

THE SHYLOCK OF BARNOW. (1873.)

The Jew's great white house stands exactly opposite the old gray monastery of the Dominicans, and close to the public road that leads from Lemberg to Skala, passing through the gloomy little town of Barnow on the way. The people born in the small dirty houses of the Ghetto grow up with a feeling of the deepest respect and admiration for this house and its owner, old Moses Freudenthal. Both house and man are the pride of Barnow; and both in their own way justify this pride.

To describe the house in the first place. It really seems to be conscious of its own grandeur as it stands there proud and stately in all the dignity of white-washed cleanliness, the long windows of the first floor bright and shining, and the painted shutters of the shop-windows coming down to the very ground at either side of the great folding-doors which stand invitingly open. For it is a house of entertainment, and the nobles of the country-side know how to take advantage of its superior attractions when they come to town on magisterial business, or attend the weekly market. It is also patronized by the cavalry officers who are stationed in the villages in the neighborhood, whenever the boredom of country quarters drives them into town. Besides this, the house is let in suites of apartments, and the greatest of the magnates of Barnow, such as the district judge and the doctor, live there. But it would be difficult to give a list of all the house contains, the ground-floor is so crowded. In one room is a lottery agency, then come the offices of a company for insuring cattle, men, and corn; and again, a drapery establishment, a grocer's shop, a room in which gentlemen may drink their wine, and another where the poor man can enjoy his glass of brandy-and-water. But then, the lottery agent, the agent of the insurance company, the draper, the grocer, and the innkeeper are one and all - Moses Freudenthal.

But the tall stern-looking old man to whom the house belongs is even more worthy of notice than it and all it contains. His family has been the grandest in the town as long as people can remember, and to him belongs of right the chief place in the synagogue. His father had been appointed head of the session on the death of his grandfather, and when his father died he was chosen as his successor without a dissentient voice, and by the unsolicited vote of the whole congregation. He is regarded as one of the most pious and honorable men in the Jewish community. Added to this is his wealth - his enormous wealth!

His co-religionists regard him as a millionaire, and they are right. For he not only possesses the big white house and all that is in it, but he has every reason to look upon several of the estates in the neighborhood as more really belonging to him than to the Polish nobles who live on them. And then Komorowka is his also. This beautiful place fell into his hands when little Count Smólski and his lovely wife Aurora lost it by their extravagance after a very few years' possession. Komorowka is indeed a lovely place. No wonder that when the time came for

Count Smólski to leave his old home, he was in such utter despair that he sought to forget his woes in the worst fit of drunkenness of his whole life.

Would you be much surprised if you were now told that Moses Freudenthal was not only the richest and proudest, but also the most envied, man in Barnow?

But this he is not. Ask the poorest man in the Jewish town - the teacher of the law, who, with his six children, often suffers from the pangs of hunger, or the water-carriers, who groan under the heavy pails they bear from morning to night from the town-well - ask these men whether they would exchange lots with Moses, and they will at once answer, "No." For Freudenthal's sorrow is even greater than his wealth.

It is true that you can not read this in his face as he stands, tall and stately, in the doorway of his house. His silver-gray hair falls down below his black velvet skull-cap; the two long curls that hang, one at each side of the face, as is the fashion of the Chassidim, are also silver-gray and thin. But his figure is still strong and upright, and the curiously cut Jewish coat that he wears, resembling a talar in shape, and made of black cloth, is by no means an unbecoming garment. The old man stands almost motionless watching the painter who is busy painting the doors of the spirit-shop a bright arsenic green, with bottles, glasses, and bretzeln,[1] in yellow and white upon the green background. He seldom turns to acknowledge the greeting of a passer-by, for but few people are in the streets to-day. Now and then a group of Ruthenian peasants may be seen reeling out of the town-gate, or a nobleman drives past in his light britzska, or perhaps it is some poor peddler, who has been wandering the whole week long from farm to farm in the district, exchanging money and cloth for the sheepskins, laden with which he is returning to town. His burden is heavy and his gain is but small, yet his pale, worn, and, it may be, cunning face is not without a gleam of joy and pride. A few hours later and the miserable ragged Jewish peddler, on whom farmers and nobles had tried the weight of their whips, and on whom they had made many a scurrilous jest, is transformed into a proud prince awaiting the arrival of his lovely bride - the day of rest, the Sabbath.

He has not long to wait now, the Friday afternoon is drawing to a close, and the sun will soon set. Preparations for the day of rest are being made in every house; the sunlit street is almost totally deserted. Herr Lozinski, the district judge, a tall, thin, yellow-faced man, is coming down the street accompanied by a young stranger. He stands at the door for a few minutes talking to Moses before going up-stairs to his rooms. They discuss the badness of the times, the low price of silver, and the promising April weather; for it is a real spring day, more like May than anything else. The streets are very dry, except for a few puddles in the market-place; the air is deliciously soft and warm, and yonder in the monk's garden the fruit-trees and elder bushes are covered with blossom. The Christian children coming home from school are shouting, "Spring! spring is coming!" "Yes, spring is coming," says the district judge, taking off his hat and leading his guest up-stairs. "Spring is coming," repeats old Moses, passing his hand across his forehead as if awakening from a dream... "Spring is coming!"

"Old Moses is a very remarkable man," says the district judge to the new registrar. "I scarcely know whether to call him eccentric or not. You won't believe it, but he knows as much law as the best barrister in the land. And besides that, he's the richest man in the country-side.

He is said to be worth millions! And yet he slaves week-in, week-out, as though he hadn't the wherewithal to buy his Sabbath dinner."

"A niggardly money-grubber like all the Jews," says the registrar, making the smoke of his cigar curl slowly in the air.

"H'm! By no means. He is generous. I must confess that he is very generous. But his generosity gives him no more pleasure than his wealth. Yet he goes on speculating as before. And for whom, if you please - for whom?"

"Has he no children?" inquires the other.

"Yes. That's to say, he has and he hasn't. Ask him, and he will tell you that he has none. But you don't know his story, do you?... Every one here knows it - but then, you see, you come from Lemberg. I suppose that you never heard any one speak of the old man's daughter, beautiful Esther Freudenthal, when you were there? The whole affair is very romantic; I must tell it you...."

The old man, whose story every one knows, is still leaning against the doorway of his house, watching the flower-laden branches of the fruit-trees in the cloister garden as they sway in the breeze. What is he thinking of? It can not be of his business; for his eyes are wet with unshed tears, and his lips tremble for a moment as though with stifled grief. He shades his eyes with his hand, as if the sunlight were blinding him. Then he draws himself up, and shakes his head, as though trying to rid himself of the sad thoughts that oppress him.

"Make haste, the Sabbath is drawing nigh," he says to the painter as he approaches to examine his work more closely.

