VISIONS AND JEWELS

AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY BY

MOYSHEH OYVED

1925

LONDON

ERNEST BENN LIMITED

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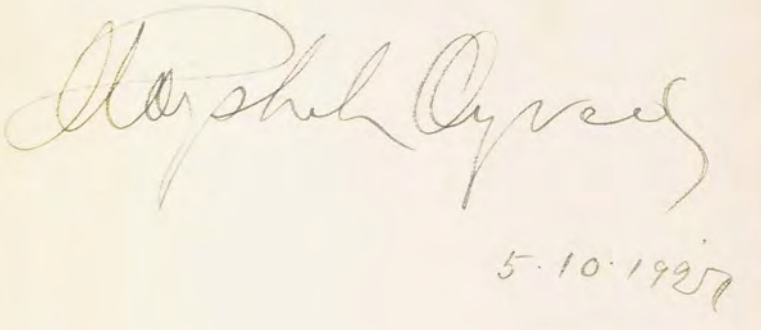

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LONDON: ERNEST BENN LIMITED
8 BOUVERIE STREET, E.C.4 MCMXXV

Made and Printed in Great Britain
by The Riverside Press Limited
Edinburgh

TO SOPHIA—

FOR AWAKENING ME

To my many Friends, especially Hannah Berman, José da Graça, Louis Golding, David Edgar and M. Hannick, who assisted me in the rendering of the English version of this book,

My heartiest gratitude.

M. O.

CONTENTS

VISIONS AND JEWELS

PRIVILEGES AND DUTIES

(Instead of an Introduction)

If a man is descended from a genealogical tree on which, as my dear Father writes, there once burgeoned "six brothers, ritual slaughterers, deeply-versed in the Holy Law," "and five daughters, all rare beauties, of exceptional charm and modesty," then it is his moral duty, when he is forty years of age—besides providing himself with pleasure—to give to the world a true account of what he has done and is doing with his young life.

But seriously, it is important that there should be written down, recorded and registered, this day and for ever, something of the weekday and desecrated-Sabbath life of one who has lived divine moments and hours. His trials and struggles must be told: How he tried to clamber up the sacred and secular ladder, his gold and tears, his triumphs and failures—how, whom and what he saw in his forty-years' journey.

His play-toys, his foolish witticisms, his true and false dreams, his aluminium lungs, steel heart, hollow and holy burning wounds — all must be recorded, once and for always.

And who can do this better than he who has lived through it all?

Now, to work!

FIRE AND "SLAUGHTER"

A YEAR after her marriage, my mother gave birth to a little girl, and called her Pessa. The joy was great; naturally, not so great as if it had been a little boy. But, as a start, a little girl is also good. And one looks forward to life, hoping for a little boy, a male child, from whom—after a hundred and twenty years—one may inherit the recital of the mourners' prayer.

Every day, in a wealthy fashion, they fried potatoes and cutlets. The silver spoons and forks rattled in the little village of Skampa, like those Polish and German words which drop into the poor Yiddish. And the silver candlesticks and wine-goblets reflected themselves dully in my mother's black velvet gown and my father's satin coat. And the newly-born child of the happy, wealthy young couple was bathed "in milk and in honey."

One night, they fetched the ritual slaughterer into their own house, and took him into the stable, so that he should slaughter a little calf by the light of a candle. A fire broke out, after the calf had been slaughtered, and burned down nearly the whole village, like a burnt-offering on the altar.

The trousseau and the feathers which had been saved up were consumed by the fire. The silver candlesticks were melted. The barn of wheat, the house, and the furniture — everything was destroyed.

Their lives were reduced to a heap of ashes.

After the disaster, every individual of the village went in search of new sources of livelihood. One went to America. One took his life. And another became a Hebrew teacher.

Our family rested its hope in the young son-in-law—that he might become the bread-and-herring provider.

They realised that his hand was light as a feather, and that he might become a ritual slaughterer and circumciser. His voice was sweet as a dove's; and he might become a cantor.

In this way, his knowledge of the Holy Law, and his sweet voice, which, until the fire, had been dedicated to God and his family, after the fire became an implement by which to earn bread and tears.

MY BIRTH

A YEAR after the fire, the autobiographist himself made his appearance on the stage, in health and honour.

For three-and-thirty years he wandered about the stage, and did not know what sort of a rôle he must play; nor did he know where to direct his gaze. To the gallery, or the stalls? Laugh, or cry? And, if to die — wherefore, and for whom? And, not knowing, his was the most intensely tragic rôle.

But the birth was none too easy. It was far from a "twilight sleep." I was born on the eve

of the Day of Atonement, when the mood was not in accord with such joyful events. My father and grandfather recited a good many Psalms and they shed enough tears to extinguish a little fire. It was only then that my mother gave birth to me. When my two-and-a-half-year-old sister, Pessa, ran to tell my father and grandfather the news, they asked her: "What? A little boy, or a little girl?" "Something good," she answered.

And they prepared an Initiation ceremony in accordance with all the Laws which Moses gave to the Children of Israel. And they gave me the name of Moysheh Oyved, which means "Moses the Servant." I do not know after whom I got the name Moysheh. But Oyved was after my great-grand-uncle—the famous Rabbi Oyved, of Sheps.

MY FATHER BECOMES A MILITARIST

At that time, Alexander III. ruled the Russian Empire, Poland, and the destiny of my family.

Had my father still been a wealthy son-in-law, they would have bought him out of serving in the Army. But as he had become a poor man, and since he was cursed with a sound constitution, Alexander III. took him from us, so that he might serve him, in his Army, for four years.

I do not know whether the calamity or the disgrace was the greater. There, go and secure a son-in-law with the brains of a genius, at great expense, and promise him his board and

lodging for life! Comes a fire, and destroys everything. The father-in-law dies; the son-in-law is snatched away. There remain an old widow and a delicate, only daughter, who is rendered desolate, and who has a little military orphan on each knee.

I was about a year old, and at that time, and for ever, my veins were saturated with milk and tears which were like gall. And I was, for ever, steeped in sorrow.

At that time, I established an eternal friendship with the Children of Wailing; whilst the Mournful Song of the Divine Presence in Exile was nearer to me than any other song.

This is the first recollection of my childhood:—

I scrambled on to a wooden box which stood in our little drapery shop, near the window. Looking out, I saw in the distance "trees and grass." A crowd of men and boys were going home, after the Friday-night prayers at the synagogue. I asked: "Mama, why does not my father come home?"

Well, well! There was a fine sort of rejoicing! The grandmother and her daughter and her little grandchildren all burst into a loud wail, until the neighbours rushed in, and consoled us by telling us of still worse troubles. And we silenced our cries.

We lived in great poverty; for the poor, half-bankrupt little drapery shop was not sufficient for our support.

CHEDER

When I was three years of age, my grandmother, Sarah Rebecca—peace be unto her!—took me, as Abraham had taken his son Isaac to the sacrifice—to the *Cheder*—the Hebrew school. Oh, how I hated going! No sooner had I opened the door than I at once saw and heard the teacher—a white beard, red eyes, and a black leather strap—beating a screaming little boy whose trousers had been let down. On the spot, I conceived a hatred for the *Cheder*, teacher, Holy Law, and the alphabet. And gradually there was born within me a great question, as to whether there was a God in the world at all. "A good God does not exist," thought I. "And a bad God, we do not want. And, if there is no God, then, surely, *Cheder*, Holy Law, Jew and Gentile are altogether superfluous things." I began to deny; and I gave up praying; and lived a hypocritical life, because I continued to attend the synagogue, where I compelled myself to move my lips like one who is praying.

With my inner self estranged and distant, I wandered about my little world, and looked forward to a new fire that would consume the *Cheder*, the teacher, and everything.

