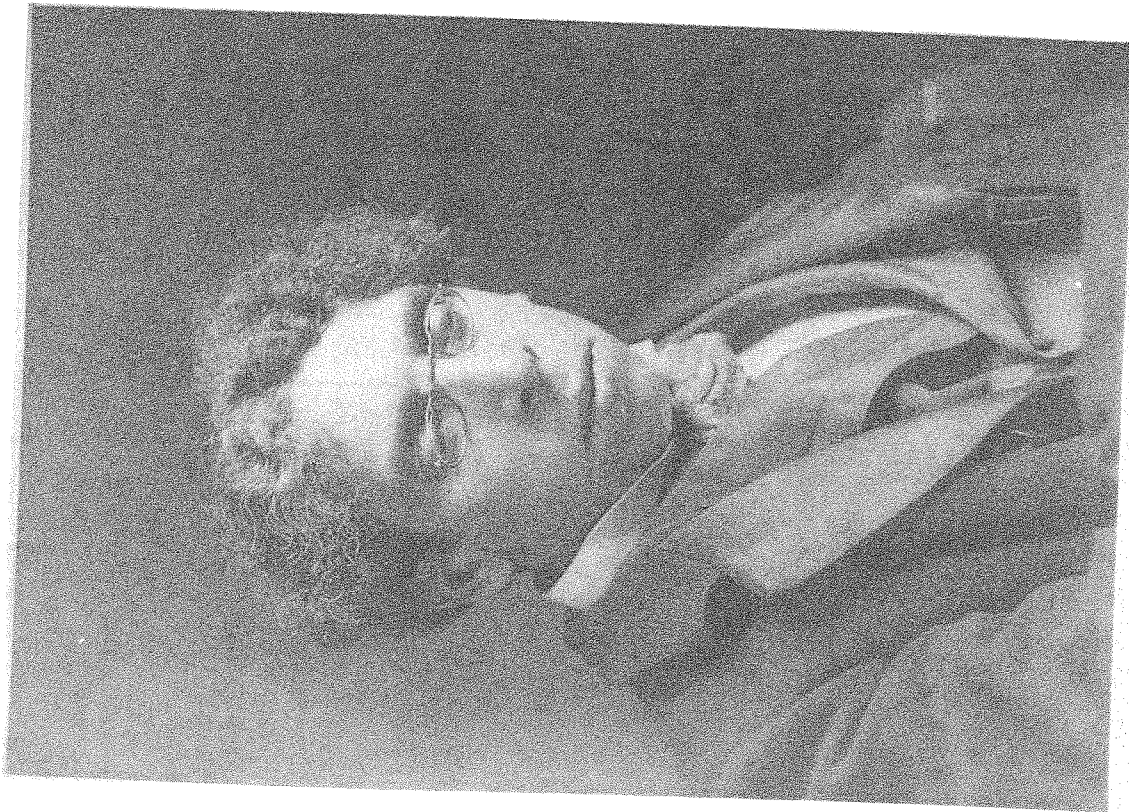


# CHILDREN OF THE GHETTO

A STUDY OF A  
PECULIAR PEOPLE

ISRAEL  
ZANGWILL

Edited with an Introduction by  
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## Proem

*Not here in our London Ghetto the gates and gaberlines of the olden Ghetto of the Eternal City; yet no lack of signs external by which one may know it, and those who dwell therein. Its narrow streets have no speciality of architecture; its dirt is not picturesque. It is no longer the stage for the high-buskined tragedy of massacre and martyrdom; only for the obscurer, deeper tragedy that evolves from the pressure of its own inward forces, and the long-drawn-out tragi-comedy of sordid and shifty poverty. Nonetheless, this London Ghetto of ours is a region where, amid uncleanness and squalor, the rose of romance blows yet a little longer in the raw air of English reality; a world which hides beneath its stony and unlovely surface an inner world of dreams, fantastic and poetic as the mirage of the Orient where they were woven, of superstitions grotesque as the cathedral gargoyles of the Dark Ages in which they had birth. And over all lie tenderly some streaks of celestial light shining from the face of the great Lawgiver.*

*The folk who compose our pictures are children of the Ghetto; their faults are bred of its hovering miasma of persecution, their virtues straitened and intensified by the narrowness of its horizon. And they who have won their way beyond its boundaries must still play their parts in tragedies and comedies—tragedies of spiritual struggle, comedies of material ambition—which are the aftermath of its centuries of dominance, the sequel of that long cruel night in Jewry which coincides with the Christian Era. If they are not the Children, they are at least the Grandchildren of the Ghetto.*

The particular Ghetto that is the dark background upon which our pictures will be cast, is of voluntary formation.

People who have been living in a Ghetto for a couple of centuries, are not able to step outside merely because the gates are thrown down, nor to

efface the brands on their souls by putting off the yellow badges. The isolation imposed from without will have come to seem the law of their being. But a minority will pass, by units, into the larger, freer, stranger life amid the execrations of an ever-dwindling majority. For better or for worse, or for both, the Ghetto will be gradually abandoned, till at last it becomes only a swarming place for the poor and the ignorant, huddling together for social warmth. Such people are their own Ghetto gates: when they migrate they carry them across the sea to lands where they are not. Into the heart of East London there poured from Russia, from Poland, from Germany, from Holland, streams of Jewish exiles, refugees, settlers, few as well-to-do as the Jew of the proverb, but all rich in their cheerfulness, their industry, and their cleverness. The majority bore with them nothing but their phylacteries and praying shawls,<sup>2</sup> and a good-natured contempt for Christians and Christianity. For the Jew has rarely been embittered by persecution. He knows that he is in *Goluth*, in exile, and that the days of the Messiah are not yet, and he looks upon the persecutor merely as the stupid instrument of an all-wise Providence. So that these poor Jews were rich in all the virtues, devout yet tolerant, and strong in their reliance on Faith, Hope, and more especially Charity.

In the early days of the nineteenth century, all Israel were brethren. Even the pioneer colony of wealthy Sephardim—descendants of the Spanish crypto-Jews who had reached England *via* Holland—had modified its boycott of the poor Ashkenazic immigrants, now they were become an overwhelming majority. There was a superior stratum of Anglo-German Jews who had had time to get on, but all the Ashkenazic tribes lived very much like a happy family, the poor not stand-offish towards the rich, but anxious to afford them opportunities for well-doing. The *Schnorrer* felt no false shame in his begging. He knew it was the rich man's duty to give him unleavened bread at Passover, and coals in the winter, and odd half-crowns at all seasons; and he regarded himself as the Jacob's ladder by which the rich man mounted to Paradise. But, like all genuine philanthropists, he did not look for gratitude. He felt that virtue was its own reward, especially when he sat in Sabbath vesture at the head of his table on Friday nights, and thanked God in an operatic aria for the white cotton table-cloth and the fried sprats. He sought personal interviews with the most majestic magnates, and had humorous repartees for their lumbering censure.

As for the rich, they gave charity unscrupulously—in the same Oriental, unscientific, informal spirit in which the *Dayanim*, those cadis of the East End, administered justice. The *Takif*, or man of substance, was as accustomed to the palm of the mendicant outside the Great Synagogue as to the rattling pyx within. They lived in Bury Street, and Prescott Street, and Finsbury—these aristocrats of the Ghetto—in mansions that are now but congeries of "apartments." Few relations had they with Belgravia, but

many with Petticoat Lane and the Great *Shool*, the stately old synagogue which has always been illuminated by candles and still refuses all modern light. The Spanish Jews had a more ancient *snoga*, but it was within a stone's throw of the "Duke's Place" edifice. Decorum was not a feature of synagogue worship in those days, nor was the Almighty yet conceived as the holder of formal receptions once a week. Worshipers did not pray with bated breath, as if afraid that the deity would overhear them. They were at ease in Zion. They passed the snuff-boxes and remarks about the weather. The opportunities of skipping afforded by a too exuberant liturgy promoted conversation, and even stocks were discussed in the terrible *lon-gueurs* induced by the meaningless ministerial repetition of prayers already said by the congregation, or by the official recitations of catalogues of purchased benedictions. Sometimes, of course, this announcement of the offering was interesting, especially when there was sensational competition. The great people bade in guineas for the privilege of rolling up the Scroll of the Law or drawing the Curtain of the Ark, or saying a particular *Kaddish* if they were mourners, and then thrills of reverence went round the congregation. The social hierarchy was to some extent graduated by synagogal contributions, and whoever could afford only a little offering had it announced as a "gift"—a vague term which might equally be the covering of a reticent munificence.

Very few persons, "called up" to the reading of the Law, escaped at the cost they had intended, for one is easily led on by an insinuating official incapable of taking low views of the donor's generosity and a little deaf. The moment prior to the declaration of the amount was quite exciting for the audience. On Sabbaths and festivals the authorities could not write down these sums, for writing is work and work is forbidden; even to write them in the book and volume of their brain would have been to charge their memories with an illegitimate if not an impossible burden. Parchment books on a peculiar system with holes in the pages and laces to go through the holes solved the problem of bookkeeping without pen and ink. It is possible that many of the worshippers were tempted to give beyond their means for fear of losing the esteem of the *Shammos* or Beadle, a potent personage only next in influence to the President whose overcoat he obsequiously removed on the greater man's annual visit to the synagogue. The Beadle's eye was all over the *Shool* at once, and he could settle an altercation about seats without missing a single response. His automatic amens resounded magnificently through the synagogue, at once a stimulus and a rebuke. It was probably as a concession to him that poor men, who were neither seat-holders nor wearers of chimney-pot hats, were penned within an iron enclosure near the door of the building and ranged on backless benches, and it says much for the authority of the *Shammos* that not even the *Schnorrer* contested it. Prayers were shouted rapidly by the

congregation, and elaborately sung by the *Chazan*. The minister was *Vox et preterea nihil*.<sup>3</sup> He was the only musical instrument permitted, and on him devolved the whole onus of making the service attractive. He succeeded. He was helped by the sociability of the gathering—for the Synagogue was virtually a Jewish Club, the focus of the sectarian life.

Hard times and bitter had some of the fathers of the Ghetto, but they ate their dry bread with the salt of humor, loved their wives, and praised God for His mercies. Unwitting of the genealogies that would be found for them by their prosperous grandchildren, old clo' men plied their trade in ambitious content. They were meek and timorous outside the Ghetto, walking warily for fear of the Christian. Sufferance was still the badge of all their tribe. Yet that there were Jews who held their heads high, let the following legend tell: Few men could shuffle along more inoffensively or cry "Old Clo'" with a meeker twitter than Sleepy Sol. The old man crawled one day, bowed with humility and clo'-bag, into a military mews and uttered his tremulous chirp. To him came one of the hostlers with insolent beetling brow.

"Any gold lace?" faltered Sleepy Sol.

"Get out!" roared the hostler.

"I'll give you de best prices," pleaded Sleepy Sol.

"Get out!" repeated the hostler and hustled the old man into the street. "If I catch you 'ere again, I'll break your neck." Sleepy Sol loved his neck, but the profit on gold lace torn from old uniforms was high. Next week he crept into the mews again, trusting to meet another hostler.

"Clo'! Clo'!" he chirped faintly.

Alas! the brawny bully was to the fore again and recognized him.

"You dirty old Jew," he cried. "Take that, and that! The next time I see you, you'll go 'ome on a shutter."

The old man took that, and that, and went on his way. The next day he came again.

"Clo'! Clo'!" he whimpered.

"What!" said the ruffian, his coarse cheeks flooded with angry blood. "Ev yer forgotten what I promised yer?" He seized Sleepy Sol by the scruff of the neck.

"I say, why can't you leave the old man alone?"

The hostler stared at the protester, whose presence he had not noticed in the pleasurable excitement of the moment. It was a Jewish young man, indifferently attired in a pepper-and-salt suit. The muscular hostler measured him scornfully with his eye.

"What's to do with you?" he said, with studied contempt.

"Nothing," admitted the intruder. "And what harm is he doing you?"

"That's my bizness," answered the hostler, and tightened his clutch of Sleepy Sol's nape.

"Well, you'd better not mind it," answered the young man calmly. "Let go."

The hostler's thick lips emitted a disdainful laugh.

"Let go, d'you hear?" repeated the young man.

"I'll let go at your nose," said the hostler, clenching his knobby fist.

"Very well," said the young man. "Then I'll pull yours."

"Oho!" said the hostler, his scowl growing fiercer. "Yer means bizness, does yer?" With that he sent Sleepy Sol staggering along the road and rolled up his shirt-sleeves. His coat was already off.

The young man did not remove his; he quietly assumed the defensive. The hostler sparred up to him with grim earnestness, and launched a terrible blow at his most characteristic feature. The young man blandly put it on one side, and planted a return blow on the hostler's ear. Enraged, his opponent sprang upon him. The young Jew paralyzed him by putting his left hand negligently into his pocket. With his remaining hand he closed the hostler's right eye, and sent the flesh about it into mourning. Then he carelessly tapped a little blood from the hostler's nose, gave him a few thumps on the chest as if to test the strength of his lungs, and laid him sprawling in the courtyard. A brother hostler ran out from the stables and gave a cry of astonishment.

"You'd better wipe his face," said the young man curtly.

The newcomer hurried back towards the stables.

"Vait a moment," said Sleepy Sol. "I can sell you a sponge sheep; I've got a beaury in my bag."

There were plenty of sponges about, but the newcomer bought the second-hand sponge.

"Do you want any more?" the young man affably inquired of his prospective adversary.

The hostler gave a groan. He was shamed before a friend whom he had early convinced of his fistic superiority.

"No, I reckon he don't," said his friend, with a knowing grin at the conqueror.

"Then I will wish you a good day," said the young man. "Come along, father."

"Yes, ma son-in-law," said Sleepy Sol.

"Do you know who that was, Joe?" said his friend, as he sponged away the blood.

Joe shook his head.

"That was Dutch Sam," said his friend in an awe-struck whisper.

All Joe's body vibrated with surprise and respect. Dutch Sam was the champion bruiser of his time; in private life an eminent dandy and a prime favorite of His Majesty George IV., and Sleepy Sol had a beautiful daughter and was perhaps prepossessing himself when washed for the Sabbath.

"Dutch Sam!" Joe repeated.

"Dutch Sam! Why, we've got his picter hanging up inside, only he's naked to the waist."

"Well, strike me lucky! What a fool I was not to rekkernize 'imi!" His battered face brightened up. "No wonder he licked me!"

Except for the comparative infrequency of the more bestial types of men and women, Judæa has always been a cosmos in little, and its prize-fighters and scientists, its philosophers and "fences," its gymnasts and money-lenders, its scholars and stockbrokers, its musicians, chess-players, poets, comic singers, lunatics, saints, publicans, politicians, warriors, politicians, mathematicians, actors, foreign correspondents, have always been in the first rank. *Nihil alienum a se Judæus putat.*<sup>4</sup>

Joe and his friend fell to recalling Dutch Sam's great feats. Each outwitted the other in admiration for the supreme pugilist.

Next day Sleepy Sol came rampaging down the courtyard. He walked at the rate of five miles to the hour, and despite the weight of his bag his head pointed to the zenith.

"Clo!" he shrieked. "Clo!"

Joe the hostler came out. His head was bandaged, and in his hand was gold lace. It was something even to do business with a hero's father-in-law.

