It is only thus that we can expect to live on a footing of perfect equality. The government has decided to crush out the intelligent and educated Poles. It certainly belongs to us who eat their bread to make common cause with them against their oppressors, who are only conquering intruders. Let us remember our own captivity."

"Did you not say that the Jews ought to observe the law above all things? You contradict yourself, for the law commands us to protect ourselves, and it is contrary to our interests to take part with the Poles."

"How do you know that? Can you read the future? The iniquities committed against this nation cannot always remain without vengeance. God has permitted the chastisement, but the measure is full. The sins are washed away by tears and by blood! The day of justice draws near! In the day of terrible retribution it will be better to be with those who have been purified by divine punishment, and not with those who have incurred the wrath of God."

"In my turn let me ask, how do you know all this?" said the elder David. "Is it your prophetic spirit that tells you? Have you remembered the sins of these Philistines, the extortions and the miseries with which they afflicted us? Do you know that there still remains much to expiate?"

"It is not just to make a single nation responsible for the crimes of all Christians. The Jews have been persecuted everywhere, and in many lands much worse than here."

"What good is all this discussion?" cried the younger David, rising from his chair. "It is nothing to us who obtains the upper hand. I do not care to decide who are the better, the Russians or the Poles. At least I know how to take a Russian. He is always easily bought; at first he is brutal and insulting, then he holds out his hand, and you have only to oil it with a few pieces of silver, and he becomes sweet and obliging; but your Poles do not inspire me with so much confidence."

Jacob would listen no longer; he arose, and cried indignantly:--

"Then, as such are your convictions I will not insist. I see, with sorrow, that you, as well as others, choose a selfish policy, and always take sides with the strong and not with the right."

"The right? The ancient rulers of the country have not respected us, have they?"

"If I admit that, is it any reason why we should imitate them to-day? The elect people ought to be more virtuous than the people they live with, and set them an example."

The younger David began to whistle, and then said:--

"Who speaks now of virtue and right? In the world of to-day self-interest is the sole right. Virtue! Right! Grand words, in which one no longer believes."--

The old man bowed before his son's superior wisdom, and threw a glance full of pride at Jacob, which seemed to say:--

"How can you reply to that, eh?"

The friend of Ivas calmly surveyed the young man, and replied in a grave voice, dwelling on each word:--

"Unfortunately, you appreciate our epoch at its true value. However, that which now is cannot always be. Truth still exists. Our law, thousands of years old though it may be, is not worn out. Open our holy books, and you will read therein truths which have never ceased to be truths, and which will never cease until the end of the world. Men are corrupt; faith has diminished. God will rectify this state of things. Let us be followers of the ancient law, and not of present errors. If you have gained by your education nothing more than the reasoning that you affect, I sincerely pity you."

On this Jacob ceased, and the old man, before so calm, became agitated, and looked at his son for a reply. The serenity of spirit of this man, so firm in his belief, awoke in him a fear similar to that which had kept him from relighting the candle on the Sabbath.

David, junior, replied coolly:--

"Do not trouble yourself about me, I beg of you, Monsieur Jacob. Every one to his own opinion. Do not go yet. Perhaps I can find a way to satisfy your demand without incurring any risk."

"Thanks. It is weak of me to implore you again to help an unfortunate whom you so little wish to succour. Still a few more words. The country is on the eve of a revolution. The result is doubtful, but it is an opportunity for us to gain equal rights by the sacrifice of our blood. Let us profit by it. Many of my race think as I do."

"Many? How many? Who are they? Do you know the intentions of the Emperor Napoleon? Are you in the secrets of Lord Palmerston? Have you received the confidences of the Rothschilds?"

"I can only tell you one thing; it is, that here the most sensible men are of my opinion."

"And the richest?"

"Yes, the richest also," replied Jacob, with an involuntary smile.

"In that case," said the old man, "we must take the affair into consideration."

"As for the object of my visit, I regard it a failure. I can only excuse myself for disturbing you at such an hour."

Then he turned to go, when the old man called him back.

"Wait!" cried he. "A glass of wine. David, bring the three rouble Bordeaux. Deign to taste it, Monsieur Jacob. Isolated, as we are, in this little village, we know not how the wind blows. Tell us, is there anything in contemplation?"

"You had better find out for yourselves, and then you can decide which party you will aid."

"Those incorrigible Poles! I fear they are engaging in some new pranks."

"I know nothing," said Jacob. "I can only surmise. The Muscovites themselves have the air of hastening the explosion of this foolishness to divert that which threatens their own country, 'holy Russia.' Since the emancipation of the serfs, the situation has been critical. By kindling a fire in Poland, they relight the national hatred, and turn away the public thoughts from Petersburg and Moscow towards the provinces. It is the only way, now that the peasants give proofs of discontent and the revolutionary idea is propagated, the sole method of reaffirming the authority of the Czar."

"What admirable teachers!" cried the old man. "Profound wisdom like that is the gage of certain success. Certainly, that is the side we had better take."

"As a nation," said Jacob, "we have been conquered more than once. Always in place of attaching ourselves to the triumphal chariot, we have remained faithful to the cause of God."

He then rose to leave for the second time, but the elder David was ashamed to let his visitor depart thus.

"What, then, is your proposition?" asked he.

"To shelter under your roof an outlaw. This village being isolated, the risk is not great."

"Very true," said the younger man; "but in a small place like this, where every one is acquainted, the arrival of a stranger would be remarked."

"Then say no more about it," said Jacob, turning to go. "A thousand excuses for disturbing you."

This time he really took his departure.

"I am sorry," said the father to the son when they were alone, "that we did not find some way to arrange this affair. Jacob has excellent connections. What will he tell them of us? Truly, he cannot have a very good opinion."

"Bah! I am, perhaps, of your opinion, but we could not do otherwise. Let us to bed."

The protector of Ivas returned to the inn, and did not awaken his companion, who was wrapped in a deep slumber. He threw himself on the bed, and his thoughts kept him awake the greater part of the night. He arose early to seek an interview with Jankiel, whom he did not know personally.

Having introduced himself to the old man, he took part in the morning prayers, and then told him frankly that he had long desired his acquaintance, and that he addressed him full of confidence in his well-known sentiments.

This frankness pleased Jankiel, who placed his hand on his visitor's shoulder, and replied kindly:--

"I have heard of you as a man on whom the people of Israel can lean with confidence, for, in spite of your known learning, you guard the ancient faith, customs, and practices, and honour old age. In all this you differ from many of our young men. May the God of Isaac and Jacob bless you! Learned men abound, but pious ones are rare. Our customs are neglected; they spit on the tombs of our ancestors, and on all that past ages have taught us to respect."

"I fear I am not possessed of all with which you credit me, but I try not to disgrace my ancient faith and lineage."

"And where do you come from now?"

"From foreign parts. I have visited almost all countries inhabited by the Jews, and everywhere I have verified their deplorable misery."

"Have you visited the land of our fathers?"

"Yes, but even there the Jews are not at home. They are strangers even in their own country."

At this moment Jankiel remembered a citation from the Prophet Jeremiah, to which Jacob replied by the following passage from the Talmud:--

"'The hands of the divine mercy are always outstretched under the wings of the Seraphim to receive the repentant sinner.'" (Pesakhim 119. a.)

Jankiel was enchanted to hear the young man quote the Talmud, so neglected by the present generation. He blessed him, with emotion, and said:--

"My heart goes out to you, and I would be glad to give you a proof of my sympathy. Speak, and tell me what service you require of me."

"I come to you with a petition that I have already, but in vain, addressed to David, your neighbour."

At the name of David the old man frowned, but quickly replied:--

"That need not deter you. I am listening."

Jacob related the history of Ivas, and asked Jankiel's advice.

"The circumstances," replied the old man, after a moment of thought, "are difficult. We ought, however, to side with the persecuted and not with the oppressor. 'Among birds the strongest always attack the pigeon and the dove, which are the most acceptable offerings to the Lord.' (Baba Kama, 93. a.) Unhappy Poland! We have lived with her people on the same soil for five hundred years. We ought not to forget that. It is true she is not of our faith, but God does not command to kill even infidels. 'Be at peace with all thy brothers, with thy neighbours, with all men, even the Pagan.' (Barakhot, 17. a.)"

"Beautiful words! If all observed them the world would be better."

"Unhappy nation! She has passed through the most frightful calamities, and greater horrors still threaten her. She wishes to break her chains, and at each attempt these chains are more tightly welded. God has humiliated her because she has counted more on human strength than on divine clemency. Her pride is not yet broken. Poor country! If we are unable to help her, at least we can pray God to protect her. Where is the young man? What do you intend to do with him?"

"Ivas is with me, but I can keep him only with great trouble. In his ardour he would throw himself into the hands of those who seek him. I desire to procure him shelter for awhile. But where? Will he be prudent and obedient? I hope I can persuade him of the necessity."

"If you had not first appealed to David, I would have received him into my house. Now I dare not. I have a room in the attic where he would have been in safety, but it is too late. An accusation is to be feared. I could buy myself off, but he would be lost."

"Do you not know of some house, some friend, in the country?"

"Ah! yes; I see my way out of this embarrassment. I know some honest men who live in the depths of a forest. Early to-morrow I will take him to them in my wagon. But he must be on his guard."

Jacob embraced Jankiel with effusion.

"Never mind thanking me so warmly," said the latter with emotion. "I am happy to oblige you, and also your friend, who loves his country and liberty as we formerly loved Judea. However, in the name of Heaven, if you have any influence with the Poles, try to restrain them. The enemy lies in wait for them, and already rejoices in anticipation of the spoils and the cruelties he will accomplish when the anticipated insurrection has been crushed. There is nothing gained by setting fire to one's own house in order to drive out invaders. They must be wary and use strategy."

"Your words are full of wisdom, but men are rarely guided by reason. Suffering and misfortune are bad counsellors."

Jacob informed Ivas of the result of his visit, and added:--

"I have done all that I could. Now it is for you to be careful not to fall again into the claws of the Muscovite. You will be informed if you are in danger, so that you can leave your hiding-place."

CHAPTER IX.

THE EVE OF AN INSURRECTION.

After his absence of several years, Jacob was surprised at the aspect which Poland presented. An extravagant and foolish hope and excitement prevailed everywhere. The most improbable rumours were accepted without question. All hearts rejoiced, and for the second time all hands were outstretched toward that France, which was, however, transformed into a sort of machine, obeying the capricious will of one man. Wonders were announced from Russia. The Muscovites were preparing an outbreak, and from this terrible uprising would come a reconciliation with Poland.

The tolerance of the government, a feigned and calculated tolerance, passed for weakness and impotence. Russia, it was said, had changed; she had weakened, and was no longer capable of repressing a patriotic rebellion. She was afraid, and the fear was believed on account of easy concessions, which were really made in order to precipitate the revolutionary movement. All this was to the secret satisfaction of the Czar and his ministers, who directed a course of action full of ambuscades and of deceit.

The propaganda of Hertzen, Bakounine, Ogaref, Golovine, Dolgorouky,--legatees of the ideas of the Decabristes,--had not been entirely unsuccessful in the cause of true Russia, the ancient Moscovie. They had worked on the youth of the universities, they had penetrated the army and the navy, they had sprung up even in the garrets and in the country. The government had been obliged to capitulate before them. They were so strong at present, that it was hoped by the precipitation of the Polish insurrection to divert the public attention from the greater danger which threatened St. Petersburg and Moscow. Thus the poor Poles were unconsciously led on to their own destruction. It was permitted to the Katkof and to the Aksakof to turn insidiously the aspirations for liberty into a current of national hatred.

In the last repression of Poland, the Russia of Alexander II. was more barbarous, more pitiless, than the Russia of Catharine and of Nicholas. As for Europe, which was formerly agitated at the sight of these crushed people, she regarded with cold indifference the hanging of Mouravief, and the wholesale exile of the people who strewed the route from the Vistula to the Lena with corpses. Such is the sympathy of Europe in this mercenary age, when self-interest is too highly esteemed to be endangered by taking the side of the oppressed.

At times Jacob refused to believe his eyes and ears, men seemed so different from what he had imagined them. Their language and their deportment were no longer the same. His first visit in Warsaw was paid to his former guardian. He found him absent, and it was rumoured, engaged in important enterprises. On returning from his house he met Henri Segel, for whom his aversion had augmented since, on the route from Genoa to Spezzia, he had encountered him in company with the danseuse Gigante. He recoiled and blushed on hearing the joyous voice of Mathilde's husband.

"Really, this is a surprise," said Henri. "You are more astonished to see me here than in Italy? Well, we live in changeable times. Mathilde did not like Italy, and was determined to return to *la cara patria*. I consented to come, for urgent business made it necessary for me to do so. How delighted I am to see you again, Monsieur Jacob! I am on my way home, and willingly or by force you must come with me. I am anxious to show you my new residence. It is a lovely house; a jewel, comfortable, elegant, and in good taste. Come and help me amuse Mathilde. Always sad and weary, she communicates to me her sadness. She is an incomprehensible woman; in fact, all women are incomprehensible. My wife wants for nothing. She has only to ask in order to obtain silks, jewels,--everything that would make most women happy. But she is always discontented; an unhappy disposition! Come, let us go!"

"Truly I have not much time. I have only just arrived, and I have business to attend to."

"Your business will keep. Mathilde will be delighted to see you. You will be doing her a special favour. Come, then, I pray you!"

Jacob felt that he ought to refuse, but the temptation was too great. To see her again! Duty forbade it, his heart demanded it, and his heart led him.

Henri took his arm as if to prevent his escape, and conducted him to his home.

"Look well at Warsaw," said he gayly. "What changes everywhere!"

"It is true," said Jacob. "These transformations I feel, but I cannot explain them."

"Enormous changes! The general exaltation is complete! The hand is on the trigger. A revolution is imminent."

"May God preserve us from it!" said Jacob.

"It is inevitable, or else I am a fool. I can smell powder; but, in any case, it cannot hurt us. Naturally, there will be many victims, and it behooves us to manœuvre not to be caught in the wheels of this machine, which rolls and crushes. We have everything to gain, whatever be the result, whichever be the conqueror."

"I avow that I do not comprehend you."

"From either side we shall obtain civil equality. That is certain. Afterward we shall not be ruined, even if we throw millions into the abyss. Our capital is not seizable like that of the landed nobles, whose estates can be so easily confiscated, but our wealth is portable; gold and jewels chiefly comprise it. We shall save our fortunes, and there lies our strength. The Muscovites will prevail in the end; the odious class of proud Polish nobles will disappear, and we shall be the aristocrats to whom the country will belong."

"The truth of your calculation may be proved, perhaps; its cruelty is unsurpassed. With what indifference you discount the misfortunes of those who form the basis of your argument!" said Jacob.

"What else can I do? Can I prevent this uprising? Ought we not to profit by circumstances? Believe me, the Jews hold to-day in their hand the future of Poland. Yesterday despised, soon we shall be the masters! Look at the nobility! What is it? A band without strength, who guard their pride of birth, their arrogance, their corruptions, their eccentricities, and foolish indifference; they have all the faults of their ancestors, and none of their virtues. It is a caste surely fated to die. Such a caste cannot exist now-a-days. And if society still demands a sort of modified aristocracy, who will replace the nobles? Who but we?"

"You know that I am a Jew, heart and soul," said Jacob; "but I pity Poland if your prophecy is accomplished."

"And why?"

"Because we are not ready for the rôle you lay out for us. We have not deserved, by our conduct, to be the arbiters of this country. And to tell the whole truth, our community is more corrupt than the nobles; it is already worm-eaten."

"Not so bad as they, though."

"Our malady is different from theirs, but it is as dangerous."

"Oh, no! Because we know how to acquire and preserve this wealth, while the nobles do not know anything of business, nor how to manage their vast estates economically. The strength of money, the strength of capital, is the only real power in this century."

"An opportunity, as you have remarked," said Jacob, "is presented to the Jews of Poland to play an important rôle; as important as the one they already hold in Germany. Will they understand their advantageous position? Will they be worthy of it? Two questions to which God alone can reply."

Segel burst out laughing.

"You are a pious Jew," cried he. "In everything you mix the idea of God. These old superstitions are completely worn out."

"And that is precisely what afflicts me. We have torn our belief to tatters, but under them is gold."

"What use of speaking of the *débris* of a past which will never return? There is my house; it cost more than a half million. I will do the honours, and we will go afterward to find Mathilde."

He looked at his watch.

"*Saperlotte!* I am expected at the Bourse in half an hour; but I have still time to stay a few moments with you; then you can await me with Mathilde. I will despatch my business at a gallop."

The mansion was spacious and elegant, but with a vulgar display of wealth. No taste, refinement, or sentiment for art. It was built on one of those plans which serve at the same time for private houses or hotels. Superb mirrors with gilded frames, furniture covered with velvet hangings of great price, wonderful inlaid floors, rare bronzes, crystal chandeliers, porcelain from China and Japan, costly bric-à-brac, and a general tone of vulgar display; such was the dwelling, where, in the least details, one could see that the proprietor had everywhere sought to dazzle his guests, and confound taste with costliness.

During the inspection he several times spoke thus:--

"This *bibelot* cost me a hundred ducats; this vase is worth a thousand roubles."

The ostentatious mansion was worthy of a dethroned king or of a prince *in partibus*. The general air of the house, nevertheless, was that of solitude and *ennui*. The rooms seemed uninhabited. In spite of their proportions, there was something wanting. Nothing seemed homelike or cheerful.

Segel even conducted Jacob to the pretentious kitchen, provided with a constant flow of running water. There was a tank filled with fish, and many other inventions more or less ingenious.

As soon as his host had left him to go and inform his wife, Jacob threw himself on a couch; he was overpowered with fatigue and disgusted with all this show, and pitied Mathilde more than ever.

Madame Segel soon entered slowly; she was very pale, and was almost unable to walk alone. She saluted her friend with a sweet smile tinged with melancholy. In her sunken eyes burned a strange fire.

"Welcome home from Italy, monsieur," said she, holding out her hand. "I longed to return home; but what matters it, here or there, it is all the same."

"No doubt life, regarded in all its gravity, is full of sadness everywhere," said Jacob.

"Why the devil do you regard it thus?" cried Henri, offering Jacob a little glass of brandy. "I almost forgot the Bourse. I have hardly time to swallow anything. Dear Mathilde, be good enough to keep our guest until my return. I confide him to you; do not let him escape. I will be absent only a quarter of an hour."

He rang.

"Are the horses ready?" asked he of the servant.

"Yes, monsieur."

"That is good. *Au revoir*. Without further excuse I leave you with my wife," said he, kissing his wife's hand. "If you are at loss for conversation, she can play the piano or sing something. You will find the daily papers on the table. Very poor reading, I assure you, but, for want of something better"--

When he had gone they remained silent for some time, not daring to look at each other. At last Mathilde sighed, and held out her hand to him, murmuring:--

"Jacob, we are old and good friends, and nothing more, are we not?"

"Madame," replied he respectfully, "time has not changed me, and the confidence you have in me will not be betrayed."

"When we seek to keep apart," said Mathilde, "fate reunites us. It is a temptation. Let us remain worthy of ourselves and worthy of our past, so pure. I cannot understand Henri. Ordinarily he is so jealous. He does not like to leave me alone with men. And to-day he has acted so differently. Is it confidence or indifference? I will ask him."

"What matters it? Tell me how you are, and why you left Italy so soon?"

"Because there is suffering everywhere, death everywhere. Since my marriage I am stricken at the heart. I must suffer, here or there. I am always suffering."

"And your health?"

"The soul alone is ill. But speak of yourself."

"I--I have neither the time nor the right to suffer. Man lives not by sentiment, but by action. It is this which renders us at the same time more miserable and more happy. In the struggle for existence, when we receive a wound, we have no right to think of it, and we must continue the combat. Even you, madame, why not seek a remedy for your sorrow?--an occupation, some aim in life."

"Occupations, my dear Jacob, are very limited for a woman without children. Without them, what object in life has a woman? Do you think that to sew and embroider can tranquillize a soul?"

"Reading, music, and poetry are inexhaustible sources of enjoyment. Believe me, madame, days well employed are not followed by satiety, regret, nor remorse. Those who have not the creative genius can assimilate immortal creations. It is a voluptuous life that draws away from the cares of existence."

"Alas! to follow your advice it had been necessary to be initiated to this manner of living, and to be accustomed to it."

"You can form the habit."

"I have already, thank Heaven, an occupation in music. It soothes me, absorbs me, and passes the time. But music occupies only a little corner in my heart, and cannot fill it entirely."

"Reading, then."

"Reading unveils to us too much the secrets of life. I speak of romances, the drama, and poetry."

"In that case seek, and you will find, some more serious occupation."

"I will try. But enough of this. Speak to me, Jacob, of yourself. For what have you returned? What are you going to do?"

"I return, heart and soul full of ideas, and more an Israelite than ever. I bring back projects of reform, of labour, and of sacrifice for my people. My views are almost presumptuous. I dream of being a Bar Maïmonides. There is so much to do for our poor race."

"Do you believe it? Do you think that you can unite these scattered people?"

"Yes; provided that my strength holds out. The task will be difficult, arduous, and redoubtable."

"Who will be your disciples? The believers remain attached to their foolish superstitions. They will repulse you as a new kind of heretic. The unbelievers and the indifferent will listen to you as to a mad poet, and will ridicule you."

"The prophets have often been repulsed by the crowd, who have even at times stoned them to death. But each one of them has left in history traces of his passage, and the grain that they have sown has germinated."

"Then you will have the courage of a martyr? You deceive yourself, however, if you think that you will be riddled with stones in public places where you preach. You will, instead, have jokes thrown at you; you will be called a fool, and covered with ridicule. That will be a shabby martyrdom, absurd and insulting. The stoning would be preferable. Sarcasm is a mighty weapon."

"When a man is absorbed, inspired, and exalted, full of the truth that is within him, he does not see the pygmies in the crowd. It is the crowd, the mass only, that he sees. When so many of our people dream of nothing but money getting, no matter how, it is absolutely necessary that some one should take an interest in the moral elevation of souls, and devote himself entirely to this holy mission."

"How happy should I be to be your pupil! but I fear I am not capable of understanding such science, such wisdom. At times it seems as if I can foresee the future, but, really, I am very ignorant. Write out your thoughts and I will read them. I will learn them by heart, and I will spread them among those of my own sex who are deprived of the consolation of faith in God. Unfortunately, if you are a Barak, I am not a Deborah."

Jacob was about to reply when the door opened, giving entrance to Mathilde's father and husband, accompanied by Mann and Simon.

Henri had informed them of Jacob's arrival, and they were all invited to dinner. The acceptance on the part of an important person, like Mann, was extraordinary, for he usually made some excuse, and declined all ordinary invitations.

Jacob's former guardian ran to him with open arms, and cried:--

"Welcome! I embrace you, and wish you much happiness, Rabbi Jacob."

Mann cried at the same time:--

"I am rejoiced to hold your hand after so long an absence."

"How do you return to us, Akiba or atheist?" asked the jovial Simon.

"Neither one nor the other. I am the same as ever, only a little more alarmed as to the future."

"Then it was not worth while to leave Poland," replied Simon, "and you arrived just in time to assist in a revolution."

"It is no laughing matter," said Henri.

"I am not joking," said Simon. "I am organizing, myself, a regiment of Jewish gamins, that I shall lead to combat seated in a sedan chair. In place of a gun I will have my umbrella."

"Such pleasantry is ill-timed," replied Mathilde's father. "We are on the eve of grave events."

"It is every day more apparent. Alas!"

"Your 'alas,' Father Simon, shows that you condemn these revolutionary tendencies."

"How can I approve them?"

"It is useless to oppose public opinion," remarked Mann; "these fools will not listen to reason. When reason speaks they are deaf as a post. The best thing we can do is to look out for ourselves."

"The safest thing," added Simon, "is to conceal ourselves during the combat."

"Certainly. Why should we mix in it?" said Mann approvingly.

"To speak seriously," said Jacob, "there is, perhaps, another line of conduct to follow."

"The catastrophe is not yet certain," observed Henri, "for there are among them many reasonable men."

Mann rose from his seat and cried:--

"The catastrophe is certain. It cannot be otherwise with a clique of proud and degenerated men guided by their passions and not by reason."

"Dear Monsieur Mann, and what of us?" asked Simon. "Are we neither degenerate nor proud? Speak!"

"We are not to be compared with those men. We are worth much more."

"That is true. They are blind, we are only lame. The Jews are peaceable men, suited only for business. When there is disorder in the streets they close their shops."

"My faith! they are sensible to do so."

"Thus said my late papa," murmured Simon. "It is a sacred duty to follow his advice."

"You are always joking."

"And you, the day when you joke I will abstain from it. If no one throws a note of gayety into the conversation, they would say that Heine carried all the Jewish spirit into his tomb. It is a service I render you all. Mann, you do not know the efforts that you cost me."

The grave Israelite, wounded in his self-love, walked up and down the room, puffing and grumbling.

"And how does the country seem to you, dear Jacob?" asked Mathilde's father.

"Very much changed. How things have changed for us!"

"Why do you say *us?*" asked Simon. "The half, at least, of our people do not take part in this with us."

"The question is much discussed by the press."

"But, in general, public opinion favours us."

"Yes, in appearance," replied Mann. "The Poles affect to be liberal, but, at heart, they remain feudal aristocrats, incorrigible, and puffed up with pride."

"Listen," interrupted Simon, "to a word of advice. Do not speak of men 'puffed up with pride.' It is inconsistent on your part."

The great man looked at Simon, and said scornfully:--

"You are only an old fault-finder."

"Fault-finder, if you will, but look at yourself in the glass before you reproach others with being proud. Are you more approachable, more cordial, more charitable, than L. P. K., or many other nobles? They have their heraldry, you your millions. Two different causes, but both alike result in pride."

"Hold your peace, you are insufferable," cried the rich man.

Then he murmured between his teeth, "What an impudent fellow!"

Henri and his father-in-law laughed heartily at his wrath.

"Dear brother in Israel," continued Simon calmly, "each time that the nobles have a bad odour smell yourself. You will discover the same odour. You are at heart an aristocrat, but you lack the title."

"Enough! Enough!" cried Mann.

"No! It is not enough. I must get rid of my bile. If I do not I shall stifle, and that would be sad for me at first, for you afterward, if you wish to pay my debts. We were speaking of pride. Very well. If we have not crests surmounted with coronets, nor three hundred years of nobility"--

"Enough, I say! Enough!"

"Certainly, if you insist." And at last Simon consented to be silent.

Mann sulked awhile, then said to Jacob:--

"What news do you bring from Jerusalem? What is the condition of the Jews there? How do they live?"

"In misery. They ask our aid to help them emigrate to foreign lands. They await the signal of regeneration from us. We ought to listen to their appeal."

"You wish, then, to direct the world?"

"I have not that pretension. Akiba, however, was only a shepherd before he became a sage. I might, perhaps, follow his example."

"It is the contrary with which you are threatened, if you do not change your conduct," cried Simon. "From a sage you will become a shepherd."

His guardian laughed good-naturedly, and said:--

"Simon predicts the future well. Instead of reforming humanity, apply yourself to business, and leave God, in his wisdom, to direct the world according to his own plans."

"Can we not become the instruments of God? Ought we not to try and accomplish his designs? I have no wish to amass wealth. I am sufficiently rich."

"If your whim is to be a second Akiba," replied Simon, "I doubt if you will succeed. From the ashes of Akiba have sprung up Börne and Heine. The precepts of Heine in a book are fine; in flesh and blood, inconvenient."

"I do not like Heine," said Jacob.

They all exclaimed against this sacrilegious prejudice.

"Why do you dislike him? He represented in his day the true contemporaneous spirit of the Jews with the Kladderadatch."

"I do not like him, because his spirit is a spirit of destruction, debauchery of thought, debauchery of language, irony, scepticism, and abasement of human nature. All these are scattered among the pearls and diamonds. It is no less corruption though the author be remarkable for talent and genius. It is from this very corruption that we should free ourselves, for it is a presage of death; it is the death-rattle."

"Then," finished Simon, "*Judæorum finis*."

"Yes. *Finis Judæorum et Judaïsmi finis*. The people of Israel resemble a man who, having preserved intact a treasure during a journey of a thousand leagues through forests full of brigands, lost it in a puddle at the door of his house. This treasure is our faith, and it is in danger."

"Dear Jacob, why do we always speak of religion and morality? You really believe, then, that they exist somewhere?"

"If they are dead, we should employ means to resuscitate them."

"Decidedly he is mad," muttered Mann to himself. Then he added in a loud voice:--

"I should be proud of such an honour, but I am unworthy."

"'And I," said Simon, "I advise you to devote your energies to a task less likely to prove disappointing. For example, seek in the Talmud the things forbidden to a Jewish stomach. Maïmonides has counted twenty-four. With a little perseverance you can get it up to thirty. What a glorious discovery that would be!"

"What matters the number of dishes," said Jacob. "Yet the prohibition has produced good results, because it has set a limit to gormandizing."

"If you only knew, dear friend," said Simon, "what a savour there is in a sausage! A wealthy proprietor of Volhynie, although originally an Israelite, ate them to satiety, and afterward said: 'I stuff myself with sausages, for I eat them for myself and for my ancestors, who never tasted them during many generations.'"

"Truly," cried Henri, "the conversation takes an agreeable turn, thanks to sausages."

Mann, wearied with the lamentations of Jacob and the jests of Simon, started a new subject.

"Has any one here," asked he, "been at the house of Count A. Z. lately?"

The count was a person whose popularity increased daily, though it might be fleeting.

"I," responded the indefatigable Simon.

"And you were received?"

"Why not?"

"Very well. What did he say?"

"Always the same sobriety of words. His theory, like that of all the nobles, is that the Jews ought to work to obtain their rights,--like apprentices, in order to pass their companions and masters."

"He is right, up to a certain point," said Jacob.

"How is that?" asked Mann angrily. "Have we not, we who were born on the same soil, received from nature the same rights as these men? In what are nobles our superiors? Have we not gained our rights of equality by humiliations endured during ages?"

"Nature," replied Jacob, "has created us all equal. I do not deny that; but on the side of rights there are duties. If we do not share all the burden we shall not merit all the rights."

"But we could not escape the expense, that I know; and, with their usual haughtiness, the nobles do not welcome us to the Agricultural Society."

"Until the present day," said Jacob, "we have not had a single title to aspire to it. Yet I admit that the nobles are wrong to be so exclusive."

"Certainly. It is wrong for them to act thus; and, tell me, what is the object of the societies the nobles are organizing? It is to deprive us of our commerce."

"Perhaps that would be rendering us a great service, for with this single occupation we are losing prestige. It would, perhaps, be for the best if we were obliged to seek our means of existence elsewhere. Why should we always remain traders? Besides, thanks to our experience and ability, we have not much to fear from their competition, for they know nothing about business."

"But they will monopolize commerce. Their societies are directed against us. Their Agricultural Society is a conspiracy, a plot against the Jews. Everywhere we meet evidences of their hatred."

"And I do not think that on our side there is very much good-will either."

"And why should we like them?" interrupted Henri. "Though they are very polite, and sometimes even familiar, they exclude us from their intimacy and never accord us their friendship."

"We do the same."

"But with us it is different," replied Mann. "We have an excuse, for they have never ceased to render themselves odious."

"Then," concluded Simon, "we have a right to detest them, and their duty is to return love for hatred. Eh! If we slap them on one cheek, they must offer us the other! Besides, the Christian religion teaches that, does it not?"

Simon looked as serious as an owl as he spoke thus, but Mann continued, without smiling:--

"These nobles are fools! Their confidence is extravagant. They believe in the promises of Napoleon III.; they count on England, on Italy, on Hungary and Sweden, and even on Turkey. They await a revolution in Germany,--a revolution of potatoes, no doubt! They also hope much from troubles that are to arise in the interior of Russia. And from all this will infallibly come out the resurrection of Poland! What blindness!"

"In the meanwhile," observed Mathilde's father, "we are in a very disagreeable position. It is equally foolish for us to be on either side. Russia will prevail, that is certain; but during the combat the Poles can crush us and do us much evil, perhaps send us out of the country.

"You are mistaken," cried Henri.

"Yes," agreed Simon. "One has only to sit on two chairs to be sure that if one fails he can sit on the other."

"Naturally."

"One thing is clear to me," said Jacob. "It is, that we ought to side with Poland and share her fate, however disastrous the consequences may be. Self-sacrifice should be our watchword, and no matter what happens, our efforts will not have been in vain."

"In this," said Mann, "Jacob is not altogether wrong. In the proud days of the Polish republic many noble families were so divided that part of their members were for the king, and others against him. These took part in the insurrection; those sustained the government. They had a foot in each camp, and, whatever the result, the one saved the other. It is a good example to follow. It is necessary to keep the middle path: these are the ideas that should be scattered among our people."

"No, no!" cried Jacob. "Not the middle path! We must share the fate of Poland, without reservation."

Mann struck him on the shoulder and said:--

"You are very young."

"Yes, yes, he is young," repeated Simon, "and he ought to listen to the advice of those who have had some experience. It is for old fellows to tell young ones what to do."

Just then a lackey in livery and white gloves announced at the door that dinner was served. Mathilde, who had absented herself, appeared and took her father's arm, and Mann eagerly rose and hastened toward them.

It would be useless to dwell on the elegance of the table and the gastronomic perfection of the repast.

Henri ordinarily contented himself, in spite of his wealth, with a bit of bread and a glass of brandy. But when his vanity was affected nothing was too costly. He was full of apologies, pretending that this was an impromptu repast, and that he was afraid they would not find enough to eat. It was really a dinner for diplomats, and the *menu* was on rose-colored paper bordered with silver.

Mann affected a nonchalant air, so that his lack of education might not be noticed. He tied a napkin around his neck and ate in silence. The conversation turned on the gossip of the day.

Suddenly Mann addressed himself to Jacob in Polish, and said:--

"Although you are an orthodox Jew, you have infringed one of the most important laws of your religion."

"Oh, let us drop Judaism," said the master of the house, in French. "Avoid this subject before the servants."

"But what sin have I committed?" asked Jacob.

"A sin so great that you do not deserve to be called a man in the sight of the Lord."

"What is it, then?"

"How old are you?" said Mann.

"Twenty and over."

"Very well. Since the age of eighteen years you have been in sin, for you have not married, and that is the first duty of every Israelite. If you do not hasten to do so, Dumah will catch you one of these days, and throw you into the depths of hell!"

"I do not deny that youthful marriage is a duty," replied Jacob, "but I believe that our law tolerates some exceptions. As for myself, I have not the least wish to marry."

"How thoughtful Mann is!" cried Simon; "he wishes to put a halter around your neck, because misery loves company."

Jacob replied simply:--

"I cannot marry without love."

As he said these words he threw an involuntary glance toward Mathilde, who grew pale and looked down.

"What a rogue!" continued Simon, with a forced gravity. "To wish to put the sugar of love on the bitter dish of marriage, is to seek hypocrisy where one ought to expect duty and care only."

"Father Simon, we are so accustomed to your jests that your last remark can pass for one. It contains, however, many truths. Yet I venture to ask you if it is not permitted to aspire here below to a little joy and happiness? And true love can procure that."

"No; not in practical life. Romance has perverted your imagination."

"It is, then, forbidden to hope for a little poetry in this prosaic life?"

"Poetry! The Jew ought not to speak of it. Calculation should be our business. Two and two make five, because to admit that two and two make four implies a loss of interest. But to return to your marriage."

"Rather let us drop the subject."

"Very well," said Mann. "I assure you I will bore you about it until you decide. Unfortunately I have no more unmarried daughters. But I can recommend to you a charming young woman with a portion of a hundred thousand roubles."

"A hundred thousand roubles!" cried Simon. "You had better take her, Jacob."

"Thanks for your interest in me," said Jacob coldly, when Mathilde spoke in her turn.

"My uncle and cousin are right," said she, fixing her large, black eyes on him. "You ought to marry."

"What!" cried he sadly. "You also? You are in the plot?"

"Yes; because I desire to see you tranquil and happy."

"Singular receipt," murmured Simon.

"We had better leave the subject of marriage to the managing mammas. After all, we are meddling with something that does not concern us, and some day Jacob will be claiming damages and interest for having marriage put into his head," laughed Henri.

They arose from the table, and all the men save Jacob grouped themselves together.

"What do you think of him?" asked his former guardian of Mann.

"He is a remarkable man. He could be very useful to us if it were not for his religious whims. They are very well for the ignorant, but useless for enlightened men."

"Yes," replied Simon; "religion for you is cabbage soup for the poor. You prefer turtle soup."

"This mania will pass," added Segel; "the principal causes are his youthful enthusiasm, his poetic and devout spirit. Let us persuade him to engage in some useful and lucrative business; it is the best way to keep him from proclaiming himself Jew so often."

New visitors arrived; Mathilde was at the piano, and Jacob listened, all absorbed.

CHAPTER X.

THE PURSUIT OF A HUSBAND.

A short distance from the mansion of Segel, separated only by their gardens, was a pretty little stone villa covered with ivy and other climbing vines. The low windows opened on a veranda, and sculptured ornaments of wood and stone gave it an attractive appearance, although it was a little deteriorated by the dampness, and there was about it a general air of neglect.

The proprietor of this villa was a man who could not live in it on account of the expense he had incurred in building it. His puerile fancy had ruined him, and he was reduced to living in a garret. The plaything was let during the summer, and during the rest of the year it remained empty.

This dwelling lacked a master who would love it and care for it; such was the air of neglect it had taken on.

For several months it had been occupied by Madame Wtorkowska and her daughter. This lady was the widow of a speculator who had been unfortunate in business, and had died in debt. His wife had succeeded in concealing from the creditors some portions of the estate. She lived on this with a certain elegance, and aspired to move in the best society. She went sometimes to Ems, to Spa, or to Paris, and hoped everything from her only daughter, whom she considered a marvel.

Mademoiselle Emma was really charming. She was twenty-two years old and owned to twenty, but no one had yet offered her his name and fortune. Although the mother was persuaded that a

king or a prince of the blood would have been fortunate to possess such a treasure, the simple gentlemen found that this pearl was exacting, and had luxurious tastes a little too costly for men of moderate fortunes.

That was why, in her despair, Madame Wtorkowska, *née* Weinberg, went back to her Israelite friends, among whom she hoped to find a rich merchant who would marry her daughter.

Emma was very beautiful, of that ideal type taken by the painters for Rachel or Rebecca. She was a dark-eyed blonde, with a snowy complexion, features which were like sculptured marble, large, black eyes full of a mysterious fascination, and rosy lips whose charming smiles displayed teeth of pearl. Nature had made her an actress, and her mother had developed in her the art of simulating all emotions and playing all rôles.