But the *Cheder* remained, on the top floor of a dark house. It was not the *Cheder* which fell down the stairs, but I. And I smashed my nose. But, to my misfortune, this did not damage my matrimonial venture. It also happened that, when

I was four years of age, I was accidentally hit by a stone which found its home above my right eyebrow, where I bear the mark of it to this day. But I felt grateful for this accident caused by the little Gentile boys who had been throwing stones at one another; because I lay in bed, ill, for several weeks, and did not have to go to *Cheder*.

FATHER COMES HOME

BOLDLY there stands out in my memory a winter's morning, when I was about five years of age.

I was sitting at *Cheder*, shaking myself mechanically, whilst pretending to read. Suddenly the door was flung open. Pessa dashed in, with a joyful face. "Moysheh Oyved, father has come home from the soldiers!" We ran home, and I saw my father. Why should I deny it? Miserable though my mood was, I was, nevertheless, overjoyed that I, too, had a father, like Mendalle, Beralle, and Leibeshel. What is more, a stronger, and a better-grown—really, a handsome father! A father with a pair of nicely-combed, curly, light moustaches, and a little beard, like a general. His face was fresh and healthy, and the skin of his hands and neck was white as milk.

He presented me with a red scarf; and I began to respect him very much, and to tremble with fear of him, as a fish trembles with fear of a fisherman.

My father had served in Berditchev itself—the most Jewish town in Russia. All the time, he had

had meals given him by the local householders, a different one each day; and he had studied the Holy Law at the House of Learning. Having a very musical ear, he learned to play the flute; and —what was at that time an extraordinary thing for a Jew—he became a subaltern in the Russian Army.

But our position was now growing worse and worse. My grandmother and mother went bankrupt. Subsequently, my father passed the examination, and became a cantor and ritual slaughterer at Oshentshin—a little town not far from the River Vistula.

OSHENTSHIN

WHEN we left Skampa for Oshentshin, we were five souls: my grandmother, my parents, Pessa, and I. We sat up on top of a waggon which was loaded with furniture, books, and slaughtering-knives. And we rolled down into the bedding. (At that time I was seven years of age.) Now and again my sister and I quarrelled. She used to call me: "Crucifix." No doubt because I was always deep in thought and had a wounded life. And I used to call her: "Tangle-head," because she had terribly long hair—two thick plaits reaching to her knees. But, high up, on top of the waggon, we lived in peace, because one push, or an angry word, could have flung us out. And besides, we were very pleased with the idea that we were going to prosper.

Oshentshin gave us a royal reception. All the idlers and good-for-nothings came to meet us outside the town, with trays and drums and rolling-pins, which the scamps had stolen from the kitchens. They made a whole band of music to greet us; and they led us into the townlet, and into our home of two little rooms.

Father had already given a recital at Oshentshin. And the people had at once lost their hearts to his singing, especially to his *coloratura*.

He became the darling of the masses—a star, a primadonna—not to mention them in the same breath, and he earned three roubles a week.

SINGING

At Oshentshin, along with the dismal *Cheder*, there arose for me another misfortune: choral-singing. When a Sabbath or a Festival came on, my father—who never beat any other child, and who really loved me—tortured and beat me, and compelled me to accompany him. Although I am by nature a lover of music, and sing to every lyric I write, and even chant when I am reading poetic prose, yet, to open my mouth, like Balaam's whipped ass, and sing — for this I never had enough desire or impudence.

But my father needed a little choir-boy. And, when it came to singing, he set his tuning-fork: Do, Re, Mi, Fa, Sol, La, Ti. "Open your mouth!" he cried, and at once gave me a "Sabbath fruit."

My mother protected me with the armour of her apron, and pleaded: "Yechial, what do you want of the child? Then, he will not be a cantor, as sure as God gives the Sabbath. . . ."

That was how my youth was punished—by having to study and sing. And I had no God to whom to pray.

At eight years of age, I learned the Talmud. I remember how my reflections paused over a question in the Gemarrah: "Why did the Torah say?" And within myself I asked: "Why did the Torah say? Why does the Law say? Who has asked it to say? Exile and tribulation can get along without the Law. Surely there must be something wrong with the whole system of life, since it is as it is?"

That was how I put questions to myself. And I found no answers anywhere.

UNCLE JACOB

My father has one sister. Tsippa is her name. She is a good, clever woman, and is now living in London. An older brother, Mendel—a man well-versed in the Torah, a great exaggerator. He has a little grocery-shop at Neustadt, near Warsaw. And also a younger brother, Jacob.

Jacob was eighteen years of age when he trod the world-famous mud of Oshentshin for the first time. He had a beautiful tenor voice. And his singing of the folk-songs of Zunzer and Goldfaden

was something to marvel at. He told us about the "Lovers of Zion," and of the new spirit which was flooding Odessa and other towns. And he also told us Epicurean stories. And in his spirit and ideals I found a tiny fragment of consolation.

That same good Jacob afterwards married my sister, Pessa. And he is now my uncle-brother-in-law Jacob of Alexandrova.

THE EXODUS FROM OSHENTSHIN

In my tenth year, we left Oshentshin, and went to Alexandrova.

We were six souls when we left Oshentshin; for our family had been enriched by the addition of another little girl, Golda. She was the only piece of gold with which we went forth from the little Egypt.

At Alexandrova we all revived. My mother now allowed herself to indulge in a fried egg on an ordinary Wednesday. And my father bought himself a bit of "wurst" for dinner. Mother had new shoes: father, new top-boots. The three little children were newly dressed.

We were very happy. We were positively delighted.

My father filled four positions: He decided questions of Law, was a ritual slaughterer, a cantor, and a circumciser.

Along with this, he delivered sermons to the congregation on Sabbaths after the midday *siesta*.

He was beloved by all, and he assimilated with his surroundings: *Misnagdim*, *Chassidim*, and "Germans."

When I was ten years of age, my brother Leon was born.

Now we had a sum-total of two little girls and two little boys.

ALEXANDROVA

In those days, and until the eve of the Great War, Alexandrova, as a frontier town between Russian-Poland and Germany, possessed characteristics such as distinguish few towns in the world. Although but a little place, of a few thousand inhabitants, amongst them a hundred Jewish families, it was, nevertheless, a cosmopolitan metropolis—a world-centre, a little Paris. It had the most beautiful railway-station in Poland, at which the trains used to stop many times in the day—world-expresses, like the Berlin-Warsaw, the Berlin-Vienna, and the Berlin-Moscow.

Several times in the day, the whole world's civilisation was poured out on the platform—its perfume and its dirt: The German pride, the Russian might, the French *chic*, and the Viennese refinement. Nor were the silent English and the energetic Americans ever missing. There were, also, yellow Chinese, brown Japanese, and dark Turks, wild Indians, black men, gypsies, and Jews with little bundles.

Every individual, separately, was examined there

to see what he was smuggling across. Does not a "he" sometimes smuggle in a "she"? Was the passport in order? Or, perhaps they were an army of spies or nihilists?

Each had to open his pockets, bags and baggage for the Russian officials to examine.

When a foreign express approached, it cut through the horizon, screamed, whistled and shrieked. A fiery smoke reached to the heavens, and sawed Alexandrova in two halves, as a thin little board is sawn through by an electric machine.

But it did not liberate me.

I was bound to the dead books at the House of Learning, just as at Oshentshin.

BACK TO OSHENTSHIN

After I had been at Alexandrova six months, my parents sent me back to Oshentshin, to *Reb* David the teacher, who had taught me when we were living at Oshentshin. But now I was given meals by the various householders as is the custom. And, although I ate at a strange table every day, for perhaps three years, it was as unpleasant to me on the last day as it had been on the first.

David the teacher never beat me. He was an honest pious Jew. He had only one fault—he was a Lithuanian! From him I learned, indirectly, how to bind books, to pave mud-floors with stones, and to fry onions in butter and mix them with an egg. (An exceptionally nice dish. Try it.)