The little humpback, who wears a shabby frogged coat of a fashion only known in Poland, has just finished the folding-doors, and now limps away to the window-shutters, paint-pot in hand. These shutters had formerly been colored a bright crimson, and their faded surface still bears the almost illegible inscription in white letters: "For ready money to-day - to-morrow gratis." Their glory has long since departed, and the little man, quickly filling his brush with the vivid green, begins to paint over them, saying as he works, "Do you remember, Pani Moschko, that I painted this too?" and with that he points to the dirty brown-red of the first coloring.

But Moses is thinking of other things, and scarcely heeding him, answers with an indifferent, "Really."

"Of course I did," continues the little man eagerly. "Don't you remember? I painted it fifteen years ago on just such another beautiful day as this is. The house was quite new, and I was a young fellow then. When I had finished my work, you looked at it, and said, 'I am pleased with you, Janko.' You were standing in front of the door, just where you are now, I verily believe, and your little Esterka was beside you. Holy Virgin! how lovely the child was! And how pleasant it was to hear her laugh when she saw the white letters appearing one after the other on the red ground! She asked what they meant, the darling! You gave me three Theresien zwanzigers[2] for my work. I remember it as distinctly as if it were yesterday. I thought then that it was my last job in Barnow; for old Herr von Polanski wanted to send me to the school of design at Cracow. But soon afterward he lost every farthing he possessed, and was even

obliged to sell his daughter Jadwiga in order to get food to eat, and so I remained a house-painter. Ah yes! man proposes and.... Deuce take it! The old man's gone, and here I am gossiping away to the empty air. I suppose that the Jew is counting his money as usual...."

But Janko is mistaken. Moses Freudenthal is not counting his treasures at this moment. Indeed he would probably give up all that he possesses without a sigh could he thereby rid his life of what has made him poorer and more wretched than the beggar at his gates. He has taken refuge in the large dusky sitting-room, into which no ray of sunlight, and no sound of the human voice, can penetrate. He can now throw himself into his arm-chair, and sob from the bottom of his heart without any one asking him what is the matter; he can let his head fall upon his breast, tear his hair, or cover his face with his hands.... He does not weep, or pray, nor yet does he curse; he moans out in pain, the words echoing in the quiet room, "How pleasant it was to hear the child's laugh!..." Thus he sits alone in the twilight. At last he gets up and raises his eyes as if in prayer - nay, rather as a man who demands a right. "O God!" he cries, "I do not ask that she may come back to me, for I made my servants drive her from my door; I do not ask that she may be happy, for she has sinned grievously in the sight of God and man; I do not ask that she may be unhappy, for she is my own flesh and blood; I only ask that she may die, so that I may not have to curse my only child. Let her die, O God, let her die, or let me!..."

Meanwhile the district judge is concluding his story in the room above. "No one knows what has become of the pretty little girl. She is forgotten; her father even doesn't seem to remember her existence. They're a heartless race these Jews; they're all alike...."

It has grown dusk in the town, but there is no gloom in the hearts of its Jewish inhabitants. The dismal irregularly built houses of the Ghetto are now enlivened by thousands of candles, and thousands of happy faces. The Sabbath has begun in the hearts of these people and in their rooms, a common and usual occurrence, and yet a mysterious and blessed influence that drives away all that is poor and mean in everyday life. To-day, every hovel is lighted up, and every heart made glad with sufficiency of food. The teacher of the law has forgotten his hunger, the water-carrier his hard work, the peddler the blows and derision that continually fall to his lot, and the rich usurer his gain. To-day all are equal; all are the happy trustful sons of the same Almighty Father. The feeble light of the tallow-candle in its rude candlestick, and the soft light of the wax-candle in the silver candelabra, illumine the same picture. The daughters of the house and the little boys sit silently watching their mother, as she, in obedience to the beautiful old custom handed down from generation to generation, blesses the candles. The father then takes the large prayer-book down from the book-shelf and gives it to his eldest son to carry to the synagogue for him. After that they all go out into the street, the men and women keeping apart, as the strict law commands. Their words are few, and those they utter are grave and quiet. To-day neither grief nor joy finds vent in speech, for all hearts are full of the divine peace of the Sabbath....

The large white house opposite the Dominican monastery is also illuminated. But the candles were lighted by a stranger, for there is no mistress there to speak the customary blessing. The finest linen covers the tables in the best parlor, which is handsomely furnished, but no child's merry laugh, and no loving word is heard there. The melancholy sound of the

sputtering candles alone disturbs the stillness.

But the old man who now enters the room in his Sabbath suit has been accustomed to this state of things for years - for five long years. At first he used involuntarily to turn and listen for the sound of the voice he loved so well; for it was on an evening such as this that his child had left him. But this evening he crosses the room quickly, and taking the heavy leather-bound prayer-book from the shelf, leaves the room at once. Does he fear that to-day of all days the ghosts of the past will come forth to meet him from every corner of the well-lighted room?

If that be the case, it is foolish to fly from them, Moses Freudenthal! See, they dog your footsteps wherever you go through the narrow gloomy little streets. They whisper in your ear, even though you strive to drown their voices by entering into conversation with the passers-by. They appear before your very eyes in spite of your fixing them upon the votive tablets fastened to the pillars in the house of God! And when you pass through the congregation and take your seat in your accustomed place, they flutter around your head, look at you out of the very letters of your prayer-book, and speak to you in the voice of the officiating minister!...

"Praise ye the Lord. Break out into joy, gladness, and song. For He judgeth the world with righteousness and the people with His truth."

"And the solitary," cries a secret voice in the heart of the unhappy man, "shall He break in pieces!" His eyes are fixed upon his book, his lips whisper the words of prayer; but he does not pray, he can not! The whole of his past life rises ghost-like before his mental vision, and in such vivid detail as to cause him intense agony...

"He who can no longer pray," his old father had often told him, and now the words involuntarily recur to him, - "He who can no longer pray shall be cast out from before the face of the Eternal." He distinctly remembers the day on which he had first heard those words. He was then a boy of thirteen, and had been allowed to put on the phylacteries for the first time, the sign that he had reached man's estate. The life that opened out before him on that day was not easy and pleasant like that of the fortunate of the earth, but hard and narrow as that endured by his race. In common with every one around him, he had early learned to dedicate his life to two objects, and these were - prayer and money-making. When he was seventeen years of age his father had called him into his room, and had then told him, in a calm matter-of-fact tone, that he was to marry Chaim Grünstein's daughter Rosele in three months' time. He did not know the girl. He had seen her, it is true, but he had never really looked at her. His father had, however, chosen her to be his wife, and he was satisfied that it was well. Three months later he married Rosele....

Hark! the Chazzân is beginning the ancient Sabbath hymn, whose words, expressive of joy and longing, go straight to the heart - "Lecho daudi likras kalle." And immediately the choir takes up the strain triumphantly, "Lecho daudi likras kalle" - "Come, O friend, let us go forth to meet the Bride, let us receive the Sabbath with joy!"