This mother knew excellently how to appear a literary woman, without having read much. She gave herself out as an accomplished musician, though she hardly knew the notes. She posed as a lady of high degree, although she had seen the best society only *en négligé* at the baths and in some salons of doubtful distinction, and she masked her poverty under a deceitful elegance and an appearance of wealth.

Emma, of which the Polish is Emusia, called herself, for short, Musia, which she further transformed into the French, Muse, which gave her a stamp of originality, and expressed by a name her diverse talents and her dazzling accomplishments. At an early age she learned to play the piano, and initiated herself in light and easy literature. Provided that the book was written in French, in an elegant style, her mother asked no more; as for the morals they inculcated she was utterly indifferent. "This is not suitable. That can harm you. You must guard yourself well from this or from that." These were the rules of conduct that Madame Wtorkowska gave to her daughter, who soon became accomplished in all her refinements: the art of dissimulation, habitual and unblushing falsehood, elegant and perfumed deceit. She had a great natural talent for music. At six years she passed for a little prodigy, at twelve she played in public, and at eighteen she was proclaimed Chopin's most clever interpreter. She had so enchanted Liszt at Ems, to believe her mother, that he would have married her then and there had it not been for the double obstacles of the princess ... and his priesthood. Muse, the better to attract attention, had adopted a very beautiful, although somewhat eccentric, toilet. Her mother lost no occasion to show her beautiful daughter at the theatre, at charity concerts, at the industrial exhibitions, and at the art galleries. She also added the publicity of the press, by procuring, from time to time, a flattering mention of the beauty and talents of Muse in the *Courrier de Varsovie*.

In spite of all, she had no luck so far; all the artifices of coquetry had not obtained a proposal of marriage worthy of being taken into consideration. Two aspirants only had presented themselves in a legitimate and honourable manner: a youth of eighteen years all fire and flame, and an old man foolishly in love. As neither of them had any money they were quickly refused.

At the baths of Spa or Ems a count also had offered himself, but this noble had ruined himself by a dissipated life, and, as he could not return to Warsaw on account of his debts, lived "by his wits."

In a moment of discouragement Muse thought of becoming an actress. "With my beautiful voice and charms of person," said she, "success is certain, and I shall soon be rolling in gold." But this idea was extremely distasteful to her mother, whose ambition was for a solid establishment, and not for the precarious life of the theatre. She wept, and implored her daughter not to think of it, and assured her that their pecuniary resources were sufficient to keep them in luxury for another year. Much might be accomplished during a twelvemonth. They were sure to secure a rich husband by that time. Why not wait before leaving the social sphere to which they were accustomed? The scenic career would always remain open.

The same day that Jacob dined at the Segels Madame Wtorkowska returned from the city to her villa in radiant humour, and found her daughter at the window reading one of Féval's novels. She contemplated her a moment with admiration.

"How lovely you are to-day," said she; "more beautiful than ever! That is right; your beauty is your capital. I have a magnificent project. We must succeed. Conquer or die is our motto!"

"What has happened now?" asked Muse, throwing down her book and giving a side glance in the mirror.

"I have just learned that Jacob, your old acquaintance, has returned to Warsaw. He will be your husband. I have a presentiment of it. A natural presentiment never deceives. You know the proverb: 'That which a woman wishes'"--

"'The devil wishes,'" replied the girl laughing. "You are in great spirits, but you need not waste your wit on me."

"I have already said that twice in public with great success."

The mother kissed her forehead, and said in French:--

"You are sublime! But listen to me: you must proceed cautiously with this Jacob; you must be

prudent, calculating, dignified, and full of tact."

"Never fear," replied the daughter, "I remember him perfectly. I know his peculiarities, and shall not make a false move."

"Be careful when you are near him not to be too gay, too witty, too brilliant. Be grave, modest, and poetical; quote much ideal poetry to him; such are the strategetic manœuvres which will serve you."

"Do you know, mamma, I have been told that he has been already in love?"

"And with whom?"

"With Mathilde, or she with him; it is the same thing. I do not know whether this love still exists or has vanished."

"Several years have passed since then. She has had time to fade, to grow ugly; and, furthermore, she is married, so that she is no obstacle for us. His love for her proves that he is capable of passion. So much the better. Now-a-days, men have become veritable icebergs. They resist an enchantress like you, and let themselves be devoured by the demimonde"--

"Yes, they do not think of marriage. It is the spirit of the age."

"Jacob, of whom I have heard much from people who know him well, is a serious young man, sentimental, pious, and even fanatic. When you are with him, you must seem to bear the burden of the sufferings of two thousand years; you must sigh, and pretend to be full of tender and elegiac poetry."

"Dear mamma, do I need these lessons?" said Muse, a little piqued.

"No, my child; but a mother's heart is always full of fears. A better match would be difficult to find. Use every means to captivate him; meet him as if by chance, and invite him here. He loves music. We will give two or three entertainments where we will have Kontski and Doprzynski, and you and those two singers will make an adorable trio. Then will come the supper, when you will be irresistible from the charms of your toilet."

Muse shrugged her shoulders.

"O mamma," said she, "leave it all to me! I know well how to play my cards."

"Listen once more," said Madame Wtorkowska, drawing near her daughter, blushing and a little embarrassed. "We will play our part well. Jacob is a man of honour, sensitive and conscientious. With him, but with him alone, dear Emusia, one can resort to extreme measures to force him into the last intrenchments and bind him to us. He is young, passionate. It would be very easy to awaken in him--you understand me? I would not advise you to go so far with another, but with him it is different."

"Of course I understand you; why not? I am no longer a child," replied Muse, with an offended air. "The means are heroic, but might succeed with a perfectly honest man like Jacob. There was real genius in that idea, mamma."

The mother blushed at this praise, for the idea appeared brazen even to herself, coming from a mother who should have instructed and guided her daughter.

"Our desperate situation only has made me suggest such a thing."

"Why speak of despair? Have we not the theatre as a last resort?"

"To see you an actress; that would be a great sorrow for me."

"And Malibran, and Pasta, and Schroeder, and Grisi, and Sontag, and many others. La Sontag, did she not become a countess and ambassadress?"

"I don't care for that. I do not wish to see you on the stage. I would prefer"--

"Do not fear, mamma."

"I have already apian," replied Madame Wtorkowska calmly. "Jacob dines at the Segels to-day. You are a friend of Mathilde's. She lives near here; dress yourself quickly and go to see her. You can feign ignorance of the circumstances. I will not accompany you, a servant alone will follow. We must take advantage of each favourable moment. To arrive at dessert or at coffee will be best. After a repast men are in good humour; you will produce a lively impression on Jacob. Modestly dressed and not expecting to see company, you must blush, draw back, and wish to retire. They will beg you to remain. You will remain. What follows I leave to you."

Muse rose quickly, like a soldier whom the clarion calls to battle, and embraced her mother, who kissed her and said:--

"One more word of advice. Do not put on any powder, your complexion does not need it, and he might think you had lost your freshness; and how will you dress?"

"In black lace, modestly, poetically. You can depend on me."

A half-hour after, while Muse was at her toilet, Madame Wtorkowska's eagle eyes at the window saw carried from Segel's kitchen into the dining-room a sumptuous roast, then ices; she ran to her daughter and cried:--

"Now is the time. Hasten, I beseech you!"

Muse was all ready. She might have served for a painter's model to represent a contemporaneous elegy; her usually mobile features were changed completely. By a profound study before the mirror she had given them an expression of sweet melancholy. She was enchanting; with an infinite art she concealed art, and seemed natural, and no one would have imagined she was playing a false rôle.

Women attract and conquer men sometimes by gayety of spirit, and sometimes by a mystical reserve; nothing awakens ardour in a man more than an enigma to solve. When he has arrived at the last page of that book called woman, it is necessary that she be a marvellous masterpiece for him to commence the reading with the same interest as before.

Muse was a living sphinx with such an attractive and finished beauty that it would have been difficult for the most clever observer to discover the least defect in her person, either physically or morally.

She wore a black lace dress, light and *négligée*; for ornaments, a coral bracelet and brooch; nothing more save a white handkerchief and a flower in her hand. To her mother, even, she appeared in a light so new as to draw from her enthusiastic exclamations:--

"Oh, my Ophelia! You are charming!"

Muse smiled proudly, kissed her mother, and with a calm and composed mien left the house as if to keep an engagement, and not to engage in a struggle where her object was to capture a man's heart. Her heart had never yet spoken; it surprised her that men in general were so little susceptible to passionate love, and that she herself had never felt this emotion. Her feelings were in her head, and if at times her brain had been inflamed, this flame had never descended to the heart. Love, as she dreamed of it, presented itself to her imagination covered with silk and diamonds in a superb *salon*, amid a royal court.

Did her heart beat on the way? Her black dress could alone tell us, but her face did not reveal a single sign of inquietude. The chronological reckoning of Madame Wtorkowska had been so exact, that Muse arrived just at the moment when they were taking coffee, and, as the piano was opposite the door, Mathilde saw her enter and then draw back as if to go. She arose at once and ran to her, and drew her into the room. Jacob was near her, but she passed him without recognition.

"But this is Monsieur Jacob, an old acquaintance of yours," said Mathilde.

"Ah, really! He has returned from his travels, then. How he has changed! I should never have recognized him. I am charmed to see him again."

The first step was of great importance. She appeared at first to be altogether indifferent; she played her first lines admirably. As for Jacob, he felt no emotion whatever. There exist in some men certain instincts which warn them, if they are not under the empire of a brutal passion, to avoid danger. Beautiful as she was, Muse did not attract him. Her beauty was for him like that of a statue or a lovely picture, no more.

She had more success with the group of men who were drinking coffee. They all praised her beauty. Henri alone dared not openly express his admiration, for fear of being heard by his wife.

"Delicious girl!" said Mann. "A dainty enough morsel for a king!"

"A morsel for a king!" added Simon; "but one must have golden teeth to chew it."

Mathilde's father, a great admirer of women, remarked in a low voice:--

"My word for it, she is well worth a thousand ducats!"

"Oh, much more!" cried Mann.

"Wait, gentlemen," added Simon; "put off the sale until after the marriage."

"How clever those women are," said Mann. "Madame Wtorkowska is not worth a sou, and look how they dress, how they live."

"I suspect the object of this visit," whispered Simon. "It is a chase organized against Jacob. I pity him if he falls into their hands."

While they were talking, Muse drew near the piano and looked at the music before Mathilde. It was a composition of Schumann's, and as Jacob was near her she asked him:--

"Do you remember our promenades with Mathilde? Are you as serious as ever?"

"Always the same, mademoiselle, with the difference, perhaps, that age has augmented my failing."

During this conversation Mathilde felt her heart beat violently. Father Simon made from afar some warning gestures, and finished by approaching the piano. Muse greeted him coldly as an enemy, but just then some one asked her to play something.

"With pleasure," said she; "I love music, and I never refuse to play. Above all, I love Schumann the best."

She executed one of those fantastic reveries where grief gushes out in poignant notes like drops of blood.

She played admirably and with much expression. An actress even in music, she expressed ravishingly the sentiments which she could not feel.

She was warmly applauded. Mathilde, who was herself an excellent musician, found new food for thought in this manner of interpreting a composition that she loved. Jacob praised, but coldly. Father Simon took him by the arm and drew him aside.

"Do you know Muse?" asked he.

"Yes, I used to see her often."

"Do you know the mother?"

"Very little."

"Then learn that they are two very dangerous women. The daughter, reared in luxury, without being worth a sou, seeks a rich husband. Take care of yourself. They will catch you, if possible. They are setting their cap for you already."

"Why, I have only just arrived!"

"The mothers of these days have, such a scent that they smell from afar the marriageable young men. Take care of yourself. This Muse is enchantingly beautiful and versed in all deceit."

"Very beautiful women do not please me."

"She can make herself anything you wish, for she can divine your thoughts."

Seated by the mistress of the house, Muse turned her head. She immediately understood that Simon was acting the part of Mentor to the young Telemachus, and called to him familiarly:--

"I have a favour to ask of you, Monsieur Simon, and I feel that I am very fortunate to meet you here."

"A favour! Of me?"

"Yes, monsieur, on the part of my mother. She dotes on your witty repartees and wishes to see you sometimes in her *salon*, if you will so honour us."

She had counted on gaining Father Simon over by her seductive flattery, but the old rogue only bowed courteously, smiled maliciously, and withdrew hastily to the other side of the room. He went up to Jacob and whispered:--

"She has been trying to burn me with incense right under my very nose. What a siren! To avoid her snares, stuff your ears with cotton, shut your eyes, and save yourself."

"For me," said Jacob, "there are neither sirens nor witches."

"There have been, however, many more than those in the Odyssey."

Muse knew better than to show too much interest in the man she was seeking to ensnare. She had Mathilde ask him to tell them something of his travels. Thanks to this diplomatic stratagem, Jacob joined them, and engaged in a lively conversation.

She saw that he was absorbed in Mathilde, and felt that he did not listen to her. Finding further efforts useless she arose to take leave. With a cold and polite tone she said to the young man only, that she would be happy to see him at her home, as if it was out of compliment to her friend.

"Man of ice," thought she, "in vain you seek to escape me. I shall subdue you. You will belong to me. Then we will square our account."

She left the room modestly, almost timidly, Madame Segel conducting her to the door. When she returned she said to Jacob:--

"Well, how did you like her?"

"She is wonderfully beautiful, but there is also something disagreeable about her."

Some of them protested.

"She is the least natural woman I have ever met," said Jacob. "My ideal is a true and sincere woman."

Mathilde fell into a revery. During this time Henri had escorted Muse to the street. It was easily seen by his sparkling eyes that this pearl pleased him. On her part Mademoiselle Muse found Segel to her taste also, but she could not compromise herself with a married man while she sought a husband. Otherwise these two souls were sympathetic, and seemed created for each other. Henri's last glance was so ardent, that it almost compensated Muse for Jacob's coldness.

Her mother impatiently awaited the result of this first attack.

"You have seen him?" asked she.

"Yes."

"Well?"

"Preludes, as you have often said yourself, dear mamma, are always tiresome. I played for him one of Schumann's fantasies as I never played it before; I felt inspired; I showed myself at the same time bewitching and indifferent. I threw him furtive glances, neither too ardent nor too cold. By slow and insidious steps, by proceeding with much caution I can put him off his guard and take him captive. I am sure of him, I think."

"Then you do not think it will be an easy matter?"

"No, probably not. He has something else on his mind."

"And can you not by your magic art draw from him that which is rooted in his heart?"

"I will try, but it is a difficult part to play."

"I am chagrined to see you doubtful of success so soon."

"Oh, if I absolutely will it, I can succeed! But I shall be obliged to compromise myself. Not in the way you suggested this morning, however. It will suffice to expose myself in the eyes of the world. For the rest, that which Count Alfred said of the chase applies perfectly to my situation. It is not necessary to make any plans in advance to draw on the game. The plan will develop when the time comes. But I have some news for you. Henri is desperately in love with me."

"What Henri?"

"Our neighbour, Segel."

"What, has he dared?"

"If you could have seen him squeeze my hand; if you could have heard him sigh when he escorted me to the street! Oh, it was droll!"

"Unfortunately, he is married."

"Yes, but Mathilde has a bad cough. They say that her lungs are affected. She is not yet twenty-five years old; at that age phthisis is fatal. But may God preserve her!"

"You are truly a genius! Your foresight is admirable. If we could keep him in reserve it would not be bad; however, I prefer Jacob. Men of Henri's calibre never become seriously in love. Their sentiment is not love, it is passion. Every year they change their mistress. It is the theatre that furnishes them."

"Bah! That is the custom now-a-days!"

"Believe me, you had better hold Jacob. There is something horrible about counting on a death."

"I will do all I can to satisfy you. I am very sorry for poor Mathilde, yet one can see death in her eyes."

"Do not think of her, then; think rather of Jacob."

"We will see. As for me, I like Henri better."

The mother frowned and said no more.

CHAPTER XI.

A POLITICAL MEETING.

The same evening Jacob set out to seek a friend of Ivas, who had been his comrade at the university, and had become a very important person in the present agitation. This man, a modest employé of the government, exercised a powerful influence on the young men and in circles where politics were the order of the day. He possessed superior intelligence, rare executive ability, great energy and activity, and his character was at the same time pliant and firm. Without being leader of any party, he went from one to another, and the timid as well as the bold bowed everywhere to his incontestable authority. Yet no one could have said that Kruder--that was his name--belonged to the fire-eaters, to the liberals, or to the conservatives, nor if he was red, blue, or white.

With the excited he was all fire and flame; with the cool reasoners he was calm and logical; with the prudent and timorous he was full of discretion and consideration.

All listened to his objections; all followed his counsels. He knew how to smooth all difficulties, conceal divergences, and to lead to the same end contradictory views.

Amid such diversity of opinions he alone could maintain order, and command sufficient confidence to subject all differences of opinion to discipline, in advance of the coming revolution; for to do this was his ambition, his only ambition.

He had friends in both camps; these precipitated the movement, those retarded it. His intimate relations with both parties put him in the way of hearing the opinions and knowing the situation thoroughly. Nothing could happen without his cognizance. In his work of centralization it was important to be well informed, so as to prevent errors, or to correct them as well as he could.

To attract less notice and to more easily escape suspicion, Kruder inhabited an unfrequented neighbourhood. He usually remained at home until ten in the morning, the hour at which he went to his office. When he had finished his government work, he commenced his active and errant life, and this was prolonged late into the night. If he had to meet any one, he made an appointment, sometimes at a *café*, sometimes in a friend's house. To meet him, Jacob went to the dwelling of a young Jew, Bartold by name, the proprietor of a manufactory and a hardware merchant. His place was full of visitors every day, a fact which could be easily explained by the importance of his business.

Well brought up and honest, he was not, however, a believer like Jacob. In religious matters he was satisfied to select the morals and repudiate the dogmas, but yet he proclaimed himself a Jew with a certain boastfulness. It pleased him to say: "If the European aristocracy are proud of tracing their origin back to the Crusades, I ought to be very proud of mine, which goes back much farther. I am a descendant of the tribe of Levi. That takes the place of arms or crests. My ancestors guarded the Ark of the Covenant in Solomon's temple; it is, at least, as great an honour as to have fought with the Saracens."

Public agitation naturally increased the number of visitors at Bartold's, and he had put at their disposal two large rooms of his house. It was a neutral ground for political discussions. It was a place of reunion sheltered from the police. Bartold took a great interest in these meetings, for, in spite of his Israelitish genealogy, he was a Pole at heart. He was thirty years old, tall, muscular, and well formed. His eyes shone with more than ordinary intelligence. His manner disclosed the serenity of an honest man who followed the right path, and whose conscience was clear. He loved to laugh and to joke, but under all this he concealed a warm, humane, and charitable heart. He received Jacob with cries of joy and open arms.

"You could not have come to us," cried he, "in a more opportune moment. You come to advise with us, do you not?"

With Bartold and Kruder there was a young Pole belonging to the most advanced party of patriotic enthusiasm.

Kruder took his hat to go, but Jacob detained him.

"Pardon, monsieur," said he; "will you wait a moment? I have come to seek you here, I have something to tell you."

"If it is not a personal affair you can speak freely before these gentlemen. We are all friends here."

"Do you know Ivas?" asked the Jew abruptly.

"I know him well. He was with me at the university at Kief. What has become of him? Have you met him anywhere?"

"Yes, in Italy. I brought him with me to the Polish frontier."

"And where is he at present?"

"In a hiding-place that I found for him, but he insists on coming to Warsaw. I fear that would be dangerous for him. They are seeking him, and his description is known."

"I do not agree with you. He had few acquaintances, and after some years of absence he must have changed enough not to be recognized. We could easily find an asylum for him here where he could escape the police. It would be prudent, however, for him to secure a communal passport."

"May he soon join us," said the young man of the extreme party. "He will be very useful to our cause. We will undertake to conceal him. I have often heard of him; he belongs to the Lithuanian provinces. Nothing could be better. We will send him there to make converts to our cause. What can we do to bring him here?"

"And," asked Kruder, looking at Jacob, "what are Ivas' feelings? You see that here we are all fire, all flame."

"I fear he has too much fire," said Jacob. "Deleterious fire, alas! This flame is, to my mind, the flame of despair. It will drive men to unreasonable acts."

"Behold a cautious man!" cried the young Pole, paling with wrath; "the sentiments of your race can be expressed in two words,--self-interest and logic. We Poles, on the contrary, are led by what you call folly. Is heroism folly? Then it will be by folly that we shall triumph."

"I am not," replied Jacob, "an exclusive partisan of cold reason. Logic leads one astray at times. In a question of life or death for the country's salvation we should not depend entirely on cold reasoning, nor wholly on enthusiasm. Reasoners and enthusiasts are equally at fault, are both on the wrong path."

"Would you, then, have a mixture of folly and reason?"

"Precisely. And I wish it for the common good. In it you will find the veritable national instinct."

"No, no! Popular opinion aspires to a revolution which will accomplish our deliverance."

"The revolutionary agitation is only at the surface," said Jacob. "In the bottom of all hearts there are forebodings of the evils which may arise from a premature explosion."

"If such are your opinions, I present you my compliments, and I salute you."

"Wilk," interrupted Kruder, "do not allow yourself to become so angry."

"Why does he irritate me, then?" replied the young enthusiast, a little appeased.

"However, I withdraw my brusque adieu and will remain."

"Be seated, gentlemen," said Bartold. "We are going to serve tea, and you, Kruder, you must not go yet."

"I am expected at ten meetings."

"You can shirk five of them."

"I cannot, however, miss my interview with Count A. Z., nor the meeting of the Agricultural Society, nor the University debate, nor the Association for Popular Publications, nor"--

"You are verily a much-sought-for man, but, if I were you, I would throw from my shoulders a good half of these burdens; childish bluster, rhetorical competitions, a war of words of patriotic agitation, behold to what you are invited! You wish to direct everything and everybody; take care that you do not become a blunted tool in the end."

Kruder shook his head as if to say, "It will never be." But at heart he felt that in his friend's warning he had something to fear.

After a general conversation he left the room with Wilk, and they talked over the measures necessary to secure Ivas' safety.

Alone, Jacob and Bartold embraced warmly, for they loved each other like brothers, despite

the rationalism of the one and the piety of the other.

They had an animated discussion on the situation of the Jews in Poland and throughout the world. Jacob, as was his custom, spoke at length on the apostleship he intended undertaking.

"You will lose your time and your efforts," said Bartold; "the era of religious convictions is passed. We live in an age of reason, where it is useless to wish to resuscitate the beliefs of antiquity and of the Middle Ages. The structures which sheltered the wings of the cherubim have crumbled away and can never be raised."

Jacob listened attentively, but his convictions were not shaken. He was persuaded of the necessity of a reform in Judaism that should reestablish the authority of the Mosaic law.

CHAPTER XII.

A SIREN.

After some weeks of sojourn at Warsaw Jacob met in the street Luci Coloni, accompanied by Gromof, her Russian cavalier of the grotto at Sestri. He was hastening to salute them, when he perceived that the lady and her companion turned as if to avoid him. Why this mystery? Jacob was puzzled, and paused on his way.

Ivas' affairs were soon arranged; it was no longer necessary to watch over him, and, freed from that anxiety, he dreamed of commencing his Judaic reform. He realized that he had two formidable obstacles to encounter,--on one side indifference, on the other, superstition. The superstitious would regard him as an atheist, the indifferent, as a bigoted fanatic.

Discouraged for the moment, as almost all reformers have been, he sought to regain his former enthusiasm by reading the Bible and the Talmud. To this end he shut himself up for several days, and came out determined to make converts, not among the old, whose convictions were settled, but among the youth, who were still animated with noble instincts. These it was whose opinion he would strive to form. Weary with his long meditations he was going out to walk in the fresh air, when he was handed a note from Madame Wtorkowska, written on satin paper, the contents of which were as follows:--

We shall be very happy to see M. Jacob at our house this evening. There will be a few friends and a little music.

BENIGNA WTORKOWSKA.

Jacob was not in the humour to accept, but he reflected that it would be impolite to refuse, and that perhaps he might meet Mathilde there, so he accepted the invitation.

The little villa occupied by the Wtorkowskas was a masterpiece of that modern art which transforms real misery into lying luxury. Nothing had been paid for, from the servants' livery to the satin robe worn by the hostess, and the lace-covered velvet dress of the charming daughter.

The refreshments, the bonbons, the flowers, were all obtained on credit. Twice a week Hermann and Grossmann demanded the money for the Pleyel grand piano, but in vain. The shabbiness of the furniture was concealed by new covers, the broken places in the frames of the pictures and mirrors were twined with ivy.

With all these frauds and ruses the little house, seen by the light of innumerable wax candles, took on an air of freshness and elegance. The studied disorder of objects thrown carelessly on the table was the result of long thought. Here, a French romance was displayed, to show acquaintance with current literature; there, pieces of classical music, to show the degree of perfection arrived at by the fair performer. On one side lay a photograph album containing portraits of celebrated men, implying a personal acquaintance with them.

Jacob arrived a little late. The company was too numerous for the *salon*, and the room was crowded. The guests occupied the couches and chairs, and some remained standing against the wall. There was heat and noise, and to move about demanded much skill.

Madame Wtorkowska received Jacob with studied politeness. Muse advanced toward him with a smile which she had practised before the glass. She led him to a little group where Mathilde

was seated. Madame Segel wore a white robe, and on her breast was a large bunch of camellias of the same colour. She was pale; on the approach of Jacob she lifted her head, and greeted him with a slight blush and a melancholy smile.

After that the poor woman relapsed into a glacial torpor. Henri stood behind the chair of Mademoiselle Muse, whose toilet was so *décolleté* that all admirers of certain feminine charms could feast their eyes to their hearts' content. Her thick and glossy braids were twined around her head in classic style, and served admirably to bring out the splendour of her eyes and complexion. She had the lively and brilliant expression of a lioness seeking whom she might devour. Her crimson velvet dress, covered with costly lace, bought on credit, became her admirably, and gave her a queenly air. On her lovely arm sparkled a large bracelet set with rubies.

Mathilde resembled an aerial spirit descended in a cloud of moonlit rays; Muse, a *bacchante*, full of sensuous vitality.

Henri whispered in Jacob's ear:--

"If I were free like you, I would not hesitate an instant; I would propose to this siren."

"And if I were in your place, and had such a wife as you have, I would not even look at her," said Jacob coldly.

Segel smiled ironically, pushed back his black hair from his forehead, and drew near Muse.

"Can you guess, mademoiselle," asked he in a low voice, "what advice I have just been giving Jacob?"

The charmer replied sweetly in an indifferent tone, although she perfectly understood what had passed between the two men.

"How can I guess, monsieur?"

"I advised him to fall in love with you."

"What bad advice!"

"Why?"

"Because I can never love any one."

"No one?" asked Henri tenderly.

"You have said it. I consider love as a dangerous malady, against which one should be on guard."

"A malady rarely fatal," said Henri smiling.

"No matter; I am afraid of it."

"A bad sign. It is said that there is much more danger of taking typhus or cholera when one fears it. It is a bad omen! Jacob"--

"Why, monsieur, why do you speak to me of this philosopher, this savant?"

"Hardly a philosopher: a mystic, a fanatic."

"Who flies from me," said Muse. "Help me, then, to tame him a little. I would like to talk with this savage."

"What would I not do for you, mademoiselle? I will bring him to your feet, be sure of that."

"You wish to marry him," thought Henri. "I will assist you, but I will claim my reward."

The treaty was concluded without further discussion, without protocol, between these two congenial spirits. Segel, wishing to hasten the execution, went to Jacob. He took his arm and said:--

"Come, then, to the divine Muse, who wishes to talk with you about Italy, with which her imagination is full."

"I fear I am not capable of doing justice to the subject," said Jacob.

"No matter. Come and try." So saying, he led him towards her, almost by force.

"This Jacob," said he to Muse, "is the most conscientious of tourists; he has travelled over Italy on foot while I went by the railway. He can tell you about it a hundred times better than I. He can speak to you of that land of art of which you have dreamed."

Muse, all smiles, turned to Jacob and said:--

"At last, monsieur, I have caught you, whether you will or not; you must tell me of that Italy where I am always begging mamma to take me."

"I regret very much not to be enough master of my subject to give you a just idea of that beautiful land. It is not sufficient merely to have visited it, one must have lived there to fully appreciate its beauties."

"Pardon me, but I do not agree with you. Travellers often know more of a country than its inhabitants."

"Superficially, yes; but the spirit, the soul of a country, only reveals itself after long study."

"Italy is delightful, is it not?"

This question was not a skilful one. But it was necessary to get Jacob started on some subject, so that she could exercise all the feminine seductions of a determined woman, resolved to succeed, and employ all the resources of her consummate art, aided by her natural charms. What an actress she was! An actress in every glance, every movement, even in the inflexions of her voice! She spoke feelingly without the least inner emotion; she spoke of feelings of which she only knew from hearsay. Judging all men more or less vain, she sought by delicate flattery to fascinate and subjugate them. By turns lively or melancholy, sensible or careless, she was charming under all circumstances.

However, she made no impression on Jacob, who remained cold and impassible. As if to alleviate his enforced captivity, he at times glanced at the chaste and pure woman who was seated not far from him absorbed in melancholy, and who seemed to him like an ideal queen covered with a saintly aureola.

Muse was exasperated by Jacob's invulnerable indifference, but desired more than ever to bring him to her feet. She let her evident efforts to enslave him be seen. Her mother surveyed the manœuvres of her daughter, which she found too bold, although she could not help admiring the audacity with which the attack was made.

Jacob was obliged, at the request of Muse, to conduct her to the piano. She took off her gloves slowly, and, coquettishly, radiant, continued her conversation in a low voice, so as to give the idea that a sort of intimacy was established between them.

"My dear," remarked Madame N. to Madame X., "Emusia is conducting herself in a scandalous manner."

"Bah! Young ladies of her stamp always succeed in their matrimonial pursuits."

Just then the mistress of the house came to them, and Madame X. said:--

"We have just been speaking of your charming daughter. She is really enchanting this evening. Madame N. and I cannot take our eyes off her. She turns the head of every one,--even the old."

"My Emusia," replied Madame Wtorkowska, "is all simplicity, all candour, although sometimes her very simplicity and frankness look like coquetry."

At this reply from the mother, her two guests exchanged glances behind her back.

"Why, she has taken Jacob by storm," cried his former guardian to Mann. "This Muse outdoes herself on his account. She did not trouble herself to amuse him before he got his fortune. It was not worth while to notice the poor beggar for whose education I paid."

"The Berlin banker's legacy has made him a desirable match. She will finish by capturing him," said Mann.

"I don't believe it, for I know my Jacob. He is not at ease in her society. You cannot catch all fish with the same hook. My son-in-law, Henri, would have taken the bait immediately. Jacob is afraid of her. He likes quiet women who are modest and timid. He is a poet."

"Certainly the creature is far from that, and I congratulate the man who"--

Mann did not finish his remark, for suddenly the music ceased. Jacob was free from the chains of courtesy. He seated himself near Mathilde, who received him with a smile.

The pale moonlight streamed in from the windows which opened on the veranda, and the light was softened by the leaves of the wild vines, which, with their long serpentine clusters, climbed over everything.

They both wished to fly from this crowd, both wished to be alone; but to put this project into execution was not easy.

Again Muse played, and under her skilful fingers the notes wept, groaned, sang, murmured,

and sighed. It was Liszt's music. Every one was enchanted.

"She is wonderful," said Mathilde. "As for myself, when I have been a half-hour at the piano I am fatigued. It seems to me that my tired soul flies away with the sounds. But what power she has! She laughs at difficulties, and rises even fresher and more radiant."

"It is there, truly, that one finds the difference between her playing and yours. You put your soul into it. Her playing does not affect me at all. It is as if the piano played alone. With you, the soul sings to me."

"No, she is a true artiste. I am only a musician."

"I cannot admire the artists of the present day. They are but the masters of their art, skilled workmen who know all the tricks of their trade. The shepherd who by inspiration plays on his bagpipe a simple air, be it very simple, very primitive, is much more an artist than this or that fashionable performer. Like everything else, art has been profaned in these days; it has become mercenary; it is a bread-winner, and not a priesthood. The artist of to-day strives for the fame that pays best, and not for the contentment of his soul. Who, then, now-a-days would paint frescoes for nothing but piety and for the love of God? Music, literature, painting, all at present go to the highest bidder. Muse belongs to the modern school. She has art, but art without soul. She plays Liszt and Walberg, but Chopin is inaccessible to her. She seizes the *bizarre* side of Schumann, but the pathetic side, never!"

"You judge her a little too severely. There is in the depths of her heart a little divine light, on her brow a little flame. But, alas! the unfortunates are not sure of to-morrow's bread, and I cannot help regarding with pity this woman and her daughter, for I know their situation."

"Are they not rich?"

"No! They are poor, very poor, though they affect riches."

"This is frightful. This comedy of luxury is odious. The tears of dupes will pay for it. Indigence with courageous labour is a hundred times to be admired."

"It is true, but false pride"--

"That word tells all; it is real deceit."

"She pains me," said Mathilde. "Under the velvet there must be tears and anxiety; at the door poverty waits while they serve a sumptuous repast; to-morrow, solitude after the brilliant reunion of to-day. What a tragedy! It pains me even to think of it."

Muse ceased to play.

Every one applauded, and Henri hastened to kiss the artiste's hand. Mathilde, who was stifling in this atmosphere, said to Jacob,--

"Let us go out a moment and get some fresh air. No one will miss us. I cannot breathe."

They passed through the crowd and reached the veranda. Muse followed them with her eyes, and turned ironically upon Henri.

"I see," replied he to the mute question, "that my wife was too warm. She has gone out on the veranda with Jacob."

"Then you are not jealous?"

"Near you, mademoiselle, I think of you alone."

"You have no right to talk thus."

"Do you not know that that which is illegal is most attractive to men?"

"You are perversity in person!"

"Alas! a god would succumb before you, how much more a simple mortal."

"Truly, monsieur, you flatter me."

"No, mademoiselle, I assure you."

Then he spoke to her in a low voice with much familiarity, and with a perfect understanding.

When Mathilde left the *salon* she gave her hand to Jacob at the threshold.

"What is the matter, my child?" said he tenderly.

"I feel very happy," said she; "I know not why, and very calm. I desire nothing. It seems as if my life were slipping away little by little. You are by my side; I am sure of your affection. What

further happiness can I have?"

"There would be very few who would be satisfied with a chaste love like ours. When I observe in the world the different personalities, different characters, I think, mademoiselle"--

"Why do you call me mademoiselle?"

"I think, I say, that there are in each human being two powers who are antagonistic, like God and Satan. The contrasts are often striking. For example, you and Muse."

"Do not judge her so harshly; you should be indulgent to all."

"Very well. Who, then, are pure and innocent in the depths of their souls around us? Life is short. Every one must taste the bitter cup. Every one has his troubles, and most men, instead of seeking happiness in their own souls, seek it elsewhere and find it not. The world terrifies me with its variety of elements where evil predominates over good. I cannot understand this predominance of evil."

"That is one of God's secrets, incomprehensible to our finite intelligence. What good will it do us to try, like the Titans, by force to pierce the closed heavens? Man seems to be the plaything of an implacable irony. He bears within him the sparks of an ardent fire, but he does not succeed in developing a large flame, for the wind of his passions scatters the firebrands. In his heart exist noble sentiments which are changed into gross appetite. Man grows more corrupt instead of purer. All is surprise in life; all an enigma. Then this dream of immortality and a future existence. Can we believe it?"

She smiled sadly, and Jacob listened. Under their eyes lay a superb view. A light breeze murmured through the dark foliage of the old trees in the avenue. In the sky, the moon glided through the deep azure, and the stars twinkled as if to shake slumber from their eyelids. In the distance could be heard the faint sound of the city.

"In contemplating creation," said Jacob, "do you not hear something within you say that we shall live beyond the tomb? That thought should destroy all fear for the future. Even if thousands of years of faith do not confirm this hope, it shines in the reply of the soul like stars in the depths of a well."

"It is impossible," said Mathilde. "In any case, the other life will not be like this. My future will not be a continuation of this miserable existence. Perhaps I shall come again to live on earth. Oh, who knows anything about it?"

"This death, so terrible to most of us, is represented in our Hebrew books as a sweet, an easy, passage to another existence. The Talmud, Berakhot 5, calls it the kiss of God."

"How sorry I am not to have read those books, and to know so little of the Hebrew language! I have been educated for the world. My soul has not been nourished. The tempest of doubt has overthrown it."

"There is yet time, dear Mathilde."

"No, it is too late. Faith is the beverage of youthful souls. When unbelief is developed, the ground is dried up and a new graft cannot shoot forth. But God is full of mercy and pity. He will not punish us when we are not in fault. He will make allowances for our education."

They were silent, but had no desire to return to the *salon*, where Muse, at the piano, was playing one of Liszt's most brilliant compositions.

"Come, Jacob," said Mathilde, "you must do your duty. Go and compliment Muse. I will not be jealous. She is on the wrong path; you can convert and save her."

"It is too late; that which you falsely said about yourself applies to her. Her intelligence and her heart have matured, and her character is already formed."

They entered the *salon*. Mathilde's first glance showed her husband leaning on the back of Muse's chair, and his tender glances told that he was very much impressed. She did not feel the slightest chagrin. She was completely indifferent to Henri, and she rejoiced to think that he amused himself elsewhere, provided he spared her all importunate tenderness.

Madame Wtorkowska was very nervous; she feared that the entertainment would not lead to the desired results. Jacob seemed absolutely indifferent to her daughter's charms; as for the other young men, they all admired her, but at a distance; and the marked attentions of Henri Segel displeased her because they came from a married man. With music, singing, cards, tea, and supper, the *soirée* was prolonged to a late hour. The elder guests took leave under pretext of engagements in the morning. Mathilde went home, as she had a headache, and left the field free to her husband. Jacob had accompanied her to her door, and had received his orders to return. This thinning out of the rooms favoured the charmer's plans.

The young man carelessly turned the leaves of an album; his conduct during the evening had strictly conformed to the rules of politeness. Yet this cold observation of the proprieties

exasperated Madame Wtorkowska, who resolved to undertake his subjugation herself. She drew near him, and, as Jacob rose to give her his seat she said, taking his arm:--

"Monsieur, let us walk a little, and tell me about yourself. Now that you have returned to us, what do you intend to do?"