Poor thing, he had a lot of children. And every day he used to sharpen the bread-knife, so that not a crumb should drop. "It's a pity to make little crumbs. Crumbs are waste," he used to say. And he was right.

Poor as he was, I remember that I once robbed him. This is the story in brief:—

One Saturday evening, about supper-time, I felt very hungry; for the householder at whose table I had eaten that day had not given me enough food. It was already dark when I came into the teacher's house. The candles had not been lighted yet. The teacher was singing hymns. I made my way to the stove, stuck my fingers into a little saucepan, and stole from it a little fish, which I ate up, bones and all.

David the teacher is now dead. But, should one of his heirs come forward, I will compensate him. He will receive from me a free copy of this book! With the thieving author's autograph.

MY GRANDFATHER AND GRANDMOTHER

In my fourteenth year, I was sent to school at Rotshintz—a townlet near Plotzk. For six months I studied at the local House of Learning, eating and sleeping at the home of my grandfather, Samuel—of blessed memory!—my father's father. He was the beadle of the Big synagogue.

The old couple lived in a tiny room. And in the

same room, he had his workshop and press, where, at times, he used to make combs and holy trumpets. He made a little trumpet for me. But it was not with this one, that, twenty years later, I became a Trumpeter of the Messianic.

My grandmother, Peralle, was a sturdy, pious, stern, stingy woman. She took life to be a very serious affair, and seldom laughed.

My grandfather was exactly the opposite. He was a strong Jew, but was possessed of as rich a vein of humour as if he had been an invalid. He was poor; but, somehow, the money rolled out of his purse as from that of a legendary millionaire. He was fond of a glass of liquor; but he never provided himself with any for the next day.

My grandmother stinted and scraped, and saved up *groschen* by *groschen* in a stocking. (She knitted stockings day and night.) She wanted to have something with which to distribute charity before the New Year's Festival. But my grandfather was always discovering the hiding-place of the stocking, and stealing from it to buy himself a glass of brandy. And he wiped his moustache.

My grandmother counted her money, and imagined that it fell short of the correct sum. She flung angry glances at my grandfather, over the rims of her iron spectacles. My grandfather pretended that he had no notion of what was going on—that he did not even know a suspicion of him existed. And he kept humming little songs.

LITTLE PEARS AND HORNS

LIKE all old couples, my grandparents loved, quarrelled, and made it up in single words, half-words and initial-letters.

At dawn, I used to pretend to be sleeping, whilst I listened to their conversations. In the middle, my grandmother became angry, and cried out, sarcastically: "Little pears!" To which my grandfather retorted with: "Horns." It did not take a moment, and they were talking of the happiness of their children and their children's children, like two hearts which were rising on the one lump of yeast. That was how they lived together for fifty years.

The story of the little pears and the horns runs like this:—

Immediately after their marriage, my grandfather took my grandmother's dowry, and bought with it several sacks of little pears. These he took by cart from Nashelsk to Lodz, to sell at the market.

But the sacks were torn, and the little pears dropped out of them the whole way. When the cart drew up at the market-place, my grandfather looked about him—"And they were not!" No more dowry! No more little pears!

Well, well! Forty years had elapsed since their marriage; but my grandmother still threw up at him the affair of the little pears.

Was it any wonder, then, that the old man had

taken to liquor, and to the intoxication of humour, whilst still in his youth?

But, on the other hand, my grandfather was well armed for the fray—with horns!

And, listen, if you please!

After the disaster attending the little pears, my grandfather heard that at a little village the other side of Lodz there was a merchant who had horns to sell; and that they could be bought for "half-nothing."

My grandmother cried that the good-for-nothing had better stay at home. "The merchant is not born yet, and the horns are not yet growing."

But my grandfather was not lazy. He hired a cart, took with him his last few roubles, and brought back a whole load of horns, which he made up, and on which he earned, perhaps, two hundred roubles.

So that, when my grandmother flung the "Little pears" at him, he instantly closed her mouth with "Horns."

MY GRANDFATHER'S FORTUNES

After the New Year's Festivals, my grandfather's Tolstoi-face used to brighten up. When every particle of nature was decaying, and every chimney was wailing, my grandfather sang little songs to himself, and altogether glowed like the rose with optimism.

Was it a trifle? Such a wonderful season! All his little combs and trumpets were sold. The

position of beadle was also profitable at the Festival season. Then, an odd circumcision. And was there not always a rich wedding after the Festivals? In brief, he accumulated a full purse of large coins; his pockets were filled with small, and he was short of nothing. At such a rich moment, he used to come to Alexandrova to pay us a visit.

We, little children, were very joyful at his coming. He flung money at us; and, good-humouredly, told us stories of the bad old times, like a man of wealth.

Whilst he talked, he kept his right-hand thumb stuck between his girdle and his satin coat; in his left hand he held a big, long gypsy pipe which he was smoking. Now and again he had a fit of coughing, provoked by smoke and hearty laughter.

"After I was ruined by the little pears, I made a fortune out of the horns. But, God sent a fire —May God preserve us! We came out of it terribly poor, with only our shirts—may it not be thought of this day! We did not know what to betake ourselves to. We were dying for a piece of bread. And here was the Passover coming. It was already the Passover eve. We had no money for *Matzos*, not even for 'Mortar.' It was well-nigh impossible to stand Peralle's agony any longer. So, I just stood at the door, sucking at an empty pipe, making a puff-puff-puff, thinking to myself: 'Where will my help come from, Father of the whole world?' And, as I was standing

there, just making a puff-puff-puff, a beggar passed by, on a crutch, and said: 'Jew, blood of a dog,' and cursed me with deadly curses. He bent down, twisted the tail of his long coat to represent a pig's ear, and cursed: 'Filthy dog of a Jew.' Thought I to myself: 'May all his abuse and all his curses come upon his own head, his own body and his own life, Father of the Universe!'

"When he bent down to make the pig's ear of his coat tail there fell out of a torn hole in his coat a knotted handkerchief. Thought I to myself: 'No doubt it is a bit of stale bread; Or, who knows what?' I picked it up, and, out of curiosity, untied the knot; and I found in the rag ten whole roubles. May we all live long as surely as I am telling the truth!

"Instantly I flew in to Peralle, and gave her the ten roubles. And we made a Passover—may no Jewish child ever have a worse! Yes! God does not desert one, not even a worm under the ground. And, what am I short of now—eh?"

And, recalling to mind how happy he was and how free—for he had left the old woman at home—he went through his pockets, gave his grandchildren a lot of money, expressed the wish that he might have more grandchildren, and his heart overflowed with joy. And he began to cough, because of the overflowing.

When his pockets grew light and ceased to ring, and a hollow chimney-wind blew through his purse, my grandfather packed up his praying-shawl and

phylacteries, groaning all the while: "Oh, Father in heaven!" and drove back home, in a depressed mood—back to the poor, degraded post of beadle at Rotshintz.

MY GRANDFATHER'S COURAGE

When my grandfather reached his home at Rotshintz, faithful Need was already lying in wait for him, watching out for him; and it fell upon him like a yearning, angry dog.

He had his weekly wage—one cannot deny that. But, when Friday came round he had not enough with which to provide for the Sabbath.

For the few *gilden*, which he collected going from house to house, he had to wait until the evening. Because of that, the day of Friday, especially in the summer, was to him as long as the Jewish Exile—an Exile of nothing but Fridays.

The whole of Rotshintz occupied an area of half-a-mile; nevertheless it took the sun perhaps sixteen hours, from its rising at the top of the Synagogue Street to its setting at the end of the Plotzker Street. This slow crawling of the sun completely unnerved my impatient grandfather. For, by the time he had collected the few *gilden*—in a lucky hour!—it was too late for my grandmother to buy, cook and bake. And if there is not a bit of fish and Sabbath bread in the house, then, surely, even white bread is black and fresh butter deadly poison.