But it is given to few men to marry their daughters to champion boxers; and as Dutch Sam was not a Don Quixote, the average peddler or huckster never enjoyed the luxury of prancing gait and cock-a-hoop business cry. The primitive fathers of the Ghetto might have borne themselves more jauntily had they foreseen that they were to be the ancestors of mayors and aldermen descended from Castilian hidalgos and Polish kings, and that an unborn historian would conclude that the Ghetto of their day was peopled by princes in disguise. They would have been as surprised to learn who they were as to be informed that they were orthodox. The great Reform split did not occur till well on towards the middle of the century, and the Jews of those days were unable to conceive that a man could be a Jew without eating *kosher* meat, and they would have looked upon the modern distinctions between racial and religious Jews as the sophistries of the convert or the missionary. If their religious life converged to the Great *Shool*, their social life focussed on Petticoat Lane, a long, narrow thoroughfare which, as late as Sturpe's day,<sup>5</sup> was lined with beautiful trees; vastly more pleasant they must have been than the faded barrows and beggars of after days. The Lane—such was its affectionate sobriquet—was the stronghold of hard-shell Judaism, the Alsatia of "infidelity" into which no missionary dared set foot, especially no apostate-apostle. Even in modern days the new-fangled Jewish minister of the fashionable suburb, rigged out like the Christian clergyman, has been mistaken for such a *Meshumad*, and pelted

with gratuitous vegetables and eleemosynary eggs. The Lane was always the great market-place, and every insalubrious street and alley abutting on it was covered with the overflowings of its commerce and its mud. Wentworth Street and Goulston Street were the chief branches, and in festival times the latter was a pandemonium of caged poultry, clucking and quacking and cackling and screaming. Fowls and geese and ducks were bought alive, and taken to have their throats cut for a fee by the official slaughterer. At Purim a gaiety, as of the Roman carnival, enlivened the swampy Wentworth Street, and brought a smile into the unwashed face of the pavement. The confectioners' shops, crammed with "stuffed monkeys" and "bolas,"<sup>6</sup> were besieged by hilarious crowds of handsome girls and their young men, fat women and their children, all washing down the luscious spicy compounds with cups of chocolate; temporarily erected swinging cradles bore a vociferous many-colored burden to the skies; cardboard noses, grotesque in their departure from truth, abounded. The Purim *Spiel* or Purim play never took root in England, nor was Haman ever burnt in the streets, but *Shalachmonios*, or gifts of the season, passed between friend and friend, and masquerading parties burst into neighbors' houses. But the Lane was lively enough on the ordinary Friday and Sunday. The famous Sunday Fair was an event of metropolitan importance, and thither came buyers of every sect. The Friday Fair was more local, and confined mainly to edibles. The Ante-Festival Fairs combined something of the other two, for Jews desired to sport new hats and clothes for the holidays as well as to eat extra luxuries, and took the opportunity of a well-marked epoch to invest in new everything from oil-cloth to cups and saucers. Especially was this so at Passover, when for a week the poorest Jew must use a supplementary set of crockery and kitchen utensils. A babel of sound, audible for several streets around, denoted Market Day in Petticoat Lane, and the pavements were blocked by serried crowds going both ways at once.

It was only gradually that the community was Anglicized. Under the sway of centrifugal impulses, the wealthier members began to form new colonies, moulting their old feathers and replacing them by finer, and flying ever further from the centre. Men of organizing ability founded univalued philanthropic and educational institutions on British lines; millionaires fought for political emancipation; brokers brazenly foisted themselves on 'Change; ministers gave sermons in bad English; an English journal was started; very slowly, the conventional Anglican tradition was established; and on that human palimpsest which has borne the inscriptions of all languages and all epochs, was writ large the sign-manual of England. Judæa prostrated itself before the Dagon of its hereditary foe, the Philistine, and respectability crept on to freeze the blood of the Orient with its frigid finger, and to blur the vivid tints of the East into the uniform gray of English middle-class life. In the period within which our story

moves, only vestiges of the old gaiety and brotherhood remained; the full *al fresco* flavor was evaporated.

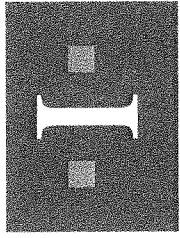
And to-day they are all dead—the *Takeefim* with big hearts and bigger purses, and the humorous *Schnorrers*, who accepted their gold, and the cheerful pious peddlers who rose from one extreme to the other, building up fabulous fortunes in marvellous ways. The young mothers, who suckled their babes in the sun, have passed out of the sunshine; yea, and the babes, too, have gone down with gray heads to the dust. Dead are the fair fat women, with tender hearts, who waddled benignantly through life, ever ready to shed the sympathetic tear, best of wives, and cooks, and mothers; dead are the bald, ruddy old men, who ambled about in faded carpet slippers, and passed the snuff-box of peace; dead are the stout-hearted youths who sailed away to Tom Tiddler's ground, and dead are the buxom maids they led under the wedding canopy when they returned. Even the great Dr. Sequira, pompous in white stockings, physician extraordinary to the Prince Regent of Portugal, lies vanquished by his life-long adversary and the Baal Shem himself, King of Cabalists, could command no countervailing miracle.

Where are the little girls in white pinafores with pink sashes who brightened the Ghetto on high days and holidays? Where is the beautiful Betsy of the Victoria Ballet? and where the jocund synagogue dignitary who led off the cotillon with her at the annual Rejoicing of the Law? Worms have long since picked the great financier's brain, the embroidered waistcoats of the bucks have passed even beyond the stage of adorning sweeps on May Day, and Dutch Sam's fist is bonier than ever. The same mould covers them all—those who donated guineas and those who donated "gifts," the rogues and the hypocrites, and the wedding-drolls, the observant and the lax, the purse-proud and the lowly, the coarse and the genteel, the wonderful chapmen and the luckless *Schlemihls*, Rabbi and *Dayan* and *Shochet*, the scribes who wrote the sacred scroll and the cantors who trotted it off mellifluous tongues, and the betting-men who never listened to it; the grimy Russians of the capotes and the earlocks, and the blue-blooded Dons, "the gentlemen of the Mahamad,"<sup>77</sup> who ruffled it with swords and knee-breeches in the best Christian society. Those who kneaded the toothsome "bolas" lie with those who ate them; and the marriage-brokers repose with those they mated. The olives and the cucumbers grow green and fat as of yore, but their lovers are mixed with a soil that is barren of them. The restless, bustling crowds that jostled laughingly in Rag Fair are at rest in the "House of Life;" the pageant of their strenuous generation is vanished as a dream. They died with the declaration of God's unity on their stiffening lips, and the certainty of resurrection in their pulseless hearts, and a faded Hebrew inscription on a tomb, or an unread entry on a synagogue brass is their only record. And yet, perhaps, their generation is not

all dust. Perchance, here and there, some decrepit centenarian rubs his purblind eyes with the ointment of memory, and sees these pictures of the past, hallowed by the consecration of time, and finds his shrivelled cheek wet with the pathos sanctifying the joys that have been.



BOOK



THE CHILDREN OF THE  
GHETTO



## The Bread of Affliction

A dead and gone wag called the street "Fashion Street," and most of the people who live in it do not even see the joke. If it could exchange names with "Rotten Row," both places would be more appropriately designated. It is a dull, squalid, narrow thoroughfare in the East End of London, connecting Spitalfields with Whitechapel, and branching off in blind alleys. In the days when little Esther Ansell trudged its unclean pavements, its extremities were within earshot of the blasphemies from some of the vilest quarters and filthiest rookeries in the capital of the civilized world. Some of these clotted spiders'-webs have since been swept away by the besom of the social reformer, and the spiders have scurried off into darker crannies.

There were the conventional touches about the London street-picture, as Esther Ansell sped through the freezing mist of the December evening, with a pitcher in her hand, looking in her oriental coloring like a miniature of Rebecca going to the well. A female street-singer, with a trail of infants of dubious maternity, troubled the air with a piercing melody; a pair of slatterns with arms a-kimbo reviled each other's relatives; a drunkard lurched along, babbling amiably; an organ-grinder, blue-nosed as his monkey, set some ragged children jiggling under the watery rays of a street-lamp. Esther drew her little plaid shawl tightly around her, and ran on without heeding these familiar details, her chilled feet absorbing the damp of the murky pavement through the worn soles of her cumbrous boots. They were masculine boots, kicked off by some intoxicated tramp and picked up by Esther's father. Moses Ansell had a habit of lighting on windfalls, due, perhaps, to his meek manner of walking with bent head, as though literally bowed beneath the yoke of the Captivity. Providence rewarded him for his humility by occasional treasure-trove. Esther had received a pair of new boots from her school a week before, and the substitution of the tramp's foot-gear for her own resulted in a net profit of half-a-crown, and kept Esther's little brothers and sisters in bread for a week. At school, under her teacher's eye, Esther was very unobtrusive about the feet for the next fortnight, but as the fear of being found out



died away, even her rather morbid conscience condoned the deception in view of the stomachic gain.

They gave away bread and milk at the school, too, but Esther and her brothers and sisters never took either, for fear of being thought in want of them. The superiority of a class-mate is hard to bear, and a high-spirited child will not easily acknowledge starvation in presence of a roomful of purse-proud urchins, some of them able to spend a farthing a day on pure luxuries. Moses Ansell would have been grieved had he known his children were refusing the bread he could not give them. Trade was slack in the sweating dens, and Moses, who had always lived from hand to mouth, had latterly held less than ever between the one and the other. He had applied for help to the Jewish Board of Guardians,<sup>8</sup> but red-tape rarely unwinds as quickly as hunger coils itself; moreover, Moses was an old offender in poverty at the Court of Charity. But there was one species of alms which Moses could not be denied, and the existence of which Esther could not conceal from him as she concealed that of the eleemosynary breakfasts at the school. For it was known to all men that soup and bread were to be had for the asking thrice a week at the Institution in Fashion Street, and in the Ansell household the opening of the soup-kitchen was looked forward to as the dawn of a golden age, when it would be impossible to pass more than one day without bread. The vaguely-remembered smell of the soup threw a poetic fragrance over the coming winter. Every year since Esther's mother had died, the child had been sent to fetch home the provender, for Moses, who was the only other available member of the family, was always busy praying when he had nothing better to do. And so to-night Esther fared to the kitchen, with her red pitcher, passing in her childish eagerness numerous women shuffling along on the same errand, and bearing uncouth tin cans supplied by the institution. An individualistic instinct of cleanliness made Esther prefer the family pitcher. To-day this liberty of choice has been taken away, and the regulation can, numbered and stamped, serves as a soup-ticket. There was quite a crowd of applicants outside the stable-like doors of the kitchen when Esther arrived, a few with well-lined stomachs, perhaps, but the majority famished and shivering. The feminine element swamped the rest, but there were about a dozen men and a few children among the group, most of the men scarce taller than the children—strange, stunted, swarthy, hairy creatures, with muddy complexions illumined by black, twinkling eyes. A few were of imposing stature, wearing coarse, dusty felt hats or peaked caps, with shaggy beards or faded scarfs around their throats. Here and there, too, was a woman of comely face and figure, but for the most part it was a collection of crones, prematurely aged, with weird, wan, old-world features, slip-shod and draggle-tailed, their heads bare, or covered with dingy shawls in lieu of bonnets—red shawls, gray shawls, brick-dust shawls, mud-colored shawls. Yet

there was an indefinable touch of romance and pathos about the tawdriness and witch-like ugliness, and an underlying identity about the crowd of Polish, Russian, German, Dutch Jewesses, mutually apathetic, and pressing forwards. Some of them had infants at their bare breasts, who drowsed quietly with intervals of ululation. The women devoid of shawls had nothing around their necks to protect them from the cold, the dusky throats were exposed, and sometimes even the first hooks and eyes of the bodice were unnecessarily undone. The majority wore cheap earrings and black wigs with preternaturally polished hair; where there was no wig, the hair was touzled.

At half-past five the stable-doors were thrown open, and the crowd pressed through a long, narrow white-washed stone corridor into a barn-like compartment, with a white-washed ceiling traversed by wooden beams. Within this compartment, and leaving but a narrow, circumscribing border, was a sort of cattle-pen, into which the paupers crushed, awaiting amid discomfort and universal jabber the divine moment. The single jet of gas-light depending from the ceiling flared upon the strange simian faces, and touched them into a grotesque picturesqueness that would have delighted Doré.<sup>9</sup>

They felt hungry, these picturesque people; their near and dear ones were hungering at home. Voluptuously savoring in imagination the operation of the soup, they forgot its operation as a dole in aid of wages; were unconscious of the grave economical possibilities of pauperization and the rest, and quite willing to swallow their independence with the soup. Even Esther, who had read much, and was sensitive, accepted unquestioningly the theory of the universe that was held by most people about her, that human beings were distinguished from animals in having to toil terribly for a meagre crust, but that their lot was lightened by the existence of a small and semi-divine class called *Takeefim*, or rich people, who gave away what they didn't want. How these rich people came to be, Esther did not inquire; they were as much a part of the constitution of things as clouds and horses. The semi-celestial variety was rarely to be met with. It lived far away from the Ghetto, and a small family of it was said to occupy a whole house. Representatives of it, clad in rustling silks or impressive broadcloth, and radiating an indefinable aroma of superhumanity, sometimes came to the school, preceded by the beaming Head Mistress; and then all the little girls rose and curtsied, and the best of them, passing as average members of the class, astonished the semi-divine persons by their intimate acquaintance with the topography of the Pyrenees and the disagreements of Saul and David, the intercourse of the two species ending in effusive smiles and general satisfaction. But the dullest of the girls was alive to the comedy, and had a good-humored contempt for the unworldliness of the semi-divine persons who spoke to them as if they were not going to recom-

mence squabbling, and pulling one another's hair, and copying one another's sums, and stealing one another's needles, the moment the semi-celestial backs were turned.

To-night, semi-divine persons were to be seen in a galaxy of splendor, for in the reserved standing-places, behind the white deal counter, was gathered a group of philanthropists. The room was an odd-shaped-polygon, partially lined with eight boilers, whose great wooden lids were raised by pulleys and balanced by red-painted iron balls. In the corner stood the cooking-engine. Cooks in white caps and blouses stirred the steaming soup with long wooden paddles. A tradesman besought the attention of the Jewish reporters to the improved boiler he had manufactured, and the superintendent adjured the newspaper men not to omit his name; while amid the sobriety-clad clergymen flitted, like gorgeous humming-birds through a flock of crows, the marriageable daughters of an east-end minister.

When a sufficient number of semi-divinities was gathered together, the President addressed the meeting at considerable length, striving to impress upon the clergymen and other philanthropists present that charity was a virtue, and appealing to the Bible, the Koran, and even the Vedas, for confirmation of his proposition. Early in his speech the sliding door that separated the cattle-pen from the kitchen proper had to be closed, because the jostling crowd jabbered so much and inconsiderate infants squalled, and there did not seem to be any general desire to hear the President's ethical views. They were a low material lot, who thought only of their bellies, and did but chatter the louder when the speech was shut out. They had overflowed their barriers by this time, and were surging cruelly to and fro, and Esther had to keep her elbows close to her sides lest her arms should be dislocated. Outside the stable doors a shifting array of boys and girls hovered hungrily and curiously. When the President had finished, the Rabbinate was invited to address the philanthropists, which it did at not less length, eloquently seconding the proposition that charity was a virtue. Then the door was slid back, and the first two paupers were admitted, the rest of the crowd being courageously kept at bay by the superintendent. The head cook filled a couple of plates with soup, dipping a great pewter pot into the cauldron. The Rabbinate then uplifted its eyes heavenwards, and said the grace:

"Blessed art Thou, O Lord, King of the Universe, according to whose word all things exist."