Surprised by these attentions, he replied:--

"I intend to study and lead a life of leisure."

"We have heard so much in your praise," said she, "that we were very desirous of knowing you."

"I am infinitely obliged, madame."

"Especially, Emusia. She admires such men."

She could not find an adjective to designate exactly what kind of men, and added after a moment of hesitation:--

"I mean superior men. For, you see, my Emusia is a young girl of talent. What intelligence, what gifts! She devours an incredible quantity of books. Her memory is prodigious. Her wit is of the finest quality. In short, if she were not my daughter I would say that she is a marvel."

"That is what I hear from every one," said Jacob politely.

"My situation," continued she, "is an anxious one, for I have a mother's heart. To whom will my cherished one give herself? Will he appreciate her? Alas, the young men of to-day are so frivolous!"

"Mademoiselle Emusia has but to choose."

"How little you know the young men, monsieur!"

For want of breath the mother stopped. She had commenced the battle with so much impetuosity that she was already worn out. She could think of nothing more to say. She was driven to her last intrenchments, and, on his side, Jacob had exhausted all his praises. Notwithstanding, after a moment of reflection she took breath and continued:--

"You, who are so great a connoisseur, what do you think of Emusia's playing?"

"It is truly marvellous, madame."

"Liszt, the master, was stupefied with astonishment when my daughter played for him his overture to *Guillaume Otello*. He watched her execute this, that, all the most difficult parts, and was wild with enthusiasm. It was at Spa. There was such clapping of hands, bravos that almost shook the house, an avalanche of bouquets! What an ovation, *mon Dieu!*"

"It was merited, no doubt."

"Oh, yes," said the mother. "An Erard piano fairly spoke under her fingers. She has such strength and incredible power."

She was thus extolling her daughter when the young lady herself came to join in the conversation. Her eyes shone wrathfully. The more invulnerable Jacob showed himself, the more she was determined to bring him to her feet. Henri had given her the key to the character of this man, whom he called a religious fanatic. She resolved to read and study the Bible, and even the Talmud, if necessary. Already she commenced to play her new rôle.

"I detest these noisy pleasures," said she. "Reading, meditation, quiet, they are the things that I love. And you?"

"I also love study and tranquillity," said Jacob.

"You men," said Muse, "have everything in your favour. You can, at your pleasure, devote yourselves to intellectual occupations; you are not slaves to the obligations of society, as we poor women are. You cannot imagine what a humiliation it is for a young girl to be taken continually here and there, and shown like merchandise."

"Mademoiselle, although what you say is partly true, I assure you that the mothers and daughters exaggerate these pretended obligations. Our poet, Krasicki, has said somewhere, 'Nothing ever comes of a dialogue prepared with too much care.'"

"That is very true, monsieur. Also most matches that end happily are made without thought, and as it were by a miracle."

"Yes, I am convinced of that."

"And it is probably by a miracle also," added the elder woman, "that marriages are

maintained."

"Have you been in the Orient?" asked Emusia, to change the conversation.

"Yes, mademoiselle, and I bring back a sad impression. The land of poetry is to-day the land of misery. The cradle of civilization has become the tomb."

"But there are still traces there of biblical times, are there not?" asked Muse.

"Certainly. The costumes, the habits, the landscape, all remind one of the Bible. As in old days, Rachel still leads her flocks to water, and the white-bearded patriarchs still welcome you to their tents."

"All that must be very interesting."

"Not for the children of a civilization, enervated and weakened. We can no longer live this poetical life. It is rigid, painful, grave, primitive, and laborious. It impresses us, notwithstanding its poetry, with a strange emotion toward the fountains which now are dried up."

"And the old biblical traditions?"

"They clash on all sides. With us the old traditions are preserved, like withered plants in an herbarium; while there they still live, mixed with the daily existence. With what emotion one contemplates stones taken from the aqueducts of Solomon, the ruins of the temple, the places sanctified by the patriarchs! Christians and Jews both find there the cradle of their faith. In Europe we are only colonists."

Emusia had taken a reclining attitude near Jacob, and listened with great attention. The mother profited by the occasion, and left them alone. Thus these two, in the midst of a crowd, found themselves alone.

Simple politeness forbade Jacob's retreat. Muse attempted to magnetize him by her glances, by her gestures, by the sight of her gleaming shoulders, by her beauty, while she idly played with her bracelet, her rings, and her embroidered handkerchief, useless for any other purpose.

The young man scarcely perceived these affected and enticing airs.

"I know not," said she with hesitation, "if it be owing to the blood that flows in my veins, but this Orient has for me a certain attraction. It is thither that my desires tend. It has been torn from us, and we have been forced to forget it. It is a source of sadness for me that I know a mass of useless things, and that I am ignorant of that which most interests me."

"What, for example?" asked Jacob, interested in spite of himself.

"I will tell you," replied she, in a low voice with a feigned alarm, "provided mamma does not hear me. I am curious about all that concerns us that is Jewish. A Christian nominally, I am of Jewish blood, and Jesus has declared that he did not come to destroy the ancient law. Mamma, like many of our race, avoids and forbids all allusion to the past."

"If you really wish it, mademoiselle, you can easily become familiar with our traditions; you have only to consult several books."

"Alas! I do not know Hebrew."

"There are translations in many languages."

"Really? Could you not secretly lend me one or two? I would be very grateful to you; but it must remain a secret between us."

This was a skilful move. Mystery brought them together. Emusia quietly put her little hand into Jacob's, and pressed it warmly as if to thank him. This grasp produced on the young man the effect of an electric current. He felt uneasy, troubled, and confused, as if he had committed a sin.

"I will send you some volumes," murmured he.

"That is not all," said she sweetly, still keeping her hand in his. "Guide me in the study for which I thirst. I have hours of liberty; mamma goes out often, and I am at home alone. I depend on you to be my master, my instructor, in the first principles of the faith of our ancestors. This may appear a little odd on my part, but you will excuse my ardent desire for light."

"I fear"--

"No scruples, monsieur! If I have appeared impressed by you, I assure you it was only because I wish to learn from you something of Judaism."

A slight feeling of suspicion entered Jacob's mind, but he thrust it away from him with contempt. He would not admit that acting could be carried so far. He believed that Muse was sincere, and he arose to go with a much better opinion of her than when he came. She seemed to

him more beautiful than before, and with something poetical about her. He sought already in his imagination for the biblical type to which this strayed lamb of the fold of Israel belonged. He felt no sympathy for her yet, but his curiosity was awakened and his repugnance had disappeared.

Emusia was radiant, and in her triumph said to herself:--

"I have hit Achilles in the heel."

CHAPTER XIII.

AKIBA.

Jacob, admonished by Mann, bantered by Henri, lectured by his former guardian, and opposed by Bartold, had, nevertheless, commenced his apostleship. He essayed to group around him the youth of Israel, for the old men were against all reform.

The most polished and the best educated did not like to recall their origin, nor to hear of the religion of their fathers. This was grievous. The disciples did not appear; all minds were absorbed in the revolutionary movement. Jacob's activity became more and more circumscribed. His co-religionists avoided him; but in spite of this abandonment, in spite of his isolation, he still clung to his ideas. He hoped to convince by his example, and to gain followers when calm should succeed the present political agitation and society regain its normal condition.

He was sadly afflicted to see the irreligion of the youth of Israel, irreligion much more widespread than he had at first supposed. In the desert around him any mark of sympathy would naturally move him, touch him, and console him, and Muse profited by these circumstances.

She put herself in possession of Jacob's ideas, procured the books recommended, and reading the ones he lent her, learned some things, guessed more, and thus armed, went forth to combat with fair chances of victory. Madame Wtorkowska had adroitly seized the opportunity of drawing nearer him whom she already called, to herself, her son-in-law. She took possession of the first story of a house of which the Jew occupied the second. As there was nothing easier to ascertain than when the recluse was at home, they sent to his rooms under pretext of returning books or to ask the loan of new ones. Then they begged him to come down to them. They also met him often on the stairs.

Emusia became a fervent and intelligent disciple, and the apostle felt more and more flattered by this adhesion.

"Would you believe it," said she one evening to her mother, "the fool imagines that I am nearly ready to embrace Judaism, while in reality his Bible and his Talmud, with all their silly old legends and their stupid stories, weary me dreadfully."

"Do you believe that the idea of marriage has entered his head?"

"Bah! I will put it there when I wish."

"In that case you had better do it as soon as possible."

"I am awaiting a favourable opportunity. With this man it is not the senses, but the heart, on which we must count, and we must not be in haste. Be tranquil, I lie in wait for the moment."

"How do you watch for it? Flirting with Henri? God knows that if you were only safely married to Jacob I would not care how much you saw of Henri; but as you are not, I think these badinages are very ill-timed and take your mind off the principal business."

"I know what I am doing, mamma; the best tactics with Jacob are to proceed slowly. If we try to hasten matters we may lose all."

"Well, work it your own way."

This phrase always terminated the altercations between Muse and her mother.

The young girl's calculation was not destitute of judgment. Jacob did not love her, but he was becoming accustomed to her. As for the thought of marriage, it had never entered his head. His heart was filled with Mathilde, this fading flower that charmed him more each day. One thing only drew him to Emusia; it was the fervour that she manifested for the Bible and the Hebrew traditions, nothing more.

The mother did not altogether approve her daughter's plans, and shrugged her shoulders, saying:--

"If he escapes we are lost."

"Oh, no! It is not my Waterloo. I have not staked all on him. I have still the stage," said she laughing; and she continued to simulate an ardent admiration for the Jew and his doctrines, while at the bottom she detested them all. With Henri, on the contrary, full of familiarity and enjoyment, she was in her element.

The better to insinuate herself in Jacob's good graces, she flattered his mania by suggesting to him the thought of giving lectures on Judaism. He fell into the trap with enthusiasm, in spite of the obstacles which he knew he would encounter. His friends, under one pretext or another, refused to give their houses for this edifying purpose. At last Bartold, against his will, but for friendship's sake, put his at the Jew's disposition.

Israelites alone were invited. The only exceptions were Madame Wtorkowska and her daughter, as was very natural. Many Jews, for fear of being accused of superstition and ridicule, excused themselves at the last moment, feigning indisposition.

The room was large and commodious. It had no Jewish features, for the master of the house lived in European style, although without luxury. Ostentation was nowhere to be seen in the dwelling of this descendant of Levi, who, with all his boasting of his biblical nobility, was really an honest and a modest man and a good Polish citizen.

That evening Madame Bartold had put her children to bed at an early hour. She was dressed in good taste, and took great care that nothing should be wanting in any direction.

The ladies were in the minority,--Madame Wtorkowska, Emusia, Mathilde, and two others. Among the men were missing Mann and Mathilde's father, who thought all this Hebrew nonsense the issue of a diseased imagination. Kruder was there, for he desired admittance to all reunions. Ivas also, and Wilk, who sought everywhere converts to the revolutionary cause. Henri had come, ostensibly to escort his wife, but really to converse freely with Muse. He often visited her; but her mother was always present, and she frequently took advantage of his attentions to her daughter to borrow money of the gallant visitor, whose passion disposed him to pecuniary sacrifices.

At nine o'clock the room was full. Madame Bartold, crimson with fatigue, and redder still with timidity, sought to give every one a seat.

On a table loaded with books was a carafe of water, a glass, and some sugar. All awaited the lecturer.

They commenced by serving tea to the company; then Jacob appeared. A solemn silence indicated that his audience was prepared to listen attentively. Not being accustomed to speaking in public, he looked around him, and commenced in a weak and hesitating voice, which gradually grew stronger.

"Ladies and Gentlemen: It is not without apprehension that as a Jew I present myself before Jews, many of whom blush for their origin; before Jews who know the history of France and England better than their own history; before Jews who know more of Sanscrit literature than of the Bible. From all sides we have been reproached for our spirit of retirement and of separation. We have been constrained to it, and the fault was not with us. How much more justly could men to-day make the merited reproach of our having ceased to be ourselves, and of losing our own identity without identifying ourselves with others. We are here in continual antagonism with the country we inhabit, to which many ties should unite us. It appears that even that does not suffice us, and we have divorced ourselves from our own past.

"It is this past, with its poetry, that I would recall to you; for the time has come to appreciate it, and I wish to show you some of its characteristic beauties.

"Without culling here and there detached fragments of this treasure, I prefer to relate to you the entire life of a man who holds a place in sacred and legendary history. My hero is the celebrated Akiba.

"Akiba was so poor in his youth that he served as a shepherd for the wealthy Kalba Chaboua. He became enamoured of his master's daughter, and this love was the source of his wisdom. The young girl responded to the tender sentiment, but she made it the spur of an intelligence of which she had divined the value and the extent.

"'If you wish me to marry you,' said she, 'you must promise to devote your life to science.'

"Akiba promised, and they were married clandestinely. Kalba Chaboua discovered the secret, disowned his daughter, and drove them from his house. They wandered a long time without shelter, sleeping at night under the open sky. For a bed they had only a small bundle of straw, and tradition relates that one morning the beautiful black hair of the young woman was full of straws. Akiba drew them out gently, and lamented their hard fate.

"'Dearest,' said he tenderly, 'if I could I would give thee rich garments, and I would hang on thy neck a golden Jerusalem,'--an ornament which represented the city of Jerusalem, and which was much worn among the Jewish women.

"As he said the words he was accosted by a beggar clothed in rags.

"'Have pity on me,' cried he, 'and give me a handful of straw to put under my wife's head. She is sick, and lying over there on the cold ground.'

"Akiba gave the poor man what he demanded.

"'Behold,' said he, 'an unfortunate still more wretched than ourselves!'

"Akiba, in order to keep his promise to his wife, decided, in spite of his repugnance, to enter the school of Nakhum Gamsu. He was obliged to leave his wife, who entered service, and never ceased during the twelve years that separated them to write her husband encouraging letters, completely forgetting her own discomforts.

"One day, pensive and sad, Akiba followed a solitary path. A little brook attracted his attention. The water had pierced a rock by gradual dropping, and flowed gently through.

"'If drops of water,' remarked the future sage, 'have such power, what force will not then the human will have.'

"He presented himself before his teachers without weakness and without false shame. He commenced with the letters of the alphabet, and in his free moments he gathered wood and sold the fagots in the market-place. Half of his earnings fed him, the other half clothed and lodged him.

"Akiba soon astonished his masters. From a scholar he became an eminent professor. Thousands of disciples grouped around him.

"During this time his wife waited. A wicked neighbour insinuated that he had abandoned her and would never return.

"'It was I,' replied the wife, 'twelve years ago, who begged him to leave me and devote himself to science. If he prolong his studies twelve years longer, it will be well.'

"Akiba heard of this advice, given indirectly, and profited by it. After the lapse of this time he returned to his native place. His renown had preceded him. All the population turned out to see him, and his wife was in the crowd. The wicked neighbour asked her how she dared present herself in rags before such an illustrious man.

"'My husband knows my heart,' replied she simply. Before she was perceived, she ran out and threw herself at his feet. The pupils of Akiba would have repulsed her, but he said:--

"'Let her come to me. She is my wife, and it is to her that you and I owe much.'

"Kalba Chaboua at last forgave his daughter and his son-in-law, and received them into his house.

"Akiba had two remarkable teachers,--Eliezer and Nahum. The former was called the sealed vase, for he never lost a drop of acquired science. The latter, subtle and penetrating, shone by the fineness of his analysis. Their pupil united to the erudition of the one the critical spirit of the other.

"When he commenced his teaching the Jews had many traditions accumulated for ages and transmitted orally. He collected and wrote them down, accompanying them with commentaries intended to reconcile the legends with the sacred writings. He founded a school which attracted universal admiration.

"At the epoch when he lived religious spirit fermented; by the side of the philosophical sects of Greece, Christianity developed; Gnosticism grafted its poetical reveries on monotheism, and differences multiplied.

"Many Jews were converted to the gospel under one form or another. Akiba remained faithful to the Mosaic belief. He was so profoundly absorbed in the mystery of the divine essence, that the angels wished to chastise him for his presumption in wishing to know all, to penetrate all. God restrained the wrath of these messengers, and said to them:--

"'He is worthy of meditating on my grandeur.'

"Devout as was Akiba, he excelled in modern science. He destroyed by his criticisms many things which his contemporaries called miraculous, rejected the prodigious pretensions credited by superstition, and was pleased to demonstrate the immutability of the laws of nature.

* * * * *

"Contrary to the other rabbis, he rejected the belief in eternal punishment. One day, when travelling, having with him a cock and an ass, he arrived at a village, and went in vain from door to door asking hospitality.

"'God doeth all things well,' said he. This was his favourite saying. Then he entered a deep forest, where he sought by the light of his lantern a place to repose. The wind put out his light, and he lay down repeating, 'God doeth all things well.' Just then a wild-cat strangled his cock and a wolf came and tore his ass in pieces; still Akiba repeated 'God doeth all things well.'

"In reality, though he had met these misfortunes he had saved his life, which had been surely lost had he slept in the village. His humility and confidence in God were his chief characteristics.

"Once Akiba appeared in great spirits at the bedside of a dying man who lamented his approaching end, and whose friends were weeping around his bed. When asked the cause of his gayety,--

"'There is no man without sin,' said he, 'and I am rejoiced that this one has expiated his during his life.'

"Another time it was a wise man who was tortured with frightful pains. Three old savants, his friends, came to console him, and spoke in praise of his wisdom.

"'Science,' said the first, 'is more useful to Israel than the dew to the earth. The dew gives the earth temporary life, wisdom prepares the soul for eternal life.'

"'Wisdom,' continued the second, 'is more necessary than the light of the sun. The one guides us here below, the other conducts us to heaven.'

"Then the third spoke thus:--

"'You have been to Israel more than a father and a mother. Our parents give us earthly life; you, the life celestial.'

"When Akiba's turn came to speak, he said simply:--

"'It is sweet to suffer here below.'

"'Raise me up,' cried the dying man; 'I wish to hear the second time these words, for they comfort me.'

"Akiba deemed suffering salutary for individuals and for nations. He compared Israel, stained with blood by Vespasian and his successors, to a white horse adorned with purple reins. He was not over-scrupulous in religious observances. His prayers were short. He wore his usual simple garments on holy days, notwithstanding the biblical command to array one's self with particular care.

"'God,' said he, 'will more readily pardon sins committed against himself than evil done a neighbour. The Israelite owes justice not only to the Israelites, but to the pagans.'

"He loved to discuss morals under anecdotal form. Here is a specimen of his method:--

"Two men were in the midst of a desert. They had only water enough for one. What ought they to do? To share the water was certain death to both. 'That is not the solution of the dilemma,' added Akiba; 'one must sacrifice himself for the other, that one, at least, should live.'

"In advance of his times, the sage had a profound respect for human life, and he was one of the first opponents of the death penalty.

"Having become rich, thanks to his father-in-law, he was a benefactor to the poor and a promoter of all charitable associations.

"'Whoever,' he used to say, 'does not relieve a sick person, when it is in his power to do so, is an assassin.'

"The destruction of Jerusalem and the temple did not weaken Akiba's faith in divine justice. While Israel wept over the smoking ruins of the holy city, he smiled and predicted a brighter future. He always taught resignation to the divine will. But incessant persecutions aroused in him a violent irritation against the Romans, and a thirst for martyrdom. He lived in an epoch when the Jews were most unfortunate. Domitian continued the horrors of Vespasian and of Titus. They struck blows on all sides, and sought particularly a descendant of David, of whom popular rumour proclaimed the existence, and who intended, it was said, to avenge Israel's woes.

"Akiba converted many Romans to the Hebrew monotheism, Flavius Clemens, a relative of the emperor, was put to death for having embraced this doctrine, and his wife was, for the same reason, condemned to exile. After the death of this Cæsar, Israel breathed again during the two years' reign of Nerva and during the first ten years of the reign of Trajan; but they paid dearly for this short respite. The Jews of Syria, of Mesopotamia, of Armenia and Persia, took arms in favour of the Parthians, and drew on themselves the wrath of Rome, whose soldiers massacred them in

great numbers. They soon took up arms again upon the Euphrates, and revolted at Cyprus and in Egypt. New persecutions and repressions followed under the reign of Adrian.

"Akiba, a man of science, was changed by these troubles into a man of action. He travelled over the different parts of the empire to prepare a general uprising. He entered into relations with Simon, or Bar Kokhba, called the child of destiny when he was in the height of his prosperity, the child of lies after he had lost his fortune.

"This Simon, intrepid, daring, and of attractive manner, had with his majestic height all the qualities required for the leader of an insurrection. He pleased Akiba, who proclaimed him Messiah. The title attracted thousands of volunteers, for the idea of a deliverer sent by God was attached to the name of Messiah. Simon admitted to the ranks of his army only the strong and vigorous, many of whom were able to tear a large tree from the earth with their hands. Full of a confidence which he communicated to others, Bar Kokhba often addressed to God this strange prayer:--

"'If thou dost not wish to come to my aid, at least do not favour my foes; for if thou dost not support them I will vanquish them.'

"To excessive presumption he owed his ultimate defeat after many brilliant triumphs. The Roman governor of Palestine was completely routed. Fifty cities or towns and nine hundred and eighty-five villages fell into the power of the insurgents. Established at Bitar, Bar Kokhba made that city his capital, fortified it, and coined money in his own name. Adrian was troubled. The Jews everywhere refused to pay taxes. He sent to Britain for one of his most able lieutenants, Julius Severus. Severus advised patience; he attacked the Jews by detachments, and finished by surrounding Bitar, whose inhabitants he reduced to famine. Bar Kokhba defended his city until death.

"It is sad to remember that this valiant chief soiled his life by an unpardonable act. During the siege, the wise Eliezer, Akiba's teacher, gave himself up to fasting and prayer. This contemplative life in the midst of general activity was called treasonable; the Messiah ordered him put to death, and the devout scholar was killed. It is estimated that a half-million of Israelites lost their lives in this formidable revolt. After the combat the fugitives were pitilessly pursued. Many died of hunger in the forests and caverns, the survivors nourished themselves on the corpses of their brothers, and those who fell into the power of the Romans were massacred or sold as slaves. Adrian renewed the edict of Trajan, forbidding the Jews to perform their religious rites or to teach their faith. All literature that might maintain or propagate the national sentiments was suppressed. Jerusalem was peopled with Romans, and on the site of the Temple of Solomon arose a temple to Jupiter, adorned with his statue. They even changed the name of the violated city, calling it Œlia Capitolina, from the name Œlius. The Jews were forbidden to stay there, or even to enter. At the gate which led to Bethlehem the head of a pig was exposed as a permanent insult.

"After the peace, Akiba was not immediately molested in spite of his participation in the insurrection,--a moral participation, perhaps, but very efficacious. He continued, contrary to the imperial edict, to explain the holy books. He was soon arrested, on the order of that same Rufus who had conquered the 'child of destiny,' and who was the new governor of Judea. The old man was shut up in a dark dungeon, and his only nourishment was bread and water. Instead of drinking this water he used it for the ablutions prescribed by the law. He was condemned to torture and to death. In the midst of the most excruciating sufferings, when the hour of prayer, called Chema, arrived, he began to recite in a loud voice. The executioner was astonished, and asked him if he had charms to banish his pains.

"'I have no charms,' replied he calmly; 'but I have always desired to offer God the sacrifice of my life. My wish is granted, and I rejoice.'

"He continued his prayer, and reaching the words, 'There is but one God,' gave up the ghost."

CHAPTER XIV.

ALEA JACTA EST.

The audience had listened attentively. The impressions produced were different and not altogether favourable. Some faces expressed an ironical disapprobation, others impatience and weariness. Nevertheless, after the lecture was over they all hastened to thank the orator with many compliments. After a while the critics commenced:--

"Fanaticism plays a great part in this historical lecture," remarked Henri Segel.

"I do not like these legends; they are pure invention," said another.

"All these old persecutions appear improbable today," added a third.

"They can, nevertheless, be renewed with the most frightful details against us or against other nations," replied Jacob. "Conquerors are always savage in their vengeance, whether they are called Nero, Domitian, Trajan, Adrian, or"--

He was interrupted by some one who asked:--

"What, in the nineteenth century?"

"Yes; in our own times. *Utinam simfalsus vates!* Can I be a false prophet?"

"But, monsieur," said Muse, "you owe us something more gay, more agreeable."

"Hebrew literature furnishes certainly agreeable and amusing stories, but the choice is difficult."

Jacob turned some pages of the Talmud.

"The Rabbi Gamaliel, who was put to death by Rufus in the same manner as Akiba, related one day to a pagan prince the creation of woman in Genesis.

"'If that is true,' said the prince, 'your God acts like a malefactor, robbing a rib from Adam during his sleep.'

"The younger daughter of Gamaliel heard of the conversation.

"'Permit me, father, to reply,' said she.

"The rabbi consented, and she approached the prince supplicatingly.

"'My lord,' said she, 'I come to demand justice.'

"'What has happened?'

"'A robbery has been committed in our house: a thief entered the house in the night and stole a silver cup, leaving in its place a golden one.'

"'What an honest thief! Would to Heaven we had more like him!' cried the prince.

"'Very well, then, my lord. Our God is a malefactor of the same stamp. He took from Adam a part of his body, and gave him the beautiful Eve in exchange.'

"'The comparison is ingenious; but your God had better have acted in a frank and open manner. Why should he have employed clandestine means?'

"The young girl said in reply:--

"'Will you permit me to bring here a piece of raw meat?'

"'Certainly.'

"As soon as she had the meat the daughter of Gamaliel went to the fire, cut it, and prepared it in the presence of the astonished prince, and when it was cooked, invited him to eat.

"'My child, I know it is well cooked, but to have seen it done in detail takes away my appetite.'

"'Behold why God did not wish Adam to assist at the preparation of his wife. Perhaps he also would not have wished to possess her.'

"The Talmud," continued Jacob, "explains why God did not take the woman from the eyes, nor the mouth, nor the arms."

"Suspend the conversation and conceal the Talmud. I hear knocks at the door," said Henri.

"Why should I do that?"

"Perhaps it is a stranger; it is not desirable that he should surprise us in full Judaism."

"Should we, then, be ashamed of our part?" said Jacob sadly.

Kruder, who had left the room, entered, pale and agitated.

"What is it?" asked Bartold.

"While you have been so quiet here there has been a massacre. The military have surprised a political meeting, and it is said that many were killed and wounded."

"Let us go!" cried Jacob. "Let us go where the blood flows, and where victims are demanded. We should be found there;" and he seized his hat, but Bartold withheld him.

"Wait," said he; "this is but the prologue of the drama. It is evident that we should not hold ourselves aloof, there I agree with you; but we must not act in an imprudent manner. The thing is probably over for to-day. I propose that we consult together as to what is best to do."

"Where, where?" came from all sides.

"At Mann's. We can do nothing without him."

"When?"

"To-morrow morning."

Kruder threw himself in a chair. "*Alea jacta est,*" said he. "Unhappy Poland!"

The tragedy occurred on the street, at a time when the nobles had arrived from all parts of the kingdom, for a general reunion of the Agricultural Society. No one had foreseen the sinister event, no one wished for it; but an invisible hand seemed to precipitate it.

After he left Bartold's, Jacob could not resist the temptation to visit the scene of the catastrophe. A lugubrious silence reigned there. Noiseless pedestrians hurriedly regained their homes, gliding silently through the misty shadows. Here and there a sentinel was stationed. On the grave faces of the soldiers he believed that he could read the struggle between military honour and human duty.

Near the Hotel Europe Jacob met a group of nobles who came out of the governmental palace; they were excited, and conversed in low voices. As he passed on, by the door of the hotel, some one seized his hand, and he recognized Gromof, the companion of Lucie Coloni. Taking his arm, Gromof drew him into the house, and made him mount several pairs of stairs without saying a word.

They entered the apartment of the Italian lady, and found her seated on a couch. She looked at Gromof and left the room; alone with Jacob, the Russian said:--

"You are young, monsieur, and you cannot be altogether indifferent to that which is happening; you ought to know everything about it."

"Of what?"

"Of the intended revolution."

"I know absolutely nothing, I assure you."

"Do you take me for a spy, an informer?" asked Gromof.

"Be cool and wise, my friend. I have scarcely returned to my home. I am a Jew, and, if you will recall it, in the depths of my soul an enemy to all revolution."

"And why are you opposed to revolutions?"

"Because they lead to nothing, they are convulsive maladies, they retard the normal march of progress, and their cruel repressions push the people to despair. I think that there are means more efficacious than rebellions; but this discussion will lead us too far. I am not a revolutionist, I repeat to you; but if this country, which is the land of my choice, needs my blood and my life, I will give them willingly. I will go with the others."

"You are a man of good faith. It is enough to see you and to hear you to be convinced of it. I will then be as frank with you as I can, without betraying the secrets of others. I am a revolutionist myself by principle, for I am a Russian. My neck bears the mark of an iron collar; on my arms are imprints made by chains; the stigma of slavery is engraved on my thoughts, on my conscience, and on my words. I am ready to sacrifice myself to overthrow the world, to shed torrents of blood, at any cost to deliver my country from intellectual servitude, from moral degradation, from a maternal slavery which makes me blush to call myself a Russian in the eyes of the world. With us a revolution is a necessity. Otherwise we shall never gain the rights of men; but in this uprising we must be united. Wait until we give the signal; then march united; if you engage in this combat against despotism alone, you will compromise both your future and ours. Use, I entreat you, all your influence to stop this absurd, tempestuous, and premature outbreak. Russia will remain chained for a century yet, if your foolish precipitation is not abated. If you rebel now, you will only be playing into their hands; it is the very thing they want you to do; as in 1812, they will appeal to the patriotism of the masses, and set them upon you like wild beasts after their prey. An infamous bureaucracy will wallow in the blood of vanquished Poland; oppressed and down-trodden, she will find it difficult to rise again. There will be persecutions, murders, and exile of hundreds at a time to Siberia. That is what awaits you if you do not take my warning."

"Have you talked with any of our young men?"

"Yes; with some of the military; but scarcely had I opened my mouth when they took me for an agent of the third section, and would not listen to me. And yet, if these madmen would only remain quiet two or three years, we Russian revolutionists would have time to work through the army and to instil in all hearts a desire for freedom, to turn the emancipation of the serfs made for the profit of the government against this same government, and to spread from the shores of the Neva the cry of freedom for Russia as well as for Poland. It is certain to come some day; but your headstrong Poles will retard it if they do not listen to reason. Could you not arrange for me to meet some of the leaders of the agitation?"

"Truly, I do not know them. A youth who has more enthusiasm than good sense appears to be the leader in this movement."

"This youth is only an instrument, I think," said the Russian. "Where are the serious men, the earnest ones?"

"I do not believe there are any."

"Young men are active in war, but need old men in counsel. How came the country to be abandoned to such authority? You are mocking me, no doubt. You do not trust me. You will not speak."

"If I had had suspicions, they might have been justified, for I hardly know you; but I give you my word of honour that I do not belong to any such conspiracy, nor to any secret society. I am ready, however, to give my life when the hour of the supreme holocaust arrives."

"I believe you; but your heroism is inconceivable. To be willing to die with those who do not confide in you is strange."

"It is not so strange, and it is not heroism. It will only be the accomplishment of my duty, and a proof that there are some Jews who deserve a country, and that some of us love Poland."

"Will you save her by your devotion?"

"No. And we ourselves will perish; but we shall have contracted an alliance of blood with this country."

"All that is very fine and very poetic, but politics require something else; they do not rely on sentimental pity. By her reiterated heroisms, Poland has weakened herself and perishes. Calculation, opportunity, and stratagem may save her. Why does she not seek to make allies of her own oppressors, when nothing could be easier? Why has she given up her place in the government of Russia to the Germans? Why has she not sought to take up all governmental interests, to endear herself to us, and to communicate to us her liberalism, her brilliant civilization? Why has she not been more politic? She has furnished us only some nobles with great names but without worth, lackeys in court dress; but men of real importance, not one. They have all kept aloof. In one century, since the first partition of your country, what has been your influence? The Poles are much more enlightened than the Russians; could you not have been benefactors? In a century so little has been done. You have dissipated the years in frivolity, and each generation has thrown itself entirely unprepared into a revolution, always cruelly repressed, the result of which was exile and oppression. Wives have left their luxurious homes and accompanied their husbands to Siberia. You have harangued, written, and revealed to the Russian government your own weakness, so that they know how to strike and how you will take the blow. The Poles have the chivalrous instinct too fully developed; you do not dissemble enough. My word for it, you must meet intrigue with intrigue. If you do not, you will perish utterly, and you will have deserved it by your candour."

"A generation will perish, perhaps," said Jacob, "but not Poland. Under Russian oppression, under the knout and the gallows, she will learn to be more serious, more persevering, and more wise. The cowardly will be terrorized, but they will be the exception."

"Do you know what your spiritual writer, Rzewuski, said to a Russian general?"

"No; I have not heard it."

"'I have a wonderful way of discovering the honesty of a Russian and the good sense of a Pole.'

"'What is the way?' asked the general.

"'It is only to look in the palm of the hand to see if there are any hairs there.'"

"That is true," said Gromof. "The Poles lack good sense and we lack honesty. From the time of Ivan the Terrible we have been taught to lie, to steal, and to kill for the public good. Such teachings for three generations have naturally borne their fruit. As for the Poles, after experiencing such misfortunes by their precipitation, they should have acquired common-sense and judgment; but they have not, I regret to say."

"What do you wish of me, monsieur?" said Jacob.

"I wish you to try and quell the passions of your youthful revolutionists. Pray, supplicate,

admonish, and entreat them to wait; in the name of Heaven, to wait; and if you think your influence is not great enough, introduce me to a leader, a chief."

"One word, monsieur," said Jacob. "How can I be sure that you are worthy of confidence; you are a Russian; what proofs can you give of being worthy of our confidence?"

"I assure you I merit your whole confidence," cried Gromof, "and I will give proofs in writing and on my own body. I will show on my back ridges left there by the knout, and on my arms the mark of chains. But, no! no! they do not wish to believe me. Unhappy Poland will fail to secure liberty, for her a forbidden fruit! The throne of the Czar will be strengthened by those who thought to overthrow it. The court will continue to suck the people's blood. Oh, what a satanic laugh does your idiotic revolution provoke in me! I will be among the first to prey on you, to avenge myself for my destroyed hopes. Yes, I will go to see you all hung with pleasure, for you will have ruined our future."

"Be calm," said Jacob; "we have not yet commenced a revolution, and perhaps it may be averted. These youth are only a handful; they may yet be suppressed."

"No; if young men are at the head, neither themselves nor any one else can hold them back. They will go to any length. Youth and the mob are two inflammable elements. The sacrifice will be accomplished. There will be a heap of corpses, and the bureaucracy will make merry with their samovars and their brandy on the battle-field. I see your future: the country ravaged, villages depopulated, cities pillaged, chained galley slaves marching towards Siberia, bloody executions, an insatiable vengeance, and everywhere ruins and ashes. That will be your fate for having retarded Russian liberty by your premature revolution."

"Do not be so excited, I pray you."

"Not be excited! That is easy to say. Have you suffered as I have? Do you know what exile is? Do you know anything about penal labour? I was condemned to it for life, but I escaped. Such labour is very hard, but exile is even more intolerable."

After a short silence Gromof continued:--

"Braving all personal danger, I come here to prevent, if possible, a fatal precipitation; but I fear it is too late."

"But," said Jacob, "how can they commence a revolution without arms, without money, without leaders or soldiers?"

"Your crazy youth would go to battle with sticks and staves. The government, to encourage them, or rather to lead them into the snare of their own destruction, have permitted the underhand introduction of a small quantity of arms; they have been allowed to amass a little money, and the government has seemed to have its eyes shut to a movement that it has really instigated. Afterward they can repress it when they desire. In the eyes of Europe, the first aggression will be on your side. Your folly will have been heroic, but will only obtain a barren sympathy. Europe will authorize by her silence the horrible cruelties which Poland will again endure, and despotism, by this crafty political stroke, will be reinforced for a long time."

Jacob did not reply, and Gromof grew warmer and warmer, when Lucie Coloni came out of the next room, and, putting her hand on his brow, said in a caressing tone:--

"Serge, calm yourself, or you will be ill."

"It will kill me!" said Gromof, hanging his head for a moment, then raising it he cried furiously:--

"Bad luck to you! Bad luck to you, if our project is ruined by you foolish Poles!"

Jacob drew out his watch; the situation was unpleasant and he did not know what to do, what to say. The Russian looked at him reproachfully as if he had thrown cold water on his hopes; he seated himself again, and instead of acting like one possessed, Gromof suddenly became pleasant and agreeable.

"Pardon me, Monsieur Jacob," said he, "for having revealed to you the sufferings of my inmost heart. Savage blood flows in my veins, which is repressed only by civilization. All my countrymen are the same; we Russians are savages at heart, but you know now what I want of you or any other person who has political influence in the present crisis."

They parted, and Jacob passing safely by the guards regained his dwelling.

CHAPTER XV.

A PERILOUS INTERVIEW.

Returned home, Jacob found a note from Muse, who implored him, no matter at what hour he returned, to come to her, saying she would wait for him if necessary until morning.

Until now the grave young man, notwithstanding the marked devotion of his lovely proselyte, had known how to maintain when in her presence a respectful distance, avoiding all familiar and compromising relations. The mother and daughter endeavoured in vain to put him in a compromising position. More than once things were arranged so that he was alone with the young girl, who then employed an insinuating sweetness and provoking tenderness; but Jacob did not cease to be respectful and dignified. There had been moments when this charming creature, animated by a simulated passion, and recalling the Greek bacchantes, had produced in him an involuntary sensation; but he conquered it, and his love for Mathilde served as a shield to defend him against temptation.

It was past midnight when the servant who had brought the letter told him that he was expected on the floor below. Jacob hesitated; but he thought that some urgent business had caused these ladies to appeal to him, and he decided to go.

He found Muse in a light piquant yet modest dress, her beautiful hair partly unconfined, her shoulders a little uncovered, as if by chance. She held a handkerchief, and was all prepared for tears. When he entered, she ran to meet him.

"Oh, Monsieur Jacob!" cried she, taking his hand. "What has happened? Where have you been? You were no doubt mixed up in this affair. Oh, I ask you, for mercy's sake, not to throw yourself in the fray. Does not friendship permit me to ask this of you?"

She fixed her eyes tenderly on Jacob, who, perfectly calm, did not reply. Muse continued:--

"I am all in a tremble about you. Do not misjudge my feelings, for I have for you only the sentiments of a sister," and she pressed his hand for the second time.

"I thank you very much, mademoiselle; but I give you my word of honour that I know nothing of the events that have taken place, and I do not intend to take part in the fray."