So, my grandfather sauntered around the village

"To destroy, to kill, and to cause to perish." He puffed at his pipe, and spat out: "Idlers, scamps, who wants them in the world? Tfu! My leather-merchants, drapers, horse-dealers—a black year! Tfu!"

Although the whole week he jeered at the socialists and Zionists, and made them look like mud itself, on Fridays he was in a revolutionary mood. Everything was a "luxury," and everybody a "hypocrite." He looked upon the sun as if it were wantonness. Who wanted it there, to burn in the middle of the market-place? What was it—a shop which was selling off bargains? Surely, every *groschen* was sheer waste.

No man, deluded with self-pride and haughtiness, was safe if he interfered with my grandfather in his Friday's day of rage. He would surely have told him who he was, and where he had come from—oh, how he would have told him!

Until one beautiful summer Friday. The sun had only just managed, after much difficulty, to get to the striking and killing of one. Then, my grandfather's patience gave out. Instigated by my grandmother, he went out into the street, and cried into the little shops: "It is time to start the Sabbath, wicked infidels! Close your shops at once. How long shall I have to wait for you—eh? Until the Messiah comes? This minute you shall start the Sabbath. I will knock the legs from under you, my fine householders. Tfu unto you! Let the Sabbath begin this minute! I command!"

They began to tremble with fear of my grandfather, and closed their shops. Neighbours also closed their shutters. The Warsawer Street heard that the Plotzker Street had closed up, and they thought that a great saint had passed away, or a Pogrom had broken out—God forbid! They, also, closed up, one after the other. The biggest wholesale merchants of the place did the same. And the Sabbath was inaugurated in the middle of the bright Friday.

That was how he taught them, once and for always; so that they might know who he was, and tell their children, and their children's children.

CHAYIM

I NEVER had any toys in my childhood, with the exception of a pocket-knife, and a dream which kept me alive.

Not the spring, not the Sabbath, nor even the Messiah comforted me. Everything I was taught, and all the consoling tales I heard went in through one ear, and out through ten.

I looked upon the whole unnatural Jewish mode of living and hoping as upon a disease—a chronic disease which grows worse and worse. And the worse it grows, the more the Jews hope for improvement. . . .

So, as a little boy of eight or nine years of age, I always ran away from my surroundings. I used to cover myself up with a thick feather

quilt to my nose, close my eyes, and dream of my own happiness: I had run away from home to Germany. I had thrown away my long coat, and dressed myself in German attire, like a man! In a few years, I finished the seminary, became a rabbinical doctor in Berlin, grew very rich, lived in a palace, with servants and lackeys. I returned home, unexpectedly, in a carriage, drawn by eight beautiful horses. I made my father give up the ritual slaughtering. And I distributed thousands of roubles amongst my father's best friends. And my father's enemies were looking on, and bursting!

With this dream I turned, very quietly, towards the wall, wishing to fall asleep and trick it into my sleep, in order that, there, it might clarify itself, grow and develop, like the Garden-of-Eden legend, so that I should feel happy the whole night; for the days were dream-disturbing, empty, real.

Until I was fifteen I kept that dream, and nourished it in secret for myself alone. And it served me as an antidote against the poison of reality.

When I was fifteen I found happiness in Chayim Fuchs, a boy of my own age. I made of him my dearest friend, and entrusted him with my healing dream.

We used to go about whole days, nestled one against the other, under the downy skies of the little town's horizon. And we whispered one to the other of running away to England, becoming

Doctors of Philosophy, and living a free, individual life, in a free land, and writing for newspapers and publishing books describing the hypocrisy and the falseness of our dark, Jewish life. And we would fight for Zionism and liberty.

Knowing well that our parents would not let us go away, and that they were poor, we worked out a scheme by which to attain our goal: He would give up being a clerk, and become a hairdresser. I would give up the House of Learning, and become a watchmaker. We thought that we might support ourselves by these trades in a free country, and during our leisure hours in the free land we would study, qualify, and begin our work of national liberation.

He became a hairdresser, but I remained at the House of Learning. I wandered about until I was seventeen years of age amongst the Houses of Learning in the villages around Alexandrova. The whole week I ate at the tables of strangers, a different one each day, and returned home for the Sabbath. To sweeten the bitter life, I wrote epigrammatical little songs in Hebrew, did wood-carving, made little boxes, and played with my passions. But of my dream, not a hair was sacrificed. On the contrary, it developed and grew, and blossomed out into a family of little dreams.

Every time I passed a watchmaker's shop I stood on the tips of my toes, looked in through the window, and "stole" the tricks of the trade, which came in useful to me in later years.

Along with the hairdressing Chayim learned Hebrew and the Gemarrah. He made good progress; for his linguistic abilities were exceptional.

I BECOME A WATCHMAKER

When I was seventeen I was apprenticed—in a lucky hour!—to *Reb* Leiballe Reichgott. My master played an important part in the affairs of the community, kept a restaurant, smuggled people over the frontier, and repaired watches and jewellery. And, out of all these, he made a living —Blessed be the Holy Name!

On one occasion, I told his daughter that my future brother-in-law, Jacob, wrote wonderful letters, over which one must cry ere one finished laughing, and vice versa. She became curious. I went home, and brought back a love-letter which he had written to my sister, Pessa, and read it to her. She looked at the letter whilst I was reading it, and was amazed at the fine handwriting. When I finished, we both noticed a *P.S.* written in a corner: "Write me, darling mine, how Leiballe Reichgott, the cunning old dog is." If, at that moment a grave had opened up in front of me, I would have jumped into it with the greatest of pleasure, and would never again have jumped out. I trembled lest the daughter should tell the old man; and, knowing that it lay in his power to send me away in disgrace, and to deprive my father of the position of ritual slaughterer and my

mother of "slaughteress," I went home that night, although she had previously promised that she would not tell her father, in utter dejection. I suffered enough agony of soul to make me nearly grey and old over-night, like one who has been, for a long time, in a "movement." About two o'clock in the morning, I got out of bed, and wrote down in a note-book what follows:—

"I, Moysheh Oyved, the son of Yechial, swear that from this day, and for ever, I will never give anyone a letter to read until I have read it through myself; and, never again will I interfere in other people's affairs."

After this, I fell asleep.

In nine months I had learned the trade fairly well—the trade which I loved for its own sake, and looked upon as a means to obtaining the doctorate of philosophy. And, *Reb* Leiballe Reichgott suddenly removed, with his whole family, to Switzerland.

I RUN AWAY THE FIRST TIME

After *Reb* Leiballe Reichgott left, I lifted up my hands to heaven, like one who believes in God; and I saw the realisation of our dream, if not in bronze, at any rate, in plaster-of-Paris. And Chayim and I began to make plans for our escape.

I had saved up twenty roubles, the result of card-playing, at which I had won, kopeks at a time, from my friends. My luck in "Oka" was very great. David Lovitsky lent me five roubles; and

his wealthy mother had, in error, given me ten silver roubles for a gold five-rouble piece. (Twenty years later, I repaid both the debt and the money I had come by dishonestly.)

Chayim had the price of his ticket. We bought a big Dutch cheese the size of the moon with which to bribe the officials at the German frontier. And we decided to run away to London on a night in July, 1903, without our parents' knowledge. At two o'clock in the morning, I got up, stole out noiselessly, kissed with my eyes the sleeping family, and whistled the signal which was to wake Chayim. It woke him; and he came down the stairs in his socks, holding in his hand a short coat which he had for me. And off we went to the station.

We hid under the seats in a first-class carriage of a train which was leaving Alexandrova for Thoren at four o'clock.

Chayim lay under the seat, with the cheese for his pillow; and I, *vis-à-vis*, under the opposite seat, with a little book of my Hebrew songs, my only piece of luggage, in my breast-pocket. From under the seats we saw the Russian officials. They did not see us.