It then tasted a spoonful of the soup, as did also the President and several of the visitors, the passage of the fluid along the palate invariably evoking approving ecstatic smiles; and indeed, there was more body in it this opening night than there would be later, when, in due course, the bulk of the meat would take its legitimate place among the pickings of office. The sight of the delighted deglutition of the semi-divine persons made

Esther's mouth water as she struggled for breathing space on the outskirts of Paradise. The impatience which fretted her was almost allayed by visions of stout-hearted Solomon and gentle Rachel and whimpering little Sarah and likey, all gulping down the delicious draught. Even the more stoical father and grandmother were a little in her thoughts. The Ansell had eaten nothing but a slice of dry bread each in the morning. Here before her, in the land of Goshen, flowing with soup, was piled up a heap of halves of loaves, while endless other loaves were ranged along the shelves as for a giant's table. Esther looked ravenously at the four-square tower built of edible bricks, shivering as the biting air sought out her back through a sudden interstice in the heaving mass. The draught reminded her more keenly of her little ones huddled together in the fireless garret at home. Ah! what a happy night was in store. She must not let them devour the two loaves to-night; that would be criminal extravagance. No, one would suffice for the banquet, the other must be carefully put by. "To-morrow is also a day," as the old grandmother used to say in her quaint jargon. But the banquet was not to be spread as fast as Esther's fancy could fly; the doors must be shut again, other semi-divine and wholly divine persons (in white ties) must move and second (with eloquence and length) votes of thanks to the President, the Rabbinate, and all other available recipients; a French visitor must express his admiration of English charity. But at last the turn of the gnawing stomachs came. The motley crowd, still babbling, made a slow, forward movement, squeezing painfully through the narrow aperture, and shivering a plate glass window pane at the side of the cattle-pen in the crush; the semi-divine persons rubbed their hands and smiled genially; ingenious paupers tried to dodge round to the cauldrons by the semi-divine entrance; the tropical humming-birds fluttered among the crows; there was a splashing of ladles and a gurgling of cascades of soup into the cans, and a hubbub of voices; a toothless, white-haired, blear-eyed hag lamented in excellent English that soup was refused her, owing to her case not having yet been investigated, and her tears moistened the one loaf she received. In like hard case a Russian threw himself on the stones and howled. But at last Esther was running through the mist, warmed by the pitcher which she hugged to her bosom, and suppressing the blind impulse to pinch the pair of loaves tied up in her pinafore. She almost flew up the dark flight of stairs to the attic in Royal Street. Little Sarah was sobbing querulously. Esther, conscious of being an angel of deliverance, tried to take the last two steps at once, tripped and tumbled ignominiously against the garret-door, which flew back and let her fall into the room with a crash. The pitcher shivered into fragments under her aching little bosom, the odorous soup spread itself in an irregular pool over the boards, and flowed under the two beds and dripped down the crevices into the room beneath. Esther burst into tears; her frock was wet and greased, her hands were cut

and bleeding. Little Sarah checked her sobs at the disaster. Moses Ansell was not yet returned from evening service, but the withered old grandmother, whose wizened face loomed through the gloom of the cold, unlit garret, sat up on the bed and cursed her angrily for a *Schlemihl*. A sense of injustice made Esther cry more bitterly. She had never broken anything for years past. Ikey, an eerie-looking dot of four and a half years, tottered towards her (all the Ansell's had learnt to see in the dark), and nestling his curly head against her wet bodice, murmured:

"Neva mind, Estie, I lat oo teep in my new bed."

The consolation of sleeping in that imaginary new bed to the possession of which Ikey was always looking forward was apparently adequate; for Esther got up from the floor and untied the loaves from her pinafore. A reckless spirit of defiance possessed her, as of a gambler who throws good money after bad. They should have a mad revelry to-night—the two loaves should be eaten at once. One (minus a hunk for father's supper) would hardly satisfy six voracious appetites. Solomon and Rachel, irrepressibly excited by the sight of the bread, rushed at it greedily, snatched a loaf from Esther's hand, and tore off a crust each with their fingers.

"Heathen," cried the old grandmother. "Washing and benediction."

Solomon was used to being called a "heathen" by the *Bubbe*. He put on his cap and went grudgingly to the bucket of water that stood in a corner of the room, and tipped a drop over his fingers. It is to be feared that neither the quantity of water nor the area of hand covered reached even the minimum enjoined by Rabbinical law. He murmured something intended for Hebrew during the operation, and was beginning to mutter the devout little sentence which precedes the eating of bread when Rachel, who as a female was less driven to the lavatory ceremony, and had thus got ahead of him, paused in her ravenous mastication and made a wry face. Solomon took a huge bite at his crust, then he uttered an inarticulate "pooh," and spat out his mouthful.

There was no salt in the bread.

## C H A P T E R I I

### The Sweater

The catastrophe was not complete. There were some long thin fibres of pale boiled meat, whose juices had gone to enrich the soup, lying about the floor or adhering to the fragments of the pitcher. Solomon, who was a curly-headed chap of infinite resource, discovered them, and it had just been decided to neutralize the insipidity of the bread by the far-away flavor of the meat, when a peremptory knocking was heard at the door, and a dazzling vision of beauty bounded into the room.

"Ere! What are you doin', leavin' things leak through our ceiling?"

Becky Belcovitch was a buxom, bouncing girl, with cherry cheeks that looked exotic in a land of pale faces. She wore a mass of black crisp ringlets aggressively suggestive of singeing and curl-papers. She was the belle of Royal Street in her spare time, and womanly triumphs dogged even her working hours. She was sixteen years old, and devoted her youth and beauty to buttonholes. In the East End, where a spade is a spade, a buttonhole is a buttonhole, and not a primrose or a pansy. There are two kinds of buttonhole—the coarse for slop goods and the fine for gentlemanly wear. Becky concentrated herself on superior buttonholes, which are worked with fine twist. She stitched them in her father's workshop, which was more comfortable than a stranger's, and better fitted for evading the Factory Acts.<sup>10</sup> To-night she was radiant in silk and jewelry, and her pert snub nose had the insolence of felicity which Agamemnon<sup>11</sup> deprecated. Seeing her, you would have as soon connected her with Esoteric Buddhism as with buttonholes.

The *Bubbe* explained the situation in voluble Yiddish, and made Esther wince again under the impassioned invective on her clumsiness. The old beldame expended enough oriental metaphor on the accident to fit up a minor poet. If the family died of starvation, their blood would be upon their grand-daughter's head.

"Well, why don't you wipe it up, stupid?" said Becky. "'Ow would you like to pay for Pesach's new coat? It just dripped past his shoulder."

"I'm so sorry, Becky," said Esther, striving hard to master the tremor in her voice. And drawing a house-cloth from a mysterious recess, she went on her knees in a practical prayer for pardon.

Becky snorted and went back to her sister's engagement-party. For this was the secret of her gorgeous vesture, of her glittering earrings, and her massive brooch, as it was the secret of the transformation of the Belcovitch workshop (and living room) into a hall of dazzling light. Four separate gaunt bare arms of iron gas-pipe lifted hymeneal torches. The labels from reels of cotton, pasted above the mantelpiece as indexes of work done, alone betrayed the past and future of the room. At a long narrow table, covered with a white table-cloth spread with rum, gin, biscuits and fruit, and decorated with two wax candles in tall, brass candlesticks, stood or sat a group of swarthy, neatly-dressed Poles, most of them in high hats. A few women wearing wigs, silk dresses, and gold chains wound round half-washed necks, stood about outside the inner circle. A stooping black-bearded bear-eyed man in a long threadbare coat and a black skull cap, on either side of which hung a corkscrew curl, sat abstractedly eating the almonds and raisins, in the central place of honor which befits a *Maggid*. Before him were pens and ink and a roll of parchment. This was the engagement contract.

The damages of breach of promise<sup>12</sup> were assessed in advance and with-out respect of sex. Whichever side repented of the bargain undertook to pay ten pounds by way of compensation for the broken pledge. As a nation, Israel is practical and free from cant. Romance and moonshine are beautiful things, but behind the glittering veil are always the stern realities of things and the weaknesses of human nature. The high contracting parties were signing the document as Becky returned. The bridegroom, who halted a little on one leg, was a tall sallow man named Pesach Weingott. He was a boot-maker, who could expound the Talmud and play the fiddle, but was unable to earn a living. He was marrying Fanny Belcovitch because his parents-in-law would give him free board and lodging for a year, and because he liked her. Fanny was a plump, pulpy girl, not in the prime of youth. Her complexion was fair and her manner lymphatic, and if she was not so well-favored as her sister, she was more amiable and pleasant. She could sing sweetly in Yiddish and in English, and had once been a pantomime<sup>13</sup> fairy at ten shillings a week, and had even flourished a cutlass as a midshipman. But she had long since given up the stage, to become her father's right hand woman in the workshop. She made coats from morning till midnight at a big machine with a massive treadle, and had pains in her chest even before she fell in love with Pesach Weingott.

There was a hubbub of congratulation (*Mazzolov*, *Mazzolov*, good luck), and a palsy of handshaking, when the contract was signed. Remarks, grave and facetious, flew about in Yiddish, with phrases of Polish and Russian thrown in for auld lang syne, and cups and jugs were broken in remembrance of the transiency of things mortal. The Belcovitches had been saving up their already broken crockery for the occasion. The hope was

expressed that Mr. and Mrs. Belcovitch would live to see "rejoicings" on their other daughter, and to see their daughters' daughters under the *Chuppah*, or wedding-canopy.

Becky's hardened cheek blushed under the oppressive jocularity. Every-body spoke Yiddish habitually at No. 1 Royal Street, except the younger generation, and that spoke it to the elder.

"I always said, no girl of mine should marry a Dutchman." It was a dominant thought of Mr. Belcovitch's, and it rose spontaneously to his lips at this joyful moment. Next to a Christian, a Dutch Jew stood lowest in the gradation of potential sons-in-law. Spanish Jews, earliest arrivals by way of Holland, after the Restoration, are a class apart, and look down on the later imported *Askenazim*, embracing both Poles and Dutchmen in their impartial contempt. But this does not prevent the Pole and the Dutchman from despising each other. To a Dutch or Russian Jew, the "Pullack," or Polish Jew, is a poor creature; and scarce anything can exceed the complacency with which the "Pullack" looks down upon the "Litvok" or Lithuanian, the degraded being whose Shibboleth<sup>14</sup> is literally Sibboleth, and who says "ee" where rightly constituted persons say "oo." To mimic the mincing pronunciation of the "Litvok" affords the "Pullack" a sense of superiority almost equalling that possessed by the English Jew, whose mispronunciation of the Holy Tongue is his title to rank far above all foreign varieties. Yet a vein of brotherhood runs beneath all these feelings of mutual superiority; like the cliquism which draws together old clo' dealers, though each gives fifty per cent. more than any other dealer in the trade. The Dutch foregather in a district called "The Dutch Tenters," they eat voraciously, and almost monopolize the ice-cream, hot pea, diamond-cutting, cucumber, herring, and cigar trades. They are not so cute as the Russians. Their women are distinguished from other women by the flaccidity of their bodices; some wear small woollen caps and sabots. When Esther read in her school-books that the note of the Dutch character was cleanliness, she wondered. She looked in vain for the scrupulously scoured floors and the shining caps and faces. Only in the matter of tobacco-smoke did the Dutch people she knew live up to the geographical "Readers."

German Jews gravitate to Polish and Russian; and French Jews mostly stay in France. *Ici on ne parle pas Français*,<sup>15</sup> is the only lingual certainty in the London Ghetto, which is a cosmopolitan quarter.

"I always said no girl of mine should marry a Dutchman." Mr. Belcovitch spoke as if at the close of a long career devoted to avoiding Dutch alliances, forgetting that not even one of his daughters was yet secure.

"Nor any girl of mine," said Mrs. Belcovitch, as if starting a separate proposition. "I would not trust a Dutchman with my medicine-bottle, much less with my Alte or my Becky. Dutchmen were not behind the door

when the Almighty gave out noses, and their deceitfulness is in proportion to their noses."

The company murmured assent, and one gentleman, with a rather large organ, concealed it in a red cotton handkerchief, trumpeting unceasingly.

"The Holy One, blessed be He, has given them larger noses than us," said the *Maggid*, "because they have to talk through them so much."

A guffaw greeted this sally. The *Maggid's* wit was relished even when not coming from the pulpit. To the outsider this disparagement of the Dutch nose might have seemed a case of pot calling kettle black. The *Maggid* poured himself out a glass of rum, under cover of the laughter, and murmuring "Life to you," in Hebrew, gulped it down, and added, "They oughtn't to call it the Dutch tongue, but the Dutch nose."

"Yes, I always wonder how they can understand one another," said Mrs. Belcovitch, "with their *chattuchayacatigewesepoopa*." She laughed heartily over her onomatopoeic addition to the Yiddish vocabulary, screwing up her nose to give it due effect. She was a small sickly-looking woman, with black eyes, and shrivelled skin, and the wig without which no virtuous wife is complete. For a married woman must sacrifice her tresses on the altar of home, lest she snare other men with such sensuous baits. As a rule, she enters into the spirit of the self-denying ordinance so enthusiastically as to become hideous hastily in every other respect. It is forgotten that a husband is also a man. Mrs. Belcovitch's head was not completely shaven and shorn, for a lower stratum of an unmatched shade of brown peeped out in front of the *shaitel*, not even coinciding as to the route of the central parting.

Meantime Pesach Weingott and Alte (Fanny) Belcovitch held each other's hand, guiltily conscious of Batavian corpuscles in the young man's blood. Pesach had a Dutch uncle, but as he had never talked like him Alte alone knew. Alte wasn't her real name, by the way, and Alte was the last person in the world to know what it was. She was the Belcovitches' first successful child; the others all died before she was born. Driven frantic by a fate crueler than barrenness, the Belcovitches consulted an old Polish Rabbi, who told them they displayed too much fond solicitude for their children, provoking Heaven thereby; in future, they were to let no one but themselves know their next child's name, and never to whisper it till the child was safely married. In such wise, Heaven would not be incessantly reminded of the existence of their dear one, and would not go out of its way to castigate them. The ruse succeeded, and Alte was anxiously waiting to change both her names under the *Chuppah*, and to gratify her life-long curiosity on the subject. Meantime, her mother had been calling her "Alte," or "old 'un," which sounded endearing to the child, but grated on the woman arriving ever nearer to the years of discretion. Occasionally, Mrs. Belcovitch succumbed to the prevailing tendency, and called her

"Fanny," just as she sometimes thought of herself as Mrs. Belcovitch, though her name was Kosminski. When Alte first went to school in London, the Head Mistress said, "What's your name?" The little "old 'un" had not sufficient English to understand the question, but she remembered that the Head Mistress had made the same sounds to the preceding applicant, and, where some little girls would have put their pinafores to their eyes and cried, Fanny showed herself full of resource. As the last little girl, though patently awe-struck, had come off with flying colors, merely by whimpering "Fanny Belcovitch," Alte imitated these sounds as well as she was able.

"Fanny Belcovitch, did you say?" said the Head Mistress, pausing with arrested pen.

Alte nodded her flaxen poll vigorously.

"Fanny Belcovitch," she repeated, getting the syllables better on a second hearing.

The Head Mistress turned to an assistant.

"Isn't it astonishing how names repeat themselves? Two girls, one after the other, both with exactly the same name."

They were used to coincidences in the school, where, by reason of the tribal relationship of the pupils, there was a great run on some half-a-dozen names. Mr. Kosminski took several years to understand that Alte had disowned him. When it dawned upon him he was not angry, and acquiesced in his fate. It was the only domestic detail in which he had allowed himself to be led by his children. Like his wife, Chayah, he was gradually persuaded into the belief that he was a born Belcovitch, or at least that Belcovitch was Kosminski translated into English.