"In that case, why this prolonged absence?"

"By a singular chance a person of my acquaintance stopped me and the conversation lasted long."

"It is useless, you cannot deceive me;" and saying this she seized both of his hands and leaned toward him. He could hear the beating of her heart, her breath fanned his cheek, and her eyes sought to magnetize him.

"I will tell you, then, that I passed the rest of the evening with a Russian," said Jacob smiling.

This smile, this coldness and complete presence of mind, displeased Muse. She had hoped to see him succumb to her fascinations; but she had deceived herself, and this angered her against him and against herself. But the more difficult it was to inspire him with no matter what kind of love, the more she was determined to succeed.

"Very well. I believe you; but look at me, monsieur," said she lowering her voice. "Have I not changed? Hours of feverish anxiety for you are graven on my face."

These words were murmured in his ear, and were scarcely intelligible.

"Truly, mademoiselle," replied Jacob, "I feel myself unworthy of such anxiety on your part."

"No; you are not worthy of a sentiment that you have awakened without even deigning to perceive it. You are so indifferent, so cold." Then, as if she had said too much, she lowered her eyes and was silent.

Jacob felt sorry for her, and leaning towards her he kissed her hand. Muse started as if he had applied a hot iron, trembled violently, und buried her head in the sofa-pillow.

Then for the first the thought that Muse loved him struck Jacob. To have allowed such a sentiment to develop seemed to him a great crime. He was as horrified with himself as if his conduct had been that of a libertine. He started from his seat and looked at her. This sudden agitation could be interpreted in different ways. Muse did not prolong the scene, for even if the desired end was not completely attained, she hoped much for the future in the silence and troubled mien of the young man.

"Go, monsieur!" said she. "I am ill. I do not know what I have said. My head is confused."

Jacob hesitated a moment, looked at her pale face, saluted her respectfully, and went out. He

had hardly closed the door behind him when the mother entered.

"Very well, what has happened?" asked she.

"He is stupid, very stupid," replied the adorable Emusia, shrugging her shoulders. "He is a fool, but I will conquer him yet."

"I fear, on the contrary, that he is not enough of a fool for us," replied Madame Wtorkowska.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE JEWS IN COUNCIL.

A great number of the most influential Israelites assembled at Mann's house on the following day. Mann, who was already proud of being considered the chief of the Israelites of Warsaw, was delighted to preside at a meeting of so much importance.

"Mann," whispered Father Simon to Bartold, "this poor Mann, resembles this morning a bladder; look out, for he may burst."

"And even if he does, with what are we threatened? A little wind, and nothing else," replied Bartold laughing.

This vain personage had really assumed a very pompous manner. He looked around him from the height of his grandeur, and from time to time put his hand on his empty head. Seated on a sofa which he occupied alone, he opened the meeting majestically.

"Messieurs," he said, "we have met here to discuss future events, for the situation is complicated. What, then, should be our rôle? That is the question submitted to you. We have always been united; I hope it will now be shown that we have not changed."

"Excuse me," said Simon. "But I vote a distribution of cigars before the important debate."

"Have done with your jests," said Mann in a firm voice, handing him a cigar. "This is no laughing matter; the times are grave and serious? What attitude shall we take toward the nobles? What will they do now, after this affair of last night?"

"The nobles will do nothing at all. They will dispute, argue, vociferate, and threaten, and the result of their consultation will be nothing," said the incorrigible Simon.

"Yes, that is usually the way; but this time they are forced to take action. I will add that the nobles have almost always been hostile to our race, and have often offended us by denying us justice."

"The nobility will always be the nobility," replied Simon to the chairman, in spite of his efforts to silence him. "They look on us as their stewards, their brokers, their innkeepers. They accuse us of exhaling garlic wherever we go. But they are not at heart our enemies. Let us speak of the other side of the matter, for, messieurs, the nobles dream only of sacrificing themselves for their beloved Poland; we do not enter into their calculations in that regard, and is it not our own fault?"

"The revolution is imminent," said Mann.

"It is possible," observed Bartold. "But I believe the nobles would like to draw out of this affair, in which the middle class are so active, and into which they seek to draw us."

"Then we must let ourselves be drawn in," said Jacob, "in order to become worthy citizens of the country that has received us when we were outcasts."

"Jacob always returns to this refrain; we know his theories, but at present we are occupied with practical things. What interest have we in the past?" said Mann.

"Our first interest," replied Jacob, "in a country where we are so numerous is to be admitted to a footing of equality. The opportunity now presents itself; let us profit by it; let us unite with the middle class."

"Nothing is so alluring as a sham compact at the outset, but afterward there are sure to be mutual recriminations and quarrels," said Simon.

"Take a cigar to close your lips!" cried the chairman, who was weary of the sentimentalism of the one and the everlasting jests of the other.

"I will give you a second cigar, if you will be silent," added another.

"I repeat my question," said Mann solemnly. "What rôle ought we to play at present,--we Jews?"

"Excuse me," said a stranger. "There are no Jews here. We are all Poles, of the religion of Moses."

A hearty applause showed approval of this expression uttered for the first time.

"If this view is adopted it solves the question," said Jacob.

"Pardon," replied Mann, "a thousand pardons. This phrase does not decide whether we will make common cause with the nobles, who do not wish a premature revolution, or with the bourgeoisie, who are the promoters of this movement."

"That's the chief point," cried Simon, always eager to give his advice. "I vote for the nobles; by going with them we may succeed in obtaining crests. I am very anxious to stamp on my seal three onions on a field of gold."

"Cursed babbler!" cried Mann, striking the table with his fist. "Will you keep silent or not?"

"I will shut up," said Simon.

"Let us be serious," replied Bartold. "Monsieur Mann has put the question well."

"I do not think so," said Jacob. "To take sides with this party or that is all that we should have to decide. The question is altogether different for me. Here it is: What is the better part for us to take in the interest of Poland, our adopted country?"

"Listen to me," cried Henri Segel. "We should be blind, indeed, not to see that, if we join in a revolution lost in advance, it would mean as certain ruin to us as to the rest of the country."

A small man with a consumptive look gazed around him, coughed, and let fall, drop by drop, these words:--

"We have been long enough held in contempt and subjection. The time has arrived to come out of it. Let us think of ourselves only. The peasant does not like us, because he is stupid, and we do not inspire him with fear. The nobles detest us and continually humiliate us. They will take part in the rebellion; if they find it inevitable, they will consider it a point of honour. The Russian government hates them, and will take advantage of the opportunity to confiscate their estates and drive them into exile. If we can be neutral during the crisis, what a prospect opens before us! In every nation, whatever be the form of government, be always on the side of the governing class. We are prepared to seize a high position. We will become the masters of the country."

"This idea," said Jacob, "has been often advanced, and is nothing new. But there is one objection: we shall save everything but honour. The fact of having been sheltered from all danger will condemn us. The nobility will not entirely disappear; many will remain. Russia, too, has her own revolutionists, who may overthrow her in a few years."

"Yes, before many years," replied the little man dryly; "if we do not make ourselves masters here, we are not worth a farthing. Already we dominate more than half of Europe in money matters, and the German press is largely at our service. France, also, has not escaped our influence. Warsaw is called our capital, a new Jerusalem."

"My dear sir," said Jacob, "your prophecy is not yet ready to be realized. We shall not attain our end by egotism. It would be much better to seal our fraternity with Poland, and by a sincere devotion gain her esteem by proving that the people of Israel are a noble people, that they will not abase themselves by taking sides with the strong or the oppressors. Never has the calculation of knavery been preferable to that of honesty."

"What is that you are saying there?" interrupted Simon. "The Jew has always been a trickster, and will do well to remain such."

"No, no!" replied Jacob warmly. "If servitude has taught us deceit and falsehood, is it any reason why we should persevere in it, now that our heavy chains are broken and the way is open to us? Let us march with the right, our heritage during thousands of years. The glory of Israel is very dear to me, but I rely above all on the laws of God and the justice of our cause. Let us prove that we are worthy of being called the 'chosen people of God.' There lies our grandeur, we do not need to seek another."

"Fine words," said Mann. "And why shall we not exult over the defeat of our enemies? They have kept us long enough in the mud at the gates of their palaces; why should we not be glad to see them in their turn humbled before us?"

"We reproach the pagans with love of revenge, and now do we wish to imitate them? Our faith has been accused of inculcating that ignoble sentiment; while, on the contrary, the Christians preach forgiveness to enemies and laud it as a virtue."

"Virtue," said Mann, "is an excellent thing in private life, but when the welfare of a nation or a community is threatened, it is not expected that we should adhere strictly to virtue."

"An old and pernicious prejudice. The magicians recommend the use of a soup made from the fat of corpses in order to attain happiness in life, and politicians of the old school preach villany in the interest of the public good. It is an error: a nation is never saved by evil."

"You are eloquent, Jacob; but you generalize too much. You forget that the right of conversation is open to all. I refer you to the Talmud, which you quote so often."

"The hour for the Bourse draws nigh, and we have decided nothing," cried another.

"That which is difficult," said Bartold, "is to decide, with the meagre information we possess. One cannot foresee how things will turn out. We must wait. I wish, like Jacob, to follow the right, but on condition that it does not lead to a precipice; I admit the necessity of sacrifices when something is gained thereby, but I do not approve of useless sacrifices."

"All sacrifice bears its fruit sooner or later," replied Jacob.

"You return to your mysticisms. Our debate is ended."

"Result: nothing, as usual," concluded Simon.

"One word more," said Mann. "It has been said that we cannot foresee how events will terminate. Some one of us should seek admittance to the revolutionary meetings and observe what is going on; that may enlighten us. Prudence dictates this precaution. Jacob, will you undertake it?"

"No, Monsieur Mann. I am not a revolutionist, and I refuse to lend myself to the rôle of a spy even for our cause."

"What delicate susceptibility! We will send some one in your place."

Mann sputtered wrathfully, and continued:--

"Thus we shall be informed of the actions of the revolutionary party, and if anything important occurs, my house is always at your service for meetings."

"The Bourse, the Bourse; it is the hour!" cried several voices. And they all hastened away.

CHAPTER XVII.

REUNION OF THE NOBLES.

Jacob, impressed by Gromof's words, sought an interview with Kruder or Ivas. The first was out, and the second he could not find. Returning from his search he learned that the people were assembled for the funerals of the previous night's victims. An irresistible impulse seized him, and he arrived, he hardly knew how, at the spot where the five victims had fallen. The place, after the murder, had been completely deserted. In the souls of the people surged an exaltation, a virility, a confidence which only demanded a signal of authority to become a revolution. They had lacked arms, but they had torn them from the Russian troops.

Soldiers and officers seemed ashamed of the attack. The government itself, after so cold-blooded an act, hesitated. Orders were received from Petersburg to display a pitiless firmness, but they dared not execute them. It almost seemed as if remorse had overtaken the representatives of the Czar at Warsaw. Was it really remorse? No, it was rather a ruse.

Clubs gathered in the open air and met everywhere without being disturbed by the police. For the first time in Poland they enjoyed under Muscovite rule a semblance of liberty. The capital was under the control of its inhabitants; in the circle of commerce delegates were chosen, whose duty was to present to Prince Gortchakof, Namiestnik of the kingdom, the will of the people. This removal of the yoke of the oppressor lasted for several days,--from March to April. Sad as its beginning had been, the nation breathed; she was free for the moment.

Those who took part in the deeds of these days guard them in their memory as the most

memorable episode of their lives. I doubt if it has ever been given a man to see twice, anything as imposing.

Jacob walked about the city, his heart filled with sweet emotions; a single thought occupied him, that of the fusion of the Israelites with the rest of the nation. The hour was propitious, the moment was decisive. In spite of little sympathy for Mann, he realized that he could undertake nothing without his influence. Mann had not been chosen a delegate, for the Jews were represented to their satisfaction in the person of the wealthy and honourable Matthieu Rosen, a man of rare merit. He urged his people and their rabbis to join in the patriotic movement, for by that means they would share in a union of sentiments and aspirations with the Christian population and their clergy. A similar union had occurred in 1848, at Cracow. At that time the coffins of the massacred Jews were stationed before the church of Sainte Marie. At present they must guard against the pride and fanaticism of the Christians on one side, and the narrow-minded selfishness of the Jews on the other. Jacob hastened to consult Mann on this subject, but found him absent. But the young man's wishes, expressed at the late council of his brethren, were soon realized by an administrative decree.

Jacob went to see the delegates, who in the silence of the night were occupied arranging for the funerals. They had at this time all authority concentrated in their hands. The Jew foresaw how fleeting this authority would be. These men were honest, but without the energy required for such a crisis, and they would in a short time lose their wits and abdicate the popular sovereignty confided to their keeping.

The funeral details were arranged. Even the most intolerant of the Christians felt the necessity, in spite of their prejudices, of uniting for the time being with the Jews in perfect fraternity. Jacob passed a sleepless night on one of the benches of the assembly room. At daybreak he again hastened to Mann's house. He found him a little irritated that the popular vote had preferred Rosen to himself, and he had retired like Achilles to his tent. The pompous old fellow was awake and already surrounded with visitors, although he had not finished his toilet. Booted, but in his shirt, he presented a laughable spectacle on account of his extreme corpulence. He, no doubt, noticed this himself, for he interrupted himself in the middle of a heated harangue, to which his visitors listened respectfully, to throw over his shoulders a cotton dressing-gown.

"Ah!" said he, "our friends the nobles have become, then, meek as lambs. It is they who first ask to embrace us. One sees that they know the proverb,--

'Dans l'embarras
Va chez Judas.'

It is for us to remember the other part of the verse:--

'Plus d'embarras
Va t'en, Judas.'"

"The harmony is well established," said Bartold. "It is sincere; we must take advantage of it."

"No; it is not peace, it is only a truce. The Agricultural Society, representative of the nobles, continues to repulse us. Its secretary has sent Matthieu Rosen a letter, which leaves no doubt of their malevolence towards us. They wish, they say, that we should merit our right as citizens, as if we had not deserved that title since we were established on Polish soil. Feudalists, ultramontanes, fanatics, they desire war; let them go to the war, then. Let us not mix with them. Every one to his own interest."

Thus spake the fiery Achilles, Mann, whom Henri Segel tried to calm.

"You must admit, however," said he, "that Matthieu Rosen, though treated with little consideration by the secretary of the Agricultural Society, has been named a delegate. Let us strike while the iron is hot."

"From this iron there can only come new chains for us," said Mann. "They are incorrigible, these nobles, eaten up by pride of long descent. We shall have conciliations when Dumah has thrown them all into hell; not before."

"The Russian government agrees with you there," remarked Bartold; "but the nobility is capable of regeneration, of amending. They commence to understand their interests better, and if they hold out their hands to us, we should not refuse them."

"No! the nobles are blind!" cried Mann, in a loud voice. "Give up all thoughts of alliance with them. What matters it to us what happens to them?"

"If we keep aloof now," said Jacob, "it is the same as taking sides with the Russians. Let us go, my friends; when we are called in the spirit of sacrifice, the cause of the weak and the oppressed ought to be ours."

"It is utterly useless to reason with you, dear Jacob. Men of your stamp go to their ruin and perish. I will not oppose you, though I deplore your fate. As for the mass of our people, they should look out for their own interests and for the country."

"Let the majority remain conservative, but not for that alone; they should escape death in order to console and succour those who survive the catastrophe."

"There will be time enough to speak of that," said Mann, with a disdainful gesture.

"It is probable," replied Bartold, "that the burial of the victims of yesterday will be a European manifestation of the regeneration of Poland. Ought we to be indifferent lookers on? to take no part ostensibly in the procession? in a word, to wash our hands of it all?"

"This burial does not concern us," cried Mann. "None of our people have been killed. Why should we thrust ourselves into the quarrel?"

"It is not merely a burial, it is a grand political manifestation," said Jacob. "Before those coffins there will be a national appeal for vengeance against the assassins; and we"--

"We? Let it suffice us to behold from afar that manifestation! And you, Jacob, who preach with so much warmth a good understanding with the Christians, as you are at the same time a fervent and orthodox Jew, you cannot ask us to march behind the coffins, side by side with the Christian clergy. That would be breaking one of our laws, which commands all kohen to keep at a distance from bodies of the dead. How much worse the impure corpses of men of another belief, another race."

"I know well that the kohenin ought to abandon even their dying wives, if they are not of Jewish origin. Their contact becomes impure. But I also know that the law, formerly so vigorous, and not without a wise motive, is indulgent under exceptional circumstances. A kohen who, in order to accomplish a good deed, touches a corpse is, according to the conclusion of all rabbis, exempt from sin."

"I do not think that can be the opinion of all the rabbis. However, we can easily ascertain."

By a strange coincidence, the door opened and admitted a dignified old man with a long white beard, clad in the ancient costume of a Polish Jew. All saluted him respectfully. He was a rabbi, generally esteemed for his learning and his honourable and upright character. His face denoted the serenity of a soul untroubled by terrestrial cares.

Mann hastened to repeat what he had said to Jacob, and, wishing above all to have the approbation of the rabbi for his doctrine of hatred and vengeance, he added:--

"Ought we to forgive the nobles? Ought we to overlook the evils done us by them? The justice of God is implacable, and the hour approaches when we shall be avenged upon our secular oppressors."

The old man listened attentively, then replied slowly and solemnly:--

"The Rabbi Ichochua ben Levi had for a neighbour a Sadducee, who had insulted him in many ways. Weary of enduring these affronts, he resolved to pray to God for vengeance. As he was preparing to go to the temple to accomplish his design, he was overcome by a profound slumber. On awakening, he said: 'The sweet sleep into which God plunged me so suddenly is a warning from on high; a just man never invokes divine vengeance against his enemies.'"

Then the venerable man arose, bowed, and went out. Mann shrugged his shoulders, and was silent. His guests, most of whom were not very devout, took their hats, considering the question decided by the text of the law. In the Talmud, as in books of a character still more sacred, each interprets as he wishes. The passage proved Jacob in the right, but could have been perhaps contradicted by another passage which would put him in the wrong. Mann, fortunately, was not sufficiently familiar with the literature of Judaism to recall a text adapted to his argument. Jacob, triumphant, rapidly followed the rabbi, and kissed his hand with gratitude.

He returned to the city, where he found that there had been a change in favour of the Jews. Their adversaries were silent, and public opinion approved their admittance on a fraternal footing, although the nobles still opposed it. Twenty-four hours had sufficed not to efface, but to mask, the prejudices of both parties,--prejudices of which they were ashamed, and which they concealed in an obscure corner of the soul and dared no longer show in daylight.

The nobles were not in perfect harmony even with each other. Like the Jews, they held diverse opinions. Those among them who were the most obstinate were those who were not well informed as to the actual situation, who had learned nothing, forgotten nothing, and who had intrenched themselves in an exclusive adherence and devotion to the past. These were called on the streets ultramontanes, on account of their importation of foreign Catholicism,--a Catholicism which was monarchical and legitimist, an enemy of progress. Essentially different was it from Polish Catholicism, which was conciliatory toward republican ideas, but did not take sides with either party, and, with Copernicus, had left its luminous traces in the ascendant march of humanity.

This group was Polish in its own way, perhaps by its attachment to the privileges of the nobility; but it was by no means patriotic in its alliance in heart or spirit with the political reaction in Europe, which weighed so heavily on Poland.

It was not easy to be conservative in Poland. It was to condemn one's self to incessant contradictions of conscience and of conduct. How can one be at the same time a patriot, and submit to a foreign yoke? to be a Catholic, and prostrate one's self before a foreign authority which persecuted Catholicism? Weary of conflict, the conservative finishes by thinking only of saving his fortune and his social position, and pays no attention to the rest.

Jacob, in wandering over the city from house to house, with the familiarity which always prevails in times of revolution, entered a circle of ultramontanes. The master of the house, who was seated in an easy-chair, which he never quitted on account of an incurable malady, had still more nerve and energy than most of the visitors assembled in his rooms. Here were genuine counts, specimens of the ancient aristocracy of orthodox Catholicism, and many young nobles fresh from the Jesuit colleges of Belgium and Bavaria. Among all these the most remarkable was a man of gigantic height, of irreproachable character, of rare eloquence, who, on account of his habit of repeating the popular proverb, *Jak Boga Kocham* (as true as that I love God), had received the not very euphonious sobriquet of Boakoam.

He was a descendant of a very aristocratic family, deprived of its former splendour by the prodigality of its ancestors. He lived ordinarily in the country on a small estate, all that remained of his fortune.

The conversation was on the events of the day, and the social equality accorded to the Israelites.

"In a hundred years," said Boakoam, "the Counts Z., P., and B. will have become coachmen, and their palaces will have passed into the hands of the R.'s, the K.'s, and the E.'s."

"It is possible," replied the master of the house, who belonged to one of the families designated; "above all, if we make many more false steps like this one. It will be our own fault. We shall foolishly ruin ourselves. We have an aversion to work, while the Jews are economical, laborious, and persevering."

"Thus, that the Jews may not devour us, my dear count, you wish we may be transformed into Jews. Pretty advice! If we must perish, let us perish at least as we are. Experience has demonstrated to us our inaptitude as financiers. To what end have come our navigation companies, or our industrial or commercial associations? We have lost money on all our undertakings. Distasteful as it is to admit, I must confess that we have arrived at a point of irresistible decadence. We have organic vices, we have attained the height of moral weakness. I would, nevertheless, like to believe that we shall yet regain our old-time vigour."

"To rise again," said a country gentleman, "we must have several chiefs, several guides in whom we can place confidence, as in you, Monsieur le Comte."

"You could not have a better chief than Count André Zamoyski, whose name is on every lip. Virtue, reason, grandeur of soul, patriotism, all these qualities he possesses."

"Certainly Count André is the right man, he is honourable and worthy; but let us talk no more of politics just now," said Boakoam.

"God preserve us from this mania of politics, unreasonable and inopportune! We can gain nothing by it, and it has already been the cause of many evils. True politics are agriculture, science, economy, and the amelioration of morals."

"You are right, Monsieur le Comte," said a listener. "But what is to be done when, in spite of ourselves, the youth and the city rise in arms and draw us in?"

"Youth has courage and action. Imitate them. If you do not wish a revolution, proclaim it loudly; not in any half way. I understand perfectly the blind but heroic ardour of these young men who offer their blood for their country. It is necessary that we have equal energy to arrest this patriotic uprising, that we do not give them encouragement by our inertia, our weakness."

"Then we are lost," cried a voice.

"Oh, not when we have just concluded an alliance with the Jews!" replied Boakoam. "The Jews will certainly save us."

This pleasantry caused a ripple of laughter.

"That which is certain," gravely replied the invalid, "is that they have more sense than we. They have proved it."

"They will not lend us their good sense as they have loaned us their money," remarked Boakoam. "They know that it is a capital which we lack, and on which we could not pay them interest."

"Where is the time when we did not know the Jews save as stewards and brokers! One could then pluck the extortioner by the beard."

"Those times, alas! will never return," said one of the company in a sad voice.

"The world is degenerating," added another.

"Have you remarked, gentlemen," said a solemn personage with black hair and the Oriental type, "that everything is being gradually monopolized by the Israelites? They are the masters of the Bourse. Now the Bourse directs the world and governs the State. Without it, no loans and no wars. They manage public opinion through the press, the principal organs of which belong to them. In Prussia, in the rest of Germany, and in Belgium, journalism is in their hands. In France every newspaper has one or more Jews connected with it. Many have seats in Parliament and the German Reichstag. Some are ministers or ambassadors."

"The reason is easily to be seen," replied Boakoam. "The Polish nobles could not exist without Jewish factors, and took them everywhere with them on their travels. Europe is like us, morally and physically declined; the governments are in decadence, and the factors do as they like."

"French masonry," added the country gentleman, "and democracy have the Jews for their firm supporters."

"But that does not agree with the Bourse, whose principals are far from revolutionary," objected some one.

"They are," replied the gentleman, "both liberals and conservatives, but only in a measure. Liberals when they wish to undermine Catholicism, and conservatives when they have other ends to serve; but when it is a question of war, they are always conservatives, for they do not wish war at any price."

"Never," said Boakoam, "shall we be able to get rid of the Jews, and they will yet ruin us."

"If one is ruined it is usually his own fault," replied his friend.

"True. But how can we change now? We, who are accustomed to a life of ease and to liberty of action, is it possible for us to become tradesmen? The Jews understand business, have money, skill, and avarice. And we? Nothing!"

"Let us try to acquire these qualities."

"How can we? The government oppresses us and seeks to crush us out of existence. We are weakened by this cruel oppression; where can we find strength for the struggle?"

"In a sentiment of duty."

"Too late to lift the burden now. I know not if the *Finis Poloniae* will be accomplished, but the end of the Polish nobility is certain. I am afraid that we are doomed."

"Listen to me, messieurs," said the master of the house solemnly. "I have not long to live. Every day death draws nearer to me, as you perceive. As the time to leave the world approaches, a man does not lie. Well, on the border of the tomb I adjure you not to lose faith in yourselves, for you who prophesy your own fall are the ones who hasten it. What have the nobles done since 1791? Where are their labours, their efforts, their sacrifices? Behold them unbalanced, their fortunes, activity, existence, entirely and foolishly dissipated in libertinage and idleness. Immutable laws regulate everything in nature. Once withered, the leaf falls; once unfaithful to its mission, every class of society is condemned to disappear. If, as you predict, the Jews are destined to supersede us, it will be owing to our improvidence and their superior virtue."

"Frightful perspective!" cried the country gentleman piteously. "Do you say that my son may perhaps become steward for a Kronenberg or a Rosen?"

"Perhaps he would be lucky to get that position. If I were a Kronenberg or a Rosen I would not think of employing so incapable a steward as your son."

Boakoam put an end to the conversation by this sally, which was a little brutal. Jacob, unable to contain himself longer, believed it a duty to reveal his identity.

"Messieurs," said he, "pardon me for interrupting this discussion, but I feel it my duty to confess that I am a Jew."

All eyes were turned toward him in astonishment. The least surprised was Boakoam and their host. The former burst out laughing, and cried:--

"In that case, my dear sir, you have heard many curious things about your race."

"Very curious, and I shall profit by them. As for your pleasantries, they have not wounded me. I could form some idea of how you spoke of us, by the way that we speak of you at our meetings. For compensation, you have finished by praising our qualities in such a manner as to make me

very grateful. But your praises are more than we deserve. If we possess some good qualities, we have also many faults, and I ought to acknowledge them. This alliance with us seems repugnant to you; but, believe me, it will be for your advantage in the end. It is repugnant to you because, as some one here has said, we smell of garlic and old clothes; but just now you cannot have too many friends and allies."

"As true as I love God," cried Boakoam, "your morals are golden. But I do not believe that we can trust in your friendship. You will be with us as long as we are standing, but you will go over to the enemy when we fall. You will then feel only contempt for us, and the thirst for vengeance will awaken in your hearts."

"Never! I promise it in my name, and in the names of those who think as I do. We will remain united in misfortune as in fortune."

"So as to profit equally by our success or our misfortunes? I am frank, and now that we are on this subject, permit me to finish. I am ready to acknowledge my fault, to avow all the vices and all the errors imputed to the nobles, but I cannot see that your rich men are any better. You accuse us of foolish vanity and aristocratic pride; your bankers have as much. The Count André, who comes from a long line of illustrious ancestors, is much more polite, more affable, more simple, than"--

"I do not deny it. Money often renders men impertinent. I have only one excuse to offer for my co-religionists: it is, that repulsed by the elegant society, overwhelmed with sarcasm, we have not had the opportunity to profit by the same schooling as yourselves. You must civilize us by your good examples."

"Hear! Hear!" cried Boakoam. "We will teach you our refined manners in return for your practical spirit."

"I consent," replied Jacob smiling. "One word more: you have alluded to some of us as rude and having repulsive manners. Very well; even among these men, vain, proud, and gross, there are some who are benevolent; though their appearance does not indicate it. I have not finished. In the presence of the representatives of the past I know not whether I shall be permitted to express my ideas. Behold them, if you will be kind enough to listen. Humanity will not retrograde. She has ceased to be led by a privileged class; she feels her strength and will walk alone. The feudal privileges are dead, very dead."

"You avow, however," said the dark man with Oriental features, "that society, freed from privileges and belonging to itself, will still admit a certain division of classes."

"Yes; but admittance to these classes will be given by personal merit, and not by birth."

"Then we shall all be in the same boat," cried Boakoam laughing,--"peasants, Jews, gypsies, bourgeoisie, pell-mell with us the fine flower of the aristocracy."

"Modern theories, fatal doctrines born of revolutionary folly," remarked a pupil of the Jesuits, fresh from Belgium. "I believe neither in progress nor a new order of things. All that I see in this accursed age is the hand of God, which chastises us and plunges us into confusion and chaos."

Saying this the disciple of Loyola took his departure, furious. Many followed his example, while Jacob was making his final remarks thus:--

"We are new citizens, but rest assured that in recovering our rights of citizenship after so long ostracism we will not refuse the accompanying duties. If until the present the Jew has not considered himself a Pole, the fault has not been with him nor with Poland herself, but with the barbarity of past ages, to the shadows of a prolonged epoch of darkness. 'Light, light, still more light!' as said the dying Goethe, and the world will move on in the sight of God."

"As true as I love God," said Boakoam, "these are holy words. And I must save myself, for my confessor would refuse absolution because I had dealings with the Old Testament, in the absence of the New. Good-evening."

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE COUNTRY WILLS IT.

Events precipitated themselves with frightful rapidity. Veiled promises and secret encouragements on the part of Napoleon III. contributed largely to the development of an

insurrection whose instigators were too confident in the diplomatic intervention of France, England, and Austria. A bitter disappointment was the result, as we know. A brutal reply from the Russian government sufficed to make Europe fall back, and rendered harder than ever the fate of Poland.

At the point whither our story has carried us, all hope of preventing a fatal catastrophe was not lost. Several men of influence, whose foresight was better than that of the foolish masses, made heroic efforts toward this end. Among these was our Jacob, whose interview with Gromof had resulted in enlightening him as to the fatal consequences of a premature revolution.

The most of the Jews rallied around the Marquis Wielopolski, a double-faced man, half Russian, half Polish, with equivocal politics. He was clever in appearance, but deceitful at heart, and sought to please both sides. This policy was not pleasing to the nobles, whom he held of little account; it alienated the ultramontanes, and irritated the revolutionists, whom he tried to reduce by violent measures. The marquis, much more authoritative than liberal, wished to inaugurate that which he called the legal progress; but not leaning on either party, he soon had every one against him. The Jews, however, sustained him for some time with ardour; but he soon displeased them, like the others, by an absolute want of tact in his conduct toward them.

Men of exalted opinions, whose only wish was to benefit humanity, and who desired to maintain a just moderation, were alienated and were left alone.

Jacob, although of an entirely different character from Wielopolski, was equally unfortunate. In his political rôle he was no more successful than in his character of religious reformer. Admitted to all the meetings, he perceived that he had no influence whatever.

He displeased the revolutionists by his wise warnings; the conservatives, by his transports of spirit; and the partisans of legal progress, by his spirit of independence. He had no communication with the Russians, with the exception of Gromof.

Among his own people, Mann detested him because he refused to bow down to him and admire him; for vanity was this individual's ruling passion.

Mathilde's father was devoted body and soul to the palace of Brühl, which was Wielopolski's seat, and received his former pupil coldly, for he did not wish to be ranked under the same banner. For the same reason Henri Segel, a zealous servant of the marquis, looked on him with pity. Bartold, less servile, nevertheless adhered to the new régime to a certain extent, and was surprised that Jacob did not follow his example. Ivas, whose relations with his friend were growing cooler, accidentally met him one evening.

"Jacob," said he, "the moment approaches when the country will need all her children's services. I was coming to ask you to pay your tribute, and I will give you the receipt. You have only to fix the amount yourself."

"I do not dream of refusing to make all necessary sacrifices," replied Jacob after a moment of thought. "But in giving I wish to know why I give. Will you give me your word of honour that it is not to aid the revolution?"

"It is truly to buy arms."

"If it is for that, I refuse. I am ready to sacrifice half, or more than half, of my fortune for Poland, but not one cent to light the torch of incendiarism."

"Man of little faith and frozen soul, how can you be presumptuous enough to suppose that you can hinder patriotic sentiments, or strong enough to overthrow all obstacles! Am I not right? We are sure of the people; we have the Catholic clergy, thanks to the marquis, who has also reconciled the masses; and we count on the greater part of the Israelites. We shall force the nobles to come out of their intrenchments and join us. In Russia the revolution ferments. Garibaldi promises us champions; Hungary, arms, men, and money. Austria is a beneficent neighbour; and, to finish, France and England will undoubtedly aid us."

"Softly! Softly! Repeat your enumerations one by one."

"If faith does not exist in you it is useless for me to talk further. I will listen to nothing. Will you give me the money? Yes or no."

"For the revolution, no."

"But the necessity is urgent, my dear Jacob. We must have money to-day; you cannot refuse us."

"I refuse; I have said it."

"I have been your friend and defender, and I am still; but above all, I am a revolutionist. Do you know to what you are exposed by your opinions? To death, perhaps; certainly infamy."

"Infamy, never! A man can only render himself infamous; others cannot imprint this stain upon him. As for death, I do not fear it. The preservation of life or of fortune by the sacrifice of

profound convictions is unworthy of a true man, is cowardly. You can obtain nothing from me by threats; kill me if you wish; I firmly believe in the justice of God and the immortality of the soul. And so I am tranquil."

Ivas laughed, and was a little touched.

"You are a great child, my dear Jacob," said he, with an air of compassion. "I pity you, for you are not a man of this century. I regard you as a phenomenon, as a mortal who awakes after a thousand years of sleep into an epoch entirely different from his own. Nevertheless, I esteem you."

Jacob held out his hand silently.

"You cannot change me," said he. "It will be useless for you to try it. I feel that the world which surrounds me is not with me; however, as I am here, and I exist, it must be with some special design of Providence."

"I return to my pecuniary wants."

"Ivas," said Jacob, "tell me, what sum do you require, for yourself?"

"Nothing for myself; all for the country."

"And it is expressly to buy arms?"

"Yes; my conscience does not permit me to lie."

"And mine commands me to refuse."

"You are the first who has refused me so decidedly. Your conduct is a bad example. A rigorous condemnation awaits you. I leave you in sorrow, for, Jacob, you will die."

"I am not at all afraid to die, and your threat will not make me break my word."

"I beg of you, my friend."

"Do not supplicate me; it is in vain. Tell me that you will use the money to save men pursued by the Russian government, to facilitate their flight, and enable them to live, and I am ready to reduce myself to poverty for that; but for your insane revolution, not a rouble."

"I do not insist, but"--

"Very well. Have you seen Gromof?"

"Twenty times."

"What have you replied to his argument?"

"That he is a Russian; consequently, ardent in words, and timid in action. For the Russians the opportune moment never arrives. Their former conspiracies were broken up by a word from Nicholas; a word sufficed to calm a popular disturbance. A weak-kneed race, they are still as cowardly as then. I believe Gromof to be an agent of the police. He is suspected."

"What he says accords with the actual situation."

"I am one of those," said Ivas, "who will not listen to reasoning. Good sense, circumspection, are empty words for us. Hurrah for blessed exultation! Hurrah for ardour pushed almost to folly! We will march against the troops with our batons, convinced of being victorious."

"You are heroes," said Jacob, "and I admire you; but have you counted the cost? How long will this exaltation last? How many are there that feel as you do?"

"A hundred, or a million, what does it matter? The masses will follow us."

"The masses will be reduced to a handful of men, most of them adventurers who will do more harm than good."

"Stop, you weary me. Adieu, egotist, I wash my hands of what will happen to you."

"But before leaving in this hostile fashion, give me your hand as formerly, Ivas, and may God's will be done!"

Ivas hesitated.

"No," cried he. "I have ceased to be your friend, and in the future I will be your enemy."

"Are you insane, Ivas?"

"I belong entirely, body and soul, to the cause of the revolution; no more friendship. Good-

night."

"Wait a moment."

"You will give us the money?"

"Impossible."

"You persist in not sacrificing your personal feelings to the interest of the country?"

"Not contrary to my convictions, my principles, never!"

Ivas was carried away by his enthusiasm, but was at heart honest and loving. At the threshold of the door strong emotion seized him; he returned and stood near Jacob.

"After all," said he with tears in his eyes, "I esteem you. Let us embrace."

They threw themselves into each other's arms.

As he was on the point of leaving he said in a grave voice:--

"But if to-morrow I receive the order to kill you for your disobedience to the revolutionary committee, I will come with cold blood to stab you. The country above everything."

"Blind heroism, which I respect without sharing. These are frightful times we are living in. How horrible is the regime which inspires hatred, and familiarizes honest souls with crime, and transforms an old friend into an assassin! What will not be the responsibility before God of governments whose tyrannous acts have engendered such despair!"

Ivas, without replying, left him with emotion.

Jacob expected to receive on the morrow his sentence of death, but it did not arrive either that day or later on. Ivas spoke on his friend's behalf, and he was not even declared a traitor to his country. All the revolutionists there understood Ivas, and ceased to have any relations with Jacob, who was considered from that day as a man from whom the revolutionary party had nothing to expect.

All this is true. The entire scene is scrupulously authentic. Author's note.

CHAPTER XIX.

A FATHER'S GRIEF.

Two days after the dramatic scene that we have just related Jacob was alone at his house, when he was surprised by a visit from Jankiel Meves, he who had furnished Ivas his first shelter. The old man, who appeared to be very sad, commenced by saying that he had profited by a sojourn in Warsaw to once more see Jacob, for whom he had the greatest esteem and whom he considered the hope of Israel. Then he spoke of the troubles of the country, and Jacob told him of the situation, and of his vain efforts to restrain the impetuous youth of the city from certain defeat; he added that he was discouraged, for his advice had been rejected with contempt, indignation, or rage.

"That is no reason," replied the visitor, "for abandoning your mission of peace, which is a divine inspiration. All truths," added he, "are at first badly received by men, but they soon take root, and often the very ones that shrugged their shoulders and refused to listen are the ones who become the most fervent converts."

"Thanks for your consoling words," replied Jacob; "you reawaken hope within my heart."

"Alas! I seek consolation from you," cried Jankiel; "I am an unfortunate father, a prey to the greatest sorrow. In my house shame and mourning are unwelcome guests. A serpent has glided secretly into my home, and has left his venom."

"I dare not ask you to explain your words," said Jacob.