When we were over the frontier we crawled out from under the seats, fell upon one another's shoulders, and sobbed into one another's necks, with scalding tears of hope.

We got out at Thoren, dodged behind the station, and there, at dawn, Chayim dressed me up like a "German," taught me how to put on a

collar, and make a bow in a tie. All his garments were too big for me. I looked in them as if I had just recovered from a dangerous illness, excepting for the stud, which fitted me to a T!—although it also hampered the free movements of my throat.

The same morning, at dawn, when the dew, like our tears, was not yet dried up, two little Jewish boys, dressed like Germans, stood before the Controller of all those who were passing through without passports; and they begged of him to give them permission to travel to England. And, when the Controller saw the free-will offering which they were holding out to him in their trembling hands, and smelled the odour of the stale, mildewed cheese, his heart grew soft as butter, and his smile broad as the moon. He took pity on the two little lambs of his flock, Israel, that were running away from the slaughter; and he gave them permission to travel to England, across the whole of the German Empire, without any hindrance whatever.

After midday, the train from Thoren stopped at Berlin. There, everybody got out.

From all the doors and windows, emigrants poured forth, mostly Jews. Father of the Universe! where did so many seats and so many cheeses come from?

At the Berlin station stood fat-necked German officials examining, and counting, singly and separately, every little sheep that came under the rod of their glances. They let Chayim pass. But,

because I had a few little sores on my forehead, and because my clothes were too big, they stopped me.

Chayim refused to part from me. So, we were both interned in the well-known emigrants' camp, Ruhleben, outside Berlin.

They kept us there for seven days, washed, cleansed and disinfected our garments, and took our money from us. Do not be afraid! They gave us our tickets, and transported us to Hamburg. From there a German ship carried us to the goal of our young dreams—London.

THE ONION-THIEF

THE German emigrant boat moved slowly and calmly, like the excursion boat of an Art Society.

We were lucky to have on board a young Roumanian carpenter who, with his dancing and singing, helped us all to forget the troubles of our old home, and the happiness we were looking forward to in our new.

The young man's evil genius tempted him into the kitchen, where there was a sack of onions. He stole an onion, and swallowed it with great gusto.

In the twinkling of an eye, the cook—a daring young man with a Hindenberg face—became aware of the fact that his Fatherland had been robbed. Was it a trifle—an onion! Surely, it is a piece of German territory? He rushed on deck, like a wild tiger, and, with distended nostrils, went in search of the onion-thief. And, really, he smelled him

out at once. And he delivered him such a smack in the face that a darkness and a misery fell before all our eyes—a terror and a sadness seized hold of us all. That night we all lay on our beds feeling restless and disgraced.

That same night, the sea-elements lost their equilibrium. The sea tossed and flung the ship about, as an angry teacher with a schoolboy, until the sun arrived, and calmed the sea, as if it were the warm hand of a mother. And the sun begged of the sea, with bright, pitiful eyes, to have pity, and refrain from disturbing the peaceful dreams of her emigrant-children.

THE LONDON GHETTO-SPHINX

At East London we were greeted by an atmosphere which was more in need of medicine than philosophy.

For several days we stayed at Rothschild's poor Buildings with Chayim's good aunt, Rachel.

The first day I was most impressed by the big English horses. They dragged heavy, black waggons loaded to the top with barrels of beer; and they clattered their shoes—click clack slack—click clack slack. And, the whole Ghetto buzzed like bees—busy—busy—busy—busy!

And, from that day, even biologically, the Ghetto stood before my eyes like a terrifying sphinx:—

"Gardener's Corner" was the head, which thrust out its tongue at Aldgate. Then, the tongue turned

to the right, and licked the Stock Exchange and the Bank of England.

Its body and backbone extended to Bow and Poplar. From there its forbidden tail started.

Whitechapel was the right, and Commercial Road the left of its fat hind legs, which were curled up under it.

Of its fore-paws—the left was Leman Street, having its claws stuck in the thick mud of the Thames, like a rat. And its right paw was Commercial Street. And the claws of this paw were buried deep in the heart of the red City.

All the little back, between and side streets were the veins, muscles, limbs and nerves of the Ghetto-sphinx, the creature with busy eyes whose tongue is so dumb.

I stood before it for fifteen years, not understanding how to read its riddle.

I pleaded:—

"Ghetto-sphinx, Ghetto-sphinx, why do we not see anywhere in the whole world such a heavy, coarsened mass as you are? Why do you throw yourself so much in folk's eyes, with your absurd cleverness and your hideous ornaments?

"What are you looking for? What are you licking? What are you gripping? Where does your huge quantity of the mud of greed and passion come from? Why do you say nothing, and sing nothing to the world? Are you, then through and through, but a hollow stone?"

At last the Ghetto-sphinx answered me:—

"I am the guardian of the great-great-grandchildren of chaos and exile. And I am a sentinel, keeping watch over the two- three- and four-pound children of poverty.

"During the pogroms of the 'eighties, your brethren ran away, out into the world.

"Two gates were opened for them: England, near; America, far.

"The wealthy, clever brains, the ten-pound self-important men, those who can create ideas and write them down on blank paper — those, with their gold and their cleverness, went off to America.

"The poorest and the most unhappy, those who were robbed of even a good upbringing, gathered together their possessions of two, three, and four pounds, and came to tolerant England.

"I am not an evil beast. I am a city of refuge for many innocent offenders, of æsthetic tastes and human honour.

"I wash them and cleanse them every day.

"That which is exalted will yet be spoken and be sung by them.

"In the marrow of my bones I already feel it, every morning."

I WORK FOR A MASTER-RECEIVER

To-day, after having been here for two-and-twenty years, I know that it is a fifty-per-cent. libel to call England a free country. But, at that time, I really

felt myself completely free. My heart leaped and danced within me with joy for that which freedom had bestowed upon me. Only I had not the courage to dance in the streets, with a newspaper full of fish and chips, as the English factory-girls used to do at that time, so vivaciously and so beautifully.

Everything pleased me—dry bread, and wet cold—so long as I was free to rove my wandering ways, in search of the inner meaning of life—the ultimate object of the Creation. I was not satisfied with the established laws, religions and ideals, although I found blossoms of truth everywhere.

But I also wandered around Whitechapel, looking for a job. After going about, workless, for a few days, I took a situation in a little street leading out of Whitechapel.

My master was a master-receiver.

Every day little boys came in to him with watches and chains, still warm, which they had only just snatched from pockets.

If they were silver or gold, he at once rewarded the boy with a shilling or two; and, the same instant, he broke up and smashed the articles, took out the movements and threw them into a box, and melted the cases.

But if the stolen article happened to be made of base metal, he drove the little thief out of the shop, with an oath and a kick.

Until he had tested the metal and pronounced his judgment, the little boy stood there, with a

pale little nose which scarcely breathed, and with stiff, quivering little lips.

My wages were to be eight shillings a week. I worked for two weeks, but did not get paid. So, I took all my tools—that is to say, my tweezers, wrapped it up in a little bit of tissue-paper, and left the place.

It will surely interest the criminologist to know that some months later the fellow was given three years' imprisonment.

Only a short while ago, after an interval of more than twenty years, I had occasion to go through the same little street; and I saw the same fine fellow sitting in the window, with a magnifying-glass in his eye, bent over the ruins of a little watch. Just as a score of years ago: the same tools, the same broken watches on the brass rail, and the same newspaper from which I had learnt the first English words. Everything was as before. Only his black gun-metal head of hair had become silvery.

When the silvery, heavenly sun projected its beams on to the head of the jail-bird, it glistened just as if he were the only honest watchmaker in the whole of London.

MY FIRST WEEKS IN LONDON

WHILST looking for a situation in Brick Lane, East London, I noticed, through a window, a watchmaker by whose very grimaces I could tell he was

a Zionist. And, really, I had guessed right. He engaged me. We did not talk of payment. Surely, I, too, was a Zionist!