Blissfully unconscious of the Dutch taint in Pesach Weingott, Bear Belcovitch bustled about in reckless hospitality. He felt that engagements were not every-day events, and that even if his whole half-sovereign's worth of festive provision was swallowed up, he would not mind much. He wore a high hat, a well-preserved black coat, with a cutaway waistcoat, showing a quantity of glazed shirtfront and a massive watch chain. They were his Sabbath clothes, and, like the Sabbath they honored, were of immemorial antiquity. The shirt served him for seven Sabbaths, or a week of Sabbaths, being carefully folded after each. His boots had the Sabbath polish. The hat was the one he bought when he first set up as a *Baal Habaa's*<sup>6</sup> or respectable pillar of the synagogue; for even in the smallest *Chevrá* the high hat comes next in sanctity to the Scroll of the Law, and he who does not wear it may never hope to attain to congregational dignities. The gloss on that hat was wonderful, considering it had been out unprotected in all winds and weathers. Not that Mr. Belcovitch did not possess an umbrella. He had two,—one of fine new silk, the other a medley of broken ribs and cotton rags. Becky had given him the first to prevent the family disgrace of



"*Achi nebbich*, poor little thing," cried Mrs. Kosminski, who was in a tender mood, "very likely it hungers them sore upstairs. The father is out of work."

"Knowest thou what, mother," put in Fanny. "Suppose we give them our soup. Aunt Leah has just fetched it for us. Have we not a special supper to-night?"

"But father?" murmured the little woman dubiously.

"Oh, he won't notice it. I don't think he knows the soup kitchen opens to-night. Let me, mother."

And Fanny, letting Pesach's hand go, slipped out to the room that served as a kitchen, and bore the still-steaming pot upstairs. Pesach, who had pursued her, followed with some hunks of bread and a piece of lighted candle, which, while intended only to illumine the journey, came in handy at the terminus. And the festive company grinned and winked when the pair disappeared, and made jocular quotations from the Old Testament and the Rabbis. But the lovers did not kiss when they came out of the garret of the Ansellis; their eyes were wet, and they went softly downstairs hand in hand, feeling linked by a deeper love than before.

Thus did Providence hand over the soup the Belcovitches took from old habit to a more necessitous quarter, and demonstrate in double sense that Charity never faileth.<sup>17</sup> Nor was this the only mulct which Providence exacted from the happy father, for later on a townsman of his appeared on the scene in a long capote, and, with a grimy woe-begone expression. He was a "greener"<sup>18</sup> of the greenest order, having landed at the docks only a few hours ago, bringing over with him a great deal of luggage in the shape of faith in God, and in the auriferous character of London pavements. On arriving in England, he gave a casual glance at the metropolis and determined to be directed to a synagogue wherein to shake himself<sup>19</sup> after the journey. His devotions over, he tracked out Mr. Kosminski, whose address on a much-creased bit of paper had been his talisman of hope during the voyage. In his native town, where the Jews groaned beneath divers and sore oppressions, the fame of Kosminski, the pioneer, the Croesus, was a legend. Mr. Kosminski was prepared for these contingencies. He went to his bedroom, dragged out a heavy wooden chest from under the bed, unlocked it and plunged his hand into a large dirty linen bag, full of coins. The instinct of generosity which was upon him made him count out forty-eight of them. He bore them to the "greener" in overbrimming palms and the foreigner, unconscious of how much he owed to the felicitous coincidence of his visit with Fanny's betrothal, saw fortune visibly within his grasp. He went out, his heart bursting with gratitude, his pocket with four dozen farthings. They took him in and gave him hot soup at a Poor Jews' Shelter, whither his townsman had directed him. Kosminski returned

the spectacle of his promenades with the second. But he would not carry the new one on week-days because it was too good. And on Sabbaths it is a sin to carry any umbrella. So Becky's self-sacrifice was vain, and her umbrella stood in the corner, a standing gratification to the proud possessor. Kosminski had had a hard fight for his substance, and was not given to waste. He was a tall, harsh-looking man of fifty, with grizzled hair, to whom life meant work, and work meant money, and money meant savings. In Parliamentary Blue-Books, English newspapers, and the Berner Street Socialistic Club, he was called a "sweater," and the comic papers pictured him with a protuberant paunch and a greasy smile, but he had not the remotest idea that he was other than a God-fearing, industrious, and even philanthropic citizen. The measure that had been dealt to him he did but deal to others. He saw no reason why immigrant paupers should not live on a crown a week while he taught them how to handle a press-iron or work a sewing machine. They were much better off than in Poland. He would have been glad of such an income himself in those terrible first days of English life when he saw his wife and his two babes starving before his eyes, and was only precluded from investing a casual twopence in poison by ignorance of the English name for anything deadly. And what did he live on now? The fowl, the pint of haricot beans, and the haddocks which Chayah purchased for the Sabbath overlapped into the middle of the next week, a quarter of a pound of coffee lasted the whole week, the grounds being decocted till every grain of virtue was extracted. Black bread and potatoes and pickled herrings made up the bulk of the every-day diet. No, no one could accuse Bear Belcovitch of fattening on the entrails of his employees. The furniture was of the simplest and shabbiest,—no æsthetic instinct urged the Kosminskis to overpass the bare necessities of existence, except in dress. The only concessions to art were a crudely-colored *Mizrach* on the east wall, to indicate the direction towards which the Jew should pray, and the mantelpiece mirror which was bordered with yellow scalloped paper (to save the gilt) and ornamented at each corner with paper roses that bloomed afresh every Passover. And yet Bear Belcovitch had lived in much better style in Poland, possessing a brass wash-hand basin, a copper saucepan, silver spoons, a silver consecration beaker, and a cupboard with glass doors, and he frequently adverted to their fond memories. But he brought nothing away except his bedding, and that was pawned in Germany on the route. When he arrived in London he had with him three groschen and a family.

"What do you think, Pesach," said Becky, as soon as she could get at her prospective brother-in-law through the barriers of congratulatory countrymen. "The stuff that came through there"—she pointed to the discolored fragment of ceiling—"was soup. That silly little Esther spilt all she got from the kitchen."

to the banqueting room, thrilling from head to foot with the approval of his conscience. He patted Becky's curly head and said:

"Well, Becky, when shall we be dancing at your wedding?"

Becky shook her curls. Her young men could not have a poorer opinion of one another than Becky had of them all. Their homage pleased her, though it did not raise them in her esteem. Lovers grew like blackberries—only more so; for they were an evergreen stock. Or, as her mother put it in her coarse, peasant manner, *Chasanim*<sup>20</sup> were as plentiful as the street-dogs. Becky's beaux sat on the stairs before she was up and became early risers in their love for her, each anxious to be the first to bid their Penelope of the buttonholes<sup>21</sup> good morrow. It was said that Kosminski's success as a "sweater" was due to his beauteous Becky, the flower of sartorial youth gravitating to the work-room of this East London Laban.<sup>22</sup> What they admired in Becky was that there was so much of her. Still it was not enough to go round, and though Becky might keep nine lovers in hand without fear of being set down as a flirt, a larger number of tailors would have been less consistent with prospective monogamy.

"I'm not going to throw myself away like Fanny," said she confidentially to Pesach Weingott in the course of the evening. He smiled apologetically. "Fanny always had low views," continued Becky. "But I always said I would marry a gentleman."

"And I dare say," answered Pesach, stung into the retort, "Fanny could marry a gentleman, too, if she wanted."

Becky's idea of a gentleman was a clerk or a school-master, who had no manual labor except scribbling or flogging. In her matrimonial views Becky was typical. She despised the status of her parents and looked to marry out of it. They for their part could not understand the desire to be other than themselves.

"I don't say Fanny couldn't," she admitted. "All I say is, nobody could call this a luck-match."

"Ah, thou hast me too many flies in thy nose," reprovingly interposed Mrs. Belcovitch, who had just crawled up. "Thou art too high-class."

Becky tossed her head. "I've got a new dolman," she said, turning to one of her young men who was present by special grace. "You should see me in it. I look noble."

"Yes," said Mrs. Belcovitch proudly. "It shines in the sun."

"Is it like the one Bessie Sugarman's got?" inquired the young man.

"Bessie Sugarman!" echoed Becky scornfully. "She gets all her things from the tallyman. She pretends to be so grand, but all her jewelry is paid for at so much a week."

"So long as it is paid for," said Fanny, catching the words and turning a happy face on her sister.

"Not so jealous, Alte," said her mother. "When I shall win on the lot-teree, I will buy thee also a dolman."

Almost all the company speculated on the Hamburg lottery, which, whether they were speaking Yiddish or English, they invariably accentuated on the last syllable. When an inhabitant of the Ghetto won even his money back, the news circulated like wild-fire, and there was a rush to the agents for tickets. The chances of sudden wealth floated like dazzling Will o' the Wisp on the horizon, illumining the gray perspectives of the future. The lotteree took the poor ticket-holders out of themselves, and gave them an interest in life apart from machine-cotton, lasts or tobacco-leaf. The English laborer, who has been forbidden State Lotteries, relieves the monotony of existence by an extremely indirect interest in the achievements of a special breed of horses.

"Nu, Pesach, another glass of rum," said Mr. Belcovitch genially to his future son-in-law and boarder.

"Yes, I will," said Pesach. "After all, this is the first time I've got engaged."

The rum was of Mr. Belcovitch's own manufacture; its ingredients were unknown, but the fame of it travelled on currents of air to the remotest parts of the house. Even the inhabitants of the garrets sniffed and thought of turpentine. Pesach swallowed the concoction, murmuring "To life" afresh. His throat felt like the funnel of a steamer, and there were tears in his eyes when he put down the glass.

"Ah, that was good," he murmured.

"Not like thy English drinks, eh?" said Mr. Belcovitch.

"England!" snorted Pesach in royal disdain. "What a country! Daddle-doo is a language and ginger-beer a liquor."

"Daddle-doo" was Pesach's way of saying "That'll do." It was one of the first English idioms he picked up, and its puerility made him facetious. It seemed to smack of the nursery; when a nation expressed its soul thus, the existence of a beverage like ginger-beer could occasion no further surprise.

"You shan't have anything stronger than ginger-beer when we're married," said Fanny laughingly. "I am not going to have any drinking."

"But I'll get drunk on ginger-beer," Pesach laughed back.

"You can't," Fanny said, shaking her large fond smile to and fro. "By my health, not."

"Ha! Ha! Ha! Can't even get *shikkur* on it. What a liquor!"

In the first Anglo-Jewish circles with which Pesach had scraped acquaintance, ginger-beer was the prevalent drink; and, generalizing almost as hastily as if he were going to write a book on the country, he concluded that it was the national beverage. He had long since discovered his mistake, but the drift of the discussion reminded Becky of a chance for an arrow.



"On the day when you sit for joy, Pesach," she said slyly, "I shall send you a valentine."

Pesach colored up and those in the secret laughed; the reference was to another of Pesach's early ideas. Some mischievous gossip had heard him arguing with another Greener outside a stationer's shop blazing with comic valentines. The two foreigners were extremely puzzled to understand what these monstrosities portended; Pesach, however, laid it down that the miscreptulous gentlemen with tremendous legs, and the ladies five-sixths head and one-sixth skirt, were representations of the English peasants who lived in the little villages up country.

"When I sit for joy," retorted Pesach, "it will not be the season for valentines."

"Won't it though!" cried Becky, shaking her frizzly black curls. "You'll be a pair of comic 'uns."

"All right, Becky," said Alte good-humoredly. "Your turn'll come, and then we shall have the laugh of you."

"Never," said Becky. "What do I want with a man?"

The arm of the specially invited young man was round her as she spoke.

"Don't make *schnicks*," said Fanny.

"It's not affectation. I mean it. What's the good of the men who visit father? There isn't a gentleman among them."

"Ah, wait till I win on the lotteree," said the special young man.

"Then, vy not take another eighth of a ticket?" inquired Sugarman the *Shadchan*, who seemed to spring from the other end of the room. He was one of the greatest Talmudists in London—a lean, hungry-looking man, sharp of feature and acute of intellect. "Look at Mrs. Robinson—I've just won her over twenty pounds, and she only gave me two pounds for myself. I call it a *cherpah*—a shame."

"Yes, but you stole another two pounds," said Becky.

"How do you know?" said Sugarman startled.

Becky winked and shook her head sapiently. "Never *you* mind."

The published list of the winning numbers was so complex in construction that Sugarman had ample opportunities of bewildering his clients.

"I won't sell you no more tickets," said Sugarman with righteous indignation.

"A fat lot I care," said Becky, tossing her curls.

"Thou carest for nothing," said Mrs. Belcovitch, seizing the opportunity for maternal admonition. "Thou hast not even brought me my medicine to-night. Thou wilt find it on the chest of drawers in the bedroom."

Becky shook herself impatiently.

"I will go," said the special young man.

"No, it is not beautiful that a young man shall go into my bedroom in my absence,"<sup>22</sup> said Mrs. Belcovitch blushing.

Becky left the room.

"Thou knowest," said Mrs. Belcovitch, addressing herself to the special young man, "I suffer greatly from my legs. One is a thick one, and one a thin one."

The young man sighed sympathetically.

"Whence comes it?" he asked.

"Do I know? I was born so. My poor lambkin (this was the way Mrs. Belcovitch always referred to her dead mother) had well-matched legs. If I had Aristotle's head I might be able to find out why my legs are inferior. And so one goes about."

The reverence for Aristotle enshrined in Yiddish idiom is probably due to his being taken by the vulgar for a Jew. At any rate the theory that Aristotle's philosophy was Jewish was advanced by the mediæval poet, Jehuda Halevi, and sustained by Maimonides.<sup>24</sup> The legend runs that when Alexander went to Palestine, Aristotle was in his train. At Jerusalem the philosopher had sight of King Solomon's manuscripts, and he forthwith edited them and put his name to them. But it is noteworthy that the story was only accepted by those Jewish scholars who adopted the Aristotelian philosophy, those who rejected it declaring that Aristotle in his last testament had admitted the inferiority of his writings to the Mosaic, and had asked that his works should be destroyed.

When Becky returned with the medicine, Mrs. Belcovitch mentioned that it was extremely nasty, and offered the young man a taste, whereat he rejoiced inwardly, knowing he had found favor in the sight of the parent. Mrs. Belcovitch paid a penny a week to her doctor, in sickness or health, so that there was a loss on being well. Becky used to fill up the bottles with water to save herself the trouble of going to fetch the medicine, but as Mrs. Belcovitch did not know this it made no difference.

"Thou livest too much indoors," said Mr. Sugarman, in Yiddish.

"Shall I march about in this weather? Black and slippery, and the Angel going a-hunting?"

"Ah!" said Mr. Sugarman, relapsing proudly into the vernacular, "Ve English walk about in all vedders."

Meanwhile Moses Ansell had returned from evening service and sat down, unquestioningly, by the light of an unexpected candle to his expected supper of bread and soup, blessing God for both gifts. The rest of the family had supped. Esther had put the two youngest children to bed (Rachel had arrived at years of independent undressing), and she and Solomon were doing home-lessons in copy-books, the candle saving them from a caning on the morrow. She held her pen clumsily, for several of her fingers were swathed in bloody rags tied with cobweb. The grandmother dozed in her chair. Everything was quiet and peaceful, though the atmosphere was chilly. Moses ate his supper with a great smacking of the lips

and an equivalent enjoyment. When it was over he sighed deeply, and thanked God in a prayer lasting ten minutes, and delivered in a rapid, singing manner. He then inquired of Solomon whether he had said his evening prayer. Solomon looked out of the corner of his eyes at his *Bube*, and, seeing she was asleep on the bed, said he had, and kicked Esther significantly but hurtfully under the table.