"But I wish to tell you all. It is no secret; evil is difficult to conceal when the malefactor is proud of it. Of what use to me is the wealth that I have amassed by the sweat of my brow? To-day my most cherished daughter is no more to me than a stranger, and Lia is dead to her father! You

know the David Seebachs, father and son. Accursed house, where the holy laws are neglected and ridiculed! Why has my daughter looked towards that dwelling? Would that she had died rather than that. Lia, my Lia, has been seduced by the younger David, who afterward abandoned her to her shame. And I--I ought to refuse her a refuge under my roof, so that she may not contaminate her pure and innocent sister, who laments the poor unfortunate in the most abandoned grief. My coffers are full of money, but Lia, perhaps, will be tortured with hunger! David was married; it was not known, for he lived apart from his wife. You saw Lia when you were at my house. Poor child, she believed in him; she was beautiful, but now she is a wreck; so young, what will become of her?"

With these words the old man wept bitterly, and in his despair tore his hair.

"You are," continued he, "honest and good; do not repulse me. Aid me. I am her father; honour demands that I keep aloof from my fallen child,--I who press the chaste lips of another daughter. My heart is broken, and I come to you."

"I am at your service," said Jacob gently. "Where is the unfortunate?"

"Here in Warsaw. But I am not permitted to see her; she dares not appear before me. The vile seducer has left her dishonoured. Who knows to what degree of misery she may fall! I have brought money for her; but, for her as for myself, there must be silence as to whence it comes. Will you take charge of it?"

"Certainly. I am at your service."

"I have the money with me. Take it and procure for her a shelter and a tranquil existence, where she at least can mourn in solitude, far from mocking sneers. Let her want for nothing. This is the service I beg you to do for me."

The old man took from his pocket a wallet, and tearing it open with trembling hands placed on the table several bank-notes of value, and a piece of paper bearing in Hebrew Lia's address.

Then embracing Jacob, "I leave for home to-day," murmured he, his voice broken by his sobs. "The air of this city oppresses me. Write to me. No, no! don't write. I will return. You will tell me all. Save her. The child is weak and accustomed to tenderness. Now she must meet misery, labour, suffering."

"Cease from lacerating your heart," said Jacob. "Trust me, I will be a faithful friend."

"Do not spare expense," cried the poor father. "Don't think of economy. I will supply you with more, but I beg of you not to let her know where it comes from; rather let her believe that distant relatives have aided her, that God has touched their hearts in her behalf."

With these words Jankiel raised his eyes to heaven. A passage of the Psalms came to his mind, and he recited a prayer. Jacob was affected almost to tears.

"I thank you for your confidence," said he. "I feel honoured by it, as you know me so slightly."

"I have heard much good of you," replied Jankiel, "and I was called to open my heart to you as to a compassionate physician. Farewell!"

CHAPTER XX.

MUSE CULTIVATES THE RUSSIANS.

Since the evening when Jacob had shown himself so much like Joseph in his interview with Muse, the relations between him and that young lady had gradually cooled. This resulted from an understanding between mother and daughter. They saw that his capture was not probable, yet resolved not to break entirely with him, but to keep him as a reserve. Henri Segel, although married, was much more promising. Muse did not deceive herself as to the nature of his love for her. It was a love which was not likely to prove lasting, but often led, when at its full height, to great follies. Madame Wtorkowska, again unsettled, insisted on the necessity of enlarging their circle of acquaintances, and said to her daughter:--

"These idiots do not appreciate you at your true value, and I am inclined to seek acquaintances among the Russians. They love society, and are better judges of grace and beauty than these foolish Varsovians. Let us attract them to us."

"An excellent idea, mamma. With the Russians an accomplished woman endowed with talents

is a rarity; with us she is more common, and must have all kinds of accomplishments. With a man like Jacob all efforts are thrown away. He is an honest man, but utterly insensible. Why, I almost embraced Judaism, but that did not melt him. This acting fatigues me, and I have no desire to prolong it; we can never obtain anything from him; never! I proved it in our last interview. Without having any particular affection for Henri, I avow, mamma, that I count on him. He is mine. Mathilde gets weaker every day. She fades before our very eyes; but suppose she recovers--she is no obstacle. She has no children. Divorce is common with the Jews. Here is a husband for me worth having."

"My dear child, the honeymoon would be sweet; but afterward would he make you happy? He does not altogether please me."

"As for me," said Muse, "I am not afraid. I know how to manage him; and as for Jacob, he wearies me. He is too good, too pathetic."

As the result of this conversation, Colonel Sofronof and the Major Ierasimofskoy were introduced into the house of Madame Wtorkowska, who essayed to dazzle them by the elegance of her receptions. Muse captivated them both. Sofronof fell seriously in love, but as he was a practical man, much occupied with politics, he resolved to "kill two birds with one stone," and find out as much as he could in regard to existing affairs. He questioned Muse as to the opinions of her friends, ignorant that although she cultivated all, she had none. She had adapted herself to circumstances, she had sung patriotic hymns; but with the same ardour she had learned the Russian songs "*Boge tsara Khrani*" ("May God preserve the Tsar") and the "Red Sarafane," and on her piano lived in harmony, Polish inspirations and the official compositions of Lvof and Glinka to the glory of holy Russia.

The assiduity of the colonel led the mother and daughter to affect conservative opinions. They mocked at the revolutionists and the patriots, and all this accorded well with their aristocratic tone and manner of living.

Sofronof was a man of consummate cunning. Before he knew these ladies well he had believed them ardent Poles, and was very careful not to shock the opinions which he supposed they held. He spoke with great respect of the glories of ancient Poland, with pity of the sorrows of Poland of today. At the beginning of his passion for Muse he had been tempted, practical Russian as he was, to implicate the young lady in some political intrigue, and to have her imprisoned for two or three months in the citadel. Then he could pursue in the gloomy shadows of a cell the first chapters of his romance. The thing would not be difficult, the arrest easy; he had so many friends in the council of war. After some reflection, however, he abandoned this fine project, which had already been more than once put in execution by the gallant officers of the Tsar. Russians are so eccentric that their love-making even is somewhat original.

After some visits the colonel decided that he could be frank in his language with these ladies, without danger of wounding their Polish susceptibilities. Madame Wtorkowska spoke with enthusiasm of the reigning dynasty, and was pleased to recall memories of the reigns of Nicholas and of Alexander I., from whom her mother, as she said, had received a present of an amethyst necklace. She did not say for what service it was given; one could divine it. Muse, as liberal in words as it is permitted to be under the Russian *régime*, approved the emancipation of the serfs, and exalted the other reforms of Alexander II. Like her mother, she was careful to condemn the revolutionists. Sofronof understood, after having listened to these ladies, that the *salon* where his good fortune had led him could easily become the centre of an active political reaction.

On intimate terms with Muse, a good musician and an ardent dilettante, he pursued a plan of conduct in which he did not forget the possibility of eventual marriage. With the usual blindness of men newly arrived in a strange country, he was thoroughly deceived as to Madame Wtorkowska's social position. Neither they, nor their manners, nor their borrowed elegance opened his eyes to their true character. He took for real their false luxury, their pretended relations with the great world. Yet he was a little surprised, without knowing why, with the silence and the smiles that always followed the name of Wtorkowska; but he attributed this to Polish malevolence at the Russian proclivities of the ladies.

Muse knew well how to attract, encourage, and put her visitors at ease. After each visit the colonel was expected to return the next day. It was a commission with which he was charged, some desired information, or some promised anecdote. The mother could not have been more accommodating. She often made the cares of housekeeping a pretext for leaving them alone, and when she did remain, she appeared a little deaf. Sofronof was delighted with her.

At the end of some weeks he one day found himself alone with Muse.

"Mademoiselle," said he, "pardon me if I inflict on you a serious conversation, for I wish to express all that is in my heart. I wish to tell you of an occupation which absorbs me. You and madame your mother can, I believe, have a happy influence on present events. Why not profit by it? The revolution is imminent. We are here, yet we are, in spite of the military forces at our disposal, in an almost unknown country, and we are embarrassed to know the right way to maintain public order. You can be of great use to us."

"How?" cried Muse. "We are only women."

"Women play a primary rôle in Poland. They are involved in everything."

"But those are women of the lower class, not of the higher order, the aristocracy."

"Why should not a woman of the upper class who has opinions suit herself?"

"Women who are *comme il faut* cannot compromise themselves in the streets."

"They can act without leaving their homes."

"But why plunge us into these political questions?"

"In ordinary times it would be wrong for you to take any part, but in troubled periods like these it is your duty. The government has the right to ask your aid for the general good."

"And in what way can we be useful?"

"By enlightening us as to the situation. I swear to you that I have the good of the country at heart, within just limits and a firm union with Russia. Unfortunately, I and others can find out nothing."

Muse understood what he wished. She blushed at the suggestion, but the blush faded away rapidly. Lending herself to the colonel's views would, she thought, give her great power. It would raise her to great heights. Her imagination transported her almost to the steps of the throne, to the imperial dais. She looked at herself in the glass, and thought that her dreams of being at court had now some chance of being realized; and under this impression she replied:--

"Dear colonel, speak to me with entire freedom, I will listen."

"Be my counsellor and my guide," said Sofronof. "You have many friends. You see much society. Aid me to understand them; walk with me hand in hand."

Muse blushed, but said nothing and hung her head.

"I do not like politics and its embarrassing complications," said she. "However, if, as you think, I am capable of making myself useful, I will devote myself to the work heart and soul. But taking part in politics is like playing with fire,--one is often burned. In my situation as demoiselle, above all, this occupation might ruin my reputation and destroy my future. It is so easy now-a-days to fall under suspicion."

"Why entertain such fears," replied the colonel smiling. "You will come to Petersburg. There you will have the best reception. And every man on whom you deign to throw a glance from those irresistible black eyes will esteem himself happy, no matter how high his rank."

He paused; the hidden meaning of his words had been rendered intelligible to Muse by some foreign overtures. She judged that it was not worth while to be too particular at this crisis, and replied gayly:--

"Now, then, my dear colonel, you have not understood me. I merely wished to say that politics often cause much trouble."

Without further discussion they came to an understanding.

Some days after, Madame Wtorkowska's *salon* was thrown open with pomp. The assembly was, indeed, a motley one, and had been gathered from all classes; there were all kinds,--white, gray, red, blue. This was according to Sofronof's advice, and in this way was formed a neutral ground whereon all might meet on an equal footing. Jacob was there, and found himself more of a spectator than an actor. Since that famous evening when Muse reproduced scenes from the Bible, she had been very cold towards him. She no longer invited him to little games of cards, she sent him no more notes, and engaged him for no sentimental promenades. This change suited Jacob better than the attentions of former days. Henri Segel, also, was a regular visitor, and in the midst of the Russians was in his element; he paid court to them, accepted their invitations to dine, and invited them to his house. Mathilde, who under Jacob's influence had risen to a higher sphere intellectually and morally, was much disturbed by these incessant amusements. But her power was very limited, almost nothing. Absolute mistress of her own apartment, surrounded by her flowers and books, she lived a stranger in her own house. Her husband simply announced to her that such guests would dine with them that day, and often presented them to her without asking her consent. At table, the turn of the conversation was often displeasing to her. Her husband perceived it, but did not care.

Jacob, absorbed in the political situation, came rarely, as he was now sure to meet the Russians, whose frequent appearance at Mathilde's house was repugnant to him. He could not expect frankness from them; and he could not, in his turn, express himself freely before them, and this constraint put him in a disagreeable and trying situation.

Presumption and obstinacy usually accompanies a civilization as imperfect and superficial as that of the Russians. To appear progressive and liberal, they often, in conversation, express advanced ideas which they do not dream of putting in practice; to sincerity they reply by

falsehoods.

Mathilde's life became more lonely and more isolated; she wasted away. Her cough increased, and she was consumed with fever. She passed entire days with her music endeavouring to forget her wearisome life. This distraction weakened her strength, but she refused to submit to any treatment. At night she read, creating thus an artificial imaginary world. Her only consolation, her only joy, was to talk with Jacob, in whom alone she had confidence; but he liked to come only when Henri and some of his new friends were amusing themselves. Then Jacob hastened to make a rapid examination of the progress of the malady which seemed to be consuming the young woman, and she looked attentively at him to discover if his brow was more gloomy, more care-worn. Afterward they pressed each other's hands, and separated.

It happened one evening at tea that no one was near Mathilde when Jacob arrived but the old English governess, who had become a friend of the house. He found Madame Segel very much changed.

"How rarely you come," cried Mathilde. "I know it is not indifference on your part, but if I had not perfect confidence in you, I should accuse Muse of depriving me of your society."

"Why do you speak of her?"

"Because it is evident that she has given entertainments in your honour."

"In my honour and in honour of a dozen others; Colonel Sofronof, and also Henri, your lord and master."

"I am not surprised that her fresh and blooming beauty pleases Henri more than my pallor and fatigue. There he finds smiles and songs, here sighs and tears. I do not wonder that he prefers her."

"Well, I do," said Jacob.

"If he were more devoted, I should reproach myself for not loving him. He is just as I wish him to be, polite, cold, and he leaves me entirely alone. It is some time now since Muse captivated him, but why should we care? What matters it to us?"

"Henri's conduct is indelicate"--

"What matters it, when I do not love him?"

Jacob walked up and down the room, and then stopped near Mathilde and looked at her fixedly.

"Pardon me," said he; "but a wild idea has just come into my mind."

"What idea? Tell me quickly."

"Divorce."

"No, no!" cried she. "I do not wish to bring to one whom I love with all my soul the miserable remains of my life, a broken heart and a sick body. Your idea is wicked and foolish. We have no right to seek happiness through scandal. Happiness gained thus will soon cease. Are we not happy as we are? What more can we wish? We can see each other often, talk, and press each other's hands, and we ought to be satisfied. To come nearer would, perhaps, prove a disenchantment for us both. Let us not renounce a supportable existence for dreams. Humiliated, faded, and weak, I am no longer the girl you formerly loved. No, no! Jacob, in the name of our love, never mention that word again. Do not tempt me; do not make me dream of happiness that can never be realized; it is impossible."

"The impossibility is only in your imagination. The thing is very feasible, dear Mathilde. What is there to bind you to your husband. He is as indifferent to you as you are to him. You have no children."

"Do not make me blush, Jacob. A woman should belong to but one man; whatever be her lot, happy or unhappy, she should submit, and be humble and resigned. I cannot commence life over again, and, moreover, I am standing on the threshold of the tomb, while your life has just begun."

"I thought that you loved me, Mathilde, as much as I love you!"

"More, for I have courage to sacrifice myself for your happiness. You cannot imagine how this idea of belonging to you has troubled my spirit. I assure you it has tempted me more than once, and I have always put it from me, as I do now. Have pity on me, do not oblige me to weep. I am weak, do not take advantage of my weakness."

"But this man is unworthy of you."

"Unworthy or not, I married him."

"And if he himself desired the divorce, would you hinder him?"

"Have you any reason for saying that?"

"No."

"Very well, then, say no more. Even if he desert me, I will refuse to be yours."

"This is folly, Mathilde."

"No, it is love. The true love of a woman who can love chastely. To give you my hand would be to put you in his place. After him; oh, no! that would be too humiliating."

"You are an angel, but I wish you to be a woman."

"Let us seek rather to elevate ourselves above this idle humanity."

"Perhaps you can attain this ideal, but I cannot."

"I can understand," said Mathilde with a slight blush. "I can understand an instant of aberration, a sudden and unforeseen fall; but I have no sympathy with the profanation of conscience by a designing woman. She who has pressed two men to her bosom, becomes afterward like an inn open to all. One only! only one for life and death!"

"And that only one, Henri!"

"No, it is not he! It is you, Jacob; he has only my body, you have my soul."

After a moment of exaltation she continued:--

"Tell me," said she, "do you really believe in the immortality of the soul and a life beyond the tomb?"

"Yes, I believe it. Otherwise man would have been an aspiration that God would not have realized. How else can we account for the desire for immortality that each one bears within his soul? Why should we suppose that this presentiment, this divination of a future existence, should be an illusion? As to the conditions of the future life we are ignorant. Man dreams that he will awaken the same as when he closes his eyes here below. That is perhaps an error; but one sure thing is, that the soul will not lose acquired virtues nor the reward for suffering, courageously endured. Certainly there is another world."

"You throw balm on my spirit; I desire to believe, but it is in vain that I search for faith in books. They puzzle me, and I always end by being confirmed in an ignorance which can be expressed in these words: I know nothing."

"Yes; but one does not draw faith from books, it proceeds from an inner voice."

"But this uncertainty; everywhere this dreadful uncertainty. Virtue, science, reason itself are so many spider webs which are torn by every wind. Yet it is frightful to die with this idea of annihilation in one's heart."

"Belief in God warrants us in this hope for the future. God cannot be unjust. He could not have implanted in us such strong and persistent hopes to make a cruel mockery of us. It is inadmissible if one believe in him. Have confidence in God and keep his commandments."

"But where is this law of God? In the books called holy? They differ; some of them are supposed to be revelation, others simple popular legends. How uncertain everything is, cold, empty, frightful!"

With these words she trembled, as if the spectre of death had appeared before her. Then she went to the piano, and played one of Chopin's touching fantasies, while Jacob listened. Some one put a hand on her shoulder, and Mathilde gave a little cry of fright. The dream was over. This was reality. Henri, with a cigar in his mouth, appeared before her.

"You have at last deigned to remember us," said he jokingly to Jacob. "You haven't been here for a long while. Mathilde, will you order the tea? What time is it? Nine o'clock. At ten I must be at the chateau. I have scarcely time to dress and to take tea, which is much better than I get there, in spite of their golden cups; but how can you stay in this room, it is freezing."

"I have not felt cold," said Jacob.

"The music has warmed you, then. Have you heard Muse play Liszt's last fantasie? It is stupefying."

"Muse's execution is marvellous, but she plays without expression."

"Profane blasphemer!"

Jacob said no more, and Henri looked at his watch.

"That which exasperates me is the white cravat; but one meets the best society at the chateau. The Namiestnik is one of the most courteous men in the world."

"Good-night," said Jacob, taking his hat.

"Good-night."

CHAPTER XXI.

LIA.

Jacob sought for two days the place where Lia had concealed herself. He at last obtained some information about her, and found that the poor girl's misery was horrible, but that she had endured it uncomplainingly and with angelic patience. She lived in the *rue des Jardins*, called thus because of the gardens which formerly abounded there, most of which had long since disappeared. The house was old and in bad repair, but it still possessed a small garden planted with fruit-trees. Under the shadow of the apple and pear trees grew beets, carrots, potatoes, and onions, also strawberries and raspberry bushes. In the centre rose a magnificent linden-tree, the pride of the proprietor. This tree gave shade, as well as some profit from its flowers and its bees. In many places the old and ruined house was propped up to keep it from falling, and the shingles on the roof were covered with a thick moss. In the lower part lived Jewish families blessed with many children; Lia lived on the floor above.

At the door Jacob met the landlady. She was very fat, and muffled up in an apron of foulard, on which the portrait of Napoleon I. was printed. At his first question regarding the lodger he sought, she looked at him suspiciously, and replied:--

"The woman for whom you ask lives here, but she receives no one. If, however, monsieur, your business is important"--

"Yes; I come on business."

"In that case you will find her in her room. She occasionally comes down to the garden, and sits under the shade of our linden. She has no right to the garden, but she is a poor girl, sweet and quiet. I pity her. Do you know her, monsieur?"

"Very little, hardly at all; but I have been sent by the family," said Jacob, somewhat embarrassed.

"Her family! At last, then, they have remembered the poor abandoned one. Oh, my good monsieur, she has suffered greatly! Go! Take the stairs. You will find a bell near her room; but if you prefer it, I will announce you. Your name? Perhaps she will refuse to see you."

"She will not recognize my name," replied Jacob.

"In that case, do as you think best, monsieur; to the right."

The staircase was old and dirty, with broken and uneven steps, and in place of a balustrade a rope was strung from one end to the other. Through the open doors of the rooms he could see large chinks in the walls through which came the heat and rain in summer, the cold and snow in winter.

Jacob knocked two or three times at the door; receiving no response, he decided to open it gently. The spectacle which met his eyes was heartrending. A chamber, or rather a miserable garret, destitute of furniture, was dimly lighted by a little window sunk in the wall. In one corner was a pallet, and by its side an old broken-down cradle which had done service for several generations. With her head leaning on a table a young woman slept. She had evidently been overcome suddenly by fatigue, for she still held in her hand some coarse cloth on which she had been working. Her feet touched the cradle in which reposed a feeble and sickly babe. The nourishment that the poor little thing drew from the maternal breast was not sufficient to develop its strength and vitality.

Lia opened her eyes, swollen with slumber; she believed that the intruder had made a mistake in the room, and remained silent and inert. Her sunken eyes and sad but calm expression denoted habitual suffering with resignation to misery.

Jacob stood on the threshold, undecided. Lia spoke at last and said: "Monsieur, what do you wish? Why do you come here? Who are you?"

"I come from your relations."

"I have no relations; I am an orphan," replied she apprehensively.

"I am sent for your good," said Jacob. "Do not be afraid. I do not bring bad news," said he tenderly.

"I do not expect news from anybody," cried she; "leave me, I implore you!"

With these words her terror increased, yet her slightest movement was graceful, full of candour and charm.

Jacob commenced by speaking of her native place. She began to weep bitterly.

"They have forgotten me there," murmured she. "Oh, do not try to deceive me! Yet," added she, looking at him fixedly, "you have the appearance of a good and honest man. Why should I fear you?"

"You have no occasion for fear, my poor girl."

Just then the babe awoke and commenced to stretch out its little arms. The mother forgot her sorrows and the presence of a stranger; she leaned over the cradle, over the only link that bound her to life, and caressed the frail creature, smiled, and spoke to him in a language which listeners do not comprehend, but which is intelligible to babies before they can speak. In this dark picture it seemed like a ray of sunshine. The infant soon slept again, soothed by his mother's caresses. During this scene Lia's beautiful hair became unloosed; it fell over her shoulders in thick tresses whose length denoted that she was unmarried, for the Jewish law obliges married women to wear their hair short. She blushingly repaired the disorder of her toilet and offered her visitor the only chair in the room, while she sat down timidly on the edge of the bed.

In the meanwhile Jacob had examined the room; a few iron pots on the little stove showed that Lia did her own cooking; stretched on a ladder against the wall some linen was drying. In spite of poverty the room was exquisitely clean, and from the open window could be seen the trees, while the birds sang in the garden.

"Your family have sent me," said Jacob. "Your friends have perhaps been too severe, but they still love you. You are in want of"--

"No, I am very well where I am. The house is quiet, no one disturbs me, no one questions me; at first it was a little trying, but now I am accustomed to it."

"If not for yourself, it is necessary for your child that you should leave this unwholesome place. That is the object of my visit; you must take a better lodging and a maid to help you."

Lia looked at Jacob, and her eyes filled with tears.

"But I desire nothing," said she.

"I bring you money," replied Jacob.

"I will not have it. I refuse this charity. I can work for my baby and myself."

"Your work will kill the poor little one who is dying for want of nourishment."

"Why should he live with my shame graven on his brow? He is my consolation, my only joy, but how much better would it have been for him never to have been born!"

"Do not despair; have confidence in divine goodness. You have been deceived by a wicked man."

"Wicked! Ah, yes, very wicked! I, who believed his words; I, who loved him so--perhaps he has sent you?"

"No."

"Swear it!" cried Lia.

"I swear it," replied Jacob.

"Then who is the charitable person?"

"It is enough for you to know that it is not he. As for the person from whom I come, it is a near relation, but you must not ask the name; I am not permitted to tell you. Confide in me. I will find you a quiet house where you will be protected."

"Oh, no! no protector, I wish to be alone."

"As you please; but at least you must leave here, and permit me to leave you a small sum for your immediate expenses."

"God is merciful, but man is wicked! I cannot believe that I can find a better place than this, where I am concealed and ignored; elsewhere they may be curious."

"Do not fear. I assure you I will find an asylum as retired as this, but more commodious."

"God is merciful!" repeated Lia. She kissed the infant's brow, and held out to Jacob a wasted hand, wasted by fatigue and poverty.

"I have been deceived once," said she; "but notwithstanding all that, I have confidence in you. Some one has thought of me enough to send you; perhaps they weep and love me still; but if it were not for my baby I would not leave this place. I cannot earn enough for two. I have had frightful days: only a cup of water, a crust of dry bread, and not a cent for milk. I knew not where to find work. I lost my head. I wished to die, yet the child demanded life. What terrible nights have I passed in cold and hunger while the child tore my heart with its cries. Oh, you cannot imagine greater torture!"

"You will be delivered now," said Jacob gently. "But one thing that I cannot understand is why you did not demand of the seducer aid for his child."

"I!" cried she. "I accept anything from that wretch! Before doing that I would a thousand times rather die, and see my child die. He wished to give me an income for life, and I threw his money in his face. He is a stranger to me, and my child shall never know him; he would have reason to blush for his father. Never shall my lips utter his cursed name, and I will efface it from my memory."

Jacob soothed her, and gradually reassured she asked:--

"Have you come from my house? Have you seen the old man whose name I dare not utter, the old man with a white beard, and the afflicted mother, and the sister who suffers for my shame, and the house where all were so happy before my folly converted it into a house of mourning and covered it with shame?"

"No, I have not been there recently."

"I believe I recognize you now. I saw you once when we were all so happy. You came one Sabbath, did you not? and you had a long and serious interview with the aged man."

"Yes. And I have not been there since that time."

"But he lives, does he not? They have completely forgotten me?"

"Yes, they are all living. God is pitiful, and his pity will extend to you."

"His greatest mercy for me and for my child would be for us to die."

"Life may yet have many pleasant things in store for you."

"Never!"

Jacob tried to divert her thoughts, and rose to go, saying:--

"To-morrow or the next day I will return myself or I will send for you. I will seek a more commodious lodging and a servant for you. Here is money for your urgent expenses and for new clothes."

He placed the money on the table. Lia was really so poorly clad that it was unpleasant for her to show herself on the streets.

"Cheer up," added Jacob; "I will look out for you."

Lia became frightened again; she wished to speak, but the words died on her lips, and her heart beat violently; her doubts returned, and Jacob divined it and said:--

"All that I have told you is absolutely true. I will never trouble you; it will be from a distance and invisible that I shall protect you. I beg of you do not misjudge me."

He bowed respectfully, and Lia, seeing that he had read her thoughts, repented of her unjust suspicions, and bowed in return. After he had gone she returned to the cradle and embraced the sleeping infant.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE OLD MOTHER.

Carried away in the whirl of active city life, Jacob, since his residence in Warsaw, had had little communication with his family, who had remained in his native province. Twice a year he received, by letter, his mother's blessing, and news of his sister and elder brother. Despite the intellectual distance which education had put between him and his relations, he did not forget them, and he scrupulously acquitted himself of his duties as son and brother. Since the recent political disturbances he had been deprived of a correspondence from which he always derived much pleasure, and to the regularity of which he was accustomed, and he felt a certain inquietude in consequence.

One day, on returning home, he was informed by his servant that an old woman, dressed in strange fashion, who said she was a near relation, waited to see him. In saying this the servant seemed a little embarrassed.

"I knew not what to do," added he awkwardly; "I told this person that monsieur was absent, but she was obstinate and would not go. She raised her voice, and the noise attracted the attention of the servants on the floor below, and it would have created a disturbance if I had, as I at first intended, ordered her out. So there she is, monsieur."

"Who is this woman?" asked Jacob.

The servant, judging his master by his own way of seeing things, dared not reply.

"I do not understand who she can be," muttered he. "She did not pronounce her name distinctly. I believe she has come to ask for help. I am not positive."

As soon as he opened the door Jacob saw a woman who was walking up and down the room, examining everything with curiosity. She was dressed in the ancient costume of a Polish Jewess. She wore a black dress of strange but simple fashion, and around her throat a necklace of pearls with a large gold medallion; a long black mantle completed her costume, and her face was sprinkled with patches, following the ancient fashion for Jewesses.

Jacob divined, rather than recognized, his mother, and with a cry of joy threw himself at her feet and covered her hand with kisses. The old woman was so agitated that she could hardly speak, and her eyes filled with tears.

Jacob seated her on the sofa and ran for a glass of water. In his haste he ran against the servant who was peeping through the key-hole, and who had no time to conceal himself.

"Go for water!" cried Jacob. "You gave this lady a fine reception! It is my mother!"

"That is just what she told me," murmured the man; "but"--

"Not another word! Get some water, I tell you!"

When he returned, he found his mother much calmer.

"God of Israel, how great has been thy goodness to my child! Oh, if his father could have seen the elegance with which he is surrounded, he could not have said enough prayers to express his gratitude! God of Moses! Alas! I can only thank thee by my tears."

"The most precious gift of God for me," said Jacob, "is the joy of a mother's heart."

"Your prosperity is the celestial recompense for your father's virtues. This recompense has not been accorded to all my children. Sarah is ill. Miriam's children are dead. I could not resist the desire to embrace thee once more before I die. I said to myself, 'Perhaps he will be ashamed of his old mother;' that kept me. Afterward, I thought that at the worst I should have seen thee, if even from afar, and given thee a secret blessing."

"How couldst thou, dearest mother, think me capable of such vile ingratitude, and such forgetfulness of the commandments of God?"

"O my Jacob, I know the world! Your eldest brother respects me, although I am not his mother, but only his father's wife. He is a good man; yet if I go to his house poorly dressed, when he has elegant visitors, I can see that he is ashamed of me. But don't be afraid, my son, I will not show myself before your fine friends."

"Then you will cruelly offend me," cried Jacob. "Never shall I be ashamed of my mother, nor my father, nor my race, nor my religion, nor anything holy. To conceal one's origin is a foolish pride, a criminal lie."

Just then the servant entered, much disturbed, and said:--

"One of monsieur's friends is here; shall I show him in?"

"Certainly," said Jacob.

It was Mathilde's father. He did not recognize his relative, and was surprised to see an old Jewess seated on the sofa. He had suspected Jacob of entertaining a visitor of another kind.

"Mother, you remember Monsieur Samuel, our cousin, and my guardian?" said Jacob. "I owe everything to him."

"After God, it is to you that I am most grateful," replied Jacob's mother.

Monsieur Samuel was somewhat embarrassed; he succeeded, nevertheless, in addressing some words of courtesy to the good woman, and to relieve himself of his embarrassment he drew Jacob aside under pretext of pressing business.

"I came to consult with you," said he; "but we can leave it until some other time. Now let me ask you, what will you do with your mother?"

"The name of 'mother' is my only reply."

"A beautiful phrase; but do not be sentimental, I beg of you, dear Jacob. Do not compromise yourself in the eyes of the world. This queerly dressed old woman, if she is seen with you, will hurt us socially as well as you. You cannot brave public opinion."

"I do not care to cultivate the acquaintance of those who mock my affection for my mother," said Jacob. "This will prove their worth; thus I can tell the gold from the baser metal."

"A truce to poetry! Let us look on life as it really is. As soon as the world scents a Jew, it will tolerate him only when his perfume is sweet; the odours of the iarmulka are obnoxious."

"I will make no concessions to the prejudices of the world," said Jacob.

"Well, then, spare me the honour of receiving a visit from your mother."

Jacob grew pale and his eyes flashed.

"You have been my benefactor," said he slowly. "Do not make me forget it."

"Excuse me, there are degrees in Judaism; for example, I give myself out as a descendant of rich German Jews."

"Why do you prefer the German Jews," asked Jacob with a smile of pity. "Are they any the less Jews?"

"Perhaps not. But they rank higher, and their past is different. Will your mother live with you?"

"I hope so. I shall be very glad to have her near me."

"I see that it is useless to reason with you. I cannot convince you; but if you have thoughts of Muse, I advise you to be careful."

"I do not dream of Mademoiselle Wtorkowska."

"There have been rumours"--

"These rumours have no foundation."

"The presence of your mother in your apartments will shock many people."

"So much the worse for them. I do not intend to offer my mother as a holocaust."

"Has she brought any more of the family?"

"I believe that she is alone. Poor old woman! to see me she has undertaken a long and wearisome journey."

"She had better have sent for you to come to her, instead of suddenly appearing at Warsaw."

Then Mathilde's father returned to the *salon*, saluted the old woman politely, and took his leave.

On the first floor of the house the news of the arrival of a Jewess in the ancient national costume was circulated from mouth to mouth. Jacob's servant had no secrets from the Wtorkowska's maid, and he soon told her all about it; she carried the news to madame, who, inspired by Paul de Kock, her favourite author, arranged the story in her own fashion and went to relate it to Muse.

"It is nothing to me," cried the young lady. "Jacob is no longer on my list."

"Alas," replied Madame Wtorkowska, "to be so rich and to remain such an obstinate Jew!"

"Mamma, would you have any objection to Sofronof, if he declares himself?" asked Emusia.

"Do as you wish. Provided that you marry, your choice will be mine. Yet be on your guard with this Sofronof. These Russians have no scruples, no delicacy; to break a woman's heart is for them a pleasure, something to glory in. Under apparent splendour, they are often penniless adventurers who come to Poland to replenish their purses. I know the Russians well. Many of them parade about in a brilliant uniform and live in poverty."

"Mamma, Sofronof has a fine property in the province of Kostroma."

"I have met these brilliant officers who boast of possessing hundreds of peasants near Iaroslaf or Tambof. They lied, and this one may also. Let us go to Kostroma. The government pays these colonels so poorly, and even the generals, that they are obliged to rob to cut any figure."

"It is not called robbery in Russia. They give it another name,--indirect revenue, I believe. The country is so organized that the employés, civil and military, without exception, procure indirect revenues to increase their salary."

"Yes, dear Emusia, I regret Jacob. Unfortunately, he has a mother who is an impossible Jewess."

"If I willed it, nevertheless, I could make him leave father, mother, and religion. I am sure I could overcome him; but I do not care to make any more efforts in that direction. Jacob is not congenial to me. My favourite, you know, is Henri."

"You always force me to repeat that he is married."

"The obstacle is Mathilde. She will soon die, and Henri would marry me immediately."

"The grapes are too green."

"We will see, and as a last resort I have always Sofronof."

Some days after the arrival of Jacob's mother Henri Segel said to his father-in-law:--

"This Jacob is intractable. He will never be a society man. Presumptuous and obstinate, he refuses to see the world as it is. His head is full of fantasies from the Talmud, of dreams of reform, strange ideas of fraternal union. He is for Poland, and at the same time against the revolution. He refuses to enter into relations with the most important persons. He keeps to himself and is a real savage; useless to the world, yet not deprived of intelligence. But he is of no use to us."

"He always reminds me of the beggary from which I took him," said Samuel. "He seems to be proud of it."

"It is too bad; with his large acquaintance he could have been of great service to us. He has good manners and a sympathetic character. No one would ever take him for a Jew, if he did not foolishly avow his origin on every occasion. He is compromising in society. Men of his calibre are destined to an evil end, and he makes himself disagreeable to all. He must be blind, to act so much against his own interests."

"Have you heard about his mother?"

"Not yet."

"Imagine, then, a Jewess of the lowest rank suddenly appearing at his house. He has welcomed her, and made much of her, and walked with her on the public streets. He would have brought her to me, if I had not begged him to spare me this ridicule."

"The same danger threatens me, I fear, and he is capable of choosing the very day when I have the best society of Warsaw in my *salon*. This eccentric has turned Mathilde's head. She will suffer no one to ridicule him, and looks on him as a saint."

"They have indulged in a Platonic romance since their childhood; but I will give you the means of breaking the charm which enchains my daughter's spirit. Behold! he whom she takes for a saint pays his tribute to frail humanity."

"How? I have never heard any scandal about Jacob."

"He has concealed it well; but I have a good detective who has told me that this sage, learned in the books of Solomon, follows the footsteps of that voluptuous monarch. Only they are not beautiful Midianites with whom he shares his wealth. He has succumbed to a pure-blooded Jewess."

"Tell me about it, I beg of you."

"Well, you know that I like to look about me a little everywhere. Sometimes I profit by it, and it always amuses me. Sometimes in one direction, sometimes another, I have bloodhounds that I

chat with. Of late, that old man with a red nose, whom they call Trompette, has spied about for me. One day I was occupied; he insisted on seeing me, and came in with a mysterious air as if he had a state secret. He told me that Monsieur Jacob,--you will never guess,--the pious Jacob, had a mistress. She is a Jewess, whose father is very rich. The romance has lasted a long time, for the result is a child, on account of which she has been turned from her father's house."

"Well, well!" cried Henri. "Why, it is impossible!"

"At first he hid her with the greatest mystery in a little old house in the *rue des Jardins*. Now he has established her, still secretly, in a much more comfortable place in Saint George's street. He often goes there in the evening. I know it to be so, and I am told that the girl is pretty, graceful, and modest."

"How does he reconcile this proceeding with his principles?" asked Henri. "Really, I am surprised."

Samuel laughed heartily, and added:--

"Yes; Jacob has concealed this intrigue well; but some day I'll tease him about it. That will be great fun."

"I can hardly believe it yet," said Henri.

"There is no doubt whatever, I assure you. Jacob supports a pretty girl, and she lacks nothing. If you think it is for love of humanity and chastity, explain his motive."

"He is, then, a Don Juan disguised as an anchorite. It is a side of his character that I have never suspected. I never dreamed of it."

"Do you wish to be convinced with your own eyes? Here is the address, go and see for yourself; you are one of the family, and you might take a little trouble about it. The thing ought to be cleared up. You will not fail, with a little pains, to surprise the gay Lothario *in flagrante delicti*. After that he will not talk so much about the saints and holy writ. At heart he is no better than the rest of us."

"Alas, poor Jacob, where is your character now! Do you know how this original romance commenced?"

"It is a secret that you will discover, no doubt. I can only say one thing, that it is a secret no longer."

"But it is such a short time since he returned, that the connection must have begun abroad. Who knows where? Perhaps at the baths."

Henri Segel, seemingly absorbed in thought, went in the early evening to see Muse. This was for him the privileged hour for a charming interview, when no one ventured to disturb them, not even Sofronof. She had so well arranged her time that her favourites never ran the risk of meeting each other. The early part of the evening was given to Henri, who could then at his ease chat and joke with the siren and kiss her lovely hands. Segel was so preoccupied that the young lady noticed it.

"What has come over you?" asked she. "Why are you so quiet? Have you lost at the Bourse, or has your dancer left you for the epaulets?"

"How cruel you are, dear mademoiselle, to think that such selfish preoccupations should cloud my brow."

"I think that you are a sensible and practical man, that is all."

"Well, this time you deceive yourself. That which troubles me is the downfall of a man whom"--

"The fall of a man? That is curious."