It was a pleasure to the soul to work for Mr Apel. Intellectuals kept coming in all day long. They talked of high politics, social economy and beautiful literature. Every day there used to come into the shop Abraham Kahn—he who has since published collections of folk-lore in America. And they squabbled over every ism and ideal.

In a word, the place rang much more with ideology and Jew-ology than horology. When the end of the week arrived, Mr Apel said to me: "Surely you can see for yourself what sort of business I am doing. Actually, I have no money with which to pay you. But I will help you to find a situation."

And, as he was saying this, an old Jew, with a beautiful, long, white, wavy beard, came into the shop. He took hold of his beard, at once caught the gist of our conversation and of my deep desire, and he said: "Come with me, young man. I know of a situation." He took me to Hackney Road, and into a nice clean prosperous-looking shop. I took the situation at fifteen shillings a week.

Who the old man was I do not know to this day. But his appearance and his action were surely those of Elijah the Prophet.

Very loyally, devotedly and conscientiously I worked there for seven weeks. I was very

happy. And I was treated just as if I really were "a man."

My aunt Tsippa gave me food for half nothing; and a relative of my uncle's gave me sleeping accommodation for nothing at all. My bed was a bundle of straw on the floor. My covering was my short "German" garments. It was summer. Besides, "Freedom" was my soft bed: "Independence" was my blanket.

One day, during the seven weeks, my master gave me a difficult repair to do. I worked at it a whole day, but made no progress. And I was worried by the "sack." That same night, the difficult repair came to me in a dream, and also the means of carrying it out. Next morning, I repaired the watch exactly as the dream had dictated it should be done.

On one occasion, my master gave me a cylinder to turn. But I did not know how to turn it on the lathe. So I filed and polished it by hand. The master pretended that he did not see what I was doing. But, when the work was finished, he congratulated me saying: "Goodack, I will never give that watch back to my customer. Let him sue me. I have never seen a cylinder made by hand so perfect!"

At the end of the seven weeks, there arrived from Poland a fellow-countryman of the master's wife—a first-class watchmaker, who had good tools and cunning, twinkling little moustaches. The master's wife prevailed on her husband to

send me away. But he first found me a situation on the Old Kent Road.

When, ten years after, I met the master in Liverpool Street, he took out the watch, and said: "Do you see? I am still wearing the watch for which you cut a cylinder by hand. It is my regulator."

I worked in the Old Kent Road for six weeks; received a guinea a week; bought myself underclothing, and tools; and began to save English money.

At the end of the six weeks, my master said to me, with a Lithuanian English-Yiddish lisp: "To-day a gentleman is coming to buy the business. I will be in the back room with him, discussing the terms. You pretend that customers are coming in and out to buy goods. Open the door now and again." (The door had a little bell.) "Open the cash-drawer." (The cash-drawer also had a bell.) "Pretend to be giving change, and say aloud, every time: 'Thank you very much. Good-morning, sir.' So that the gentleman may hear everything in the other room. If I succeed in selling the business, I promise you a situation with my father-in-law, a better one than mine."

The Lithuanian carried out his part; and I, mine. And the business was sold.

That same evening, I was already working for the father-in-law. And I could see him walking up and down the room. His neck was red with anger. His hands were folded behind his back.

He was in a rage with his son-in-law: "You a merchant? You should have had a cats'-meat shop. Others grow rich on the Old Kent Road. He goes and sells the business. You are a lazy greenhorn. You are not worth that the earth should carry you!" The other defended himself with: "No, my dear father-in-law. I am not lazy. Let Goodack say. Did I not polish the brass signs every day? Did I not stand in front of the door all day, trying to draw the girls in with my eyes? What more could I do. Am I a magnet?"

Both told the truth. I said nothing, never wishing to interfere between two truths.

MY FIRST THREE POUNDS

THE beginning of the winter, I began to work for the father-in-law in North London. I slept in an attic, like a poet; and, regularly as a watchmaker, I paid two shillings a week for the room.

The bed was hard as a stone, and the blanket was thin as a sheet. (This is a bit exaggerated. But what will not a sinful writer do to gain the sympathy of a reader?) So I covered myself with everything I had taken off: my shoes, my Macaulay's *History of England*, and my Nuttall's dictionary. A strong blast of snow, frost and rain penetrated the roof, and also my very bones. Nevertheless, like a true Stoic I was contented.

During the day, the father-in-law frequently

warmed himself with liquor. The family sat in the room, by the fire, eating cakes and drinking lemonade. The door of the shop was kept open in the hardest frost; and my hands were swollen. But what did I care? I sat there, freezing and working. At every meal, I read Leading Articles of every political shade. And I saved penny by penny, until I had three pounds; and I felt very happy.

All at once—Crash! Crash! The Russian-Japanese war broke out. And we, an accursed family of militarists, were affected by it in the highest degree. My father was thirty-nine years of age, and was still in the Russian Reserves. My uncle-brother-in-law, Jacob, was also in the Reserves. He ran away to Sweden; and from there came to London. My father ran away to Thoren, Germany, to wait for the day when he would be called up; ready to run farther still.

The position was intolerable. I sent home the first three pounds, and consolation worth three hundred. And, from that day to this, at every sort of trouble, the folks at home first lift their eyes to God, then cast their glances, like arrows, across the North Sea, to me.

After a few weeks, a Ukase was issued by His Imperial Majesty Nicholas II. to the effect that men in my father's year were not to be called up. My father went back to Alexandrova, to his ritual slaughtering. But my uncle Jacob remained here, until after the war. He supported himself,

by severe toil and hardship, as a tailor's presser. On Saturdays and Sundays he sang folk-songs at Zionist concerts. The whole time, he was longing to go back to his little grocery-shop, and to his beloved little wife, Pessa.

ADVENTURES

FRAIL, shy and self-conscious though I have been from childhood, and still am to this day, I, nevertheless, have always had the courage to undertake terrible businesses and risky schemes. Sometimes I have succeeded in them, to the amazement of cold-blooded heroes; and sometimes I have broken my tender neck.

When I was eight years of age, a crowd of us boys stood staring in astonishment at an acrobat throwing himself about, and turning somersaults in the air, three at a time. "It is not so difficult as you think," said I to my companions. "One has only to be daring. The principal thing is not to be afraid, but to let oneself go." Said the boys: "If it is not difficult, why don't you do it?"

"I will show you that I can do it."

And I went into our yard with the boys, tied myself about tightly, with a belt, clenched my two fists together firmly, galloped and flew, and let myself into the air, and gave myself such a bang on the head—may God save and protect us! If a corpse got such a bang it would come back to life.

I lay there unconscious. They had to fetch a doctor.

A similar calamity befell me when I was twenty-one years of age, but with more disastrous consequences:—

At that time, I could boil an egg for myself, make tea and breakfast. On one occasion I had the desire to buy meat and cook a dinner for myself for Sunday. I was not at all lazy. I went off to the market, bought a whole pound of meat—I was ashamed to ask for half-a-pound—carrots, parsnips and other vegetables, also a saucepan. I returned to my lodging with parcels wrapped up in newspapers, loaded to the chin. It just happened that my chin was shaven and slippery as the mud. So, my old enemy the wind—against which I have always loved to pit my strength—saw my helplessness, took advantage of the opportunity, and gave me a bang in the face with its inflated air-glove. I fell, with the raw material of my Sunday's dinner scattered all around me.

Go and become a super Don Quixote, and fight, in such darkness, with the wind, all alone! I got up, wiped my mouth, the vegetables and my clothes. I covered everything up in a clean Leading Article which I always carried about in my pocket; and I dragged myself home, through little back streets.