"Then you had better say your night-prayer."

There was no getting out of that; so Solomon finished his sum, writing the figures of the answer rather faint, in case he should discover from another boy next morning that they were wrong; then producing a Hebrew prayer-book from his inky cotton satchel, he made a mumbling sound, with occasional enthusiastic bursts of audible coherence, for a length of time proportioned to the number of pages. Then he went to bed. After that, Esther put her grandmother to bed and curled herself up at her side. She lay awake a long time, listening to the quaint sounds emitted by her father in his study of Rashi's commentary on the Book of Job,<sup>25</sup> the measured drone blending not disagreeably with the far-away sounds of Pesach Weingott's fiddle.

Pesach's fiddle played the accompaniment to many other people's thoughts. The respectable master-tailor sat behind his glazed shirt-front beating time with his foot. His little sickly-looking wife stood by his side, nodding her bewigged head joyously. To both the music brought the same recollection—a Polish market-place.

Belcovitch, or rather Kosminski, was the only surviving son of a widow. It was curious, and suggestive of some grim law of heredity, that his parents' elder children had died off as rapidly as his own, and that his life had been preserved by some such expedient as Alte's. Only, in his case the Rabbi consulted had advised his father to go into the woods and call his new-born son by the name of the first animal that he saw. This was why the future sweater was named Bear. To the death of his brothers and sisters, Bear owed his exemption from military service. He grew up to be a stalwart, well-set-up young baker, a loss to the Russian army.

Bear went out in the market-place one fine day and saw Chayah in maiden ringlets. She was a slim, graceful little thing, with nothing obviously odd about the legs, and was buying onions. Her back was towards him, but in another moment she turned her head and Bear's. As he caught the sparkle of her eye, he felt that without her life were worse than the conscription. Without delay, he made inquiries about the fair young vision, and finding its respectability unimpeachable, he sent a *Shadchan* to propose to her, and they were affianced; Chayah's father undertaking to give a dowry of two hundred gulden. Unfortunately, he died suddenly in the attempt to amass them, and Chayah was left an orphan. The two hundred gulden were nowhere to be found. Tears rained down both Chayah's

cheeks, on the one side for the loss of her father, on the other for the prospective loss of a husband. The Rabbi was full of tender sympathy. He bade Bear come to the dead man's chamber. The venerable white-bearded corpse lay on the bed, swathed in shroud, and *Talith* or praying-shawl.

"Bear," he said, "thou knowest that I saved thy life."

"Nay," said Bear, "indeed, I know not that."

"Yea, of a surety," said the Rabbi. "Thy mother hath not told thee, but all thy brothers and sisters perished, and, lo! thou alone art preserved! It was I that called thee a beast."

Bear bowed his head in grateful silence.

"Bear," said the Rabbi, "thou didst contract to wed this dead man's daughter, and he did contract to pay over to thee two hundred gulden."

"Truth," replied Bear.

"Bear," said the Rabbi, "there are no two hundred gulden."

A shadow flitted across Bear's face, but he said nothing.

"Bear," said the Rabbi again, "there are not two gulden."

Bear did not move.

"Bear," said the Rabbi, "leave thou my side, and go over to the other side of the bed, facing me."

So Bear left his side and went over to the other side of the bed facing him.

"Bear," said the Rabbi, "give me thy right hand."

The Rabbi stretched his own right hand across the bed, but Bear kept his obstinately behind his back.

"Bear," repeated the Rabbi, in tones of more penetrating solemnity, "give me thy right hand."

"Nay," replied Bear, sullenly. "Wherefore should I give thee my right hand?"

"Because," said the Rabbi, and his tones trembled, and it seemed to him that the dead man's face grew sterner. "Because I wish thee to swear across the body of Chayah's father that thou wilt marry her."

"Nay, that I will not," said Bear.

"Will not?" repeated the Rabbi, his lips growing white with pity.

"Nay, I will not take any oaths," said Bear, hotly. "I love the maiden, and I will keep what I have promised. But, by my father's soul, I will take no oaths!"

"Bear," said the Rabbi in a choking voice, "give me thy hand. Nay, not to swear by, but to grip. Long shalt thou live, and the Most High shall prepare thy seat in Gan Eden."<sup>26</sup>

So the old man and the young clasped hands across the corpse, and the simple old Rabbi perceived a smile flickering over the face of Chayah's father. Perhaps it was only a sudden glint of sunshine.

The wedding-day drew nigh, but lo! Chayah was again dissolved in tears.

"What ails thee?" said her brother Naphtali.

"I cannot follow the custom of the maidens," wept Chayah. "Thou knowest we are blood-poor, and I have not the wherewithal to buy my Bear a *Talith* for his wedding-day; nay, not even to make him a *Talith*-bag. And when our father (the memory of the righteous for a blessing) was alive, I had dreamed of making my *chosan* a beautiful velvet satchel lined with silk, and I would have embroidered his initials thereon in gold, and sewn him beautiful white corpse-clothes. Perchance he will rely upon me for his wedding *Talith*, and we shall be shamed in the sight of the congregation."

"Nay, dry thine eyes, my sister," said Naphtali. "Thou knowest that my Leah presented me with a costly *Talith* when I led her under the canopy. Wherefore, do thou take my praying-shawl and lend it to Bear for the wedding-day, so that decency may be preserved in the sight of the congregation. The young man has a great heart, and he will understand."

So Chayah, blushing prettily, lent Bear Naphtali's delicate *Talith*, and Beauty and the Beast made a rare couple under the wedding canopy. Chayah wore the gold medallion and the three rows of pearls which her lover had sent her the day before. And when the Rabbi had finished blessing husband and wife, Naphtali spake the bridegroom privily, and said:

"Pass me my *Talith* back."

But Bear answered: "Nay, nay; the *Talith* is in my keeping, and there it shall remain."

"But it is my *Talith*," protested Naphtali in an angry whisper. "I only lent it to Chayah to lend it thee."

"It concerns me not," Bear returned in a decisive whisper. "The *Talith* is my due and I shall keep it. What! Have I not lost enough by marrying thy sister? Did not thy father, peace be upon him, promise me two hundred gulden with her?"

Naphtali retired discomfited. But he made up his mind not to go without some compensation. He resolved that during the progress of the wedding procession conducting the bridegroom to the chamber of the bride, he would be the man to snatch off Bear's new hat. Let the rest of the riotous escort essay to snatch whatever other article of the bridegroom's attire they would, the hat was the easiest to dislodge, and he, Naphtali, would straightway reimburse himself partially with that. But the instant the procession formed itself, behold the shifty bridegroom forthwith removed his hat, and held it tightly under his arm.

A storm of protestations burst forth at his daring departure from hymeneal tradition.

"Nay, nay, put it on," arose from every mouth.

But Bear closed his and marched mutely on. "Heathen," cried the Rabbi. "Put on your hat."

The attempt to enforce the religious sanction failed too. Bear had spent several gulden upon his head-gear, and could not see the joke. He plodded towards his blushing Chayah through a tempest of disapprobation.

Throughout life Bear Belcovitch retained the contrariety of character that marked his matrimonial beginnings. He hated to part with money; he put off paying bills to the last moment, and he would even beseech his "hands" to wait a day or two longer for their wages. He liked to feel that he had all that money in his possession. Yet "at home," in Poland, he had always lent money to the officers and gentry, when they ran temporarily short at cards. They would knock him up in the middle of the night to obtain the means of going on with the game. And in England he never refused to become surety for a loan when any of his poor friends begged the favor of him. These loans ran from three to five pounds, but whatever the amount, they were very rarely paid. The loan offices came down upon him for the money. He paid it without a murmur, shaking his head compassionately over the poor ne'er do wells, and perhaps not without a compensating consciousness of superior practicality.

Only, if the borrower had neglected to treat him to a glass of rum to clench his signing as surety, the shake of Bear's head would become more reproachful than sympathetic, and he would mutter bitterly: "Five pounds and not even a drink for the money." The jewelry he generously lavished on his womankind was in essence a mere channel of investment for his savings, avoiding the risks of a banking-account and aggregating his wealth in a portable shape, in obedience to an instinct generated by centuries of insecurity. The interest on the sums thus invested was the gratification of the other oriental instinct for gaudiness.

## Seder Night

"Prosaic miles of street stretch all around,  
 Astir with restless, hurried life, and spanned  
 By arches that with thund'rous trains resound,  
 And throbbing wires that galvanize the land;  
 Gin palaces in tawdry splendor stand;  
 The newsboys shriek of mangled bodies found;  
 The last burlesque is playing in the Strand—  
 In modern prose, all poetry seems drowned.  
 Yet in ten thousand homes this April night  
 An ancient people celebrates its birth  
 To Freedom, with a referential mirth,  
 With customs quaint and many a hoary rite,  
 Waiting until, its tarnished glories bright,  
 Its God shall be the God of all the Earth."<sup>118</sup>

To an imaginative child like Esther, *Seder* night was a charmed time. The strange symbolic dishes—the bitter herbs and the sweet mixture of apples, almonds, spices and wine, the roasted bone and the lamb, the salt water and the four cups of raisin wine, the great round unleavened cakes, with their mottled surfaces, some specially thick and sacred, the special Hebrew melodies and verses with their jingle of rhymes and assonances, the quaint ceremonial with its striking moments, as when the finger was dipped in the wine and the drops sprinkled over the shoulder in repudiation of the ten plagues of Egypt cabalistically magnified to two hundred and fifty; all this penetrated deep into her consciousness and made the recurrence of every Passover coincide with a rush of pleasant anticipations and a sense of the special privilege of being born a happy Jewish child. Vaguely, indeed, did she co-ordinate the celebration with the history enshrined in it or with the prospective history of her race. It was like a tale out of the fairy-books, this miraculous deliverance of her forefathers in the dim haze of antiquity; true enough but not more definitely realized on that account. And yet not easily dissoluble links were being

forged with her race, which has anticipated Positivism<sup>119</sup> in vitalizing history by making it religion.

The *Matzoth* that Esther ate were not dainty—they were coarse, of the quality called "seconds," for even the unleavened bread of charity is not necessarily delicate eating—but few things melted sweeter on the palate than a segment of a *Matso* dipped in cheap raisin wine; the unconventionality of the food made life less common, more picturesque. Simple Ghetto children into whose existence the ceaseless round of fast and feast, of prohibited and enjoyed pleasures, of varying species of food, brought change and relief! Imprisoned in the area of a few narrow streets, unlovely and sombre, muddy and ill-smelling, immured in dreary houses and surrounded with mean and depressing sights and sounds, the spirit of childhood took radiance and color from its own inner light and the alchemy of youth could still transmute its lead to gold. No little princess in the courts of fairyland could feel a fresher interest and pleasure in life than Esther sitting at the *Seder* table, where her father—no longer a slave in Egypt—leaned royally upon two chairs supplied with pillows as the *Din* prescribes. Not even the monarch's prime minister could have had a meaner opinion of Pharaoh than Moses Ansell in this symbolically sybaritic attitude. A live dog is better than a dead lion, as a great teacher in Israel had said. How much better then a live lion than a dead dog? Pharaoh, for all his purple and fine linen and his treasure cities, was at the bottom of the Red Sea, smitten with two hundred and fifty plagues, and even if, as tradition asserted, he had been made to live on and on to be King of Nineveh, and to give ear to the warnings of Jonah, prophet and whale-explorer, even so he was but dust and ashes for other sinners to cover themselves withal; but he, Moses Ansell, was the honored master of his household, enjoying a foretaste of the lollings of the righteous in Paradise; nay, more, dispensing hospitality to the poor and the hungry. Little fleas have lesser fleas, and Moses Ansell had never fallen so low but that, on this night of nights when the slave sits with the master on equal terms, he could manage to entertain a Passover guest, usually some newly-arrived Greenet, or some nondescript waif and stray returned to Judaism for the occasion and accepting a seat at the board in that spirit of *camaraderie* which is one of the most delightful features of the Jewish pauper. *Seder* was a ceremonial to be taken in none too solemn and sober a spirit, and there was an abundance of unimproved giggling throughout from the little ones, especially in those happy days when mother was alive and tried to steal the *Afikuman* or *Matso* specially laid aside for the final morsel, only to be surrendered to father when he promised to grant her whatever she wished. Alas! it is to be feared Mrs. Ansell's wishes did not soar high. There was more giggling when the youngest talking son—it was poor Benjamin in Esther's earliest recollections—opened the ball by inquiring in a peculiarly pitched incantation

and with an air of blank ignorance why this night differed from all other nights—in view of the various astonishing peculiarities of food and behavior (enumerated in detail) visible to his vision. To which Moses and the *Bube* and the rest of the company (including the questioner) invariably replied in corresponding sing-song: "Slaves have we been in Egypt," proceeding to recount at great length, stopping for refreshment in the middle, the never-cloying tale of the great deliverance, with irrelevant digressions concerning Haman and Daniel and the wise men of Bona Berak,<sup>120</sup> the whole of this most ancient of the world's extant domestic rituals terminating with an allegorical ballad like the "house that Jack built," concerning a kid that was eaten by a cat, which was bitten by a dog, which was beaten by a stick, which was burned by a fire, which was quenched by some water, which was drunk by an ox, which was slaughtered by a slaughterer, who was slain by the Angel of Death, who was slain by the Holy One, blessed be He.

In wealthy houses this *Hagadaht* was read from manuscripts with rich illuminations—the one development of pictorial art among the Jews—but the Anselms had wretchedly-printed little books containing quaint but unintentionally comic woodcuts, pre-Raphaelite in perspective and ludicrous in draughtsmanship, depicting the Miracles of the Redemption, Moses burying the Egyptian, and sundry other passages of the text. In one a king was praying in the Temple to an exploding bomb intended to represent the Shechimah or divine glory. In another, Sarah attired in a matronly cap and a fashionable jacket and skirt, was standing behind the door of the tent, a solid detached villa on the brink of a lake, whereon ships and gondolas floated, what time Abraham welcomed the three celestial messengers, unobtrusively disguised with heavy pinions. What delight as the quaffing of each of the four cups of wine loomed in sight, what disappointment and mutual bantering when the cup had merely to be raised in the hand, what chaff of the greedy Solomon who was careful not to throw away a drop during the digital manoeuvres when the wine must be jerked from the cup at the mention of each plague. And what a solemn moment was that when the tallest goblet was filled to the brim for the delectation of the prophet Elijah and the door thrown open for his entry. Could one almost hear the rustling of the prophet's spirit through the room? And what though the level of the wine subsided not a barley-corn? Elijah, though there was no difficulty in his being in all parts of the world simultaneously, could hardly compass the greater miracle of emptying so many million goblets. Historians have traced this custom of opening the door to the necessity of asking the world to look in and see for itself that no blood of Christian child figured in the ceremonial—and for once science has illumined naïve superstition with a tragic glow more poetic still. For the London Ghetto persecution had dwindled to an occasional bellowing through the keyhole, as the

local rowdies heard the unaccustomed melodies trolled forth from jocund lungs and then the singers would stop for a moment, startled, and some one would say: "Oh, it's only a Christian rough," and take up the thread of song.

And then, when the *Afikuman* had been eaten and the last cup of wine drunk, and it was time to go to bed, what a sweet sense of sanctity and security still reigned. No need to say your prayers to-night, beseeching the guardian of Israel, who neither slumbereth nor sleepeth, to watch over you and chase away the evil spirits; the angels are with you—Gabriel on your right and Raphael on your left, and Michael behind you. All about the Ghetto the light of the Passover rested, transfiguring the dreary rooms and illumining the gray lives.