Strange emotion to stir the spirit of a people to its very depths! Strange that all the passion and sensuousness of which its heart and mind are capable are expended on the adoration of the Divinity, and on that alone. The same race whose genius gave birth to the Song of Songs - the eternal hymn of love, - and to whom the world owes the story of Ruth, the most beautiful idyl

of womanhood ever known - has now, after a thousand years of the night of oppression and wandering, learned to look upon marriage as a mere matter of business, by which to secure some pecuniary advantage, and as a means of preventing the chosen of the Lord from dying off the face of the earth. These men know not what they do - they have no suspicion of the sin of which they are guilty in thus acting.

Nor did Moses Freudenthal know it. He honored his wife as long as she lived, and found in her a faithful helpmeet in joy and sorrow. A blessing seemed to rest upon everything he did, for whatever he undertook prospered. He studied the language of the Christians around him with an eager determination to learn, and then began the arduous task of learning German law: the man of thirty studied as hard as if he had been a schoolboy. He was not actuated by the desire of gain alone, but also by a love of honor and knowledge. And this knowledge bore fruit; he became rich - very rich. The nobles and officers of the neighborhood came to his house and bowed themselves down before the majesty of his wealth; but before he had done with them, they were forced to hold him in as much respect as his gold. In those days every one envied him, and people used to whisper as he passed - "That is the happiest man in the whole district."

But was he really happy? If he were so, why did he often look gloomy, and why did Rosele weep as if her heart would break, when she was sure that no one could see her? A dark shadow rested on the married life of this couple, who, in their daily intercourse, had gradually learned to esteem each other. Their marriage was childless. As they had been brought together by strangers, and were not even yet united in heart and soul, they could not live down their sorrow, or find comfort in each other's love. The proud man bore his grief in silence, and, unmoved, watched his wife fading away before his very eyes. When his friends spoke of a divorce, he shook his head, but no word of love for the unhappy woman to whom he was bound ever crossed his lips. Years passed away; but at last one evening - it was in winter - when he entered the sitting-room, and wished his wife "good evening" as usual, instead of answering softly, and glancing at him shyly and sadly, she hastened to meet him, and clung to him as though she felt for the first time that she had a right to his love. He gazed at her blushing excited face, his surprise giving way to joyful anticipation; then taking her hand, he drew her down to the seat beside him, and made her lay her head upon his breast. Their lips trembled, but neither of them could find words to express their joy - none seemed adequate!...

"Praise ye the Lord!" These words of the minister roused Moses from his dream of the past, and he hears the congregation reply, "Praised be the Lord our God, who createth the day and createth the night, who separateth the light from the darkness, and the darkness from the light: praised be the Lord, the Almighty, the Eternal, the God of battles!..."

"Praised be God!..." With what mixed feelings had Moses Freudenthal joined in this cry of thanksgiving on that Sabbath evening twenty-two years ago when he first entered the house of God a father! His heart bled and rejoiced at the same moment; he wept with mingled joy and sorrow, for a little daughter had indeed been born to him: but his wife's strength had been unable to withstand her sufferings, and she had died. She had borne her terrible agony with un murmuring resignation; and even when dying a happy smile passed over her pale face

whenever she heard the voice of her child. In those sad hours before the end the hearts of the husband and wife, that had remained strangers to each other during the long years of their married life, at length found each other out. He alone understood why his wife said, "Now I can die in peace;" she alone understood why he bent over her hand again and again, sobbing, "Forgive me, Rosele; forgive me!" "The child," she said; "take care of the child!" then she shivered and died. Next morning they carried her out to the "good place." And he rent his garments, took the shoes from off his feet, and sat on the floor of the chamber of death for seven days and seven nights, thus fulfilling the days of mourning after the manner of the children of Israel. He did not weep, but fixed his sad tearless eyes on the flame of the funeral light which has to burn for a whole week in order that the homeless spirit may have a resting-place on earth until God shows it where it is henceforth to dwell.

"He is talking to the dead," whispered his relations in awe-struck tones, when they saw his lips move, as he murmured, "All might have been well now, and you are dead!"

His sorrow found relief in tears when they brought him the child, and asked what it should be called. "Esther," he answered - "Esther, like my mother." He held his little daughter long in his arms, and his tears fell on her face. Then he gave the child back to her nurse, and from that moment became calm and composed.

When the days of mourning were over he returned to his business, and worked harder than ever before. A new spirit seemed to possess him, and every day he embarked in new and daring undertakings. He ventured to do what no one else would attempt, and fortune remained true to him. He now carried out the wish he had long nourished - bought the piece of land opposite the Dominican monastery, and began to build a large house there. He passed his days in unceasing labor; but in the evening he would sit for hours at a time by his child's cradle, gazing at the soft baby face. And in the first months after his bereavement, the nurse was often startled by seeing him come noiselessly into the nursery in the middle of the night, and watch and listen long to see if all were well with the child.

The days grew into months, the months into years, and little Esterka became ever more remarkable for beauty and cleverness as time went on. She was very like her father, for she had the same black curly hair, high forehead, and determined mouth; but in strange and touching contrast with the other features of the defiant little face, were the gentle blue eyes she had inherited from her mother. The father often looked at those eyes, and whenever he did so, he took his little girl in his arms, pressed her to his heart, and called her by a thousand pet names; but except at such times, the grave reserved man showed the child few tokens of the almost insane love he bore her.

When Esther was five years old they left the small house they had formerly inhabited in the Ghetto, and went to live in the large white house opposite the monastery. And after that Moses began to take measures for the education of his daughter, who was to be brought up according to old established usage. Esther learned to cook, to pray, and to count - that was enough for the house, for heaven, and for life. And what could her father have taught her in addition to this? Polish and German, perhaps? She could speak both languages, and he, like every other Jew in Barnow, regarded reading and writing as needless luxuries for a girl. He had learned both in

order that he might write his business letters, and understand the book of civil law; his daughter did not need to do either. Besides that, would greater knowledge make her a better or happier woman? "When a Jewish girl knows how to pray" - has come to be a proverb among these stern-natured men - "she needs nothing more to make her good and happy!" And yet little Esther was to learn to read German, and much more besides!...

"It was in an hour of weakness," murmurs the old man, as he rises with the rest of the congregation to take part in the long prayer, during which all must stand - "of weakness and folly that I gave way. Woe unto me for consenting, and cursed be he who led me astray!"

How can you say so, Moses Freudenthal! However much your misfortunes may have enlightened you, and taught you to know your own heart, you can not even yet see that it was a sin you were committing in shutting out the light of the world from your child, and that you did right when you consented to permit another to reveal it to her. Oh, how you sin, old man, when, hardening your heart in egotism and ignorance, you say, "That was the cause of her misfortunes and of mine also! From that time forward her mind was poisoned, and turned away from me and my God! Cursed, cursed be that hour!"