"Very curious."

"Do I know the man?"

"Very well. He is one of your friends."

"Speak, then! Why distil your story drop by drop?"

"It is Jacob."

"A fall! His mother's visit, then?"

"No; better than that."

"What, then?"

"An original adventure, a strange story. Jacob, our saint, our immaculate Jacob, has a mistress by whom he has a child."

"Pure calumny!" said Muse.

"At first I thought so too; but, alas! it is a fact; there is good proof."

"This will destroy his character."

"Simple truth that all men are fallible," said Henri.

"I am dying to know the details!" cried Muse. "Is she young, pretty, blond or brunette, poor or rich, well educated?"

"She is only a little Jewess, daughter of a merchant, but young and very pretty."

"When did this intrigue commence?"

"I am ignorant of the circumstances. It was my father-in-law, whom nothing escapes, who discovered it. At first I did not believe it, but he soon convinced me. The girl lived in the *rue des Jardins* for a while, now in Saint George's street."

"And this offspring of which you spoke?"

"Did you not understand me?"

Muse smiled and did not repeat her question, she only added:--

"He played so well the rôle of chaste Joseph that no one would have suspected him of this."

"Humbug! His character now appears to me in a new light. I must commence to study him again; until now I was all astray."

"I," replied Muse, "was convinced that he was ice toward women. At last I see that he is vulnerable." She was so impatient to repeat this scandal to her mother that she dismissed Henri.

"At present," said she, after finishing her story, "this man seems to me more inexplicable than ever. A common girl succeeds where I have failed."

"He loves; that explains all," said her mother.

"He loves! That is no reason; it is no excuse. I am furious, now that I see that his coldness was only assumed so as not to marry me."

Colonel Sofronof paid dear for Muse's vexation. She deprived him of little bits of news that she had been in the habit of giving him, and in order to irritate him displayed some patriotic songs. However, he did not get angry, but only smiled, and said:--

"You are not feeling well to-night."

The calumny spread rapidly. Henri arrived home in good humour. Not finding visitors, he resigned himself to tea with his wife. After tea the Englishwoman read in one corner, Mathilde in another; finally Segel broke the prolonged silence.

"Have you seen Jacob lately?" asked he.

"No; he has not been here for some time."

"Without doubt his mother's society"--

"Yes, he told me of her arrival," said Mathilde.

"Has he ever spoken of any one else?"

"Of whom, then?"

"Bah! It is useless to tell you. It is not worth while to destroy your illusions. You have an affection for Jacob; let it rest."

The least curious of women have still a little touch of curiosity, especially in regard to the man they love. Mathilde became uneasy.

"I am sure," said she with agitation, "that Jacob has done nothing to destroy the good opinion that I have of him."

"If you are sure, so much the better."

"Do not torment me thus. As you have commenced, tell me all."

"Why should you take this lively interest in Jacob," said Henri smiling.

"I love him as a brother; I have never concealed it. We were brought up together."

"Well, this Jacob has committed no crime. He simply possesses a mistress whom he conceals from public view." Then he repeated cynically all he had heard, with a malicious irony.

"If you do not believe me," added he, "ask your father. He is the one that discovered the secret."

During this narration Mathilde had grown red and pale, and listened with bowed head, trembling nervously. Suddenly she raised her head and said boldly:--

"It is a lie! I believe neither you nor my father. It is an unworthy calumny."

"And why do you say that?"

"Because it is not possible."

With these words, instead of going to the piano as usual, she went and shut herself up in her room, where she could give free vent to her tears. Until then she had been so proud of the man whom she had made her ideal. Her idol was overthrown from his pedestal and was reduced to the level of ordinary men.

Then she said to herself:--

"No, it cannot be possible." An inner voice replied: "They are all built on the same model. The whole world is corrupt."

Life now appeared so empty, so sombre, so odious to her that she would gladly have died. The next day when she seated herself at the table, her face bore traces of the great suffering she had endured. She was very pale, and her features were drawn and pinched. She replied indifferently to her husband's questions, and pleading a violent headache, hastened again to her chamber. She wished to be alone with her sorrow.

CHAPTER XXIII.

RUSSIAN POLITICS.

Russian tyranny increased the number of the revolutionists, for often a cause which has at the outset few adherents rapidly develops when blood has been shed.

Jacob, who had been opposed to those who incited the country to a revolution, modified his sentiments in its favour when the government displayed bayonets and erected scaffolds.

At the head of the saviours of Poland by terrorism was the Grand Duke Constantine, brother of Alexander II., and the Marquis Wielopolski. These two would probably have adopted another system if Petersburg had not forced them to employ the traditional remedies of cruelty and tyranny, banishment, the penalty of death, Siberia, and penal servitude.

Jacob did not protest against resistance to arbitrary enlistment accomplished in the most outrageous manner. From the Polish nation, wounded in its dignity, rose on all sides the cry of revolt. "Rather death than be slaves, kissing under the knout the hand of our executioners!"

Jacob was willing to do anything he could, but his former prudence had alienated him from the revolutionary party. So he employed himself in publishing a Jewish journal in the Polish language, in which he continued to maintain his ideas of Jewish reform; but for such a propaganda the moment was not opportune. New troubles also awaited him. His articles, written in elegant style with warm conviction, attained recognition from his co-religionists only on their literary merit. To some it was superstition, to others fanaticism, and so he remained alone in politics as well as religion. He was too much Jew or too little Jew, too patriotic or not patriotic enough. The society of his mother was a great consolation to him at this time. He had installed her in his apartments, and often walked out with her, and his filial devotion had put him under the ban of the wealthy Jewish society. He was avoided by all. He perceived it, and renounced all relations with these narrow-minded men. He even ceased to go to Segel's on account of Henri's coldness. Mathilde gave another explanation to this voluntary ostracism; in it she saw confirmation of the rumours she had heard. The poor girl suffered greatly.

One evening Jacob was tempted to visit the Wtorkowska's, hoping to meet Mathilde. In the midst of an assembly composed almost exclusively of Russians appeared a new-comer, the Count Bavorof, counsellor of state. He was scarcely thirty years old, and was said to be a great favourite

of the Grand Duke Constantine, and above all he was a bachelor. Naturally, Muse wished to count him among the number of her adorers, and had already tried on him the irresistible combination of beauty joined to wit.

Jacob approached Mathilde, who was seated at one side, alone. Her deadly pallor shocked him.

"Are you suffering?" asked he, in a low voice.

The young woman threw on him a glance of profound compassion, and replied:--

"No. I feel no worse to-day than usual."

"I have not seen you for a long time," said Jacob.

"That is true."

"It is my fault; but I cannot impose myself on men who repulse me."

"Rather, is it not you who repulse them?"

The remark sounded like a reproach.

"How? I? They avoid me because my dear old mother, who is endowed with many excellent qualities, is not an elegant and fashionable woman. Is that any reason why I should not love her and cherish her? The ridiculous snobbishness of my so-called friends will not regulate my conduct."

"Is it your mother alone that keeps you from us? Perhaps there is another person who absorbs your time?"

Jacob opened his eyes, astonished. There was something in his look so open and reassuring, that she felt shaken in her conviction. She blushed, and was too embarrassed to prolong the conversation, so she rose and went to sit near Muse. She took her leave soon, bowing to Jacob from a distance.

The latter was downcast. He sought in vain the key to this enigma. He understood that some one had calumniated him to his beloved, but who or what it was he could not imagine.

In the *salon* the conversation was animated. Colonel Sofronof, Count Bavorof, Muse, and the Counsellor Pikulinski made most of the noise. The recent recruiting, from which had burst out the first revolutionary spark, was the subject of the discussion. Sofronof did not approve of the measure, and commenced to question the genius of the Marquis Wielopolski. The Count Bavorof, with his ideas fresh from Moscow, told of the atrocious repressions, since perfected and adopted with so much cruelty, which the journalist, Katkof, was disposed to raise to the height of a system.

The Counsellor Pikulinski was one of those counsellors from whom no one expects the least counsel. He was an absolute nonentity. The sole thought which predominated in his poorly developed brain was the perpetual fear of compromising himself. Like a doll that always squeaks alike when it is struck in the stomach, at each instant he repeated the word "yes," with an approving nod of the head.

It mattered little to Pikulinski if the "yes" accorded to one person contradicted the "yes" offered to another. The essential thing with him was not to oppose superior authority or its representatives. Thanks to this invariable line of conduct, he had made a splendid career in the bureaucratic hierarchy. Decorated with the cordon of Saint Stanislas, the cross of Saint Waldimir, he enjoyed the entire confidence of the government as a reward of twenty-five years of faithful service.

Despite his intrinsic nullity he displayed an enormous activity. Official presentations, manifestations of devotion, addresses of submission to the government, subscriptions of command, deputations, wherever he could make himself conspicuous, Pikulinski appeared.

A kind-hearted man, he knew how to render himself agreeable to the old dignitaries and to the venerable dowagers, and it was natural that he should expect still further promotion in his civil career. The title of senator and the order of the White Eagle could not escape him; it was only a question of time. At each new favour from the government Pikulinski was profoundly touched. He quickly put on his full-dress uniform covered with decorations, and hastened to present himself at the chateau, in order to return his humble thanks. He always returned from these interviews puffed up with pride at the flattering words of his chiefs.

"If every one," thought he, "would imitate my example, how many evils might be averted. Unfortunately, most of my Polish compatriots are wanting in tact and have little policy."

In Madame Wtorkowska's *salon* he took no active part in the conversation, but contented himself by throwing in here and there a "yes" which was only varied by the inflexion.

"Russia," said Bavorof, "can say that she will act independently with more justice than Italy. She will carefully refrain from an alliance with perfidious Austria and feudal Prussia. Young and vigorous, she is strong enough to make head against the whole Occident united."

"Yes," immediately assented Pikulinski.

"It would be wiser to avoid the conflict," said Sofronof.

"Yes," said the counsellor of state feebly.

"For my part," said Jacob, "I think it would be a sensible thing for her not to engage in so formidable a combat."

"And why, then?" demanded Bavorof.

At this question Pikulinski accidentally let fall a "yes," which he tried to smother by coughing.

"Poland," replied Jacob, "claims only the liberties guaranteed by legitimate treaties of the past. It would be much better to give them to her, than to reply by terrorism and false claims."

The counsellor of state could scarcely suppress a "yes," which was on the point of coming out; then he feared that he had compromised himself by merely assisting at this conversation; he was taken with pains in the stomach, and took refuge in another part of the room.

"You are putting yourself in a bad light, monsieur," replied the count. "We do not recognize any rights whatever on the part of Poland nor the Poles, not even the inherent rights of men. Our first duty is to repress this revolutionary tendency. Our strength sustains us; it is by this that we live. Our sole means of existence are our swords."

"To say that Russia's only power is brute force," replied Jacob, "is to avow her moral weakness."

"Until the present the empire has had no other foundation than force, described by you as brutal. That may change, perhaps; but in the meanwhile I repeat to you our gospel is the sword."

The count's cynicism shocked the colonel, who was more diplomatic.

"Monsieur le Comte," said he, "I cannot entirely agree with you. There are certain hereditary rights which should be superior to force."

Pikulinski almost let fall a "yes," but judged it prudent to await a better occasion.

"Passive obedience," continued Jacob, addressing the count, "seems to be your principal axiom."

"Yes, for it is a national axiom, powerful as a religious dogma. Add to that, money, official position, decorations, titles of nobility, and all advantages which the government can give"--

"Then you speculate on human weaknesses, cupidity, vanity, ambition?"

"You have said it. All the science of statesmen worthy of the name is summed up in working men through their vices. To speculate on virtue is only a dream, a childish illusion. Why? Because in humanity vice always predominates over virtue."

Muse, who practised after her own fashion the maxims of Bavorof, believed, nevertheless, that it would look better for one of her sex to appear shocked, and cried:--

"Oh, Monsieur le Comte, your ideas are really shocking."

"Pardon me, mademoiselle, they were not said for your charming ears."

Pikulinski let fall a loud "yes," being sure that he could not compromise himself this time.

"You know, however," replied Muse, "that just now most of our women are mixed up in politics. We are accustomed to hear everything, and our influence is widespread."

"It is a misfortune. It does not well become your white hands to stir up the filth of life, nor to penetrate, elegant and perfumed, into the laboratory where are prepared the drugs for the maladies of humanity."

Pikulinski thought this remark merited a repeated "yes, yes."

"You think, then," asked Jacob, "that morals should have no part in the government of nations?"

"Morals! There is no sense in the word. Politics exclude morals."

"If that is your profession of faith, all discussion is impossible between us. I believe in morality, always and everywhere, and every time that an injury is done to it I call on the justice of

God."

"God! Justice! You believe in that? Are you a Catholic?"

"No; I am a Jew."

Bavorof had never met a Jew of this stamp. He looked at him in astonishment, and asked:--

"German Jew?"

"No; Polish."

"Does Poland contain many Jews who think and reason like you?"

"I do not understand the question."

"I mean no offence. I wish to know if there are in Poland many Israelites who are polished and educated."

"There are many better educated and more polished than I."

"Then so much the better. You can exercise a happy influence over the people in curing them of their patriotism without a future, and of their superannuated Catholicism. Eliminate the feudal spirit and that of the nobility, and with these new conditions will come the fusion between Russia and Poland."

"The Jews who are preserved, thanks to their religious faith, cannot employ themselves by tearing out the hearts of others."

"I have, then, the pleasure of talking with a revolutionist."

"Not at all. Though there are circumstances when men who were most opposed to revolution have taken part in them, in spite of themselves."

"Pardon me," said Sofronof, interrupting him. "The truth is that Poland will never be satisfied. Give her autonomy. She would soon demand the annexation of the provinces included in Russia, Prussia, and Austria. Give them all that, and they would claim the ports on the Baltic and on the Black sea."

"One thing certain," replied Jacob, "is that Russia never yet has tried to satisfy Poland in any way."

"And Alexander I.?" asked Bavorof.

"Alexander I. promised much and performed little, and that little he has taken back again by the hand of his brother, the Tsarevitch Constantine."

At these words Pikulinski was thoroughly frightened; he was afraid to breathe even the same air with this audacious man. He thought of pretending to have the nose-bleed for a pretext to leave suddenly. However, he remained.

"And Russia did wrong to promise and make those concessions," replied Bavorof. "Since 1815 it has been necessary to uproot and overthrow Polonism and Catholicism. They must be replaced by the Russian spirit and the orthodox Greek church."

"But, Monsieur le Comte, did you not just avow that Russia's power is in her material force? In that case, what is the Russian spirit, and how shall she inspire others with a spirit which is actually incompatible with strength?"

"The contradiction is not so apparent. Our spirit is to destroy all those who do not think with us. We were wrong to deceive Poland with fallacious promises; between us it is a battle to the death. Her annihilation is our end, and always has been."

"And what will come out of the ruins?"

"An enormous Russia, a Russia semi-civilized,--paleoslav, democratic, and social, with a Czar at the head. A republic, if you will, *democ-soc*, as they said in 1848, with a hereditary president clothed with dictatorial authority, and to the eyes of the ignorant masses of a sacred and divine character. I am a noble; but to tell the truth, in Russia nobility does not exist. It never has existed, and never will. All Russians are equally under the knout."

This expression of the republic, *democ-soc*, even in the mouth of Bavorof, sounded so badly to the ears of Pikulinski, that this time he suppressed the "yes," and, under pretext of the nose-bleed that he had in reserve, hid his face in his handkerchief.

Jacob, after taking the tour of the *salon* two or three times, took his leave.

"Who is this man?" asked the count. "Is he really a Jew?"

"Yes," replied Muse; "and there are many Israelites here who are as well educated."

"And have they the same ideas?"

"Not by any means," replied Sofronof, who had some acquaintance with Jewish society. "This man is an exception. He is an idealist, a dreamer, a reformer. An original, he walks alone."

"A dangerous man," muttered Bavorof. "He is obstinate, no doubt, like all men with convictions, imbued with a fervent mysticism and plunged in the clouds of spirituality. He sets up a standard of morals and right that takes with weak-minded people everywhere; above all, the women. If he were a Catholic I would have arrested him and banished him without further ceremony; but he is only a Jew, so we can have a little patience."

"At Warsaw," said Muse, "the Israelites play a grand rôle. It is difficult to distinguish them from the rest of society at first sight."

"But from what I have heard they are not friends with the feudalists."

"It is not so; they are reconciled."

"That is a pity. Then we must sow discord among them. Divide and conquer is one of our maxims."

"You are a strange politician, dear count," said Sofronof; "you think aloud."

"Like a celebrated minister. To-day it is the best way to deceive the world. Men are always disposed to attribute to you ideas contrary to those which you loudly proclaim."

Pikulinski confirmed this sentence with two loud "yeses," and went away wondering if he could in any way have compromised himself.

One day, soon after, Bavorof said to Sofronof:--

"I recommend you, colonel, to warn the police not to lose sight of this Jew, Jacob. He displeases me. He sees through our plots. There are only two alternatives: to oblige him to serve us, or to send him to Penza."

"What good would that do? His is an open nature, from which we have nothing to fear. He is wrapped up in the Talmud and his innocent mania of playing the prophet."

"As for me, I despise his prophecy. Is he rich?"

"Very rich."

"So much the worse. Ambitious?"

"Not the least in the world."

"Still worse. Is he a coward?"

"I do not think so."

"In that case to Penza! To Penza!"

"But he is not a revolutionist."

"That is still worse. Sooner or later a revolutionist will change his skin. A revolutionist can be dealt with; but a liberal, a legalist, a moralist, who believes in men's rights, this is a dangerous animal. Give me individuals like Pikulinski, malleable to our will, and I will place them in the centre of our social organism. We can control them, and, with the rabble at our feet, all will go smoothly. Hurrah!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE SEDUCER.

Jacob was absorbed in the study of the works of Maimonides, when his servant brought him a visiting-card.

This servant had replaced him who had so rudely received his master's mother, and who, on

account of her, had left Jacob's service, with tears in his eyes, but too proud to serve a country-woman in Jewish costume.

The visiting-card bore a name engraved indistinctly. Without deciphering the name, Jacob received his visitor. He frowned when he recognized David Seebach the younger, the seducer of Lia. He was dressed richly, but in bad taste, with a cane in his hand, an eye-glass at his eye, and a smile on his lips. Jacob received him coldly, and, with a wave of the hand, indicated a chair. David seated himself, put the end of his cane in his mouth, adjusted his eye-glass, and spoke in a low voice:--

"My presence at your house is perhaps a surprise, for you gained, I fear, a bad impression of us on our last interview. We were very sorry, my father and I, not to have been able to conceal that unfortunate exile for you, but"--

"I do not blame you for that. Every one has a right to act as he pleases."

"Since then I have thought it over, and I admit that I was in the wrong. Your reasoning was just at all points. We must follow the current; we must side with Poland. My father and I, however, do not think alike, on account of his former relations. He remains in the Russian camp, while I take the side of the Poles. Thus we are safe in any case."

"As you please," said Jacob, in an indifferent tone.

"You are on their side, are you not?" asked David.

"I am for Poland, but I am not a revolutionist."

"As for myself, I have made the acquaintance of the principal agitators. I attend all the meetings, and I will aid the revolutionists, for there is money to be made by so doing. As a measure of precaution I have put all my property in a safe place across the frontier, so that in case I am taken the Russians can get nothing, and my father can save me from the hands of the police through the protection of the high functionaries with whom he is in favour. The patriots will need capital to procure arms at the Austrian frontier. I will accommodate them, and the profits will be worth running a little risk."

"Excuse me," interrupted Jacob. "I do not wish to meddle in such business."

"How is that? Have you not said that you sympathize with Poland, and did you not reproach us for being opposed to it?"

"Listen to me, my good David. If I am Polish, it is not from love of lucre, not for fear, but from conviction."

"I am equally patriotic at heart," said David. "I sing the recent hymns which ask God to manifest his power against the secular enemy. I believed that you would aid me to conduct my business to a successful termination; for to speak frankly, as I am a new convert the patriots have not yet entire confidence in me. Your recommendation would have weight, and you can share the profits."

At these words Jacob rang, and the servant appeared immediately.

"You see this gentleman," said the master. "Look at him well so as to recognize him."

"Monsieur, I will remember him."

"Very well. If he ever presents himself here again you will not admit him."

David arose, frightened and furious.

"Be careful how you treat me, my dear Jacob," said he, as he left. "I have your life in my hands, and I will be revenged."

After this scene Jacob's brow was bathed in a cold sweat, and he fell on a couch nearly prostrated. He was aroused by the arrival of Lia's servant, who said that her mistress begged him to come immediately to St. George's street. He called a carriage and hastened to the dwelling of David's victim.

Near the house he perceived a veiled woman, who seemed agitated on seeing him, and leaned against the wall as if faint. Then she rapidly disappeared around the corner. Something about this woman reminded him of Mathilde.

What if it was she!

This thought could be imaginary only, and Jacob did not entertain it for a moment. Lia, all in tears, ran to meet him for whom she had waited impatiently.

"Oh!" cried she, "that wretch has been here; he has dared to look at my child. Save me from him! He has threatened to return. I will not see him. I do not know him."

"Be quiet. You have nothing to fear. Did he tell you why he came? Perhaps he is divorced from his wife, and he wishes to marry you."

"Then I will refuse; but he cannot give his wife the Ghet, for he knows not where she is. And as for me, I have taken an Issar. I have sworn never to marry the man who caused the tears of my father and my mother."

Wrath and contempt gave to Lia's face a wonderful beauty. She continued:--

"May my child be among the Asufim, the Piggum, and the Schetukim, rather than bear the name of his miserable father!"

Jacob made vain efforts to calm her, and said:--

"I do not approve of your Issar. The child needs a father, and the marriage would justify you in your parents' eyes."

All at once they heard David's voice in the antechamber. Lia snatched her child from its cradle and fled to another room, and Jacob was left alone. The door opened violently and the seducer rushed into the room, his face purple with rage. He was stupefied to find in Lia's visitor one whom he had not expected to meet again so soon. After a moment's silence his anger returned, and with drawn sword he rushed on his enemy, but his coolness and the heavy cane which Jacob presented kept him at a distance. He lowered his arm and muttered some unintelligible words.

"Why do you come here?" asked Jacob, with a firm voice.

"And you?"

"I am here at the request of Lia's father, with all the rights of a guardian."

"And I come to see my child."

"Neither the mother nor the child belong to you. Have you given them your name? Have you shielded them from shame, misery, and malediction?"

"I intend to divorce my wife and marry Lia. I must speak with her. Why do you hinder me?"

"I consent that she sees you in my presence, if she wish. Otherwise, no."

"She ought to be willing, for I hold her fate in my hands."

He had hardly ceased speaking when Lia opened the door and entered, her features convulsed with aversion and contempt. She was superb in her scorn, and David trembled as he regarded her. She hesitated an instant, then cried;--

"Between you and me there is no longer anything in common. I declare, before this witness, that I will never be your wife, and I forbid you to call yourself my child's father. May my tears, my sobs, my sufferings, my sleepless nights, and the disgrace that I have brought to my family bring down upon your head divine wrath! May you be tortured by demons, and may Dumah invent for you new torments!"

In the midst of these imprecations her eyes became suddenly fixed in her head. Her arm appeared paralyzed and her legs sank under her; a froth came from her mouth, and with a convulsive laugh and piercing cries she fell senseless.

David fled from the house, his face covered with his hands. The maid ran for a physician, who, on his arrival, said that it was not an ordinary fainting, but a dangerous attack of apoplexy. All remedies used in such cases were employed, but the stricken one did not regain consciousness until toward evening, when she heard her child cry. She extended her arms to him, but her strength failed anew. Jacob watched by her bedside until daybreak.

CHAPTER XXV.

BETWEEN TWO FIRES.

Overcome with lassitude, Jacob, after returning home, threw himself on a couch, and was just going to sleep when the voice of Ivas awakened him. The young man, despite the efforts of the servant to bar the passage at such an early hour, had forced his way into Jacob's room. He wore a heavy hunting-coat, and carried on his shoulders a haversack. Heavy boots completed his

costume, and his bearing expressed ardour and energy.

"We are to-day," commenced he without preamble, "in opposite camps. But I have not forgotten that I owe my return to Poland to you, and probably my life also, for your helping hand drew me from the deepest misery. I come to thank you for the last time, and to bid you an eternal adieu."

"Why that?"

"To-day I go directly to the forest. Our insurrection may last some days, and it may last for years. We shall march, armed with batons, against the regular troops. The forests will serve us for camp, fortress, and arsenal. We shall march, scoffed at by some and cursed by others, and accompanied by the tears of the women who love us and whom we love. We will advance with despair in our souls, ever forward!"

"Why are you so hopeless?"

"Because the young men who had confidence in us have been torn from us, and compelled to put on the uniform of the Muscovite soldier. We must save them or die! You see I have no illusions. I know that I risk my life, and that perhaps in the future we may be accused of presumption, of folly, of puerile enthusiasm. No matter. National honour commands it, and I obey. For the last time, Jacob, I who am so near death adjure you not to be a traitor to your country, not to work against us."

"Who has dared to accuse me of treason?" cried Jacob.

"This accusation has been circulated. Perhaps they wish to make a striking example. I will no longer be there to defend you, and you will fall a victim to your own obstinacy."

"Why I, rather than another? Have I ever made you any promises that I have not kept?"

"You have enemies, and very dangerous ones. They accuse you of secret relations with the Russians, here on the first floor, at the rooms of your betrothed."

"My betrothed! I have none. She of whom you speak will never be anything to me."

"But you go there, and you also go to Henri Segel's, who is in very bad odour with us. You openly speak against us; and, lastly, you refused to pay that money to us."

Jacob smiled sadly.

"Singular destiny," said he. "I have enemies, and many of them; I, who am no man's enemy. But you, Ivas, you do not mistrust me?"

"No, I honour your character; I esteem you; I have defended you, and I will continue to do so; but the great majority of my companions think otherwise."

"Let us talk no more of me. I am prepared for the worst. But tell me, is it not possible to delay the insurrection?"

"It is impossible, and in my turn I also ask you to speak of something else."

He was just going, when Kruder, all out of breath, rushed into the apartment.

"Ah! you are here," said he to Ivas; "at last I have found you. I see by your accoutrements that you are off. It is too soon, too soon, do you hear? In Heaven's name do not act prematurely and unreflectingly."

"I suppose you would advise us to wait until the Russians seize us?"

"You will all perish if you commence now."

"So be it. At least our blood will be prolific."

"Listen to the voice of reason."

"We prefer to listen to that of despair. Have you witnessed any of the scenes provoked by the nocturnal recruiting, when our men have been seized and forced into the Russian army? Have you heard the prayers of the young men torn from their mothers' arms? Do you know what it is to be a Russian soldier?"

"I know all; but this is a supreme moment, and your action will involve the salvation or the loss of the country. Your passion is only a heroic egotism. Once more I call you to reason."

"Say no more, Kruder. Folly is our reason, our watchword. And now, farewell, Jacob."

Ivas and Kruder left at the same time, and Mann, who had just arrived, met them in the antechamber. He was struck with the appearance of the two men. The younger man's dress shocked him. It had been for some days the sign of suspected revolutionists.

He sank down in an arm-chair, while Jacob, surprised in the midst of his toilet, dressed himself.

"I come," said he, "as your guardian's friend and your well-wisher, although I know you dislike me, to give you a salutary warning. It is useless for you to try to deceive me, or to resort to falsehoods."

"I never lie, either to you or to any one else. Learn this, monsieur; it is true that I do not see the necessity of boasting to every one, but I never say anything I do not mean."

"If that is so, perhaps we can come to an understanding. I will show you my hand. You are, without flattery, a prominent figure in Jewish society; your education and your fortune assure you an enviable position. That is why you are not absolute master of your acts, of which the responsibility belongs to the class you represent. In compromising yourself, you compromise us. The government watches men of your stamp, and we are judged by your conduct. Every one is talking of your discussion at Madame Wtorkowska's with Count Bavorof and Colonel Sofronof. Pikulinski has spread it in the city. And what did those two men want that just left here? Evidently you are being induced to take part with the revolutionists. What folly! If it only endangered yourself it would not matter so much, but it can injure us who belong to the same society as you."

"Is that all?" asked Jacob impatiently.

"It is enough, I think. What was the tenor of your conversation with Bavorof, the remembrance of which has made Pikulinski's very hair stand on end?"

"Do you know the counsellor of state?"

"Certainly! He is an ass in every sense of the word."

"And you take notice of his judgment?"

"Because Bavorof, also, thinks you a dangerous man. And this young man in revolutionary costume, with his great boots, what was he doing here? A conspirator, probably."

"You are mistaken. He came to warn me to be on my guard, for I am threatened with death from his party. You see how that agrees with your accusation."

"That proves that you lack tact. You are, then, suspected by both parties."

"It is often the fate of a conscientious man to bring upon himself the condemnation of all, because he tells the bitter truth to both without shrinking under their threats or trying to gain favours. I am one of those men who act according to their convictions, and I will not abandon them to please you." Then he added in Hebrew:--

"'Happy he who dies as he was born, pure and without stain.'" (Baba Mezzia, 107. a.)

Mann threw upon him a look of ironical compassion that might be literally translated: A fool you have lived, a fool you will die.

"Really," said he, "there is nothing to be done with a man who quotes the Talmud when one is talking business. You wish, then, to be incarcerated in the citadel? And we shall suffer more or less from having been intimate with you. That is the worst of it."

"What can I do?"

"You say that you are not a revolutionist?"

"Truly, I am not."

"Very well, take sides with those who oppose the revolution."

"But they are not content with fighting them legally. They add to it arbitrary terrorism," said Jacob.

"Of two evils choose the lesser."

"Yes; the evil is in the two extremes, or rather the two extremes meet and form one evil. Despotism above, despotism below. I will serve neither the one nor the other. I am between the two."

"I congratulate you on the excellent means you have taken to ruin yourself. I am really sorry for you. The best thing for you in your frame of mind is to depart for foreign lands."

"You would advise me, then, to desert, when my duty orders me, in this difficult crisis which has overtaken Poland, to remain and do what I can for truth and justice. If I embarrass you," added he laughing, "you can blow out my brains for the public good."

"Unfortunately that is not practicable. We should be implicated in an assassination. Well, if

you will not go away, at least shut yourself up, and do not go on the streets."

"Then they will say that I am a conspirator."

"Meet only Russians."

"I will irritate them by my remarks."

"Be silent, then."

"I must speak."

"May Dumah and a million devils catch you at last!" cried Mann, rushing toward the door. "Farewell!"

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE RECONCILIATION.

It was a sad day for Jacob, for many reasons. His friend had left him for almost certain death. A rude person had come to weary him with reproaches and complaints, and then followed a message from Saint George's street to hasten, as the invalid was in the last extremity. When he arrived, she was no longer of this world. Lia had breathed her last.

There remained the orphan: what should he do with him? To whom confide him? Jacob thought of his mother at first; the good woman blushed; she attributed the parentage to Jacob, and in order to satisfy her scruples, he was obliged to relate to her the whole sad history.

"I believe you," said she; "but will others believe it? Seeing the child under your protection, what calumnies, think you, will be circulated?"

"Is it necessary, then, that I leave this poor innocent to hirelings? And ought I to refuse to do my duty for fear of unjust criticism?"

"The child will never again find a mother, but I will place him in good hands. I will not hinder you from doing a good action, but I will save you from the blame which might attach to your good name. You may leave it to me," said his mother.

In his present mood, Jacob felt instinctively drawn toward Mathilde, and late in the evening he directed his steps to her house. The servants, accustomed to see him enter unannounced, opened the doors of the *salon*. He waited there for some time, looking at the closed piano, the stiffly-arranged furniture, and the withered flowers in the vases. Everything bore that air of desolation found in houses that have been closed for some time.

Clad in a long, trained peignoir, Mathilde appeared, gliding like a shadow, with slow and measured steps. She was very much changed since he last saw her. Her eyes shone with a feverish fire, and her cheeks were sunken. Her former soft lassitude had become a torpor. She offered him a cold, trembling hand. Jacob understood by this reception that here as elsewhere he had been slandered; but, happily, he was one of those characters whose clear conscience fortify them against all contumely.

"Have I come at an inopportune moment?" said he. "In that case, I will go."

"No. You could not arrive more opportunely. I was anxious to see you, monsieur."

"You are ill."

"Not the least in the world."

"Well, Mathilde, so many unfortunate things have happened to me lately, that I come to you to comfort my tortured heart."

"Your heart? It is in the Old Testament."

"I do not understand you. Do you doubt me?"

"Ah! I do not know. This doubt is killing me. I wish to know all the worst; then I can die. You used to be frank and sincere. Why do you deceive me now, like the others?"

"This is too much, Mathilde," said Jacob.

"Oh! I have proofs of your deceit," cried she. "Would it not be better to confide in me as a sister, and say, 'I love another, I am tired of contact with a corpse. I wish a living creature? I would have answered you thus: 'Go, be happy!' In losing you I would at least have kept my respect for you."

"Why do you not respect me now?"

"What! you dare to deny it?"

"Mathilde," replied Jacob gravely, "I assure you I have done nothing to merit these reproaches. I have never been guilty of forgetting you."

"How explain, then, your mysterious adventure; that woman, who is she?"

"You shall hear the truth," said Jacob. "Listen!" He then related the dark drama of which Lia was the heroine, not omitting the scene of the previous evening and the morning's death. The poor girl's fate made Mathilde weep, but at the same time she felt proud and happy. Her beloved was worthy of her deepest respect. When he had finished she could hardly refrain from throwing herself at Jacob's feet and asking pardon for her unjust suspicions.

"Forgive me," she cried, "for my foolish credulity. But the calumny was so well devised that it had all the appearance of truth. It was repeated to me as undoubtedly true."

"One thing astonishes me: it is that you did not come to me about it immediately. You were wrong not to demand an explanation."

"A long and frightful torture has punished me for my hesitation. The days that have passed since then have been the bitterest of my existence. Your supposed infidelity poisoned all remembrances of the past, and I tried to tear your image from my heart."

"I could not have foreseen that a good action would have had such direful consequences," said Jacob sadly.

"How happy would I be could I adopt the orphan! Unfortunately, in this house I am a slave, a prisoner. I am respected, it is true, and the master surrounds me with luxury to gratify his vanity; he strews flowers on my path to dazzle the world; but in the midst of this perfumed atmosphere I am a captive, and very often envy the working women who live by labour, or in their poverty beg upon the streets. For a long time I have been abandoned. Henri Segel divides his days between the Russians and Muse. When I feel very ill the physician comes here. Sometimes a beggar appears, and, you will not believe it, under this exterior wealth I am often without money, without a sou to give for charity."

She sighed, and continued:--

"To-day I live again; my soul is at peace once more. I have been given back the only man in the world who makes me love humanity and believe in virtue."

Their conversation was continued for a long time. Tea was served at the usual hour, and the Englishwoman arrived, but she had a bad cold and her presence was a constraint. Absorbed in each other, they forgot the world. Mathilde went to the piano, which had been closed for several days, and the celebration of their reconciliation ended with the polonaise of Chopin (A-dur).

When Jacob found himself some distance down the street he went back to look at the house he had just left as if he had a presentiment of not returning.

CHAPTER XXVII.

JACOB IN FLIGHT.

Warsaw presented a strange sight. From all its doors the population hurried toward the forests. The combat had been precipitated, and they rushed eagerly to death.

The Russians paid no attention to this exodus. They did not wish to oppose it.

At the Chateau de Brühl they repeated the saying: "When the abscess is ripe it must surely burst!" The cold-blooded authorities did not say that this abscess was the result of a purulent malady, engendered by unbridled oppression. They cared neither for the suffering which it produced in ripening, nor for the blood which was lost in bursting.

In the interior of the capital everything seemed to be in a normal condition. Only the initiated recognized in the streets the gladiators vowed to death, for the fever in their souls was concealed by a deceitful calm. From time to time, rumours were secretly circulated that companies had been formed under the very nose of the Russian troops, that Muscovite detachments had been beaten, that the insurgents had taken such a village, that here and there the national flag had been ostentatiously displayed and the revolutionary government proclaimed.

Gromof alone persisted in declaring the revolutionary movement premature, and sought to check the torrent. Vain efforts; the dikes were broken, and the rallying word was "Liberty or death!"

Thoughtful men, however, foresaw the imminent explosion of Muscovite vengeance. A barbarous and savage repression began, like that of 1794, in the time of Kosciusko. Then some concealed themselves in the thickets, while others fell into the hands of the police. Houses were searched, and in some cases destroyed, during the hunt for insurgents. Roofs were broken in and floors pulled up, and often, in default of finding the guilty, the innocent were made to suffer in their stead. The citadel was crowded with prisoners. Every day files of the unfortunates, including nobles of high degree, left for Siberia, and chains commenced to be lacking, so many were imprisoned.

And during these horrors the groves put forth joyously their green leaves, the turf was carpeted with flowers, and the lark sang in the clear azure heaven; but the doom of the destroyer was over all.

Russia prepared her saturnalias to celebrate a definite victory. By hundreds of thousands the soldiers tracked the insurgents, who were scattered in bands without camps, without money, without arms or powder. Yet victory was delayed for a whole year.

One might attribute the rage of the Russian government to the humiliation of the army, if the slowness of the manœuvres had not, as we have already said, been premeditated. The Russians wished to crush Poland, but they wished it to appear as if the revolution had been entirely a surprise. Since 1863 her vengeance had increased in ferocity, redoubled under a thousand pretexts. Her cruelty had now become systematic. And the civilized world assisted at this frightful execution by looking on with cold indifference at such sufferings.

Jacob saw in his imagination the dark future of Poland,--a future become a perpetual present. He was almost desperate at his impotency to stay the impending disaster. To despair, succeeded apathy. What good was life, thought he, without high aim. And, alas, all the ways towards this end were closed to him! He tried vainly to become absorbed in reading, but his brain seemed congealed. A heavy slumber like a lethargy overtook him. When he opened his eyes the lamp was out, and the morning light filled the room. He opened the windows. The sky was sad and sombre, like his soul. In the silence of the new-born day he heard steps on his staircase; some one knocked at his door. He opened the door, and a man quickly entered. A long cloak covered him completely, and his hat was drawn over his eyes. It was Kruder.

"You know all, do you not? Then you are all ready?" cried he.

"All--what?"

"There's not a minute to lose. It is four o'clock. You have an hour and a half, or two hours at the most, before you."

"What is it, then?" asked Jacob.

"There is no use beating about the bush with a man like you. In two hours they are coming to arrest you."

"Why?"