"I have already got over the worst," thought I to myself. "To-morrow I will cook the meat for myself, so that, positively, a fragrance will arise! I will lie in bed, curled up, like Count

Patotsky. I will read all Ibsen's dramas, and I shall be happy the whole day. Is that what they call knowing how to cook a bit of meat!" Next day, I put the meat into the saucepan, poured water over it, cut up the carrots and parsnips, added pepper and salt, placed the saucepan on the little stove which I had lighted, and jumped back into bed.

I read two or three acts of *The Wild Duck* and took a peep at the saucepan, to see how the dinner was getting on. I noticed that the water had boiled down, and that the meat was red and raw. I added more water, and went back to bed, where I read a whole drama. But it did not help at all. To my surprise, the water had again boiled down, and the meat was still as it had been. The same happened several times. When I had finished with Ibsen, the vegetables were rather soft; but the meat was as raw as ever.

From that day, I had great respect for the housewife, the kind that knows the prime art of cooking meat.

After two years' search, I found my ideal, and married her.

I GO HOME

After I had been here four years, I grew weary of the lonely bachelor life, and longed for home. I did not make any elaborate preparations, and went home, to Poland, wishing, at the same time, to present myself for conscription. In the four

years I had learned a fair amount of English, had bitten into English Culture, and had drunk deeply of John Stuart Mill, John Ruskin, and the American, Emerson. I had learned my trade very well. The fifty-odd golden sovereigns which I had saved up my Aunt Tsippa prudently sewed into my shirt, not very far from my heart.

Generally speaking, I was the same insignificant Moysheh Oyved, but with a more rational perspective. And the little town actually rustled, like the leaves in autumn: "Moyshoyved, Moyshoyved has come!"

In the four years which had elapsed, Poland had changed much more than I had, to my great surprise.

Nearly the whole of the working-class had become inspired with the fire of revolution. And national Jews had straightened out their bones in a wonderful way. They had fixed their eyes, like great marksmen, to aim at the goal of liberation.

CONSCRIPTION

I COUNTED out thirty golden sovereigns to the military doctor at Lipna, and he assured me that I would go free. But, on the eve of conscription, they changed the doctors; and I was pronounced "fit."

But I knew that my physique was too frail and my spirit too strong for military service. The idea of serving the despotic Tsarism was particularly

disgusting and repellent to me. So, the only way out was to risk my life, and run away, back to London. However, I had to go to the synagogue, and take an oath, by the Holy Law, that I would serve Nicholas II. faithfully. I was accompanied by two soldiers, with two glittering swords at their shoulders.

I was the only being in the synagogue who breathed the sanctified emptiness. The soldiers with the swords remained standing at the pillars of the door.

At that moment the old rabbi entered, absorbed in anxieties and in the sorrows of the Exile from the Divine Presence. He greeted me with: "Peace be unto you!" and a deep sigh, and led me straight to the Holy Ark, to take the oath of allegiance.

He kissed the Holy Veil, and pushed it to one side. He opened the Ark, and kissed the Scroll of the Law. His lips parted. I said to him, in a soft whisper: "Rabbi, I cannot take the oath. To-morrow I am running away, back to England."

Said the rabbi to me: "My child, repeat the oath. What can we do? Surely we are in Exile. If you run away, run away in peace. And may God grant that you will be what Joseph was to his brethren in Egypt!"

I RUN AWAY THE SECOND TIME

I GOT three days' leave, exactly long enough for me to run away.

The doctor had given back to me my thirty pounds. I bade farewell to the family of Rubinstein, and their daughter, Rosa, for whose especial benefit I had written twelve essays on English Political problems. With bitter tears, and standing on a dark stair, I bade Rosa farewell. We both cried softly, because our harmonising heart-beats had been interrupted. I went off to Alexandrova.

My cousin, Chayyim Leib Turkeltaub, whose common-sense had had a certain influence over me in my youth, is now in South America, and is translating my book, *Out of Chaos*, into a beautiful, strong Hebrew. He knew of a Jew who had a wife and children, a horse and cart, and a little grocery-shop, close beside the Polish-German frontier. I gave this Jew ten roubles to take me across the frontier at night.

The Jew knew that I was *Reb* Yechial's son; so he gave me a nice, fresh meal, and a freshly-starched, newly-covered bed. At two in the morning he woke me: "The cart is ready."

I went out. An empty cart was standing there, and a horse that was holding its breath like a smuggler. The Jew bade me stretch myself out in the cart, with my face down. I obeyed. Afterwards, I heard and felt him placing raw leather hides, of cattle and sheep, on top of me. I could breathe, but the weight and the stench were suffocating.

When the cart suddenly stopped at the frontier,

I could hear a Russian soldier asking the Jew, as he beat on the cart with his sword:

"Are you smuggling anything, Jew?"

"No. Nothing."

"Drive on."

After we had driven several hundred yards, the Jew stopped before an inn, flung the leather hides from off me, and sat me down on a bench—a political refugee who was scarcely alive. And he revived me with cold, German water.

I COME BACK TO LONDON

WHEN I got back to London, I came across a little watchmaker's shop to be managed, in Fetter Lane. This is a little street which cuts between Holborn and Fleet Street. In Fetter Lane, for the first time, I came to realise my business ability. I also had exceptional opportunities for observing the character of English business people, and the literary spirit, the commercialism and the machinery of the Press.

I at once began to build up a strong friendship amongst various classes of English people. My little business improved, along with my position. Every day of living was a day of joy.

At that time, I stayed at a lodging at Holborn, under the Prudential Insurance Company's Offices. The instant I crossed the threshold, with my imitation-leather valise, I saw a pretty girl, with milk-white skin, and kind, longish, Japanese eyes,

like sweet almonds. She was sitting there, writing a letter. The first words she said to me were: "Tell me, please, how 'affectionately' is spelled in English." I told her, and our hearts at once beat in unison.

Not many days had passed, and we were already talking of being engaged. I asked my parents' permission, and their answer was a positive: "No!" I was not to hurry. I had suffered too much through poverty all my life to marry a poor girl; and so forth, and so forth. Evidently, ours was not the true love which ignores wise words, breaks iron, and melts steel. I at once broke off the affair, and decamped, with my imitation-leather valise, and with a little love-wound, which has long ago healed up.

I BECOME MY OWN MASTER

On a fine summer's evening, in the month of June, 1908, I closed the little shop hidden away in Fetter Lane, which I managed, and, in a mid-festival mood, went for a walk with my friend, Chayim, in the West Central district of London. All at once, we saw, in a corner of New Oxford Street, a little shop to let. It was too small for a hairdresser's. Next day I rented it for a watchmaker's business. A week later, I was already sitting in the window, at work.

Without doubt, my figure looked like a badly-painted picture of an unknown man, by an unknown master, framed in a heavy frame of silver and gilt

watches, chains and rings, of a banal, watchmaker's kind. But I was indescribably and inexpressibly happy.

Was it a trifle, to be my own master, at last, after having served others all my life, like generations before me? I felt as happy as a ritual slaughterer might feel when he is slaughtering a chicken for himself, after having resigned his public post; or rather, as happy as a domestic servant on her first day in her own household. I cleaned and polished the little wheels and the plates, and kissed them dry, so that they should not get rusty! I made the watch-cases look like new cut-glass mirrors in a ball-room, for the most unbelievably small sums of money. Nothing mattered, so long as I was my own master.

In this way several days went by; and, as a result of my happiness and the quart of milk which I ordered for myself each day, and myself paid for, my leanness almost grew fat.

HOW MY NAME WAS CHANGED

When a poor sign-writer saw my new little shop, with its naked sign-board, he took a few drinks on its account, after which he turned about and staggered around in front of my premises. At last he prevailed upon me to allow him to paint my name and trade on the empty sign-board. We went over the matter, and I told him to write: Edward Goodack, "Watchmaker," on one side,

and "Jeweller," on the other. He repeated: "Edward Gaduck." Said I: "No. Edward Goodack." Again he mispronounced my name; and again I corrected him.