Dutch Debby sat beside Mrs. Simons at the table of that good soul's married daughter; the same who had suckled little Sarah. Esther's frequent eulogiums had secured the poor lonely narrow-chested seamstress this enormous concession and privilege. Bobby squatted on the mat in the passage ready to challenge Elijah. At this table there were two pieces of fried fish sent to Mrs. Simons by Esther Ansell. They represented the greatest revenge of Esther's life, and she felt remorseful towards Malka, remembering to whose gold she owed this proud moment. She made up her mind to write her a letter of apology in her best hand.

At the Belcovitches' the ceremonial was long, for the master of it insisted on translating the Hebrew into jargon, phrase by phrase; but no one found it tedious, especially after supper. Pesach was there, hand in hand with Fanny, their wedding very near now; and Becky lolled royally in all her glory, aggressive of ringlet, insolently unattached, a conscious beacon of bedazzlement to the pauper *Pollack* we last met at Reb Shemuel's Sabbath table, and there, too, was Chayah, she of the ill-matched legs. Be sure that Malka had returned the clothes-brush, and was thrown in complacent majesty at Milly's table; and that Sugarman the *Shaachan* forgave his monocular consort her lack of a fourth uncle; while Joseph Strelitski, dreamer of dreams, rich with commissions from "Passover" cigars, brooded on the Great Exodus. Nor could the Shalotten *Shammos* be other than beaming, ordering the complex ceremonial with none to contradict; nor Karlkammer be otherwise than in the seven hundred and seventy-seventh heaven, which, calculated by *Gematriyah*, can easily be reduced to the seventh.

Shosshi Shumendrik did not fail to explain the deliverance to the widow Finkelstein, nor Guedalyah, the greengrocer, omit to hold his annual revel at the head of half a hundred merry "pauper-aliens." Christian roughs bawled derisively in the street, especially when doors were opened for Elijah; but hard words break no bones, and the Ghetto was uplifted above insult.

Melchitsedek Pinchas was the Passover guest at Reb Shemuel's table, for



the reek of his Sabbath cigar had not penetrated to the old man's nostrils. It was a great night for Pinchas, wrought up to fervid nationalistic aspirations by the memory of the Egyptian deliverance, which he yet regarded as mythical in its details. It was a terrible night for Hannah, sitting opposite to him under the fire of his poetic regard. She was pale and rigid, moving and speaking mechanically. Her father glanced towards her every now and again, compassionately, but with trust that the worst was over. Her mother realized the crisis much less keenly than he, not having been in the heart of the storm. She had never even seen her intended son-in-law except through the lens of a camera. She was sorry—that was all. Now that Hannah had broken the ice, and encouraged one young man, there was hope for the others.

Hannah's state of mind was divined by neither parent. Love itself is blind in those tragic silences which divide souls.

All night, after that agonizing scene, she did not sleep; the feverish activity of her mind rendered that impossible, and unerring instinct told her that David was awake also—that they two, amid the silence of a sleeping city, wrestled in the darkness with the same terrible problem, and were never so much at one as in this their separation. A letter came for her in the morning. It was unstamped, and had evidently been dropped into the letter-box by David's hand. It appointed an interview at ten o'clock at a corner of the Ruins; of course, he could not come to the house. Hannah was out with a little basket to make some purchases. There was a cheery hum of life about the Ghetto; a pleasant festival bustle; the air resounded with the raucous clucking of innumerable fowls on their way to the feather-littered, blood-stained shambles, where professional cutthroats wielded sacred knives; boys armed with little braziers of glowing coal ran about the Ruins, offering halfpenny pyres for the immolation of the last crumbs of leaven. Nobody paid the slightest attention to the two tragic figures whose lives turned on the brief moments of conversation snatched in the thick of the hurrying crowd.

David's clouded face lightened a little as he saw Hannah advancing towards him.

"I knew you would come," he said, taking her hand for a moment. His palm burned, hers was cold and limp. The stress of a great tempest of emotion had driven the blood from her face and limbs, but inwardly she was on fire. As they looked each read revolt in the other's eyes.

"Let us walk on," he said.

They moved slowly forwards. The ground was slippery and muddy under foot. The sky was gray. But the gaiety of the crowds neutralized the dull squalor of the scene.

"Well?" he said, in a low tone.

"I thought you had something to propose," she murmured.

"Let me carry your basket."

"No, no; go on. What have you determined?"

"Not to give you up, Hannah, while I live."

"Ah!" she said quietly. "I have thought it all over, too, and I shall not leave you. But our marriage by Jewish law is impossible; we could not marry at any synagogue without my father's knowledge; and he would at once inform the authorities of the bar to our union."

"I know, dear. But let us go to America, where no one will know. There we shall find plenty of Rabbis to marry us. There is nothing to tie me to this country. I can start my business in America just as well as here. Your parents, too, will think more kindly of you when you are across the seas. Forgiveness is easier at a distance. What do you say, dear?"

She shook her head.

"Why should we be married in a synagogue?" she asked.

"Why?" repeated he, puzzled.

"Yes, why?"

"Because we are Jews."

"You would use Jewish forms to outwit Jewish laws?" she asked quietly.

"No, no. Why should you put it that way? I don't doubt the Bible is all right in making the laws it does. After the first heat of my anger was over, I saw the whole thing in its proper bearings. Those laws about priests were only intended for the days when we had a Temple, and in any case they cannot apply to a merely farcical divorce like yours. It is these old fools,—I beg your pardon,—it is these fanatical Rabbis who insist on giving them a rigidity God never meant them to have, just as they still make a fuss about *kosher* meat. In America they are less strict; besides, they will not know I am a *Cohen*."

"No, David," said Hannah firmly. "There must be no more deceit. What need have we to seek the sanction of any Rabbi? If Jewish law cannot marry us without our hiding something, then I will have nothing to do with Jewish law. You know my opinions; I haven't gone so deeply into religious questions as you have—"

"Don't be sarcastic," he interrupted.

"I have always been sick to death of this eternal ceremony, this endless coil of laws winding round us and cramping our lives at every turn; and now it has become too oppressive to be borne any longer. Why should we let it ruin our lives? And why, if we determine to break from it, shall we pretend to keep to it? What do you care for Judaism? You eat *trifles*, you smoke on *Shabbos* when you want to—"

"Yes, I know, perhaps I'm wrong. But everybody does it now-a-days. When I was a boy nobody dared be seen riding in a bus on *Shabbos*—now you meet lots. But all that is only old-fashioned Judaism. There must be a God, else we shouldn't be here, and it's impossible to believe that Jesus

was He. A man must have some religion, and there isn't anything better. But that's neither here nor there. If you don't care for my plan," he concluded anxiously, "what's yours?"

"Let us be married honestly by a Registrar."

"Any way you like, dear," he said readily, "so long as we are married—and quickly."

"As quickly as you like."

He seized her disengaged hand and pressed it passionately. "That's my own darling Hannah. Oh, if you could realize what I felt last night when you seemed to be drifting away from me."

There was an interval of silence, each thinking excitedly. Then David said:

"But have you the courage to do this and remain in London?"

"I have courage for anything. But, as you say, it might be better to travel. It will be less of a break if we break away altogether—change everything at once. It sounds contradictory, but you understand what I mean."

"Perfectly. It is difficult to live a new life with all the old things round you. Besides, why should we give our friends the chance to cold-shoulder us? They will find all sorts of malicious reasons why we were not married in a *Skool*, and if they hit on the true one they may even regard our marriage as illegal. Let us go to America, as I proposed."

"Very well. Do we go direct from London?"

"No, from Liverpool."

"Then we can be married at Liverpool before sailing?"

"A good idea. But when do we start?"

"At once. To-night. The sooner the better."

He looked at her quickly. "Do you mean it?" he said. His heart beat violently as if it would burst. Waves of dazzling color swam before his eyes.

"I mean it," she said gravely and quietly. "Do you think I could face my father and mother, knowing I was about to wound them to the heart? Each day of delay would be torture to me. Oh, why is religion such a curse?" She paused, overwhelmed for a moment by the emotion she had been suppressing. She resumed in the same quiet manner. "Yes, we must break away at once. We have kept our last Passover. We shall have to eat leavened food—it will be a decisive break. Take me to Liverpool, David, this very day. You are my chosen husband; I trust in you."

She looked at him frankly with her dark eyes that stood out in lustrous relief against the pale skin. He gazed into those eyes, and a flash as from the inner heaven of purity pierced his soul.

"Thank you, dearest," he said in a voice with tears in it.

They walked on silently. Speech was as superfluous as it was inadequate. When they spoke again their voices were calm. The peace that comes of resolute decision was theirs at last, and each was full of the joy of daring

greatly for the sake of their mutual love. Petty as their departure from convention might seem to the stranger, to them it loomed as a violent breach with all the traditions of the Ghetto and their past lives; they were venturing forth into untrodden paths, holding each other's hand.

Jostling the loquacious crowd, in the unsavory by-ways of the Ghetto, in the gray chilliness of a cloudy morning, Hannah seemed to herself to walk in enchanted gardens, breathing the scent of love's own roses mingled with the keen salt air that blew in from the sea of liberty. A fresh, new blessed life was opening before her. The clogging vapors of the past were rolling away at last. The unreasoning instinctive rebellion, bred of ennui and brooding dissatisfaction with the conditions of her existence and the people about her, had by a curious series of accidents been hastened to its acutest development; thought had at last fermented into active resolution, and the anticipation of action flooded her soul with peace and joy, in which all recollection of outside humanity was submerged.

"What time can you be ready by?" he said before they parted.

"Any time," she answered. "I can take nothing with me. I dare not pack anything. I suppose I can get necessities in Liverpool. I have merely my hat and cloak to put on."

"But that will be enough," he said ardently. "I want but you."

"I know it, dear," she answered gently. "If you were as other Jewish young men I could not give up all else for you."

"You shall never regret it, Hannah," he said, moved to his depths, as the full extent of her sacrifice for love dawned upon him. He was a vagabond on the face of the earth, but she was tearing herself away from deep roots in the soil of home, as well as from the conventions of her circle and her sex. Once again he trembled with a sense of unworthiness, a sudden anxious doubt if he were noble enough to repay her trust. Mastering his emotion, he went on: "I reckon my packing and arrangements for leaving the country will take me all day at least. I must see my bankers if nobody else. I shan't take leave of anybody, that would arouse suspicion. I will be at the corner of your street with a cab at nine, and we'll catch the ten o'clock express from Euston. If we missed that, we should have to wait till midnight. It will be dark; no one is likely to notice me. I will get a dressing-case for you and anything else I can think of and add it to my luggage."

"Very well," she said simply.

They did not kiss, she gave him her hand, and, with a sudden inspiration, he slipped the ring he had brought the day before on her finger. The tears came into her eyes as she saw what he had done. They looked at each other through a mist, feeling bound beyond human intervention.

"Good-bye," she faltered.

"Good-bye," he said. "At nine."

"At nine," she breathed. And hurried off without looking behind.



It was a hard day, the minutes crawling reluctantly into the hours, the hours dragging themselves wearily on towards the night. It was typical April weather—squalls and sunshine in capricious succession. When it drew towards dusk she put on her best clothes for the Festival, stuffing a few precious mementoes into her pockets and wearing her father's portrait next to her lover's at her breast. She hung a travelling cloak and a hat on a peg near the hall-door ready to hand as she left the house. Of little use was she in the kitchen that day, but her mother was tender to her as knowing her sorrow. Time after time Hannah ascended to her bedroom to take a last look at the things she had grown so tired of—the little iron bed, the wardrobe, the framed lithographs, the jug and basin with their floral designs. All things seemed strangely dear now she was seeing them for the last time. Hannah turned over everything—even the little curling iron, and the cardboard box full of tags and rags of ribbon and chiffon and lace and crushed artificial flowers, and the fans with broken sticks and the stays with broken ribs, and the petticoats with dingy frills and the twelve-button ball gloves with dirty fingers, and the soiled pink wraps. Some of her books, especially her school-prizes, she would have liked to take with her—but that could not be. She went over the rest of the house, too, from top to bottom. It weakened her but she could not conquer the impulse of farewell. Finally she wrote a letter to her parents and hid it under her looking-glass, knowing they would search her room for traces of her. She looked curiously at herself as she did so; the color had not returned to her cheeks. She knew she was pretty and always strove to look nice for the mere pleasure of the thing. All her instincts were æsthetic. Now she had the air of a saint wrought up to spiritual exaltation. She was almost frightened by the vision. She had seen her face frowning, weeping, overcast with gloom, never with an expression so fateful. It seemed as if her resolution was writ large upon every feature for all to read.

In the evening she accompanied her father to *Shool*. She did not often go in the evening, and the thought of going only suddenly occurred to her. Heaven alone knew if she would ever enter a synagogue again—the visit would be part of her systematic farewell. Reb Shemuel took it as a symptom of resignation to the will of God, and he laid his hand lightly on her head in silent blessing, his eyes uplifted gratefully to Heaven. Too late Hannah felt the misconception and was remorseful. For the festival occasion Reb Shemuel elected to worship at the Great Synagogue; Hannah, seated among the sparse occupants of the Ladies' Gallery and mechanically fingering a *Machzor*, looked down for the last time on the crowded auditorium where the men sat in high hats and holiday garments. Tall wax-candles twinkled everywhere, in great gilt chandeliers depending from the ceiling, in sconces stuck about the window ledges, in candelabra branching from the walls. There was an air of holy joy about the solemn old structure

with its massive pillars, its small side-windows, high ornate roof, and skylights, and its gilt-lettered tablets to the memory of pious donors.

The congregation gave the responses with joyous uncton. Some of the worshippers tempered their devotion by petty gossip and the beadle marshalled the men in low hats within the iron railings, sonorously sounding his automatic amens. But to-night Hannah had no eye for the humors that were wont to awaken her scornful amusement—a real emotion possessed her, the same emotion of farewell which she had experienced in her own bedroom. Her eyes wandered towards the Ark, surmounted by the stone tablets of the Decalogue, and the sad dark orbs filled with the brooding light of childish reminiscence. Once when she was a little girl her father told her that on Passover night an angel sometimes came out of the doors of the Ark from among the scrolls of the Law. For years she looked out for that angel, keeping her eyes patiently fixed on the curtain. At last she gave him up, concluding her vision was insufficiently purified or that he was exhibiting at other synagogues. To-night her childish fancy recurred to her—she found herself involuntarily looking towards the Ark and half-expectant of the angel.

She had not thought of the *Seder* service she would have to partially sit through, when she made her appointment with David in the morning, but when during the day it occurred to her, a cynical smile traversed her lips. How apposite it was! To-night would mark *her* exodus from slavery. Like her ancestors leaving Egypt, she, too, would partake of a meal in haste, staff in hand ready for the journey. With what stout heart would she set forth, she, too, towards the promised land! Thus had she thought some hours since, but her mood was changed now. The nearer the *Seder* approached, the more she shrank from the family ceremonial. A panic terror almost seized her now, in the synagogue, when the picture of the domestic interior flashed again before her mental vision—she felt like flying into the street, on towards her lover without ever looking behind. Oh, why could David not have fixed the hour earlier, so as to spare her an ordeal so trying to the nerves? The black-stoled choir was singing sweetly; Hannah banished her foolish flutter of alarm by joining in quietly, for congregational singing was regarded rather as an intrusion on the privileges of the choir and calculated to put them out in their elaborate four-part fugues unaided by an organ.

"With everlasting love hast Thou loved the house of Israel, Thy people," she sang: "a Law and commandments, statutes and judgments hast thou taught us. Therefore, O Lord our God, when we lie down and when we rise up we will meditate on Thy statutes: yea, we will rejoice in the words of Thy Law and in Thy commandments for ever, for they are our life and the length of our days, and will meditate on them day and night. And

mayest Thou never take away Thy love from us. Blessed art Thou, O Lord, who lovest Thy people Israel."