"One never knows why in these times. I bring you a passport. I procured it yesterday, before the authorities at the chateau had warned the police against passports. Come, do not tarry!"

"Where shall I go?"

"Where you will."

"Would it not be possible for me to wait, and prove myself innocent?"

"You jest! They would answer you by sending you to the extreme borders of the Russian empire. They are doing it every day."

"Be it so! They would send me back."

"And you would submit to Russian brutality when you can avoid it?"

"To leave my country at such a supreme moment would be to compromise my Israelite acquaintances, which Mann has recently reproached me for. I would be accused also of cowardly motives, of excessive prudence, of calculating egotism, and my flight would justify the

accusation."

"The moments are precious. Keep yourself for better times. Captivity would ruin you, and unfit you for the future. The insurrection is strengthening. No one can foresee the result. European diplomacy may interfere. It is true that the uprising is premature, but it is possible that this time they may obtain some concessions. You can be useful to us. Keep your intelligence, your relations, and your fortune for Poland."

"Intelligence falsified by mysticism. Every one says 'relations,' but with whom? My ideas are always in contradiction with those around me; there remains to me only a fortune. Alone, whom can I serve?"

"Come on! This is no time for pessimism. You must decide."

"My resolution is taken. I will go and make my farewells to my mother, and leave her in charge of the house. I will go far away, and there reflect as to what is the best course to pursue. I can give myself up to the gendarmes at any time, but not just yet. I will accompany you. Do you know of a safe place for a few hours?"

"Yes. Come with me."

Jacob lost no time in changing his clothes and ran to embrace his mother. He filled his pocket-book with bank-notes, and a quarter of an hour later was in the streets with Kruder. By many devious ways they arrived at the poorer quarter of the town. The fugitive had for a moment entertained the idea of seeking the hospitality of Segel, of Bartold, or of his guardian, but after reflection he feared to compromise them.

"We are going to the 'Kafarnaum,'" said Kruder smiling.

"The Kafarnaum? What is that?"

"A sobriquet of my own invention to designate the place where the revolutionists meet."

"You belong to them, then?"

"I belong to everybody and to nobody," answered he. "I enter, I listen. I give my advice and I engage in arguments, and I wait. With me you will be welcomed at the Kafarnaum."

"Is it a safe asylum?"

"Excellent, no one suspects, and therefore it has nothing to fear from the police. It is in the house of the *commissaire* of the ward."

"Let us go there, then."

Kruder turned into an alley. It was growing light, but the city was still quiet and deserted, and the only people abroad were the milkmen and the hucksters. They stopped before a house. At the entrance were some gendarmes, police, and individuals in citizens' dress. By a staircase which opened on the court they ascended to the second story. The house was new, and the apartment at the door of which they stopped had a fine external appearance. A servant who was half asleep let them in, and without question indicated a second door. This led them to a spacious *salon*. Two men were writing at a large table by the light of a lamp. The couches and easy-chairs were occupied by young men, whose fatigued air bore witness that they had passed a sleepless night.

Kruder whispered some words into the ears of the two men at the table. These persons, whose faces were somewhat familiar to Jacob, offered him their hands.

"Here," said they, "no one can come to seek you. As we have no secrets from honest men, we will continue our work before you. We conspire even in the open air, in the public streets, and as yet we have not fallen under suspicion. Be seated, take part in our deliberations, give us your advice,--we ask it. Today it is necessary to combine all our forces to arm, to rouse enthusiasm and practise strategy. Do not be disturbed, monsieur; do as you would in your own house."

Kruder, whose custom was to take no sides, went from one to another, read the order of the day over the secretary's shoulder, listened to short dialogues between different persons, and then hastened to some other meeting.

Jacob, left there by his friend, assisted at a strange, and to him novel, spectacle. Every instant the door opened; it was a continual going and coming of individuals of all ages and of all ranks of society. Among them were women, children, Jews, and ecclesiastics. Some brought good or bad news, messages and money, while others came to receive orders or to bring letters, and in this crowd appeared some in uniforms which bore the insignia of high rank in the army. They showed by their faces and bearing traces of a long and fatiguing military career. The breasts of many were covered with decorations gained in the Caucasus or in the Taschkend. In contrast with these officers were workmen, artisans, idlers, and vagabonds. The movement was incessant, and the crowd was continually changing.

A youth who had been wounded came to relate the particulars of the combat, where he had

received a bullet in his leg. He asked for a surgeon to extract it, and seemed impatient to return to the seat of war. His face was lighted up with heroism, and the fever of his patriotism exceeded the fever of his wound.

A workman came in haste to announce that the police had made a raid on a clandestine printing-house where he was employed, and from which he had escaped through the roof. Immediate decision was taken to establish another printing-office in another hiding-place.

The revolution displayed an immense activity which, notwithstanding, was defective. Necessary funds were not forthcoming, in spite of the threats and prayers employed to procure them. Every moment there arrived from the insurgents scattered in the forests complaints of lack of arms, powder, ambulances, medicines, and surgeons. There were rumours that this or that emissary had fallen into the hands of the Russians, or that a knavish contractor, who had been paid in advance, had delivered a cargo of guns which proved to be utterly useless, the refuse of the Austrian arsenals. These difficulties did not daunt the committee, for it was composed of men of unheard-of audacity and bravery, who had already accomplished miracles with their scanty resources. Russian surveillance was relaxed, and this fact, which should have made the revolutionists suspicious, encouraged their efforts. Their confidence increased daily. From all the Polish provinces, and even from the districts incorporated with the Russian empire in 1772, came assurances of warmest sympathy, but each accompanied by an urgent prayer to delay the uprising. It was too late. The duchy of Posen, annexed to Prussia, and Galicia, with the city of Cracow, which was subservient to Austria, viewed the situation with the deepest interest, but did not revolt for fear of drawing down on Poland two more adversaries. These remnants of the old republic sent volunteers and money, and at the same time procured some arms from Austria, not always openly, though the government at Vienna closed its eyes and let them pass.

Gromof had the right of entrance to the Kafarnaum. Here he continued to oppose the insurrection, and excited general ridicule.

"Instead of blaming our enthusiasm," replied they, "do something for us. Work the army. Work the dissenters from the orthodox church."

"Alas!" replied Gromof, "that is what we are doing. But our people do not respond to the first appeal. We have yet to instruct them and teach them their rights."

"And you desire us to remain inactive and wait for these babes to grow up? Oh, no! You cannot expect that any more than for us to return to the Greek calendar."

"But you are going to your own destruction. You are on the brink of an abyss."

"An abyss! To hell! rather than your yoke," cried an impetuous youth.

This argument was interrupted by a woman who came to tell that her son had been sent to the citadel, and that she had succeeded in saving some very compromising papers that he carried on his person. After the woman came a youth almost a child. He told how he had fled from the soldiers who had seized him for the Russian service.

Amid this noisy crowd came and went women chatting tranquilly, carrying important despatches hidden in their stockings or their corsets, and messengers waited while cobblers drew the nails from the heels of their boots where messages had been inserted.

Jacob saw before him an admirable tableau of devotion. To him the spectacle was most pitiful, for he was convinced that all these efforts could only result in a final catastrophe. Kruder returned. He informed his friend that one hour after their departure the police had invaded his dwelling, searched his papers, demolished stoves, had even taken up part of the floor, and carried away as sole trophy a pocket pistol, a prohibited weapon. The house was placed under strict supervision, and the search for Jacob was now going on in the streets.

There remained to him the choice between flight or prison; but whither should he fly? He thought of some obscure streets where the poor Jews lived. He had among them many friends whom he had aided in their distress. He had often penetrated into these houses of misery with the idea of devoting himself some day to their total extinction. With this end in view he had organized a Jewish school, for in his opinion popular instruction was the basis of moral reform and material improvement.

One man in particular in this quarter he knew well. A certain Rébé Schmul, a petty merchant who had been on the verge of bankruptcy when Jacob had set him once more on his feet. His back loaded with old clothes, he walked in the cold or the heat crying in the streets, "*Hendel! Hendel!*" ("Old clothes! old clothes!") Nothing escaped his glance or his hearing. He heard the calls from the garrets, and introduced himself into the courts at the risk of being harshly treated. It was a laborious business, and often scarcely sufficed to sustain existence. At the most it permitted him to buy a little fish and a morsel of white bread for the Sabbath.

Rébé Schmul and his wife were growing old; they had five daughters, two of whom were married, while three remained at home. In all, five mouths to feed. To do this it was necessary that each day, in all seasons, the pedler should tramp from early morning until nightfall. He must also be careful not to make a bad bargain in buying old clothes, which often appeared so well

that a hole would pass unperceived. There lies the danger of the business, and Schmul, although experienced, had been taken in more than once. Tall and thin, he did not look his age, for, as he said, he had no time to think of it. In this business, which he had followed for more than thirty years, he had become a keen observer of men; and from this study was born in his soul not contempt, but compassion, for his fellow-creatures. Although he was very poor, he often found some one more unfortunate, who drew from him the last sou in his pocket in charity. Besides this sensibility, he was distinguished by a jovial humour. His natural gayety served him well in trading. A smile always attracts, and he by his bright ways encouraged men who were obliged to sell their best garments, and softened the bitterness of the sacrifice. Schmul always had a joke to tell, and a smile on his lips, when he left home in the early morning or when he returned weary and footsore at night. He treated his sick wife with pleasantry; by pleasantry he consoled his daughters in their chagrins; and lastly he fortified himself thereby, when he felt that a sigh was likely to escape his breast.

No one celebrated with more enjoyment the feast of the Sabbath than did Schmul, in his narrow and crowded lodging, by the light of a tallow candle. His business did not prosper, although he worked so hard. This was a disappointment to him, for he had dreamed of enlarging his stock by the addition of blacking and matches; but circumstances had not as yet permitted the realization of his hopes. Then he bought tickets in the lottery, and each time hoped to gain the grand prize. In vain did his wife beg him to renounce this delusion, and use the money in buying the necessaries of life for his family. When she had scolded him well, his only reply was that he must not shut his door against the good God.

Schmul lodged with his family on the third floor of a large house inhabited by many other Jewish families, all equally poor. This building, it is needless to say, did not shine with neatness. It was constructed in a rectangle with a narrow front, and opened upon a court. On each story a wooden gallery served for the workroom of the household. Here they washed and dried the linen. Here they split the wood, and cooked the food, and dressed the children. What did they not do here? Old clothes of all kinds were stretched on ropes, and the odours of the cooking, the steam from many wash-boilers, the waters from which ran through the court, produced a perfume which the lodgers endured from force of habit only. The inhabitants were like one family, many of whom had been born and were destined to die in this receptacle of misery.

Schmul occupied three dark rooms, where the air and the light came only from the court. You can imagine what air and what light! Both had to filter through the wet clothes and the rags which hung on the ropes stretched from one gallery to another.

One of these rooms served for a parlour, and possessed a rickety sofa and two old arm-chairs. The other apartment was the bedroom for the old couple; the third, the chamber of the three girls. It was here that the Schmul girls cleaned, patched, and mended the old clothes. A memorable event happened here. The father loved to tell of it as a proof of the protection of Providence.

Ten years before, the pedler's position was desperate. He had been so unfortunate as to buy some clothes that proved to be stolen. He was obliged to give back the goods, beside paying a large fine. To raise the money for this he had appealed to several friends in vain. Seeing no way out of his embarrassment, he had gone out and had succeeded in selling an old cloak for a few florins. He had just returned home when a soldier came and wished to sell him an old velvet waistcoat. He refused to buy it; but the man insisted, and seizing him by the arm, made such a noise that Schmul gave him a small sum for the garment. He soon perceived that he had made a poor purchase, for it was nearly worthless. He gave it to one of his girls to patch, who presently uttered a great cry of joy, for under each button she had found a piece of gold, the total of which was sufficient to pay the fine.

The waistcoat contained also a paper written over closely, but the writing was almost effaced and indecipherable.

It was not possible to return the garment to its owner, for the soldier had evidently stolen it. Nevertheless, Schmul did not believe it right to appropriate a sum which seemed to have been sent from Heaven; he considered himself the depositary, and distributed the whole in small sums to political prisoners. This act describes the man. Unfortunate though he was, he paid his debt to an unknown. He often showed pieces of the waistcoat when he had occasion to relate the story, and returned thanks to Providence, for he was very pious.

He always left home early in the morning and did not return until dark. He carried an old umbrella, formerly blue, but become by long usage an indefinable colour. It was less to shield himself than to shelter his merchandise from the rain, the snow, and the sun. His breakfast was invariably composed of a raw onion or a smoked herring, with a morsel of bread and a small glass of brandy. In the evening he loved to find some hot dish awaiting him, and seated at the table he related the most amusing incidents of the day, to which his family listened attentively. Then came the prayer before going to bed.

The pedler was generally loved on account of his good character and jovial spirit. People were surprised that with his intelligence he had not already made his fortune. He replied by likening himself to a pair of scissors. Be they ever so sharp, they were no use without something to cut. Gold was the something that God, in his wisdom, had not given to every one.

Jacob arrived at the staircase which led to the Schmuls' lodging. He ascended without seeing the pedler, who, returning from his work, followed him, and stopped at the same time before the door of his lodging, on which was graven the name of God. Following the custom, he touched it with his hand and afterwards kissed it. It was then that Schmul recognized him.

"*Salem alekem*," said he.

"*Alekem salem*," replied the fugitive.

"Rabbi Jacob, tell me why I am honoured by your presence?" asked Schmul.

"I am in trouble," replied Jacob.

"Can I do anything for you?"

"Yes, and easily, I hope."

"Even if it were not easy you may count on me to do all I can."

They entered; the old man dusted the sofa and the table in Jacob's honour, and begged him to be seated. The prettiest and the boldest of his daughters, Rosélé, came to help him. Notwithstanding their poverty, she was dressed neatly and in good taste, and her beautiful black eyes indicated a certain coquetry.

"Now that you are seated," said Schmul, "I will listen to you."

"In a moment. Rest yourself first, you must be tired."

"Oh, as for that, yes! I cannot say how many stairs I have climbed to-day. I have done well. There are some young Poles who sold their last fine shirts to buy thick warm garments. I did not have to make myself hoarse to-day by crying '*Hendel!* Everybody called to me. They sold at any price. I had not enough money, and was obliged to borrow of old Mortchel."

"I am obliged," said Jacob in a low voice, "to leave Warsaw. The police paid a visit to my house this morning."

"To your house? Is it possible? Are you then, Rabbi Jacob, one of those madmen who tempt God?"

"No; but the Russian government often arrests innocent people."

"This is true. They do it every day. No one is secure here, nor ever has been under Russian rule."

"Do you know any one who can conduct me in safety to the first post station?"

"Certainly. Under this very roof dwells Mordko. As every one must live by some means, he is a smuggler. Merchandise, papers, men, he gets them all across the frontier. Thus, by exposing his head every day, he feeds his stomach."

"Can I trust him?"

"Entirely. This Mordko is a queer fellow, and when you see him you will not doubt him. Half mute, almost blind, he can scarcely say four words or take three steps. He has such a stupid and innocent air that he is never suspected. I will go and find him."

Madame Schmul came in to keep Jacob company, and at the half-open door the three girls peeped at him with admiration. Rosélé said to herself: "What happiness for me if I could please this rich man. But, alas! I must not think of it. I am called beautiful, but no doubt I should not satisfy a man such as he."

In a few moments Schmul returned with a very shabby individual. He looked at Jacob from head to foot attentively.

"He already understands the situation," said the pedler. "You need make no farther explanations."

"I wish to leave at once," said Jacob.

"To-night? No!" replied Mordko. "Too dangerous! Morning will be better."

"But I cannot sleep here, there is no room, and the hotels are surrounded by the police."

"I know a place where you can sleep quietly. I will return in a moment, and conduct you to it."

As soon as Mordko had gone, Schmul said to his visitor:--

"Your flight gives me great sorrow. When will you return? No one knows. Your absence is a misfortune for the Israelites. You are the only one who could restore our old purity of religion. No

one else, and now you are taken from us."

"If I am really useful to our cause, be sure that the God of Israel will protect me," replied Jacob.

"Then you will return, safe and sound. I have a presentiment. And waiting here we will drink the bitter cup to the dregs."

Mordko returned, and Jacob, under his guidance, went to a small hotel in the suburbs, where he was given an isolated chamber. He soon slept, and for several hours the fugitive was oblivious to the world.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

LOVE OF COUNTRY.

It was not an easy thing to travel in Poland in the time of the revolution. The country was scoured by bands of Cossacks, and battalions of regular troops inundated the cities and villages, took possession of any place they fancied with impunity, and committed all kinds of excesses. In the ravaged fields the unfortunate farmers beheld both their friends and enemies tear from them the nourishment of their wives and children.

Mordko brought Jacob safely by a circuitous route to the post station, whence a carriage took him to the village where Jankiel dwelt.

Here he learned that the two Davids were absent. The elder lived in Warsaw, under the protection of the Russian governor, and the younger took some part in the insurrection, and had acquired the name of an ardent patriot.

Jacob surprised Jankiel, all alone, bent over a large book. He saw how suffering had emaciated the old man, who, not divining who his visitor was, did not raise his head, but signed with his hand that he wished to finish his pious meditation. At the end of a few moments he closed his book, and recognizing Jacob, received him with great cordiality.

"Do you bring me bad news?" he asked.

"No, I will tell you all frankly. I have been threatened with arrest; for what, I know not. I have been advised to absent myself, and I come to you to shelter me a little while from the storm."

"The storm is still far from its end. The clouds thicken; but come what will I receive you with all my heart, and my house is at your service."

"I am at present at the hotel."

Jankiel rose, went to the door, and called by name a Jew who was passing, and who came running to him.

"Go and get this gentleman's luggage at the hotel, and bring it to the chamber opposite mine.

"I will not permit you to dwell away from me," said he. "There is in this village a regiment of soldiers, who search every traveller. You will be safe here. But much as I desire your company, and you know how welcome you are, yet believe me it will be better for you to leave this place. There will soon be trouble here. The Russians are letting the revolution grow, so as to have a greater chance for pillage. I have been through all this before, in 1809, 1812, and 1831. What the result will be now, God only knows; but I fear the worst."

After a moment of silence and visible embarrassment, he added:--

"My wife is ill, my daughter is ill, and our house is in mourning. Only the holy books help me to bear my sorrow. Those people," he pointed to the house of the Davids, "are gone. One to the city, the other, it is said, to the insurgents. I do not congratulate them on the acquisition. Unhappy is the cause which is upheld by impure men!"

Jankiel and Jacob were reading, when suddenly there was heard in the silent street the sound of horses galloping over the uneven pavement. From the window they saw in the square below a group of Cossacks and several carts. There were savage cries, and then, in a vibrating voice, came an order for silence from the commander.

Jankiel sent out for information. A detachment of Russian soldiers, the advance guard of

several regiments, escorted a chief of the rebels taken in a bloody combat, wounded and dying. The straw bed on the cart where the man lay was soaked with blood, and yet, if alive, he would be hung on the morrow! Such was the story told by the soldiers, who soon spread themselves through the dwellings of the village.

Jankiel foresaw that some of the officers would be quartered upon him, and, fearing what might follow, went to hide his daughter in her mother's room. He disposed of his money in secret places, known only to himself, keeping in his pocket a sufficient sum for urgent necessities. The precious vessels had already been carefully put in a place of safety. With perfect presence of mind he warned the servants to say that Jacob was his son-in-law, and then seated himself quietly to await events. The village was full of soldiers, who received orders to form a camp in the market square. The officers alone installed themselves in the private houses, and the night was advanced when the colonel of the regiment arrived at Jankiel's dwelling.

He was not a barbarous-looking man; his manner and bearing were those of a cultured person. Notwithstanding, the man was not necessarily a gentleman. For in the Russian army, as in Russian society, superficial culture often covers the most base corruption. Men who are charming in the drawing-room are often cruel and brutal in the exercise of authority, as if they wished to make up to themselves for the restraint placed on them by the requirements of society. The colonel bore a German name, Tendemann; his extraction was a mystery to every one, and perhaps to himself.

He was pale, excited, and angry; the reason for which was the responsibility which rested on his shoulders. He was no longer a man; he was a Russian in the full sense of the word. He entered without saluting any one, and without informing the proprietor. All he thought of was to lodge comfortably. At the door of his sick wife's room Jankiel barred the way respectfully, and said:--

"This is my wife's room, who is sick in bed."

The colonel, without noticing the old man, opened the door, examined the place indicated, looked into the next room, and then descended in silence to the lower floor. There he stopped, and said that he would stay for the night. His men soon spread themselves over the house, demanding loudly a samovar, a fire, candles, and hot water. In a spacious chamber several officers were engaged in boisterous conversation; from above it sounded like the noise of a storm accompanied by peals of thunder.

Jankiel and Jacob were seated alone, watchful and anxious. Information gathered from the servants verified the first reports. A Russian detachment, sent in the pursuit of a troop of insurgents, had surprised them in the middle of the night, surrounded and captured them. The Poles defended themselves with their usual heroism, but they lacked ammunition, and they were soon beaten. Their young chief fought valiantly until he fell grievously wounded. It was this hero whom they were taking to be hanged, a proof of his distinction, for the other officers who were captured had been simply shot on the spot. The colonel of the detachment watched this prisoner with great care, that he might not escape the scaffold, and ordered him placed in a neighbouring house under a strong guard,--an unnecessary precaution, for the unfortunate could not move and his case was a desperate one. His name the Russian soldiers mutilated after their fashion. Like most of the revolutionary chiefs, he went under one that was assumed.

The sufferings of the unknown, for whom a scaffold was being erected on the market-place, moved Jacob's sympathies strongly. If he could not serve him, he believed it his duty to at least console him. He communicated his desires to Jankiel.

"The thing seems very difficult to me," replied the old man; "but I will try and see him. After all, I do not risk much at my age."

Then Jankiel put on his long black coat, took his *czapka*, descended the staircase, and begged the guard at the door to announce him to the colonel.

The latter was lying on the sofa, his legs stretched out, with a cigar in his mouth, when Jankiel entered and stood respectfully at the door.

"What do you want?" asked the colonel brusquely.

"I wish to know if your lordship lacks anything."

"If I wanted anything in the house, I would take it without your permission. These are times of war."

"Certainly."

"What do they think here of the rebels?"

"Nothing, that I know of."

"Have they passed by here?"

"No."

"You all reply the same way, for you are at heart their friends. Jewish dogs!"

"We have always been loyal to our sovereign."

"And why, then, do you not chase the insurgents, and give them up to the authorities?"

"That would not be natural for Jews. We are peaceful men and have a horror of war."

The colonel rose and walked up and down the room. Jankiel bowed low, and said to him in a low voice:--

"Your lordship knows, perhaps, that, following a custom of our religion, when a man is sentenced to death, it is the duty of the Jews where the execution takes place to offer a repast to the condemned."

"What is that you are saying? The custom of which you speak no longer exists. You have invented it. Why do you wish to see the prisoner, and how dare you lie to me?"

The custom did not really exist; Jankiel had imagined it in pious thought, but how could Colonel Tendemann know about it? That is what the Jew asked himself, fixing a scrutinizing glance on the officer.

"Why do you look at me thus? What do you mean?" cried the colonel.

"It is admiration, for your lordship must be deeply learned to know what the Talmud does and does not contain. You have then, no doubt, read that which the rabbin Ichochuah said of prisoners."

The colonel, pale and trembling, listened to the old man. There seemed to be a struggle going on within him; his lips trembled, and a mist came over his eyes; the voice of Jankiel made a strange impression on him. He tried to force himself to be cruel, but in vain,--an invincible sentiment held him. The old man remarked this emotion, but did not know how to interpret it.

After a short silence the colonel wiped his forehead, and said in an angry tone:--

"Why do you remain here? What are you waiting for? Go away! Go away! Do not think of the condemned. His hours are numbered."

"May your lordship"--

"Go away before I do something to you!" cried he. At the same time he approached the Jew, and whispered in his ear in German:--

"Go away. I will come to you soon."

In the German pronunciation of the colonel, as well as in his features, there was a barely perceptible trace of Jewish origin. But why suppose this Russian officer to be a child of Israel? Jankiel refused to admit the thought. Nevertheless, he could not forget it, and was thinking of it when he entered the room. He said nothing to Jacob, who went to his chamber, a prey to the deepest anxiety.

About a half-hour later a step was heard on the stairs. The Muscovite entered, his face as white as snow. He glanced eagerly around the room, the Jewish character of which seemed to fascinate him; books, inscriptions, portraits of rabbins, all attracted his attention. He held out his hand to Jankiel, and said to him:--

"*Salem alekem*."

"*Alekem salem*," replied the old man, amazed.

No more explanation was needed. Without doubt the colonel was a Jew. His father, or he himself, in order to enter the service of the government, had adopted the orthodox Greek faith. Nevertheless, the fire of the belief of his ancestors and of his repudiated race burned beneath the ashes.

The colonel seated himself. Jankiel observed him thoughtfully.

The Russian's figure trembled with the remorse of apostasy. He was one of those numerous Jews who have adopted the belief, the customs, and the prejudices of the country in which they live, but have, in spite of themselves, often after several generations, irresistible longings for the faith of their fathers.

By a sign he indicated to Jankiel the sacred word inscribed on the door, and, approaching with veneration an open volume of the Talmud, turned the leaves respectfully. For many years he had not come in contact with the Hebrew characters and the language of the commandments, but he remembered the days of his childhood, when his father taught him secretly to read that language

which had come upon earth from the mouth of God. At first he could hardly read the letters, but little by little light dawned upon him, and with intense delight he read on, oblivious to all around him; the day's combat, the tragedy of the morrow, his military rank, Russia, his Czar, and the entire world were all forgotten.

His eyes, unused to weep, were full of tears, of regret or of consolation it would have been difficult to say which; probably the two sentiments were united.

By chance his eyes fell upon this prayer for the dead:--

"God of mercy, deign to remember the men who have been more swift than the eagles and stronger than the lions in the accomplishment of thy holy will, and do not forget to show thy vengeance on those who have shed the blood of thy servants."

Jankiel contemplated with emotion that which seemed to him a miracle. The colonel, after reading for some time, seemed overcome, and leaned back in his chair. His host said to him gently:--

"God will be merciful to those who repent."

"I do not know," answered the servant of the Czar, "which I ought to regret more,--what I have been, or what I am; but is it my own fault that I am a renegade? My father chose for himself and for me. I belong to-day to an alien race. I weep when I remember Israel, until a wild madness possesses my spirit; then I tremble lest they may recognize under his new skin the cursed Jew. I tremble for fear I may betray myself by pitying a brother Jew. My children do not know that the blood of Jewish rabbis flows in their veins. Ah, may they never know that they are the children of a traitor, of an apostate!"

"Brother," said Jankiel, hastening to take advantage of his softened mood, "what are you going to do with the prisoner?"

"Do not speak of him. He is condemned by superior orders. To-morrow will be his last day on earth. I am sorry, but I can do nothing."

"It is a pity. Perhaps he has a mother, a sister, or a wife. I wish I could be permitted to see him."

"What is he to you? What have we Jews in common with the Poles? Have you forgotten their conduct toward our people?"

"I do not forget that we are born on the same soil," said the old man. "And our immortal lawgiver orders us to raise the burden from the weary beast. Should we have less compassion for a man, even if he were a pagan?"

"I am under the surveillance of a thousand evil eyes. You can, however, buy my soldiers with brandy or money. For money these wretches would sell their own father and mother. And then you may do what you can for the unfortunate man."

"You will permit it? I will send my kinsman in my place. He will be safe, will he not?"

"I permit nothing. I will shut my eyes, and I wish to know nothing of it."

Jankiel left the colonel for a moment to tell Jacob, and found him dressed ready for any emergency. He had already arranged a plan with an old Jew named Herszko, nicknamed the Madré. He put on his old clothes, with two bottles of rum in his pockets, and they went out on the street. The hour was late, the soldiers snored, and the sentinel walked slowly on his beat. Before the house where the prisoner was shut up an under officer watched, seated on a bench. He cursed and swore between his teeth. Fortunately, he was a confirmed drunkard, by name Fédor Michailovitch Chelmenko. As soon as he saw the two Jews in the distance he immediately thought that this might bring him a rouble, or at least a glass of brandy.

"Good-evening, officer," said the Madré; he saw that this was only an underling, but gave him the full title, hoping thereby to tickle his vanity.

"Pass thy way, Jew!" cried Chelmenko.

"You must be weary, seated on this bench."

"Certainly it is not very pleasant."

"Then why do you remain here?"

"What is that to you?"

"Excuse me, mere curiosity."

Herszko mischievously showed the neck of the bottle as if it were about to leap out of his pocket; Chelmenko saw it; the very sight of it made his mouth water.

"Let me taste it, miscreant," cried he.

"You guess what it is? No? Well, it is the genuine Jamaica rum, worth a rouble and a half a bottle."

"Let me see, quick!"

Madré handed him the bottle; the officer put it to his lips and swallowed some of the rum with great enjoyment, then said:--

"Now tell me what this means?"

"Officer," answered the old man, "my companion is a Jew, as well as myself. We have heard, but perhaps we are misinformed, that your prisoner is called Baïkowski; if so, he owes a large sum of money to my companion, who wishes to see him, and get his money, if possible."

"Rebels, rascals, knaves, get out of here! Don't you know that no one can see the prisoner? It is strictly forbidden."

Without hesitation Madré deposited on the bench the other bottle, and beside it three roubles.

"No one. I cannot let any one enter," murmured the Muscovite; then after a moment of reflection he added:--

"Follow me."

"Not I, but my companion," said the old man.

"Which you like. It is nothing to me."

Chelmenko, already tipsy, conducted Jacob to a door which he opened with a key. He pushed him into the room and shut the door after him.

The dark apartment was lighted by a single tallow candle, which hung in a lantern suspended from the ceiling. By this uncertain light Jacob saw stretched on a straw pallet in the corner a human form with one arm extended. From the breast of the man came deep and broken respiration like that of the dying.

The condemned made an effort to carry his hand to his wounded leg, but he fell back heavily with a sharp cry. His head was a little raised, and by the ray of light which fell on his face, Jacob, with a great cry of sorrow, recognized Ivas.

With disordered hair, foaming mouth, and wild eyes, the young man raved:--

"I am ready. March! A ball in my leg! No matter! Down with the Muscovites! Let us attack them!"

Then silence.

"Ivas! Ivas!" cried Jacob. "Don't you know me?" The sick man turned, his eyes toward him.

"You? Who are you?" said he. "Pole or Russian? A spy, perhaps. Yet that voice! Aqua Sola! Lucie Coloni! Paris--the boulevards! Who are you?"

"Jacob, your friend Jacob."

"Ah! Jacob the patriarch. Are you also a rebel? Oh, my leg, my leg! It is terrible!"

"Ivas, try to collect your thoughts," said Jacob. "Perhaps I can be useful to you."

"Certainly! More arms, more ammunition. Give them to me!"

"My brother, you are wounded; a prisoner condemned."

"Ah, yes! I remember. We were concealed in the forest. Beaten! Wounded! How dark it is here! Is it a hospital or a tomb? Can they not at least bury me decently?"

"Have you any wish to have carried out, anything to confide in me?" asked Jacob.

"The Cossack told me that I would be hanged to-morrow. No matter! I will return to the world in the form of a mad dog to murder them. Towianski teaches the transmigration of souls. He is right. If there is a God, where is he? Is he afraid of the Russians?"

"Ivas," repeated Jacob, "rouse yourself, and tell me if you have any last instructions to give me."

"Liberty or death! Have they all perished? The scaffold awaits me. A cord of hemp. After that, nothing! It will hurt my throat, like strong tobacco. Were you ever hanged, my Jacob? No? Who knows; perhaps you were, under another form, according to Towianski. It will, I think, be the first

time for me. I haven't the least idea of the thing, but I will be calm; I am no coward."

"Ivas, have you any relations, any friends? tell me."

"None! My mother died a long time ago. There is no cross over her grave. She was too poor; I was a little boy. With pebbles I designed a cross. My father? I have never seen him. Other relations? They turned the cold shoulder to me because I was poor. My will? Behold it. To arms!"

"Nothing more?"

"Nothing," replied Ivas, who had somewhat regained his mind. "Nothing. I have no one in the world. Ah, yes! there is some one. You remember that old house that I showed you one day in Warsaw? On the fourth floor lives Marion, sad and thoughtful. She is a laundress, but in her former life she was, I am sure, a queen. But she has forgotten it. I think she loves me. Tell her that I thought of her when dying. She made me two shirts for the journey. Her hands are large and red, but she has the heart of an angel. Or, rather, tell her nothing. That will be better. She will forget me, and console herself with a Russian officer. The poor girl!"

"Ivas," said Jacob, "my time here is short, we shall never meet again. Be calm, and think if there is anything you wish me to do."

"I ask you to avenge me. How hot I am! Ah! Ah! An immense cemetery. They dance. The earth is freshly broken up at the sound of a violin. Some bears are dancing. The good God is looking at them from heaven through a little skylight. He strokes his mustache, and marks the measure."

"Ivas," cried Jacob, "be calm, I beg of you."

"Yes, I remember there were millions. We were a handful, and they attacked us, but we fought them. We did our duty! All dead! *Requiescant!* Is this death? Provided my soul does not enter into the body of a Muscovite, I do not care."

Jacob tried, without success, to make Ivas realize his situation. As soon as the dying man became more conscious, the pain of his wound was so extreme that, to prevent himself from crying aloud, he buried his head in the straw; then the delirium returned. It was a heartrending spectacle.

"Do you wish a priest?" asked the Jew.

"A priest? There was one in our band. Brave frater! A ball in his head, he is dead. A priest for me? What good? I have not confessed since my mother was no longer here to make me kneel and pray. A priest! I want none. It would do no good, for God has gone on a visit to St. Petersburg, and no one knows when he will return. They do not confess the dead, and I am already dead, although I can still speak."

Then he continued his raving.

"Do you think they could have taken me alive? Never! Tell Marion that I had one of the shirts on, and the handkerchief around my neck, and also the medal of Notre Dame de Czestokowa, but the mother of God did not aid me! They have killed me!"

Jacob tried to revive him with some cologne that he had in a little flask. He bathed his forehead and temples, and poured several drops in his mouth; but it was useless.

"You perfume me," said the poor boy. "I smell it. I cannot go to the ball, I cannot dance."

He grew worse and his ravings continued. Snatches of songs, military commands, fragments of prayers and oaths, were all mingled together in an unintelligible manner.

Jacob was kneeling, holding the burning head of his friend, when suddenly some one struck his shoulder. It was the officer.

"Enough of this! Get up and come away!" said he.

"Dear Ivas," cried Jacob, without paying attention to the man; "one word more, dear Ivas, your last word!"

The condemned raised himself, threw his arms around his friend's neck, and with an expression full of love and enthusiasm, cried:--

"My country!"

Then he fell back weeping and laughing at the same time. The delirium had returned. The officer took Jacob by the shoulder and forced him out of the room.

Madré awaited him, and before he let them depart the officer extorted a present.

Before retiring, Jacob knocked at Jankiel's door.

"Have you seen the poor man?" asked his host.

"Yes."

Then he detailed the interview with Ivas which terminated with the thrilling words, "My country!"

During this sad recital, in the silence of the night they could hear, on the square below, the blows of a hammer. It was the gibbet of the young patriot which they were finishing in the centre of the marketplace. They passed the rest of the night in prayer.

Ivas died before daybreak, and as they were unable to execute him living, they hanged his dead body. The Russians having thus proclaimed their victory quitted the village, leaving their souvenir of terrorism.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE GORDIAN KNOT.

The same morning that Jacob left his house for fear of arrest, Henri Segel returned to breakfast. It was only at meal-times that he saw his wife, and then for but a few moments. He usually went away so early in the morning that Mathilde rarely saw him until evening.

This day the poor woman, consoled by her explanation with Jacob, had more colour than usual, and appeared to have recovered her health.

"I am really distressed," said Henri, seating himself at table, "and you will share my anxiety when you hear that Mann's prophecy has been realized. They have tried to arrest Jacob."

Mathilde grew very pale, and cried:--

"Arrested? Did you say arrested?"

"Why this emotion?" replied her husband smiling.

"Answer me! I beg of you!"

"He was warned in time, and has eluded the police, but they have searched his house."

"I breathe," said Mathilde. "Is that all you know?"

"Provided with a passport he will probably leave for Austria or Prussia. He is a strange man, I never could understand his character."

His wife smiled. Henri was annoyed at this mocking smile and said:--

"It seems to amuse you that he should, be an enigma to me."

"Not at all. It is very natural. Your characters are so dissimilar, that you could not possibly understand each other."

Henri replied, with some bitterness:--

"You are very flattering. If this man, so opposite to me, has all your sympathy, what sentiment then have you for your humble servant?"

"My sentiment for you," replied Mathilde simply, "you already know. It has satisfied you, and you have never tried to awaken any other."

Henri looked at his watch, took his hat, and started to go; then he returned, and said in an offended tone:--

"My dear, if you are tired of our conjugal tie you have only to say so. It is very distressing to me to be the cause of your regret and of your secret sorrows."

Mathilde looked at him with an air of dignity.

"You wish to say," asked she, "that you do not find the situation to your taste?"

"How can it be agreeable for me to contemplate without ceasing the statue of melancholy? Is this happiness? I think not. You must at least admit that I bear my fate heroically."

"You reproach me?"

"Your sadness, your gloomy looks, say plainly that you are not happy."

"You believe, then, that the honour of being your wife ought to make me happy? What can we do? We cannot change anything, can we? We must bear it, for we have taken before God a sacred vow, and must drink from the same cup, be it bitter or sweet."

Henri grew excited, while his wife's face remained as calm as marble. He shrugged his shoulders, and hastily left the room. The carriage awaited him, and he was driven alone to Muse. She was all alone, but ready to receive company. She was elegantly dressed, perfumed, and in charming humour, and she greeted Segel warmly.

"Have you heard the news?" asked he.

"What news?"

"Jacob has fled."

"How could I, living in the same house, be ignorant of it; and I trembled for him, from what I know of Colonel Sofronof and Count Bavorof."

"He is now almost an outlaw," replied Henri. "More than once I have attempted, but unsuccessfully, to make him listen to reason. What eccentricity! He has often argued with the Russians and told all his thoughts, and the Russians did not like his sincerity; they required that men's convictions should bow to them, or else be concealed. I pity Jacob; but he is incorrigible and destitute of all prudence or policy."

Several visitors arrived. There was as usual a mixed crowd, and on one side Mann harangued a little group of friends.