... But all this happened on a warm bright summer evening thirteen years ago.... The moonlight lay on the houses and streets, and the very dust on the road seemed to glitter like silver. Moses Freudenthal was sitting on the stone seat at his door lost in thought. He felt strangely soft hearted that evening; for whether he would or not, he could not help living over again in memory the occurrences of his former life, and thinking of his dead wife Rosele. His daughter, who was now nine years old, was sitting beside him, gazing wide-eyed into the moonlit night. Suddenly a man came up the street and stood looking at them. Moses did not at once recognize him, but little Esther sprang to her feet with a cry of joy - "Uncle Schlome! How glad I am that you have come to see us, Uncle Schlome!"

Moses now recognized the stranger, and rose in astonishment. What did Schlome Grünstein want with him, and how had his daughter become acquainted with the "Meschumed?" He was Rosele's brother, and had been his playfellow in his boyhood, but Moses had not spoken to him for twenty years; for a pious Jew could hold no communication with a Meschumed, an apostate from the faith - and Schlome was an apostate in the eyes of the Ghetto. And yet the pale, delicate-looking man, with the gentle dreamy expression, had always remained a Jew, and had lived quietly and peacefully among his neighbors, spending his wealth in works of charity and mercy. But the name and the shame had cleaved to him from his youth upward.

His had been a strange boyhood. As he had been a shy, thoughtful child, living only in his books, and showing no talent except in literary things, his father determined to make him a Rabbi. Schlome was pleased with this decision, and studied so hard to fit himself for his future calling that he not only injured his health, but soon got beyond his teacher. The delicate boy was consumed by an unquenchable thirst for knowledge. And this thirst became the cause of his destruction, the curse of his life. By means of money and passionate entreaties combined, he induced the Christian schoolmaster of the place to teach him at night and in secret. Thus he learned High German, the forbidden and much-hated language of the Gentiles around him, and also "Christian theology." Of the latter branch of learning the schoolmaster himself knew very

little; so he helped out his ignorance by lending his unwearied pupil many books belonging to the Dominican library, and this he did before Schlome had got over all the difficulties of learning to read. In this way the boy read all manner of strange books, one on the top of the other, and often enough, no doubt, put sufficiently curious interpretations upon them. At last one day a book fell into his hands, which nearly drove him mad. The form and tone were well known to him, for did they not enforce obedience to the holy Thora (Law)? But the spirit that breathed in its pages was another and - the youth's very blood seemed to freeze in his veins - a milder and better than what he had known. For this book was the New Testament. Its teaching seemed to him like the mild beauty of a spring day, and yet his hair stood on end with horror. This, then, was the idol-worship of the Christians, - this was the history of the life and labors of that Man whom his father crucified, and from whose likeness he had been taught to turn away his head in hatred and contempt! The blow was too severe. Schlome became very ill, and lay for many weeks dangerously sick of a fever. Often and often in his delirium the unconscious youth wept and talked of the pale Nazarene, of the cross, and of that ill-starred book. His parents and neighbors listened to his ravings in horror; they searched into their cause, and at length discovered Schlome's secret studies. Soon afterward a strange rumor was circulated in the Ghetto, to the effect that Schlome Grünstein had wished to become a Christian, and that as a punishment for this sin God had visited him with madness. In course of time the youth recovered, and went about among his brethren in the faith as usual; but henceforth he seemed paler, shyer, and more depressed than before. No one knew what inward conflicts he had to wage; but every child in the Jewish quarter called him a Meschumed, and told how he had sworn a holy oath to his father that he would only remain a Jew on two conditions - first, that he might buy and read whatever books he chose; and second, that he might remain unmarried. He kept his oath, even when the death of his parents made him rich and independent. Thus he passed his life in the narrow, gloomy Ghetto. He had only one friend, David Blum, a man who devoted his life to tending the sick, and whose own story was both strange and sad. But then he did not make him his friend till late in life, and lost him soon afterward; for David Blum died, whether of low fever or of a broken heart it were difficult to say. The Meschumed mourned his loss deeply. It seemed to him as though a bit of his own heart had been buried with his friend. And yet these men differed from each other as much in character as in the circumstances that had moulded their lives. David was strong and high-hearted, but quick-tempered and fantastic, so that he broke down once for all when fate aimed a heavy blow at him; Schlome, on the contrary, was weak and gentle, and endowed with a great power of endurance which enabled him to bend under the blows of fate instead of being broken by them. Thus he lived on in the midst of men and yet terribly alone - the poor even hesitated to accept charity at his hands. Still he loved all men, but especially children; and these alone returned his affection, although they could seldom show it from fear of their parents. He almost idolized little Esther, the only child of his dead sister; and she loved him better than her grave, reserved father.

Such was the man who came up to the bench on which Moses Freudenthal and his daughter were seated on that lovely summer evening.

"I want to speak to you, brother," he said, as Moses rose and looked at him with a coldly

questioning gaze. He then requested the child to go to bed, and after she had left them, continued: "I want to speak to you about many important things. Sit down beside me.... You needn't be afraid! There isn't a creature to be seen in the street...."

Moses sat down hesitatingly.

"It is about the child," resumed the Meschumed. "I have been thinking long and earnestly about her, and when I chanced to see you this evening as I was passing, I determined to say what I had to say at once. You see, brother, the child is growing a big girl. She will be beautiful one day; but what is more to the purpose at present, is, that her goodness and intelligence are surprising in one so young. You have scarcely any idea of the sort of questions she asks, and of the kind of thoughts that little head contains - you'd hardly believe it, brother."

"And how do you know?" interrupted Moses, in a harsh stern voice. "Did I ever give you leave?..."

"Don't let us discuss that point, if you please," replied Schlome, raising his hand in deprecation, "don't let us discuss that point. I could answer you boldly that Esther is my sister's child, and that I have a right to love and care for her. But I will not answer you thus; we have been kept apart long enough by angry words. And even if you tell me that I am a stranger in your house, and by my own fault, too, I will answer you nothing. Love is not alone induced by ties of blood, and the world is not so rich in love that one can afford to cast any aside. But - it isn't that you mean. You fear danger for your child; you fear that I should try to undermine her faith. You feel less confidence in me than in the lowest servant in your house."

He ceased, but Moses made no reply. And yet the hard man's heart was really touched when he once more heard the voice that had been so dear to him in his boyhood. But he shook off his emotion, and when Schlome repeated his question, answered with cold severity, "My servants are all pious, and are stanch believers in the faith of their fathers." This he said with his eyes fixed on the ground. Had he looked up he would have seen his brother-in-law's lips tremble with bitter grief and disappointment. And yet his answer was gentle.

"Listen, Moses," he said; "it is written, and it is a true saying, 'By their fruits ye shall know them.' Every incident of my life is known to you, and to all our neighbors. I have always been terribly alone in the world, forsaken of all men, but still I have striven with all my heart and soul to unite my life to that of others. I have striven to make it as useful as it was possible for it to be after the blight that had fallen upon it. You are the first person to whom I have ever said this, and you will be the last who will ever hear from me that I know I have acted toward my fellow-men with as much beneficence - as it is called - as I could; and yet, what is such beneficence in reality but the duty every man owes to his kind? I have not, therefore, lived either a happy or a good life; but judge, Moses, I entreat of you, whether it shows either folly or sin?"