Hannah scanned the English version of the Hebrew in her *Machzor* as she sang. Though she could translate every word, the meaning of what she sang was never completely conceived by her consciousness. The power of song over the soul depends but little on the words. Now the words seemed fateful, pregnant with special message. Her eyes were misty when the fugues were over. Again she looked towards the Ark with its beautifully embroidered curtain, behind which were the precious scrolls with their silken swathes and their golden bells and shields and pomegranates. Ah, if the angel would come out now! If only the dazzling vision gleamed for a moment on the white steps. Oh, why did he not come and save her?

Save her? From what? She asked herself the question fiercely, in defiance of the still, small voice. What wrong had she ever done that she so young and gentle should be forced to make so cruel a choice between the old and the new? This was the synagogue she should have been married in; stepping gloriously and honorably under the canopy, amid the pleasant excitement of a congratulatory company. And now she was being driven to exile and the chillness of secret nuptials. No, no; she did not want to be saved in the sense of being kept in the fold; it was the creed that was culpable, not she.

The service drew to an end. The choir sang the final hymn, the *Chazan* giving the last verse at great length and with many musical flourishes.

"The dead will God quicken in the abundance of His loving kindness. Blessed for evermore be His glorious name."

There was a clattering of reading-flaps and seat-lids and the congregation poured out, amid the buzz of mutual "Good Yomtoys." Hannah rejoined her father, the sense of injury and revolt still surging in her breast. In the fresh starlit air, stepping along the wet gleaming pavements, she shook off the last influences of the synagogue; all her thoughts converged on the meeting with David, on the wild flight northwards while good Jews were sleeping off the supper in celebration of their Redemption: her blood coursed quickly through her veins, she was in a fever of impatience for the hour to come.

And thus it was that she sat at the *Seder* table, as in a dream, with images of desperate adventure flitting in her brain. The face of her lover floated before her eyes, close, close to her own as it should have been to-night had there been justice in Heaven. Now and again the scene about her flashed in upon her consciousness, piercing her to the heart. When Levi asked the introductory question, it set her wondering what would become of him? Would manhood bring enfranchisement to him as womanhood was doing to her? What sort of life would he lead the poor Reb and his wife? The omens were scarcely auspicious; but a man's charter is so much wider than a woman's; and Levi might do much without paining them as she would

pain them. Poor father! The white hairs were predominating in his beard, she had never noticed before how old he was getting. And mother—her face was quite wrinkled. Ah, well; we must all grow old. What a curious man Melchisedek Pinchas was, singing so heartily the wonderful story. Judaism certainly produced some curious types. A smile crossed her face as she thought of herself as his bride.

At supper she strove to eat a little, knowing she would need it. In bringing some plates from the kitchen she looked at her hat and cloak, carefully hung up on the peg in the hall nearest the street door. It would take but a second to slip them on. She nodded her head towards them, as who should say "Yes, we shall meet again very soon." During the meal she found herself listening to the poet's monologues delivered in his high-pitched creaking voice.

Melchisedek Pinchas had much to say about a certain actor-manager who had spoiled the greatest jargon-play of the century and a certain labor-leader who, out of the funds of his gulls, had subsidized the audience to stay away, and (though here the Reb cut him short for Hannah's sake) a certain leading lady, one of the quartette of mistresses of a certain clergyman, who had been beguiled by her paramour into joining the great English conspiracy to hound down Melchisedek Pinchas,—all of whom he would shoot presently and had in the meantime enshrined like dead flies in the amber of immortal acrostics. The wind began to shake the shutters as they finished supper and presently the rain began to patter afresh against the panes. Reb Shemuel distributed the pieces of *Afikuman* with a happy sigh, and, lolling on his pillows and almost forgetting his family troubles in the sense of Israel's blessedness, began to chant the Grace like the saints in the Psalm who sing aloud on their couches. The little Dutch clock on the mantelpiece began to strike. Hannah did not move. Pale and trembling she sat riveted to her chair. One—two—three—four—five—six—seven—eight. She counted the strokes, as if to count them was the only means of telling the hour, as if her eyes had not been following the hands creeping, creeping. She had a mad hope the striking would cease with the eight and there would be still time to think. *Nime!* She waited, her ear longing for the tenth stroke. If it were only ten o'clock, it would be too late. The danger would be over. She sat, mechanically watching the hands. They crept on. It was five minutes past the hour. She felt sure that David was already at the corner of the street, getting wet and a little impatient. She half rose from her chair. It was not a nice night for an elopement. She sank back into her seat. Perhaps they had best wait till to-morrow night. She would go and tell David so. But then he would not mind the weather; once they had met he would bundle her into the cab and they would roll off, leaving the old world irrevocably behind. She sat in a paralysis of volition; rigid on her chair, magnetized by the warm comfortable room, the

old familiar furniture, the Passover table—with its white table-cloth and its decanter and wine-glasses, the faces of her father and mother eloquent with the appeal of a thousand memories. The clock ticked on loudly, fiercely, like a summoning drum; the rain beat an impatient tattoo on the window-panes, the wind rattled the doors and casements. "Go forth, go forth," they called, "go forth where your lover waits you, to bear you off into the new and the unknown." And the louder they called the louder Reb Shemuel trolled his hilarious Grace: *May He who maketh Peace in the High Heavens, bestow Peace upon us and upon all Israel and say ye, Amen.*

The hands of the clock crept on. It was half-past nine. Hannah sat lethargic, numb, unable to think, her strung-up nerves grown flaccid, her eyes full of bitter-sweet tears, her soul floating along as in a trance on the waves of a familiar melody. Suddenly she became aware that the others had risen and that her father was motioning to her. Instinctively she understood, rose automatically and went to the door; then a great shock of returning recollection whelmed her soul. She stood rooted to the floor. Her father had filled Elijah's goblet with wine and it was her annual privilege to open the door for the prophet's entry. Intuitively she knew that David was pacing madly in front of the house, not daring to make known his presence, and perhaps cursing her cowardice. A chill terror seized her. She was afraid to face him—his will was strong and mighty; her fevered imagination figured it as the wash of a great ocean breaking on the doorstep threatening to sweep her off into the roaring whirlpool of doom. She threw the door of the room wide and paused as if her duty were done.

"*Nu, nu,*" muttered Reb Shemuel, indicating the outer door. It was so near that he always had that opened, too.

Hannah tottered forwards through the few feet of hall. The cloak and hat on the peg nodded to her sardonically. A wild thrill of answering defiance shot through her: she stretched out her hands towards them. "Fly, fly, it is your last chance," said the blood throbbing in her ears. But her hand dropped to her side and in that brief instant of terrible illumination, Hannah saw down the whole long vista of her future life, stretching straight and unlovely between great blank walls, on, on to a solitary grave; knew that the strength had been denied her to diverge to the right or left, that for her there would be neither Exodus nor Redemption. Strong in the conviction of her weakness she noisily threw open the street door. The face of David, sallow and ghastly, loomed upon her in the darkness. Great drops of rain fell from his hat and ran down his cheeks like tears. His clothes seemed soaked with rain.

"At last!" he exclaimed in a hoarse, glad whisper. "What has kept you?"

"*Boruch Habo!* (Welcome art thou who arrivest)" came the voice of Reb Shemuel from within, greeting the prophet.

"Hush!" said Hannah. "Listen a moment."

The sing-song undulations of the old Rabbi's voice mingled harshly with the wail of the wind: "*Pour out Thy wrath on the heathen who acknowledge Thee not and upon the Kingdoms which invoke not Thy name, for they have devoured Jacob and laid waste his Temple. Pour out Thy indignation upon them and cause Thy fierce anger to overtake them. Pursue them in wrath and destroy them from under the heavens of the Lord.*"

"Quick, Hannah!" whispered David. "We can't wait a moment more. Put on your things. We shall miss the train."

A sudden inspiration came to her. For answer she drew his ring out of her pocket and slipped it into his hand.

"Good-bye!" she murmured in a strange hollow voice, and slammed the street door in his face.

"Hannah!" His startled cry of agony and despair penetrated the woodwork, muffled to an inarticulate shriek. He rattled the door violently in unreasoning frenzy.

"Who's that? What's that noise?" asked the Rebbitzin.

"Only some Christian rough shouting in the street," answered Hannah. It was truer than she knew.

\* \* \* \* \*

The rain fell faster, the wind grew shriller, but the Children of the Ghetto basked by their firesides in faith and hope and contentment. Hunted from shore to shore through the ages, they had found the national aspiration—Peace—in a country where Passover came without menace of blood. In the garret of Number 1 Royal Street little Esther Ansell sat brooding, her heart full of a vague tender poetry and penetrated by the beauties of Judaism, which, please God, she would always cling to; her childish vision looking forward hopefully to the larger life that the years would bring.

End of Book I

## Notes

Printed sources for these notes include such standard works as the *Encyclopedia Judaica* (1972), the *Oxford Companion to English Literature* (1985), and general reference works, as well as *Victorian Britain: An Encyclopedia*, edited by Sally Mitchell (New York: Garland, 1988); *The Jewish Book of Why*, by Alfred J. Kolatch, rev. ed. (Middle Village, N.Y.: Jonathan David, 1995); *The Social Politics of Anglo-Jewry 1880–1920*, by Eugene C. Black (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988); *London Jewry and London Politics 1889–1986*, by Geoffrey Alderman (London: Routledge, 1989); and other studies, as indicated.

Yiddish terms not found in this list are defined in context or in Zangwill's glossary, appended to the text of the novel. In transliterating Hebrew words not used by Zangwill, I use the more modern *h* for his *ch*, and the final *t* for his *th*.

1. **Andrew Lang** (1844–1912) was a well-known and prolific writer, reviewer, historian, anthropologist, and folklorist. **Rosa Dartle**, a character in Dickens's *David Copperfield*, was noted for her insinuating and disingenuous catchphrase, "I want to know."

Zangwill's Preface also mentions that the "original sub-title" is restored in the 1893 edition. In fact, the subtitle in the typescript and the American first edition reads "Being Pictures of a Peculiar People."

2. **phylacteries and praying shawls** Phylacteries (*tefillin*) and the prayer shawl (*tallit*, *tallith*, or *tallis*) are ritual items worn by Jews. *Teffilin* are small leather boxes containing verses from the Torah that are attached by leather straps to the forehead and forearm during daily morning prayers. Their use is prescribed in the Torah's commandments to place a sign on the hand and between the eyes as a reminder of the commandments and the deliverance from Egypt (Exodus 13:9; 13:16; Deuteronomy 6:8, 11:18). The term *phylacteries* comes from Christian scripture (Matthew 23:5) and is not in common Jewish usage today. The *tallit* is a shawl whose fringes fulfill the commandment to attach fringes to the corners of one's garment as a reminder of the commandments (Numbers 15:37–41). It is worn during daily morning prayers and on the Sabbath and holidays. Although today some women are beginning to use both *tefillin* and *tallitot*, they were traditionally used only by men, and certainly that would have been the case in the community

described in *Children of the Ghetto*. Use of the *tallit* by Jewish men in synagogues is and was nearly universal (the exception being in Reform congregations), while today use of the *tefillin* is limited to those observant Jews who say daily prayers.

3. *Vox et praeterea nihil*. (Lat.) "A voice and, beyond that, nothing." The saying comes from Plutarch, who tells the story of a man who plucks the feathers off a nightingale, only to find that it is pathetically small—"a voice, and nothing more." The phrase in common usage denotes an empty threat, though here Zangwill is simply punning upon it. I am grateful to Marian Demos for her assistance with this and other classical references.

4. *Nihil alienum a se Judeus putat*. (Lat.) "A Jew thinks/believes that there is nothing which is beyond his sphere," or, more colloquially, "A Jew thinks there is nothing which does not concern him." Zangwill is here playing on the famous line 77 from Terence's Latin play *Heauton Timorumenos* (*Self-Tormentor*), which refers to the Stoic tenet of human brotherhood, *homo sum: humani nil a me alienum puto* ("I am a human being: nothing human do I deem strange").

5. *as late as Strype's day* John Strype (1643–1737) was an ecclesiastical historian who brought up to date, in 1720, the detailed *Survey of London* published by John Stow in 1598 and 1603.

6. "stuffed monkeys" and "bolas" The stuffed monkey is a biscuit (or cookie) stuffed with an almond and citron peel filling. According to Evelyn Rose in the *Jewish Chronicle* (Cooking: "What a Lot of Monkey Business," 7 Sept. 1990), its origins are probably Dutch. It was introduced to the East End by Monnickendam's Jewish bakery, which stood on Middlesex Street until World War II. The name of the cookie thus derives from the name of the shop, not the animal. Stuffed monkeys were typically eaten with hot chocolate. A bola is a large cake made with almonds, ginger, and sugar syrup. These confections are not common in American-Jewish cooking. See Evelyn Rose's article and *Florence Greenberg's Cookery Book*, published by the *Jewish Chronicle* (no date).

7. "gentlemen of the Mahamad" As Zangwill describes it in *The King of Schnorrers* (a work in which it figures prominently), the Mahamad was a council of five that administered the affairs of the Sephardic community in London in the eighteenth century. It gave permission for marriage, divorce, and burial, enforced regulations, collected fees and fines, and distributed charity. "To itself the Mahamad was the center of creation" (*The King of Schnorrers: Grotesques and Fantasies* [New York: Macmillan, 1898] 105).

8. *Jewish Board of Guardians* The Jewish Board of Guardians was established in London in 1859 to provide philanthropy to the immigrant poor (who were not being served by existing Jewish relief organizations) and, eventually, to consolidate the charitable work being carried out by numerous smaller groups. Eugene Black points out that Jewish self-help programs of some kind were in place as early as 1690; in the nineteenth century they allowed the Jewish poor to receive aid while maintaining religious observance (something that would have been impossible in the English workhouse), protected from the enticements of conversionists.

9. *Doré* Gustave Doré (1832–83), a French illustrator and caricaturist, became well known for his drawings and engravings of London life. Completed between 1869 and 1870, they depict many sides of the city but emphasize, as the *Oxford Companion* notes, "the picturesque clutter and squalor of the poorer districts."

10. *Factory Acts* a series of laws passed throughout the nineteenth century, starting in 1802, designed to regulate working conditions and hours for children

and later for women as well. The 1878 act consolidated the laws then in existence and increased the enforcement powers of inspectors.

11. *Agamemnon* leader of the Greeks in the Trojan War, whose purpose was to rescue and return the beautiful Helen.

12. *breach of promise* Zangwill is referring to the requirements placed on both parties by the Jewish marriage contract, or *ketubah*. However, breach of promise was also a lively controversial issue in late Victorian England and a frequent subject of comment in *Puck* and *Artel*, Zangwill's humor papers.

13. *pantomime* The pantomime was a highly popular form of theatrical performance, typically associated with Christmas and Easter entertainment. The *Aladdin* story was a frequent theme, as were other plots from fairy tales, mythology, and history. By the end of the century, music hall acts, spectacular costumes, and cross-dressing were integral parts of the entertainment. The role of the "principal boy," for example, was played by a young woman. (See Kathy Fletcher, "Pantomime, Burlesque, and Extravaganza," in Mitchell, *Victorian Britain: An Encyclopedia*.)

14. *Shibboleth* in Judges 12:6, the password required by Jephthah's Gileadite sentries. Forty-two thousand Ephraimites were slain because they could only pronounce the word as "sibboleth." Zangwill is referring to differences in the pronunciation of Yiddish letters between Lithuanian and Polish Jews. In fact, when Moses Ansell's cousin refers to him as "Méshe (101), she is using the Lithuanian-Yiddish pronunciation of a name that in Polish Yiddish is "Moishe" and in Hebrew is pronounced "Moshéh."