"I avow to you, gentlemen," said he, "that I am delighted to be delivered from Jacob. He was a most compromising person, who belonged to neither party. He stood entirely alone, and such individuals are naturally victims of their narrow individuality; but after all I hope that nothing very bad will happen to him."

"Provided that he is not drawn into the revolution," remarked some one.

"I do not fear that," replied Mann. "Jacob is not a man of action. He knows how to think and talk only."

Just then Mathilde's father came in; he was much disturbed.

"What has become of Jacob," asked he.

"He has gone."

"Where? That is what I wish to know. He was the cause of a pretty scene at my house. His old Jewess mother came there in her ridiculous costume early this morning. She caused a general laugh in the house. That is not all. Unfortunately there arrived just then an aide of the Grand Duke Constantine. She was seated in the *salon*. Groans, tears, lamentations; judge of my situation! I had great trouble to rid myself of her. What a foolish visit! The good woman does not know where her son has gone but she is sure he has not crossed the frontier."

"We shall, no doubt, soon hear of his exploits," said Henri. "The laurels of Berko will prevent his sleeping. He dreamed of the picture of Kossack, and of giving the artist a new subject. That which is most deplorable in this adventure is that it prejudices the government against us all. It will be necessary for us to be very circumspect, and to furnish fresh proofs of our devotion and of our loyalty."

During these remarks from Mann the fascinating Muse questioned Colonel Sofronof about Jacob. He feigned surprise, and vowed that he had not heard of Jacob's flight, with an assurance that proved that he knew more about it than any one else. He questioned right and left, expressed some chagrin, and promised to make some inquiries, and from his face even Mann guessed that the source of the denunciation was well known to him.

"In these days," murmured Sofronof, "it is wise to be doubly prudent as to what we say. Jacob did not weigh his words. I think, however, that he is not threatened with anything terrible. Perhaps temporary exile to the borders of Russia. He will not be executed."

After the visitors had gone, Muse was going to the piano when her mother came to her.

"Let us have a chat," said she.

"Well, say on, dear mamma."

"In all probability Jacob will never return."

"No matter, he is crossed off my list."

"Against whom, then, are your batteries directed?"

"Against Henri first. Failing him, Sofronof."

"I wish to talk of this Muscovite. Under his polished exterior I can discern the Tartar; his fortune is problematic, and his character is amiable enough in society to be disagreeable in private life. I do not like him. He is a cold-blooded animal. Why do you not repulse him?"

"Alas! It may be necessary to take him as a last resort."

"Henri gives us very little hope. He will not divorce Mathilde, and she obstinately lives on. She is not consumptive; her physician has told me so. Her malady is only *ennui* and weakness. She may live for years."

"Never fear. Henri becomes more amorous each day. He has no secrets from me, and he has decided to divorce her; but, can you believe it, mamma, she does not wish it. As she loves, I thought the idea would please her; but no. She has I know not what strange notions of the sanctity of marriage, the marital tie, and marriage vows, such ridiculous ideas! The English governess, who often hears the conversation of the lovers, has related to me these sentimental scenes. It is a Platonic love taken from some old romance, and not from the romances of to-day,--a mystical and unintelligible love. What fools they are to refuse their own happiness! Mathilde has even told me of her theories. I adroitly led the conversation to the subject. Poor woman! I could scarcely keep from laughing in her face. Henri seeks his own desires and mine. He dreads only the explanation with his father-in-law."

"If you have gone so far with Henri, I must hesitate no longer," said the mother. "We cannot wait in this suspense until the judgment day."

"These Russians, Bavorof and Sofronof, have played me a villanous trick in forcing Jacob's flight. He would have been of great use to us. Henri counted on his presence when he put the question of divorce before his father-in-law, for Samuel would be disposed to consent on condition that Mathilde would marry Jacob immediately after the rupture. No Jacob, no divorce. We counted on him, and now he is gone."

"What a misadventure," cried Madame Wtorkowska, wringing her hands.

"Bah! We can arrange it. I will have Henri. The others? I am disgusted with them."

Her mother said in a low voice:--

"To marry Henri will be the same as to marry a widower, for a divorce is almost the same thing."

"What has that to do with it? I wonder how many times most men have been widowers before marriage."

"That is true. Then that is no objection; but you must hasten things, my child. Be quick about it."

"Ah! I understand that there is no money in the house. I will borrow some of Henri."

Madame Wtorkowska thanked Heaven that had given her so practical a daughter.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE INSURGENTS.

"H----, July, 1863.

"The Russians had scarcely vacated the village when the insurgents arrived. They marched through the streets, bearing a banner on which the national colours were surmounted by a white eagle painted on wood. They were a small band of men, armed for the most part with scythes and pike-staffs, while some had only heavy sticks with pointed iron ends. There were no uniforms. Each one was equipped and clad as circumstances had permitted at the time of his enrolment. Their forms were strong, and their faces expressed energy already clouded by dark despair. All knew that they were marching to certain death, and knew not what torture or misery awaited them.

"The body of Ivas had been cut down after the execution, but the gibbet still presented its gloomy front to the market-place. The chief of the insurgents saluted it, and inclined his head, and all his troop followed his example. It was a mute and solemn homage rendered to a martyr.

"I could not help feeling for these men a sentiment in which was mingled compassion, sympathy, and respect.

"The young commander recognized me, for he had seen me with Ivas at Warsaw. He was much affected to hear from me that the condemned man had been our mutual friend. 'One of our bravest,' murmured he; 'but our country demands such sacrifices. Oh, if only we were better armed!'

"Our conversation was not of long duration. The detachment had entered the village only to recruit, and succeeded in gaining a dozen volunteers. They also found some guns and swords, dating from 1831, covered with rust.

"This heroism in poverty transported me back several centuries to the times when the Israelites rose against Roman oppression. Here was the same self-sacrificing spirit, the same love of liberty. My eyes filled with tears, and thoughts came into my head that I had not before entertained.

"Let us go with them, thought I. Let us die in the ranks of these heroes. It is glorious to shed one's blood for his brothers.

"Yesterday I would have hesitated. To-day I felt around me such an empty void that the future appeared aimless, and the thought of action inspired me. I, who had refused money for the revolution, I would offer my life. This seems strange, does it not? But do not condemn me without reflection. It is necessary to seal the act of alliance, contracted between the Israelites and Poles. My example will prove that this alliance is accomplished.

"This letter, friend of my youth, is like my last testament.

"I recommend to you my mother. Let my brother Israelites know why I have taken this step. I owe to the mission that we have received from God to return again to the past of an elect people. This mission is, to be more noble, more devout, and more loving than other men.

"Farewell! You already know all I wish to say, for you have always been the confidante of my inmost thoughts. It is you who have inspired me with the resolution I have taken. If you had left me the shadow of a hope, I would, perhaps, have valued my life more; but you said one evening that a woman ought to be the wife of one man only, and as at the same time my brother Israelites have refused to listen to my voice, I am convinced that I am useless here below.

"Do not regret me. God will give me grace to meet death joyfully.

"To-morrow we leave here. I am well equipped. I have bought a horse and arms; I shall serve as a private soldier, for there are already too many leaders.

"God is great; the soul is immortal, and pure spirits may, perhaps, meet again in another world."

The reader has already divined that this was a letter addressed by Jacob to Mathilde. We have suppressed the commencement, which related to events spoken of in the preceding pages.

Henri Segel received it in his mail, and hastened to take it to his wife.

"What can it be?" asked he.

"A letter from Jacob," she replied, without hesitation, recognizing his writing.

She read it hastily.

"What has become of him," asked Henri again.

"He has joined the insurrection."

"Ah, it wanted only that! He has done us a great injury. The government will imagine that we are all more or less implicated in his folly. But is the thing certain?"

"There is no doubt whatever," and Mathilde read with a trembling voice a passage from the letter. The husband seeing her so agitated left her, and himself became thoughtful and gloomy.

The news spread from mouth to mouth over the city. Some refused to believe it, while others rejoiced at it. Jacob had no warm friends, and few were sorry for him.

The same evening Sofronof went in triumph to Muse.

"Well! He has joined the insurgents, this man that you accused me of suspecting without motive!"

"You jest. Was he not the enemy of the revolution?"

"Yet he has enlisted under their banner. The Poles are all the same. The sight of their eaglet always has an irresistible attraction for them."

"It is nothing to me," replied Muse; "but I will not believe it without more ample information."

Just then Henri Segel arrived and confirmed the news. He had a dejected air, and was careful not to speak of the letter the colonel had had in his hand that morning. He well knew that all suspicious letters were read before the distribution of the post.

Mathilde's father also was much chagrined on hearing the news. Without deep feeling, he had, nevertheless, a certain affection for his cousin. Perhaps, also, he counted on him for restoring to health his daughter, whom he saw daily fade before his eyes. Without saying anything, he hastened to Mathilde at the hour when he was sure to find her alone. The servant said to him that she was ill, and had given orders to admit no one; but the father, using his authority, went straight to her bedroom. He found her with disordered hair, eyes red with weeping, and cheeks burning with fever. Mathilde was no longer the marble statue, cold, resigned, impassable, inert.

At the sight of an unexpected visitor she blushed with the timidity of a child. But her education had inculcated a respect, almost a veneration, for her father, who had repelled all familiarity, all confidence; she tried, with a forced smile, to conceal the violence of her grief.

"I pity Jacob," said the father abruptly. "He courts his ruin; I wish to save him."

"But how can you?" asked the daughter.

Samuel did not reply immediately. He took several steps about the room. It cost him something to be, for the first time in his life, frank with his child. Suddenly he stopped before her, and, looking at her fixedly, said:--

"Your secret is known to me. Common sense has until now commanded me to close my eyes. But the time has come to treat the wound by severe cauterization. Now or never. You love Jacob, and he loves you. This love has not died out. I believed that your childish affection would disappear, but, contrary to my expectations, it has remained permanent, and surpasses all my ideas of love. You are unhappy with Henri; he was not made for you; his spirit is earthly, and yours is exalted in a high degree."

"Nevertheless," said Mathilde, "I have nothing to say against Henri."

"You mean that he observes the proprieties; and yet he has let himself be fascinated by Muse, who deceives and despoils him. Do you wish to save Jacob? You can do it; you alone. I will arrange a divorce with Henri. He is anxious for it. Give your consent, and the thing is done; then I will marry you to Jacob, who will make you happy. You can live in Italy, and in a few years, when the country is again peaceful, you can return to Poland. I will obtain Jacob's amnesty; I have influence enough for that."

Mathilde kissed her father's hand, and said:--

"Dear father, I have never seen you as you are today, so sympathetic toward your child, so thoughtful for Jacob. Do not be angry, do not tell me that I am foolish, but it is impossible."

"Why? Why?"

Mathilde replied with timidity:--

"I love him too well to throw myself in his arms. I, a poor faded creature, broken and soiled by another. Do you understand me?"

"No! Truly! This is refinement which is beyond my comprehension, a morbid sentimentality. You say you love him? The devil! What more do you want?"

Mathilde, sighing, replied:--

"I have dreamed of a different kind of happiness."

"Give up these reveries, and content yourself with the reality. Do you accept my proposition? Yes or no?"

"Read his letter," said she, drawing near to the lamp. "Here it is; I will reply afterward."

Samuel took the letter, and commenced to read it attentively. Mathilde retired to the next room, which was not lighted. She sank into meditation. She was torn by two conflicting feelings: her unworthiness of becoming Jacob's wife, and the desire to belong to the man she loved. In her perplexity she seemed to hear an inner voice which said, "Let your father decide." At the same time she accused herself of weakness, and her heart beat violently.

"The letter," said her father, "confirms me in my opinion. You alone can save him. A strange

dreamer is your Jacob; but, after all, he possesses that which most of us lack,--firm principles and profound convictions. One esteems him in spite of one's self."

Not caring to appear in the full light, the young woman murmured in an agitated voice:--

"I am proud of you, my father. Dispose of your child as you please." Then she threw herself at his knees, and Samuel felt awaken in his heart feelings which he had not believed himself capable of indulging.

Lifting her up tenderly, he said, smiling:--

"I will attend to the affair. Sit down and write to Jacob that you are free. He has only to equip fifty or a hundred soldiers to replace him, and excuse his retirement."

He spoke with a rapidity and warmth that surprised himself, and he experienced a sensation of happiness altogether novel to him.

When his daughter had finished the letter, he kissed her tenderly, and whispered in her ear:--

"Not a word of this to Henri. I will manage everything, and spare you needless annoyance."

Soon after Samuel appeared at the *salon* of the Wtorkowskas. The siren was at the piano, surrounded by her Muscovite gallants, who, listening, forgot their administrative cares. Under cover of a general movement, he quietly drew near Madame Wtorkowska.

"I have something to say to you, madame," whispered he. "It is about an important matter that concerns you."

"Very good!" replied she, rising and taking his arm. "Come to my room."

When they were alone, Samuel asked:--

"No one can hear us, I hope? I wish to speak to you with entire frankness."

"Do as you would in your own house," replied she.

"To play a part is disagreeable to me, and so to open the matter I will tell you, without reserve, that I know that you are ruined, dear madame."

"Softly, softly!"

"Softly, softly! I am aware that your only fortune is your debts. Your only hope is your daughter. To find a rich husband is not so easy. I am sure that these are your opinions."

"We have several persons in view, monsieur."

"Who are they?"

"Count Bavorof."

"Bah! A Russian who has no fortune but his position. Beside, he is married. His wife lives in Paris, and has no wish to be free, and in Russia divorce can be obtained only by special influence. I do not think you would be willing to give Muse to the count."

"What nonsense you are talking."

"Who next?"

"Colonel Sofronof is madly in love."

"In the Russian fashion. Sofronof lives by his appointments and thefts. He possesses some land, mortgaged to its full value. Let him pass. Next?"

"The counsellor of state, Pikulinski."

"What! that old fool?"

"For a husband it does not matter."

"That is true. In marriage, foolishness is at times a good quality; but his little property is pledged to the Crédit Foncier. Your counsellor is a nobody. His emoluments are too slender. Another?"

Madame Wtorkowska sighed deeply. She was at the end of her list, for it was hardly worth while to mention, after the counsellor, two petty officials who possessed only their titles and their brilliant uniforms. Naturally she dared not suggest Henri Segel to his father-in-law.

"Why, madame," replied Samuel, "are you lacking in sincerity, when I come to chat with you in the most confidential manner?"

"And whence comes, monsieur, this suddenly friendly guardianship for my daughter and myself?"

"Your question is logical. It may be possible that I am myself interested in the affair, and that may be the cause of my solicitude to serve you. Confess, then, with an open heart. Do not hesitate to mention the name of my son-in-law, whom you have so entangled."

"What do you mean? I cannot shut my door on Monsieur Segel."

"I know your plans, dear lady," replied Samuel laughing. "Let us show our cards and be friends. You have speculated--own it--on Mathilde's phthisis. You have even wished that her physician would confirm your hopes. Bitter deception! And during this time you have endeavoured to ensnare Henri, and you have made an easy conquest. Now, listen to me, madame. My daughter cannot be happy with him. I cede him to you. Take him. Try and persuade him to demand a divorce; the initiative will never come from Mathilde. You will have me for an accomplice. I give him up freely. Do what you wish, provided you rid me of him. Do you now understand the cause of my solicitude for you?"

Madame Wtorkowska was stupefied. She stood still a moment. Then her joy overcame her. She threw her arms around Samuel's neck, and kissed him several times; but, as he did not enjoy the caresses of elderly matrons, he freed himself from her embraces, and said:--

"Twenty or twenty-five years ago this exuberance of affection on your part would have charmed me. To-day it is too late. I am too old. What do you think of my proposition?"

"Dear benefactor," replied she, wiping the perspiration from her face with her handkerchief, "I cannot reply without consulting Emusia. In a few moments my rooms will be empty; she will see you herself. Wait here."

"With pleasure, madame; but I will light a cigar if you will permit it."

"Ten if you wish," replied the mother, closing the door on Samuel.

There were still some visitors in the *salon*. She made a secret sign to her daughter, and a few moments afterward Muse complained of a headache. Her admirers regretfully took their hats and left the house. The particulars of the interview were soon learned, and her delight was equal to that of her mother.

Nevertheless, before going to meet Samuel, she assumed a calm and dignified mien.

"Your mother has no doubt spoken of my proposition. Let us discuss, then, without restraint," said Mathilde's father.

"But, monsieur, the subject is so delicate, so embarrassing, so painful."

"Painful, mademoiselle, in what way? Not for you; nor for me, I think. Delicate. Yes! Let us treat it with delicacy."

"I like Mathilde so much," said Muse.

"Then you will give her a real proof of your friendship by delivering her of a husband who does not suit her, who will suit you, and who loves you."

Muse tried to appear very much embarrassed.

"Dear mademoiselle," said Samuel, "we can dispense with acting; you can gain nothing by it. I ask of you entire frankness. If you wish to succeed, you must act. Make Henri believe that Sofronof is a dangerous rival. I will tell everywhere that the colonel wishes to marry you at any price. Henri will be in despair; then push him to the end of the wall; exact a divorce, and advise him to take Mann for an intermediary between him and me."

"That is admirably planned," cried Madame Wtorkowska.

"Yes, the plan is excellent," added Muse, putting aside all embarrassment. "I am sure I shall play my part to the satisfaction of its author."

"Well, I will be obliged to you if you do not make the play long. I am anxious for the end."

"I will do my best."

"I do not doubt that you will accomplish wonders," said Samuel, gallantly kissing her hand. "And now, mademoiselle, do not fail to tell me if I can be in any way useful to you at any time."

He then took his leave. Madame Wtorkowska conducted him to the antechamber, and then returned to throw herself in her daughter's arms. She laughed and wept by turns for very joy. Muse was more quiet, but no less delighted, and she passed part of the night making plans for the morrow.

The news soon spread through their circle of acquaintances that Mademoiselle Wtorkowska was soon to marry Colonel Sofronof. At first Henri shrugged his shoulders; but he heard it from so many different sources, with details added by this one and that one, that he grew uneasy, and, wishing to hear the rumour denied, hastened to Muse.

She received him coldly, and was so reticent on the subject that it seemed as if she were on her guard, and afraid of committing some indiscretion.

Segel thought that there must be some truth in the rumour. He became furiously angry, and the ingenious coquette soon brought about a quarrel. He took his hat, and she did not detain him; but at the door he paused, then returned, threw his hat on the floor, and seated himself again, filled with wrath.

A violent scene ensued. Her mother appeared as the *deus ex machina*. She reproached Henri with compromising her daughter, and called him selfish and heartless. The comedy waxed pathetic. Finally, Henri had to choose between a dismissal or a divorce. Vanquished and subdued, he promised to take at once the steps required by them.

Muse then feigned to shed tears, and he tried to console her. Her mother disappeared, leaving the lovers alone. Segel obtained some kisses, and advice to take Monsieur Mann as an intermediary, and he promised to see Mann at once. Mann, well instructed, at first resisted, moralized, and deplored the situation, but ended by consenting.

And yet, when Henri returned home, he experienced a strange feeling of repentance for his haste. Mathilde presented herself to his mind as calm, sweet, and pure; Muse, on the contrary, under a menacing aspect. The one he did not love, but esteemed; the other he loved, but did not esteem. He loved her, if a passion which was entirely sensual merits that name.

He saw himself in the future bound to a new companion, full of coquetry and schemes, and endowed with an unendurable mother-in-law. He saw the luxury with which he would have to surround them, and the slavery to which he would be doomed. He shivered with dread at the very idea. Unhappily for him, it was now too late to draw back.

Mathilde looked for an outburst the next morning at breakfast; but none came. Henri was unusually reserved, almost timid; he looked at his watch often, and under pretext of important business soon left the house.

Mann came to dinner, and informed Segel of the happy result of his negotiations. At table the couple, already morally divorced, seemed ill at ease. Mathilde taciturn, Henri almost mute, let Mann and two other guests do the talking. At dessert came Samuel, who amused the company for some time with his witty sayings. On leaving the table he took his daughter by the hand to lead her to the garden. He insisted on her putting on her hat, saying the sun was yet warm; then he conducted her to the street, where a carriage awaited them.

"My dear child," said the father, "we will take a short ride. It will do you good, for the air is fresh and agreeable this evening." A half-hour after, the carriage stopped at the door of her father's house.

"Here," said he, embracing Mathilde, "is your home. You will not return to Segel's. I have had your old room prepared for you."

The gordian knot was thus severed with the greatest simplicity. The young woman saw no more of her former husband. Aided by the English governess, she occupied herself with household cares. With what secret satisfaction she renewed her former life! Her springtime revived. But she was at times a prey to deep anxiety, for Jacob had not written since his letter of farewell, and all traces of him were lost.

The revolution, contrary to all expectations, took on larger proportions daily.

Owing to the assumed names which the chiefs and soldiers of the insurrection bore, all steps to ascertain Jacob's whereabouts proved fruitless.

Mathilde was almost in despair, yet she seemed to hear a voice say to her:--

"God will give him back to you."

From that time she believed in God.

Each day she questioned her father, who, without giving her great hopes, encouraged her not to despair. Weeks and months passed. At last, early one morning, he entered her chamber, and, in spite of his endeavours to conceal his feelings, appeared much agitated.

"Prepare to leave to-day," said he. "Jacob is at Cracow, wounded, but not dangerously."

Mathilde gave a great cry, and fainted, but soon came to herself, and on the morrow was with her father at the bedside of her beloved.

EPILOGUE.

In the year eighteen hundred and sixty-five a numerous company were reunited at the Albergo della Grotta, where we will finish, as we have begun, our veracious history.

To-day the company assumed a more cheerful aspect than at the first meeting. It was composed only of persons whose appearance denoted wealth or competence. Here were no unfortunates who fainted from want, like poor Ivas, and on whose faces could be seen traces of misery and care.

In the privileged corner of the grotto, near the murmuring fountain, a sumptuous table was set for the most distinguished travellers. Instinctively Firpo, the host, gave their titles in advance to Monsieur le Comte and Madame la Comtesse. The choicest wines, the freshest fruits, and a tablecloth whose snowy whiteness was only excelled by the brilliancy of the polished silver knives, forks, and spoons, were for them. The other tables were already occupied by the guests, here singly, there in groups. All belonged to the class usually called aristocratic, who lead an easy and luxurious life.

The day was warm; the blue Italian sky shone in all its splendour. The sea sang its immortal symphony. The trees rustled harmoniously, the laurels exhaled their perfumes, the golden oranges contrasted with the dark green leaves, and the fresh sea-breeze sweetly refreshed the limpid air.

Alone at a table a man was seated. He was the same who, some years before, travelled this way in company with the sprightly dancer, Gigante. But he was no longer in joyous humour. He was Henri Segel; but how changed!

Equally isolated and bored we find our Tsigane, Stamlo Gako, whom the reader has not forgotten. He is more yellow and blacker than ever, and he has grown stout, heavy, and somnolent.

There is another solitary traveller. It is Gromof, who is not now accompanied by the charming Lucie Coloni. He carries his head high, as if to brave destiny. But his irritation betrays itself in every movement. He amuses himself by making little balls of bread crumbs, and throws out of the window the fruit that he has scarcely tasted.

These three do not converse. The Russian and the gypsy have met before, as we have seen, but they do not care to renew the acquaintance. As for Segel, he has never spoken with either Gromof or Gako.

A sumptuous equipage entered the court of the inn. The host and the servants hastened to meet it. A lady filled the whole interior of the vehicle with her white robe, and one scarcely perceived in one corner hidden under the immense crinoline, which was then so fashionable, a little, thin, withered-looking man.

They were no doubt husband and wife. She was in all the splendour of her youth, charming, elegant, confident of her beauty, proud and victorious. He, as one soon perceived, was the most humble servant of her who bore his name and disposed of his fortune.

He jumped out of the carriage, and with all the manner and gallantry of a young man, despite his fifty and odd years, presented his hand to his queen to aid her to descend. She raised herself with indifference, and gathered together the train of her rustling robe.

At sight of this beauty, whom he immediately recognized through the window near which he dined, Henri rose as if he wished to avoid a disagreeable meeting, but a retreat was impossible. To go out he must necessarily pass them. He made an ironical grimace and reseated himself.

The reader has recognized Muse, now actually Baroness Von Kreig, the wife of a wealthy speculator, whose nationality was a mystery to all, for he carefully concealed his Jewish origin. He did not give himself out as a Pole, although living in Poland, but passed sometimes for a Russian, oftener for a German. Where and how did he steal the title of baron? No one knew. It might have been, said some, the recompense of a great financial operation. He wore on his travelling coat several ribbons and decorations.

The reader doubtless expected to hear of the marriage of Muse and Henri, who were supposed to be so much attached to each other; but in consequence of the fickleness and calculation of the lady, the marriage had not come to pass. Henri, for her sake, had divorced his wife, had proposed, been accepted, and passed for her future husband everywhere. Muse introduced him to all her friends, and he was proud of his betrothed. It was then that the Baron Von Kreig met the enchantress on the street. He had known the mother of old, but avoided her because she had the bad habit of borrowing money which she always forgot to return. The baron had just lost his

second wife, and he required for his third, above all, good health. He was struck with the blooming beauty of Muse, and fell in love at first sight. The next day he went to pay her a visit. Muse immediately coolly sat down, when she was alone, and compared him with Henri. Von Kreig was ten times richer, a baron, and could introduce her into the most brilliant circles of society. He was well educated, and, although old and dried up, was an excellent match. Muse put forth all her powers of fascination, and soon succeeded in bringing the baron to her feet. The marriage with Henri was delayed under pretext that the lace had not arrived from Paris. In the meanwhile the baron gained over the mother by consenting without demur to the most advantageous settlements for the daughter, imposed by Madame Wtorkowska. The engagement was accomplished quietly. Then there remained the rather unpleasant task of breaking with Henri, who believed himself master of the situation, and laughed at the attentions of the baron.

It puzzled even the genius of these two women to find a plausible or decent excuse for the rupture. In the intervals of his life, as a betrothed between the acts, as it were, Segel sought distraction at the theatre. He was tied to the gauzy apron-strings of a sylph, or, in plain words, a danseuse. This connection had lasted for more than two years, and the evenings away from Muse were passed with the beautiful danseuse. He made no secret of it, and his carriage was often seen at the door of the ballet-girl's dwelling. It was with this, as a pretext, that Madame Wtorkowska sought to break the engagement. In vain Segel asked for pardon. He was dismissed, and received back the ring he had given Muse. For this engagement ring he had paid ten thousand francs, in Paris. It was a superb solitaire surrounded with smaller diamonds, each half a carat in weight. It was shown, as if by accident, to the baron; he felt the sacrifice, and with noble emulation Von Kreig replaced it by another which cost thirty thousand francs.

Segel stormed, but the baron solemnly conducted Muse to the altar. The newly married couple started on a wedding trip, which was to be the grand tour of Europe, including all the large cities, baths, and fashionable resorts.

The blackest ingratitude awaited Madame Wtorkowska. Her son-in-law paid her debts, and settled on her a beggarly pension; then took his leave courteously, and forbade more than rare communications with her daughter. The poor woman, who had calculated on managing everything, travelling with them, and spending money lavishly, prayed, begged, and threatened. The baron was inexorable, and replied by silence only. The daughter sacrificed her mother with Roman stoicism, playing the part of a humble and obedient wife.

Madame was at first disheartened and fell ill; then, as one must live, she rented an apartment in the faubourg, and, to augment her income, set up an *écarté*, taking care always to have around her many pleasing young women to add to the attractions of the place. The house soon became well known, although no one cared to avow openly that they visited it. Sofronof, Bavorof, and others remained faithful to the unfortunate.

As may be supposed, this meeting between Muse and Henri at the inn was equally distasteful to both. The moment the baroness entered the grotto her eyes fell on her old lover. Notwithstanding her usual presence of mind, she was confused. More master of the situation, Segel saluted her respectfully, and smiled bitterly.

At the same time there arrived another couple. They were quietly dressed, yet with a certain distinction which is not always, as some think, an exclusive possession of birth. They were the distinguished guests expected by the host, Jacob and Mathilde. They came in, thinking themselves unknown. The husband was relating his first visit to this fairy grotto; the wife replied laughing. The sound of her voice came to Henri's ears; he believed it at first a hallucination; he listened attentively, and could not doubt the reality of his first impression.

There seemed to him a strange fatality in this simultaneous meeting of the two persons, one of whom recalled his lost peace, the other his vanished hopes. He could not see Mathilde, and the sound of her well-known voice seemed to descend from the clouds. Curious to know if it were she, he went to the end of the grotto, where, in an isolated corner, Jacob dined with her. She seemed rejuvenated, and her face shone with happiness. Her husband kissed her hands, believing himself unobserved.

Segel experienced a feeling of wrath; his lips curled under a sardonic smile.

"All happy!" said he. "And I"--

Then he returned to his place. The silvery voice of Madame Jacob attracted the attention of the baroness also, and she, likewise, drew near under pretext of examining the grotto. She gave a cry of surprise. The couple turned and recognized Muse, who tenderly greeted the old friend whom she had so often wished dead.

"Ah, my dear Mathilde," cried she, "what a happy and unexpected meeting!"

Truly it was a romantic encounter, rarely met with in real life. Chance, however, often plays us tricks altogether unforeseen.

Mathilde did not share the apparent joy of Muse, for whom she had no great affection. But their acquaintance dated back to the time when they both wore short dresses, and the remembrances of childhood are always pleasant.

The proprieties required observance, and Jacob had his table carried to the grand *salon*, where their friends were dining; he certainly did not expect to see Henri Segel, and Mathilde saw him first. She drew back, for all her involuntary unhappy experience with Henri appeared before her. Her husband, although much annoyed, encouraged her to shake off her distress.

Segel understood that his presence was disagreeable to all; therefore it pleased him to impose it. It delighted him to see all countenances grow pale and abstracted at sight of him. He affected a cynical gayety, drank a glass of wine, lighted a cigar, then turned toward Jacob and Mathilde.

With well-simulated indifference Muse watched the meeting. Her husband, playing the young man, had risen quickly and received his wife's friends with much courtesy. He was very polite to Jacob, and entirely ignored the revolutionary rôle that he had played.

Von Kreig detested Henri, but he deemed it proper for a baron to disguise his sentiments, and he was very courteous to his vanquished rival. The scene was highly dramatic. There was no outward appearance of excitement, however, for men of the world do not show their feelings in public.

Gromof, roused from his meditations, looked around and perceived Jacob.

"How strange," said he, "to meet you again at Sestri."

"Yes," replied the latter, "a real accident. I am the same as ever, you see, but not so gay as then."

The baron asked in a low voice:--

"Who is this person?"

"A Russian," replied Jacob.

Von Kreig, taking Gromof for a prominent official of the imperial court, was going to ask for an introduction, when Jacob whispered in his ear:--

"An outlaw."

The baron drew back and, as he was a strict conservative, thought:--

"What kind of company have we fallen in with, anyway?" Then he said to Jacob:--

"Madame and yourself are travelling for pleasure, are you not?"

"We are obliged to leave Poland," replied Jacob. "I joined the revolutionists, was wounded and was taken to Austria, whence orders came for me to leave the country. My wife and I seek a retreat where we may dwell peacefully. It is not so easy to find. Nowhere in Europe, except in Switzerland or England, is there much security for exiles. In Saxony they are given leave to remain only temporarily. In Bavaria they are not given leave to remain at all. In France an arbitrary expulsion, authorized by the law, always like the sword of Damocles, is suspended over their heads; and in Belgium they are also unwelcome."

"But I think, monsieur, that you can better your position. The Russian government is magnanimous; it has proclaimed a general amnesty."

"Yes, I could have obtained that amnesty by solicitation. Unfortunately the pardon granted to-day does not always do for to-morrow. In Russia the despotism of caprice is the only law."

Von Kreig frowned.

"The state of siege exists now," said he, "but will not last always."

"To ask permission to return is to avow a fault," said Jacob, "and to return to Poland now would be to act against my conscience."

The baron knew not how to reply. Gromof relieved him of this embarrassment by joining in the conversation.

"I told you," said he to Jacob, "what would be the result of your insurrection."

"Yes, but it could not be avoided. It was written that Poland should be bathed in blood. It was a trial or a chastisement of Providence; it is not for me to say which."

"You still believe in Providence? What an incorrigible child! All Europe suffers from your folly. You have revealed to the world the weakness of England, the nullity of the imperial government of Napoleon III., and the abasement of the moral level of all society. Formerly other countries at least sympathized with nations that were so oppressed, and looked with disfavour upon the cruel tyrants who caused such suffering. Under Louis Philippe France did nothing for Poland, but the two chambers at least protested against her being utterly crushed. To-day policy reigns, and they bow before superior force. Formerly many hearts beat at the words 'liberty' and 'fraternity.' To-

day these words provoke only a smile. Lord Byron, when he risked his life for the independence of Greece, passed for a Don Quixote. And the country of these heroes has legislators who pretend that humanity is not a family, that there is no union among the people. Every one for himself! Every one for himself! Behold a summary of the actual moral situation! Neither you nor I will ever see the sun of liberty!"

Von Kreig, terrified, whispered in his wife's ear:--

"This Russian is a red revolutionist."

Henri interposed. He changed the subject of the conversation, and from Poland passed to the Jews. Segel maintained that the Israelites ought to profit by the situation of things, without caring what became of Poland. Jacob held to his opinion that it was better to be with the oppressed against the oppressors. Segel, laughing heartily, replied:--

"This is romantic, poetic, heroic, magnificent; but it is not practical."

"Whatever you may think," replied Jacob, "it is our duty to convince the Christians that our morals are not inferior to theirs, that love of one's neighbour is taught in our books as in their Gospels, and that between the Mosaic law and the Christian law there is accord and not contradiction."

"Words, empty words," said Henri, "nothing but words! Material interest should be the motive of nations as well as individuals. Liberty, equality, fraternity are a triple aberration of mind! Behold their result: fields strewn with dead men and bones!"

"Yes; but the dead will rise, the bones will be reanimated as in the vision of Ezekiel."

Jacob commenced to recite the passage, then, remarking that no one listened to him, turned gayly to his wife and asked:--

"Is not Italy beautiful?"

"It never seemed so lovely before," replied Mathilde tenderly.

"And what do you think of it, madame?" asked he of the baroness.

"Bah!" replied she. "I suppose one must conform to the fashion and admire Italy. It is a picturesque country; but, all things considered, this land filled with tombs and ruins has nothing agreeable for me. Prosaic as it is, I prefer Paris."

"Now, I do not like Paris," said Jacob.

"Is it permitted not to like Paris?" cried Von Kreig. "You are joking, monsieur."

"Not at all. The same places do not suit all characters or all dispositions. To dreamy and poetic temperaments I recommend Italy; Germany, to those who are positive and prosaic; England, to men of enterprise and activity; and Paris, to high livers, and to ladies who love the excitements and gayeties of society."

"And Poland?" asked Henri.

"To those who thirst for martyrdom," replied Jacob sadly.

"But now-a-days every one laughs at these Polish theories of suffering and of sacrifice!"

"Oh, dear and charming Paris!" cried the baroness.

"One vegetates elsewhere, one lives only in Paris," added her husband, "and perhaps a little in London."

"Do not compare London with its fogs to my dear Paris," replied his wife.

In the midst of this desultory chatting Henri remained obstinately near, until the veturino which he had ordered was announced. He could not deny himself the bitter pleasure of seeing side by side her who had been his wife, and her who was to have been. He seemed unable to leave the place.

Meanwhile the dinner drew to a close. The dessert was brought in, consisting of figs, spoiled pears, green grapes, and musty peaches.

"No comparison is possible," said the baron, "between these wretched fruits and the delicious fruits we get at Paris."

"These are horrible!" added his wife, biting into the bad part of a peach. Then she turned to Mathilde and asked her if she should return to Genoa.

"Yes; but not until evening," she replied.

"Well, we must make haste, for we are going to the theatre," said Muse.

They all arose from the table. The baron offered cigars to Jacob and Henri Segel, but he hastened to quit their society. One appeared to be compromising, the other altogether odious.

Gromof and the Tsigane chatted together. Muse drew Mathilde into an obscure corner of the grotto to ask her this question:--

"Are you happy?"

"Above all expression," replied she. "I have only one sorrow,--to see our native land in such an unhappy condition."

"And Jacob?"

"He is the best of men; he is my ideal."

"What do you think of that horrid Henri?"

"I had to summon all my courage when he looked at me so fixedly, a cold sweat came on my forehead. He is capable of killing both of us."

"No! He is not susceptible of so violent an emotion. We ought to pardon him, for he suffers keenly."

"Oh, no! I know better than that. He will easily console himself."

The baron was impatient to depart, and coughed to bring back his wife from the grotto. At last the two friends separated, saying farewell, and Muse bowed to Henri from the distance, with a grave dignity. The brilliant star entered her carriage and disappeared in a cloud of dust on the highway. Jacob conducted his wife to her room in the inn and descended to the grotto.

Gromof and the Tsigane came to talk with him. The Russian saw the future outlook dark and gloomy. Jacob was rather optimistic.

"Man," said he, "ought never to abandon himself to despair. If he object to his own individual lot, it is narrow-minded and weak. If he complain of the lot of humanity, it is blindness or error. In the annals of the world human events are submitted to a normal development, an intelligent fatality which is not arrested by the stupidity and malevolence of men. The law of destiny, whatever we may do, will prevail. Patience, and the storm will disappear."

"And we,--we cannot expect to live to see the sun appear!"

"Our children will see it, perhaps. In the collective existence of humanity there is a cohesion of facts which do not exist in the same individual existences. Individuals are only the stones of a vast edifice."

"You are a happy man from all points of view," declared Henri. "You have faith in the aim of life, you possess serenity of soul; nothing is lacking."

"And you? Can you not acquire the same happiness?"

"No. I have squeezed life like a lemon. There remains to me only the bitter peel. I exist aimlessly; I believe in nothing; everything seems to me senseless or ridiculous. It is the malady of the age. Your dreams are worth more than the reality."

"They are not dreams. For me it is the living reality. Your materialism is what is false. You will soon return to Poland; there is much to do there. Do your duty there, and life will have a new meaning for you."

Henri laughed ironically and said:--

"In the meanwhile I have another work on hand. I am going to attach myself to Muse. I shall follow her everywhere. She will see continuously my mocking face. I will be the skeleton at the feast, and I will enjoy this revenge to satiety. Every one to his taste! I really believe that Satan cradled me, and that this nurse has injected into my blood some of his own character."

He gave an infernal laugh, took his hat, and left them, saying:--

"I will join Muse at the theatre."

THE END.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE JEW ***

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