Moses passed his hand slowly across his forehead and eyes, as though to give himself time for thought.

Then he answered more mildly:

"No man can judge a whole life with a righteous judgement; God, who knows all, can alone do so. I am willing to believe it is as you say, and it is well for you that you can thus justify

your life. For you can thus wait quietly for the hour when God Himself will judge you. But" - he interrupted himself, and then continued, almost shyly - "do you believe in God?"

"Yes," replied Schlome, raising his head; "yes, I believe in Him. I sought Him in my boyhood, when I imagined that he was a God of wrath and vengeance, the light and refuge of one people alone; I sought Him in my youth, when I imagined that He was a God of love and mercy, who yet was only gracious to those who worshiped Him with certain forms and ceremonies. Later on, I really found Him and knew Him as He is. He is neither a God of wrath nor of mercy, but a God of justice and necessity; He is, and all are in Him, even those who deny Him..."

He had risen in his excitement, and as he stood in the moonlight before Moses, the latter felt strangely moved; it seemed to him almost as if Schlome's face shone. He did not know how it happened, but he could not help looking at the image of Christ opposite to him in the monastery garden, which stood out sharp and distinct in the clear pale light against the dark sky. "And He over there?" he asked, almost fearing the words he had uttered.

"He," answered the Meschumed, his voice sounding strangely soft and gentle, "He was a great and noble man, perhaps the best man that ever lived. But He is dead, and His spirit has died out - died out even in those who call Him their Redeemer! The fools! Through himself alone can man be redeemed - through himself and in himself..."

He ceased, and Moses was silent also.

The two men sat side by side for some time without speaking, each busied with his own thoughts.

At length Moses asked: "And what do you want with the child?"

"I want to be her teacher," replied Schlome, "for I have learned to love her dearly in the few interviews I dared to have with her. And believe me - she is no common child! Oh, had she only been a boy! I have often thought; and then, again, I have been thankful she was a girl - you can guess why, perhaps. She has a real hunger for knowledge, and a strange longing for the light of truth..."

Here the other interrupted him impatiently. "You are dreaming, Schlome!... Esther is scarcely nine years old, and I, her own father, have noticed nothing of the kind in her."

"Because you wouldn't see it," was the answer; "because you wouldn't see it, or, forgive me, couldn't see it. You look upon it as dreaming or folly, or else think it childish. But I know what it is for a young heart to have to bear that longing alone. Believe me, it would be a sin to let it die out for want of food. I therefore beg of you to allow me to be Esther's teacher!"

There was another long silence between the men.

At length Moses answered: "I can not, brother, and I dare not if I would. It isn't because of you that I say this - I believe that you are good, and that you would only teach the child what is good. But it would not be suitable for my daughter. I wish her to remain a simple Jewish girl; I wish it, and it must be so. Why should she learn what may make her sad, and discontented with her lot? My daughter is to grow up a pious, simple-minded woman; it is best for her that it should be so, and that is my reason for refusing your request. I have already arranged that she should marry a rich and honorable man."

"Yes," said the Meschumed, and, for the first time during this conversation, his voice sounded bitter and hard - "yes; you are rich and have the right to do as you will: you have therefore arranged that you should have a rich son-in-law. The girl is now nine years old; in six or seven years' time you will give her to the wealthiest and most pious youth in the district, or perhaps to a widower who is even richer and more pious. She will not know him, but what of that? she will have plenty of time to make his acquaintance after marriage! Then she will probably fear him, or hate him, or else he will be indifferent to her. But what of that? What does a Jewish woman want with love? What more does she need but to love God, and her children, and - let me not forget to mention it - her little possessions?..."

"I don't understand you," said Moses, hesitating and astonished.

"You do not understand me!" cried the other, springing up excitedly. "Can you say that - you? O Moses, think of my sister...."

Moses Freudenthal started like a wild creature shot to the heart. He wanted to answer angrily, to order Schlome to leave him at once and for ever; but he could not do it. His eyes involuntarily sank before those of the despised Meschumed: after a long and hard struggle with himself he felt constrained to answer low and sadly, "It was not my fault."

"No," replied the other, gently; "no, it was not your fault; it was that of your father and mine. But remember that you, and you only, will be responsible for what you do with your child."

He paused a while, and then finding that Moses was too deeply moved to be able to answer, went on: "Do not harden your heart, lest you be tempted to evil. Remember what is written, 'Give to the thirsty to drink.' Brother, will you allow me to show your child the light and life for which her whole nature thirsts?"

Moses was unable to answer, but next day a strange rumor was afloat in the Ghetto, to the effect that Moses Freudenthal had become reconciled to Schlome, the Meschumed, and had permitted him to teach his only child!...

It is of that hour that the lonely old man in the synagogue is thinking, and it is that hour which he curses from the bottom of his soul. The remembrance of it follows him as he rises with the rest of the congregation and goes out into the spring night. The narrow streets are full of life; the houses are lighted up; the children and young girls are standing in the doorway of their homes waiting for the return of their parents. The unhappy man tortures himself as he walks with the thought of how different everything would be if he were now going home with his son-in-law and his daughter, to be greeted by his grandchildren at the gate. Every child's laugh, every word of welcome that he hears, cuts him to the heart. Ah, well! Perhaps he is not so very much to blame when he mutters below his breath, "If God is just, he will punish him who gained the heart of my child only to lead her astray, and him also who opened her ears to the words of the tempter!..."

At this moment he feels a hand laid upon his shoulder, and, turning round to see who it is, starts back as though he saw a ghost. His breath comes thick and fast, his eyes flash, and he clinches his fist. The man he has just cursed stands before him - a sickly, broken old man - Schlome, the Meschumed.

"I must speak to you," he says to Moses. "I have a letter...."

"Silence, wretch!" cries the other, half mad with rage and misery. "Silence I will not listen.... May you words choke...."

A crowd collects round the two men.

The Meschumed advances a few steps nearer his brother-in-law, and repeats: "I must speak to you. Curse me if you like, but listen to me. She is...."

Before he can utter another word, Moses has turned and rushed away. He flies like a hunted creature through the narrow streets, across the market-place, and up to his own house. There he sinks half fainting on the stone seat by the door. He sits still, waiting till his breathing becomes more regular, and his pulses beat less quickly. Then all at once he thinks he hears some one mention his name. The first-floor windows are lighted up and widely opened; loud laughter can be heard within the room. Frau Kasimira Lozinska is having an "at home" this evening. Now he hears it again quite distinctly: his name, and then a burst of laughter. He pays no attention to it, but goes into his parlor and sits down, silently pushing away the food and drink the old housekeeper sets before him. "She is dead!" - these words seem to ring in his ears and heart - "of course - she is dead!"