15. *ICI on ne parle pas Français*. (Fr.) "French is not spoken here."

16. *Baal Habaa*s literally, lord of the house.

17. *Charity never faileth* 1 Corinthians 13:8. Zangwill's frequent allusions to Christian scripture may have several sources: his desire to appeal to a broad readership by placing Jewish culture in the larger British context; his assumption that key phrases from Christian texts would be familiar even to Jewish readers; and the related pervasiveness of Christian cultural references in the lives of middle-class, educated English Jews of his time. The allusions indicate both the degree to which Zangwill himself had internalized English pressures on Jews to assimilate and the extent to which well-educated English Jews examined their religion in relation to Christianity. Articles in the *Jewish Quarterly Review*, the most important intellectual Anglo-Jewish journal of the day, reflect that ongoing comparative analysis. When quoting from Christian or Hebrew scripture, Zangwill apparently uses the King James Version (sometimes inexact). I have therefore used the KJV translation for quotations of scripture in these notes and acknowledged the assistance of the searchable KJV database of the University of Virginia (<http://etext.virginia.edu/patbin/pat2www?specfile=/lv6/workspace/kjv/kjv-pub.p2w>).

18. "greener" the term given to new immigrants by immigrants who had been in the new country for a while, used in England and the United States.

19. a *synagogue wherein to shake himself* The Jewish custom of swaying back and forth while standing in prayer (called *shuckling* in Yiddish) has a long history and many explanations. Today it is most commonly seen as a way of involving the whole body and spirit in the act of devotion.

20. *Chasanim* plural of *chasan*: bridegroom or fiancé.

21. *Penelope of the buttonholes* Penelope, the wife of Odysseus, had promised her suitors she would marry one of them when she finished weaving a shroud for her father-in-law. She would weave during the day and unweave at night, so that the shroud would never be completed while she awaited her husband's return.

22. **East London Laban** Laban was the father of the biblical patriarchs Leah and Rachel. When Jacob wanted to marry Rachel, Laban made him work seven years for her and then substituted the elder sister, Leah, as the bride. Jacob had to work another seven years for Rachel, although he was able to marry her one week after his marriage to Leah (Genesis 29:1–30).

23. **"It is not beautiful that . . ."** This awkward English phrase is a direct translation of a common expression in Yiddish, *es iz nisht sheyn*, meaning it is not nice, not fitting, or the like. It is an example of the convoluted expressions that appear often in the novel as a result of Zangwill's decision to translate literally rather than idiomatically. Readers who understand Yiddish will know that the spoken language is not at all as stilted and formal as it appears in Zangwill's translations. In particular, while Zangwill may have wanted to re-create a biblical tone in his immigrants' speech, the use of the pronouns "thou," "thee," and "thy" are in fact simply literal translations of the familiar forms of "you" in Yiddish. Any biblical resonances, indeed, seem out of place.

24. **Jehuda Halevi . . . Maimonides** Jehuda Halevi (1085–1142) was a great Hebrew poet of medieval Spain, educated in Talmud, philosophy, Arabic literature, and medicine. He was the author of *The Kuzari*, a philosophic work that aimed at showing Judaism superior to other systems of belief. Unlike other Jewish philosophers, Halevi did not attempt to reconcile Judaism with philosophy but rather affirmed that religious observance needed no confirmation by reason. Maimonides (Rabbi Moses ben Maimon, or Rambam, 1135–1204), the great Jewish philosopher, religious thinker, and physician, was also born in Spain; he lived and worked in Morocco, Palestine, and Egypt. He is best known for his comprehensive code of Jewish law, the *Mishneh Torah*, a fourteen-volume work in Hebrew, and his *Guide to the Perplexed*, written in Arabic around 1190. In the *Guide to the Perplexed*, Maimonides did attempt to reconcile faith and reason, referring specifically to Aristotelian philosophy in relation to rabbinic Judaism.

25. **Rashi's commentary on the Book of Job** Rashi (Rabbi Solomon [Shlomo] ben Yitzhak, 1040–1105) was born in Troyes, France, where he founded a Talmudic school and produced what are still considered the most important and influential commentaries on the Talmud and Bible.

26. **Gan Eden** paradise; literally, the Garden of Eden.

27. **the great Ghetto school** The Jews' Free School was created in 1840, developed from the Talmud Torah School in the East End by Moses Angel, who remained its headmaster for fifty-one years. By the beginning of the twentieth century, the Jews' Free School was the largest elementary school in England. Its founders and supporters saw its mission as providing a balance of Jewish and English education; as a school, community center, and home of the Jewish Lads' Brigade, it was a major organ of the anglicization of East End youth. Israel Zangwill, who began his career as a teacher there, was one of its most famous graduates. (See Black 109–11.)

28. **there were rumors of strikes in the air** (also 108: **Everybody is striking**—**Jews with them**) See the Introduction for a brief discussion of Zangwill's response to the bootmakers', tailors', and bakers' strikes of the 1880s and 1890s.

29. **carte and tierce** parrying positions in fencing.

30. **sported their oaks** closed their doors on one another. The phrase originates in the double doors of student rooms at Oxford and Cambridge. When company was welcome, one might shut the light inner door but leave open the heavy outer door, made of oak. When the outer door was closed, it was a sign that privacy was wanted, and no one dared to knock. The *OED* notes the phrase "sporting one's

oak" as early as the late eighteenth century; it was later adapted to more general usage. A lively discussion of the evolution of the phrase may be found in the VICTORIA electronic archives for late April–early May 1997 (<http://www.indiana.edu/~libref/victoria/>).

31. **the Oxbridge Music Hall** The music hall, with its ballet girls, singers, and comedians, was a popular form of theatrical entertainment in fin-de-siècle London. Zangwill comments on Jewish enthusiasm for the theater here and elsewhere in the novel. In the early 1890s, Zangwill himself was an avid theatergoer and beginning playwright whose acquaintances included the actor-managers Henry Irving and H. Beerbohm Tree as well as actresses Olga Brandon, Elizabeth Robins, and others. His connection to the theater deepened as he became increasingly involved in writing and producing dramas.

32. **a morsel of wood to burn with them . . .** The practice of burning nail cuttings rather than simply throwing them away has to do with the fact that the nails serve as a barrier to impurities, and thus are likely to contain them. Burning ensures that a pregnant woman will not come in contact with these impurities which might harm her and, as in one account, cause premature birth. According to Rabbi Yosef Y. Kazen, the wood is used to weaken the odor of burning nail tips. Discussion of this practice may be found in various tracts of the Talmud and in the important post-talmudic code of laws, the *Shulhan Aruh*. (Rabbi Yosef Y. Kazen [<http://www.chabad.org/>], private e-mail correspondence, "Re: wood n nails" 28 May 1997; Murray Freedman and Elliot Gertel, private e-mail in response to my post on the H-Judaic listserv [[h-judaic@h-net.msu.edu](mailto:h-judaic@h-net.msu.edu)], "a query: cutting finger-nails," 27 May 1997; see also "Nail," *Jewish Encyclopedia* [New York: Funk & Wagnall's, 1905].)

33. **Térah . . . Gemorah . . . Mishnays . . . Tractate Niddah . . . Cabballah** Zangwill's terms reflect Yiddish pronunciation, with *Térah* indicating the Torah, or five books of the Law (Pentateuch) and *Mishnays* representing the study of *Mishnah*. The Mishnah and the *Gemara* are the two major divisions of the Talmud, the massive work of commentary that interprets Jewish law. The Mishnah is the interpretation of biblical law, while the *Gemara* contains commentaries on the Mishnah. (The Talmud as a whole is composed both of *halahah*, or law, and *aggadah*, the legends, tales, and fables of Jewish tradition that Zangwill refers to elsewhere in *Children of the Ghetto*.) The Mishnah is divided into six major sections that are further divided into sixty-three tracts. Tractate *Niddah*, as Zangwill's text indicates, deals with the laws of marriage, including rules governing sexuality. *Cabballah* (or *Cabbalah*) is Jewish mysticism, including numerology.

34. **Pitayun Haben** As commanded in Exodus 13:1–2, the first-born son of every Hebrew family is said to be consecrated to God, and must be given to a priest, or *Cohen*. However, that same chapter of Exodus provides that the child may be bought back, or redeemed. In the *pitayun ha-ben* ceremony, held on the thirty-first day after birth, a *Cohen* is paid a symbolic amount of money in exchange for the first-born son. The ritual, described late in the chapter, is the occasion for festivities.

35. **imbeshreer** Zangwill's glossary defines this expression as "without bewitchings; unbeshrwn." Its use requires comment, however. Like the similar expression *keyn eyin-horeh* ("let there be no evil eye"), *imbeshreer* is pronounced immediately after a boast is made or a compliment given, especially about a child. The point of this superstition is to deflect any evil spirits who might be made jealous and thus be tempted to harm the object of the compliment or boast.

36. **Chevrah** and **Shool** Although in this instance the word *shool* is used to



from 1885 to 1900 was a Jew, Sir Samuel Montagu (see n. 53); he was succeeded by his nephew, Sir Stuart M. Samuel. Alderman points out that between 1889 and 1913 Jews made up less than 1 percent of the population of London but 5 percent of the London county councillors and that a similar overrepresentation appeared in Parliament (*London Jewry and London Politics* 29–30).

104. **the Henry Goldsmith prize** Zangwill was the first recipient of the Rothschild prize when he was a student at the Jews' Free School.

105. **He rent his coat . . . turned the looking-glass to the wall . . .** Moses Ansell is carrying out traditional Jewish mourning customs. The *Shemang* recited by Benjamin is today more commonly referred to as the *Sh'ma*.

106. **Rachel** stage name of Eliza Rachel Felix (1821–58), the French actress who gained an international reputation as one of the great tragic actresses of her day. The daughter of a Jewish peddler, her most famous role was Racine's *Phèdre*; the play *Adrienne Lecouvreur* was written for her.

107. . . . **the domestic table-knife** Sarah Siddons (1755–1831) was one of the great tragic actresses of the English stage. She made her London debut in 1775 and retired from public performance in 1812 playing Lady Macbeth, the role for which she was best known.

108. **Sheol** the land of gloom and darkness where the dead dwell. Sheol is referred to many times in Hebrew scripture and legend, but it does not have a large place in Jewish religious belief.

109. **a sprinkling of audience (most of it paper)** "Papering the house" refers to the wide dissemination of free tickets when paying audiences are unlikely to be obtained.

110. **unleavened "palavas"** The ingredients of the palava, a cake that is kosher for Passover, are eggs, salt, sugar, lemon, oil, water, and matzo meal. It seems to resemble the ubiquitous American Passover sponge cake.

111. **Mudie's** the successful and highly influential subscription library established in London by Charles Edward Mudie in 1842. Mudie's required that the books it bought be suitable for family reading. It encouraged the production of three-volume novels until the 1890s, when its policies, joined with authors' and readers' changing demands, ensured the demise of that form.

112. **"Russell"** (Yiddish) brine.

113. **"Here's your cakes! . . ."** This picture of the vendors' hawking and the bargaining before Passover is adapted from Zangwill's early story "Motso Kleis, or the Green Chinese" (see Introduction).

114. **Hokey Pokey** cheap ice cream sold by street vendors (*OED*).

115. **tanner** sixpence. A **bob** is a shilling.

116. **Elisha's influence over bears** When children mocked the prophet Elisha on his way to Bethel, "he cursed them in the name of the Lord"; two bears promptly appeared and mauled forty-two of the children (II Kings 2:23–24).

117. The British third edition corrects Reb Shemuel's error by having him ask, "Did not the House of Judgment authorise the divorce?" **Leviticus, chapter 21, verse 7 . . .** A debate ensued among rabbis and scholars as to whether Zangwill was correct in having Reb Shemuel uphold the validity of the marriage and divorce. (See n. 41 and the Introduction.)

118. **" . . . the God of all the Earth."** Zangwill is the author of this sonnet, which is reprinted in *Blind Children*.

119. **Positivism . . .** the philosophy of Auguste Comte (1798–1857), which maintains that the object of knowledge is to understand the cause and effect relations that govern phenomena. It is rooted in principles of scientific investigation

and opposed to metaphysics. Comte coined the term "religion of humanity," which Zangwill uses elsewhere in the novel in relation to Judaism.

120. **the wise men of Bona Berak** (also Bene Berak) The subject of one of many anecdotes in the *Haggadah*, these rabbis become so engrossed in the story of the exodus that they must be interrupted to recite morning prayers. Zangwill in this part of the novel alludes to many Passover readings, songs, and customs that would be well known to Jewish readers.

121. **Christmas crackers** snappers; paper party favors that one pulls to make a snapping or cracking noise.

122. **Touchstone's license** Tombstone, the clown in Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, is able to say whatever he wants to with impunity.

123. **causeur** (Fr.) talk or chat.

124. **When Jeshurun waxed fat . . .** Deuteronomy 32:15.

125. **Lessing and George Eliot** Gottfried Ephraim Lessing (1729–81) was a dramatist and writer of the German Enlightenment. He was not Jewish but urged religious toleration; his 1948 play *Die Juden* presented a relatively objective image of the Jew on the German stage. His last play, *Nathan der Weise*, is believed to have been inspired by his friendship with Moses Mendelssohn, a friendship that Zangwill depicts in *Dreamers of the Ghetto*. George Eliot (1819–80) wrote sympathetically of Jews and, in particular, of Jewish nationalist aspirations, in her last novel, *Daniel Deronda* (1876). Zangwill was a great admirer of Eliot (although he occasionally tweaked her in his literary criticism), and her humanistic religious beliefs find a sympathetic reflection in Zangwill's Judaic "religion of humanity." *Children of the Ghetto* contains several verbal echoes of phrases in Eliot's novels, and Zangwill's leisurely explanations, often rich with analogies, are at times reminiscent of her style.

126. **alahabiyia** a large sailing boat used by travelers on the Nile (*OED*).

127. **Marannos** (more commonly spelled *Marranos*) Spanish Jews converted during the Inquisition who practiced Judaism in secret. The literal meaning of the term is *pigs*, and for this reason its use is now avoided.

128. **Wendell Holmes** Zangwill is most likely referring to Oliver Wendell Holmes (1809–94), professor of anatomy and physiology at Harvard and author of a substantial body of poetry and prose. He was the father of the great American jurist who shared his name. In *Over the Teacups* (1891) he reprints his response to the *American Hebrew's* questionnaire regarding prejudice against the Jews (see Introduction) and emphasizes the shared values and teachings of Judaism and Christianity.

129. **Bachja** (or Bahya) Of the various Jewish writers and thinkers with this name, Zangwill is most likely referring to Bahya Ben Joseph Ibn Paquda, an eleventh-century Spanish moral philosopher and poet. His Hebrew treatise *How to Live* (*Duties of the Heart*) draws significantly on Muslim mysticism and Arabic Neoplatonism. He was for a long time believed to be the author, as well, of the Neoplatonic work in Arabic *Kitab Ma'ari al-Nafs* (*On the Essence of the Soul*). This treatise is now attributed to another writer using the pseudonym Bahya, about whom very little is known.

130. **'bound each to each by natural piety'** the concluding verse of William Wordsworth's short poem "My Heart Leaps Up" (1807).

131. **dea ex machina** (Lat.) goddess from a machine. This is Zangwill's variation on *deus ex machina*, a term originally describing a god brought onto the scene of an ancient drama to decide its outcome and later adopted to mean any person or thing providing a sudden or apparently arbitrary solution.