Thus he sits alone in the brilliantly lighted room in a tumult of wild thoughts, of passionate internal conflict. All around him is hushed; the melancholy sputtering of the numerous candles is the only sound to be heard.

The wife of the district judge has an "at home" to-night.

The gentlemen are in the ante-room playing at whist and tarok, and perhaps a little innocent game of hazard. The ladies in the drawing-room are seated round a large tea-table, drinking tea out of enormous cups, eating sweet cakes of all kinds, and talking a great deal. The only person at all out of humor is the fat wife of the fat estate agent. She is accustomed to be the principal lady in Barnow, but is dethroned for to-day by the wife of a beggarly Government official - i. e., the new registrar. For Frau Emilie comes from Lemberg, the capital of the province, and has brought with her not only the latest fashions in dress, but also a number of piquant stories. In return for these, she is of course told all the scandals of Barnow that relate to any lady who happens not to be present at the time. But that amusement soon comes to an end, as almost every one of any standing is at Frau Kasimira's this evening. Then, as luck will have it, Frau Emilie asks to be told the curious story her husband has heard about from the district judge that day.

"I can tell you that story better than any one else," answers her hostess, eagerly. "We have lived in this house for the last twelve years, and I know everything that happened. It is very interesting, for a handsome hussar is the hero of the tale. I'm sure that you can not have heard anything like it in Lemberg."

She then goes on to relate as follows:

"Well, as you know already, the story is about Esterka, the daughter of the Jew to whom this house belongs. She was ten years old when we came here, and tall of her age, with black hair and large blue eyes. She was scarcely ever to be seen, and never to be heard: she used to sit over her books all day long, and often far into the night. My daughter Malvina, who was about the same age, used to ask her to come and play with her; but the proud little Jewish girl

wouldn't accept any of her invitations, she was so taken up with her reading. It was very foolish of her, and her uncle Grünstein was at the bottom of it all. Old Grünstein is a very queer sort of man - most disagreeable to have anything to do with, I should say: he's neither Jew nor Christian - quite an infidel, in fact; indeed, some people go so far as to say that he can raise the dead when he likes. Yes, I mean what I say! He can raise the very dead from their graves! And he was Esterka's teacher. He must have given her a nice sort of education, for at the end of three years she was every bit as foolish and godless as himself. To give you an example of this, let me tell you what happened one very hot August afternoon when she was with us. You must know that she embroidered beautifully, so we had asked her to come and help Malvina to finish a bit of work. As we sat at our sewing the clouds began to come up thick and fast, and soon afterward there was a terrible storm; it thundered, lightened, and hailed with the greatest possible fury. My daughter, who, thank God, had received the education of a good Catholic, began to pray aloud; but the Jewess remained calm and cool. 'Esther,' I said, 'aren't you afraid of the judgement of God?' - 'A thunder-storm isn't a judgement of God,' answered the conceited little thing. - 'Well, then, what do you call the lightning?' I asked. - 'A discharge of atmospheric electricity,' was her reply. - 'Aren't you afraid of the lightning, then?' - 'Oh, yes,' she answered, 'because we haven't a lightning-conductor on the house!' - I couldn't possibly allow such godless sentiments to pass unreprieved, as Malvina was there, so I said very sternly: 'You're a little infidel, child; remember this, the good God guides every flash of lightning!' - 'How can that be?' answered Miss Impudence. 'The poor peddler, Berisch Katz, was killed by lightning last year, when he was crossing the open fields, although he was a very good man; and now that he is dead, his children haven't enough to eat.' - I said nothing more at the time, but next day, when I happened to see old Moses, I told him the whole story. 'The child is having a nice sort of education,' I said in conclusion, 'and if this kind of thing goes on, who knows what the end of it will be?' - 'It shall not go on,' he replied; 'I had made up my mind to put a stop to it before, and what you tell me determines me to do so at once.' - He was as good as his word, and took away all of Esther's books. Then he put her in the shop, and made her weigh the sugar and sell the groceries. As for Schlome, he turned him out of the house.

"All this took place nine years ago last summer. One Sabbath afternoon in the following autumn Esther came to my daughter and entreated her with tears to lend her a German book, or else she would die. She said that her father had taken away every one of her books, and looked after her so strictly that she couldn't herself get any to take their place. He did not, however, go so far as to prevent her visiting us. Our acquaintance was an honor to the girl, and besides that, he knew that I was a woman of principle. Well, as I said before, Esther wept and entreated in such a heart-rending manner that I was touched. So I lent her some German books that I happened to have in the house: Heine's 'Reisebilder,' Klopstock's 'Messiade,' 'Kaiser Joseph,' by Louise Mühlbach, the new 'Pitaval,' Eichendorf's poems, and the novels of Paul de Kock. She read them all, devouring them much as a hungry wolf does a lamb. She read them in the shop whenever her father's back was turned, and at night when she went to her room. The only book she didn't like was the first novel of Paul de Kock; she brought it back to me, and asked me to find her something else. But I hadn't time to do so then, so I said: 'Read it, child, read it;

you'll like it when once you've fairly begun.' I was right; she liked it so much that she never offered to give back the second novel, and after the third, she wanted to finish all by that author before reading anything else. I was able to gratify her, as we have the whole of his works. She devoured the hundred and eighty volumes in the course of one winter. For, I can assure you, these Jewish girls have no moral feeling...!"

The ladies all agree in regarding this statement as true. The estate-agent's wife is the only one who does not join in the chorus. For though she is very fat and rather stupid, she has a good heart.

"It wasn't right," she says very distinctly and very gravely. "You have a great deal to answer for."

The Frau Kasimira looks at her in silent astonishment. If she were not a very courteous woman, a woman of the world, and, above all, if it were not her own house, she would smile sarcastically and shrug her shoulders. As it is, she contents herself with saying apologetically, "Mon Dieu! she was only a Jewess!"

"Only a Jewess!" repeats the chorus of ladies aloud, and also in a whisper. Many of them laugh as they say ... "only a Jewess!"

"Only a Jewess!" is echoed in a grave deep voice. The games in the ante-room, are finished, and the gentlemen have rejoined the ladies unnoticed. "You have made a great mistake, madam."

It is the doctor of Barnow who speaks, a tall stately man. He is a Jew by birth. He is hated because of his religion, and feared because of his power of sarcasm. His position obliges these people to receive him into their society, and he accepts their invitations because theirs is the only society to be had in the dull little country town.

"You have made a mistake," he repeats, addressing the estate-agent's wife. "You have never been able to throw off the prejudices of your German home, where people look upon a Jew as a human being. It is very foolish of you not to have learned to look upon the subject from the Podolian point of the view!"

"Laugh as much as you like," says his hostess quickly. "I still maintain that an uneducated Jewess has very little moral feeling!"

"Yes," is the dry answer, "especially when she has been put through a course of Paul de Kock - has been given the whole of his works without exception. But, pray, don't let me interrupt you; go on with your story."

Frau Kasimira continues:

"Very well; where did I leave off? Oh, I remember now. She had finished Kock by the spring. I had no more German books to lend her; so she begged me to subscribe to the Tarnapol lending library for her, and I at length consented to do so. I didn't like it at all, but she entreated me to do it so piteously, that I must have had a heart of stone to refuse. She read every one of the books in the library, beginning with About and ending with Zschokke. Her father had no suspicion of the truth, and he never knew it. She used only to read in the night when she went to her bedroom. The exertion did not hurt her eyes at all. She had most beautiful eyes, large and blue - blue as the sky. As to her figure, it was queenly, slender, upright, and rounded. In short,

she was lovely - very lovely. But at the same time she was a silly romantic girl, who thought that real life was like the novels she used to devour. When she was sixteen her father told her that he wished her to marry a son of Moschko Fränkel from Chorostko, a handsome Jewish lad of about her own age. She said she would rather die than marry him. But old Freudenthal isn't a man to jest with. The betrothal took place, and beautiful Esther sat at the feast pale and trembling as though she were about to die. I had gone down-stairs to see the ceremony from curiosity. My heart is not a very soft one, but when I saw Esther looking so miserable, I really felt for the girl. 'Why are you forcing your daughter to marry against her will?' I asked the old man. He answered me abruptly, almost rudely, I thought: 'Pardon me; you don't understand; our ways are different from your ways. We don't look upon the chicken as wiser than the hen. And, thank God, we know nothing of love and of all that kind of nonsense. We consider that two things are alone requisite when arranging a marriage, and these are health and wealth. The bride and bridegroom in this case possess both. I've given in to Esther so far as to consent that the marriage should be put off for a year. That will give her time to learn to do her duty. Many changes take place in a year.'

"The old man was right. Many changes take place in a year. The greatest possible change had taken place in beautiful Esterka, but it was not the change that her father had expected or wished to see. Look here, the doctor there looks upon me as hating all Jews, but I am perfectly just to them, and I tell you that the girl, although inwardly depraved, had hitherto conducted herself in the most praiseworthy manner. And yet her temptations must have been very great. She was known throughout the whole district, and every one called her the 'beautiful Jewess.' The inn and bar down-stairs had more visitors than Moses cared for. When the young nobles of the district came to Barnow on magisterial business, they spread out the work they had to do over three days, instead of contenting themselves with one as before; the unmarried lawyers and custom-house officials spent their whole time at the bar; and as for the hussar officers, they took up their quarters there altogether. These men, one and all, paid their court to Esther, but she never wasted a thought upon one of them. Her father kept her as much as possible out of the way of his customers. When she met them, she returned their greeting courteously, but was as if deaf to their compliments and flattery. And if any one was rude to her, she was quite able to defend herself. Young Baron Starsky found that out to his cost - you know him, don't you? A tall fair man, and the hero of that queer story about Gräfin Jadwiga Bortynska. Well, he once met Esther as he was leaving the bar-parlor rather the worse for wine. He will never forget that meeting, because of the tremendous box on the ear that she gave him.

"There was a change in her after her engagement. Not that she was on more friendly terms with these men than before, but that she no longer rebuffed one of their number. This favored individual was a captain in the Württemberg Hussars, Graf Géza Szapany by name. He was like a hero of romance: tall, slight, and interesting-looking, with dark hair, black eyes, and a lovely little mustache. This is no flattering portrait, I can assure you; our friend Hortensia will bear witness that I do not exaggerate, she used to know him too...."

Frau Hortensia, a handsome blonde, and wife of the assistant judge of the district, blushes scarlet, and casts an angry look at her "friend" and hostess, but forces herself to answer

indifferently, "Ah yes, to be sure, I remember him.... He was a good-looking man."

"Good-looking," repeats Frau Kasimira. "He was more than that. He was very handsome; and so interesting! His manners were perfect. He thoroughly understood the art of making himself agreeable to women; but that was natural enough, for he had had plenty of experience. Beautiful Esterka was soon caught in his toils. He approached her almost shyly, and spoke to her with the utmost respect; and more than all, he paid her no compliments. That helped on his cause wonderfully. And then you mustn't forget what I told you before, that she was depraved at heart, and foolishly romantic. The affair ran the usual course. At first a few meetings, then many; at first but a few words were exchanged, afterward many; at first one kiss, then many more.... It was very amusing!"

Every one present seems to regard it in the same light as Frau Kasimira. The ladies giggle and the gentleman laugh. One lady alone remains grave - and she is the fat, kind-hearted German woman sitting in the corner of the sofa.

"You don't seem to be amused by the story," observes the doctor, who is sitting beside her.

"No," she answers. "It is a very sad story. The poor girl was a victim."

"Yes," says the doctor, his voice sounding deep and low with suppressed feeling, "she was a victim. But she was not a victim of the handsome hussar, nor even of our kind hostess here. The cause of her ruin lies deeper, much deeper than that. As the twilight is more eerie than complete darkness, so a half education is more dangerous than absolute ignorance. Darkness and ignorance alike lay a bandage over the eyes and prevent the feet from straying beyond the threshold of the known; knowledge and light open the eyes of man and enable him to advance boldly on the path that lies before him; while half knowledge and twilight only remove part of the bandage and leave him to grope about blindly, perhaps even cause him to fall! Poor child! she was snatched away from the pure stream, and her thirst was so great that she strove to slake it in any puddles she passed on the way. Poor child! She...."

Here a yawn interrupts the speaker. The fat woman is thoroughly good and kind, but she is by no means intellectual, and hates having to listen to what she does not understand.

Meanwhile Frau Kasimira continues as follows:

"So Graf Géza soon succeeded in gaining complete influence over her. And when he left this to be stationed at Marburg, she followed him there. One Friday evening - just like to-day - when Moses came home, he found the nest empty. There was a great uproar down-stairs. They called her, sought her everywhere with tears - no words can describe the scene. My husband went down-stairs - Moses raged like a madman. It all happened five years ago, but I shall never forget that night...."

"The next few days were very uncomfortable and queer. They all went on as if Esther were dead. The shop and bar were both closed; the pictures were hung with black; the mirrors were turned with their faces to the wall. A small lamp was burnt in a corner of her room for seven days and seven nights, and during the whole of that time Moses sat on the floor of the room barefoot and with his clothes torn. I don't know whether it is true, but I heard that the Jews took an empty coffin to the cemetery on the Sunday following, and then filled in an empty grave. I have been told that they even went so far as to put up a gravestone to Esther! On the eighth day

Moses rose up and went quietly about his business again. These Jews are such strange creatures! Only fancy! he came to us that very day to ask for his rent. I scarcely recognized him - his hair had turned quite gray in the course of a week. His manner was quiet and composed, and he seems to have forgotten all about his daughter now. But as everybody knows, the Jews are fonder of their money than of their children!"

"Has no one heard anything more about Esther?" asks the fat woman.

"Yes - once. But what we heard wasn't much to be relied on. Little Lieutenant Szilagy - you remember what fibs he used to tell - went to spend his leave in Hungary on one occasion, and when he came back, he declared that he had seen Graf Géza and Esther in a box in the National Theatre at Pesth. But the little man tells so many lies that one never knows how much to believe. It may quite well have been some other pretty girl."

"Do you know," says Frau Emilie, the highly educated lady from Lemberg, "do you know what this story reminds me of? Of a very amusing play I once saw acted in Lemberg. It was translated from the English of a certain ... oh dear! these English names...."

"Perhaps you mean Shakespeare?" inquires the doctor, coming to the rescue.

"Shakespeare," repeats the district judge; "he's a rather well-known poet."

"Yes; a very talented man!" says the doctor, with the utmost gravity.

"You're right - Shakespeare!" continues Frau Emilie; "and the play was called 'The Merchant of Venice.' There is a Jew in it, Shylock by name, whose daughter also ran away, and who, like Moses, was far fonder of his money than of his child. I therefore propose that we should no longer call the Freudenthal of to-day by his own name, but instead of that" - the speaker makes a long pause - "the Shylock - of Barnow!"

The registrar feels very proud of his clever wife. The gentlemen laugh, the ladies titter, and even the estate-agent's fat wife smiles as they one and all repeat:

"Ha! ha! ha! The Shylock of Barnow!"

But they do not laugh next morning. They never laugh at Shylock again - neither they nor any one else.

The wan pale light of the Sabbath morning dawns upon a woful sight. It is a damp, misty, disagreeable morning. The wind, which had risen at midnight, and had driven the heavy black clouds across the sky, covering the moon as though with a pall, has fallen; but the clouds are heavier and blacker than ever, and a thick cold mist inwraps the whole plain and the gloomy little town.

All sleep soundly in the small houses of the Ghetto. Not a step is to be heard in the narrow streets. The dogs in the courtyards, and the night-watchman in front of the town-hall, are alone awake. The latter is usually asleep at this hour, but the dogs are making too much noise to allow him even to fall into a doze. They are barking furiously. The dogs at the town-gate are the first to begin it, then the watch-dog at the monastery takes up the chorus, and lastly, Moses Freudenthal's black "Britan" joins in the uproar. The wise watchman therefore makes up his mind that some stranger is passing the monastery and going toward the Jew's house. But it never occurs to him to go and see who it is. The mist makes the morning very dark, and the streets very slippery. So the guardian of Barnow remains quietly in his little box in front of the

town-hall. "Britan is barking so loud," he says to himself, consolingly, "that the Jew can't help hearing him."

He is not mistaken. The people in Freudenthal's house hear the furious barking. The old housekeeper gets up to see what is the matter, and to call the man-servant. As she passes her master's room, she notices a light under the door, and, on hearing the sound of her footsteps, old Moses comes out. He is still dressed; he has evidently not yet gone to bed, although it is nearly two o'clock in the morning. He looks thoroughly worn-out.

"Go back to bed," he says to the old woman; "I will go myself and see if anything is wrong."

At the same moment the dog again barks furiously, and then all at once begins to whine and utter short barks of joy. They hear the huge creature jumping about and scratching at the outer door. He has evidently recognized the person who has come up to the house, and is trying to get to him.

The old man turns as pale as death. "Who can it be?" he murmurs. Then he proceeds with tottering steps toward the entrance-hall. The housekeeper prepares to follow him, but he exclaims "Go away" so passionately, that she draws back. He takes no candle with him, for it is the Sabbath; so he feels his way to the house-door.

The old woman stands and listens. She hears the dog spring forward to meet his master, and then run with joyous whines toward the outer door.

Then she hears Moses ask, "Who is there?"

All is still. The dog alone utters a short bark.

Moses repeats his question.

An answer comes from without. The housekeeper can not hear what it is. It sounds to her like a cry of pain.

But the old man must have understood. He opens the heavy outer door, steps out, and shuts it behind him. The dog has apparently slipped out at the same time as his master, for the housekeeper can hear the stifled sound of his bark.

Then Moses's voice becomes audible; he speaks very loudly and passionately. What he says sounds at first like scolding, and then like a solemn curse or conjuration. But the old woman can not hear the words.... No mortal ear hears the words that Moses Freudenthal addresses to the person who had knocked at his door that dismal night.

After a minute of suspense, the housekeeper hears the outer door creak. Moses is coming back. He returns alone. The dog has remained outside.

There is a moment's silence; and then the housekeeper hears a heavy fall.

She seizes the candle - what does she care in her terror about the old pious custom? - and hastens to the door. There lies Moses Freudenthal, motionless and pale as death. She raises his head; he breathes stertorously.

On perceiving this, the old woman utters a loud shriek. The man-servant and shopman, wakened by her cry, hasten to the spot. They lifted their master, and, carrying him to his room, put him to bed. Then one of them goes for the doctor of the district, who lives close by on the first floor. He bleeds the sick man, but shakes his head as he does so. The old man has had a stroke.

The housekeeper weeps, the men stand about the room awkwardly, not knowing whether to go or stay, and the doctor attends to his patient.

Thus the hours pass slowly, and the morning comes. No one remembers the stranger who had knocked at the door in the night.

Early in the morning a loud knocking is heard at the door. The night-watchman stands without, accompanied by several people who have come in early to the market. They have found a poorly-dressed, half-starved-looking young woman lying dead at the door. Black Britan is lying beside the corpse, whining, and licking its hands. When any one tries to approach, he growls and shows his teeth.

The doctor goes on and bends over the dead woman. He lays his hand on her heart; it has ceased to beat. He then looks at the pale, worn face, and recognizes it at once.

He rises sadly, and orders the corpse to be taken to the dead-house. He then returns to the sick man, who still lies senseless.

Next day they bury Esther Freudenthal. No one knows what her religion had been - whether she had remained a Jewess, or had become a Christian. Not even her uncle Schlome, who cowers down by her bier in a stupor of grief. So they bury her where suicides are laid; and yet she had died of starvation.

A packet of letters is found in her pocket. They are all written in the same hand, and bear the same superscription - Géza. The last of these letters, which is stamped with the post-mark of a small Hungarian town, contains the following lines: "I tell you honestly that I am tired of the whole thing. I am now with my regiment, and advise you not to attempt to follow me. My serjeant, Koloman, has promised to marry you. He likes you. If you don't like him, you had better go home."

She did go home.

Old Moses does not die in consequence of the occurrences of that night. He lives on for a long time; he outlives his brother-in-law, and many happy people. He lives a gloomy, solitary, mysterious life. When he dies, the only people who weep for him are the mourning-women who have been hired for the purpose. He leaves his great fortune to the wonder-working Rabbi of Sadagóra, the most jealous opponent of light, the most fanatical supporter of the old dark faith.

This is the story of Moses Freudenthal, whom they called the "Shylock of Barnow."