He was drunk as Lot; and, with his ragged, paint-stained clothes, and his cut face, he looked exactly as if he had torn himself away, canvas and all, from a painting of drunkards by an old Dutch master. His eyes took on a glassy stare, as he said to me: "What use is Gaduck to you? Why not simply Good — Edward Good? No one in the City trades under his real name. I have been writing signs all my life; and I know. Nobody!"

I saw that the man was talking sense. No Englishman, especially not a drunkard, would ever be able to pronounce my name. And it is hard to make a living out of sober customers!

Also, fearing lest he might fall off the ladder and get killed, whilst writing such a substantial, bony name as "Goodack," in which eventuality, England would surely declare war against me and mine, I capitulated in advance and said to him: "Very well. Write what you like, so long as you do not get killed."

Years later, when the business had grown big, and the name "Edward Good" had become popular in the whole of the British Empire, even in Chelsea, it fretted me very much, and grieved me bitterly—at such moments as I had time to grieve—that my name had been changed. "Oh,

why had I been such a fool as to allow myself to be persuaded by a drunkard like that? I had such an original name; and I went and changed it for one that is banal. Why, oh, why? If I had gone bankrupt just once, or, at least, had killed somebody! Nothing! I had not even had a little fire in my place. Then, why had I, without rhyme or reason, insulted my forefathers' surname, and my national pride?"

It was only in 1917, when I wrote under my real name, Moysheh Oyved—a name which I sanctify, and which sanctifies me—it was only from that period that I grew indifferent to all other names. "Goodack" and "Good"—both are mine, and not mine. It was then that I began to believe that every man should have several names and also nicknames, the more the better—names which should express every wise act, every profession and every foolishness of his life. It is really time that we were delivered of the tyranny by which surnames generations-old oppress and offend a growing flourishing family.

That was what I thought; and that was how I consoled myself after many years of regret.

THE CHAPTER OF THE ROBBERY

On the evening of the tenth day of my happiness, four thievish eyes frightened me. They were looking in through the window, and following my every movement.

To run no risks, I packed all my goods, even to my tools and the spectacle-cases, like herrings in a barrel, in the little iron safe which had cost me, second-hand, six guineas. (Later on, I learnt that they cost five pounds new.) I locked the safe, switched off the electric lights, locked the door, and went into a neighbouring confectioner's, where I drank a cup of coffee and ate some sweet cakes.

A quarter of an hour later, I went back to the shop, to see if everything was in order. Oh, how ill—how very ill I felt! The door was open, and the iron safe was gone. And I was not insured!

Oh, tender-hearted reader, you should have seen my pillow next morning. But you are not yet too late. It is surely still wet, to this day.

The whole night I wept and sobbed. I am positive that a neighbour's child cutting its first teeth does not cry as much. Fifty golden sovereigns! The accumulated golden harvest of four years of toil! The fifteen pounds which Chayim had lent me, and which he had earned by hard work, by his own and other people's sweat; the beloved tools which I had bought with money or made in my rare free hours; and, above all, the hopes of my whole life—all these had been carried off in the iron coffin, for ever. And I had not even been invited to the funeral!

The culmination of the tragedy lay in this, that the coffin contained the repairs left with me by strange people. How could I meet them, face to face? Surely, they would refuse to believe me!

I had not the courage or strength to open the broken door, and not a shilling with which to start again. So I went off to Lewisham, where my Chayim was working as a hairdresser. I got there about eleven in the morning, and I told him everything. Said he to me: "Oh, get away! Don't be a fool! What is the use of crying? Surely you did not do it. Have courage. Begin all over again from the beginning. Here is twenty-five shillings for you. Buy a little stock for yourself."

I went off straight to Whitechapel, to "Lippe." He dealt in old watches. From him I bought, for a pound, a whole box full of broken metal watches and empty cases. Then I went to Houndsditch. For three shillings I bought twelve gilt bracelets in little plush boxes, made in Germany. And I bought a pennyworth of metal polish. About four o'clock that same day, the show window was ready. I had brightened the broken and empty watch-cases of brass and copper, with the polish, and had hung them up, with their backs towards the esteemed public.

My "gold" and "silver" desert made the street sparkle and glitter and shine, as it had never done during all its ten-days' rich history.

At about five o'clock there limped into my shop an old English gentleman. He bought of me a bracelet, as a present for one of his six servants. He paid me ten shillings and sixpence for it. And it had cost me threepence.

This is the only time I have ever swindled anybody. And it was such a small sum. Of course, as usual, it is Germany that is to be blamed for this; for, on the back of the plush box, in golden letters, was printed: "Best quality 18 Carat Rolled Gold. Guaranteed to keep its colour for ten years. 10/6."

I never sold the remaining eleven bracelets. They turned black before I grew rich, and I threw them into the dust-bin.

The owners of the repairs were exceptionally nice to me, as only the English can be. One man, whose watch, worth three pounds, had been stolen said to me: "Oh, it doesn't matter. Give me those four studs, and we will be quits." (The four studs were worth one shilling.) Of late, I sometimes play chess with him. And he is the same gentleman when he loses a game to me.

It was only with one girl that I had a bit of trouble. She demanded back her grandmother's wedding ring. Out of each angry eye there dropped a tear, and out of her pursed-up mouth the word: "Jew!" So, I, too, wept bitterly. "An eye for an eye"—a tear for a tear!

THE THIMBLE

In those days I did not understand the soul-language of genuine antiques.

"It is good for idlers to collect old silver, old furniture, so that they shall not go crazy. It is good for those who deal in antiques, for the

sake of making a living; and it is also good to study antiques for the sake of a career. But for glittering-new democratic people a glittering-new article is the best."

That was what I thought within myself, in my ignorance.

On one occasion, a lady who was very worried came into my shop. What was amiss? She wanted an antique, silver thimble. Maybe I happened to have such a thing? I laid aside my watchmaker's glass, and said to her: "What do you want an old thimble with holes in it for? I will sell you a brand-new one for a small sum. Here is a new one for you for a shilling."

Said she: "I can get a new one anywhere. I am looking for an old one. I have an old Etui case, and the thimble is missing to complete it." Said I: "I can make a new one look old." To which she replied: "The old have piquant mottoes engraved on them." Said I: "Give me the opportunity, and I will engrave a motto."

Said and done. The same day I crippled a new thimble, drilled little holes in it, filed away its sharpness, and invented a motto for it: "In stitching too late, I have no faith." I engraved this on the thimble in old script, then soaked it in aquafortis, until, at last, it looked a grey-haired old thing of over a hundred.

My watchmaker's ignorance was satisfied, as also was the lady; and I charged her only a shilling for the thimble, because, then, already I was making a gift gratis of art and literature to the world.

This happened sixteen years ago. But, to-day, I feel what an old thimble conveys to one—how songs and tears have sanctified it; and that, once on a time, it stitched little shirts for little children who were never born, and graveclothes for those who were lost too early. And it conveys all this to me through the mysterious veil of bygone generations, until my tears fall into the little thimble that is full of holes. And they never cease.

EAR-PIERCING

I THINK the Gemarrah asks somewhere: "Why did God create the lobes of the ear?" And answers: "So that you may stop your ears with them when you hear evil spoken."

But, in reality, they are more useful than many decorative-useless limbs; for, from the most primitive times, they have been used for swinging ear-rings.

I myself have pierced more than one pair of ear-lobes, and threaded them with little gold wires, like a murderer! Nowadays, the ladies—may their health increase!—wear ear-rings which resound against the bones of their shoulders.

In real life, before and after shop-hours, I am very tender-hearted, and cannot bear to see blood—but, what does one not do for righteousness sake, ear-rings, and a livelihood? Did my father slaughter and circumcise for the pleasure of the thing? Naturally, I operated mercifully,

scientifically, with a little instrument, which, when you pulled the trigger, shot out a sharp little needle, and pierced the ear in the twinkling of an eye. It did not hurt the patient, and the operator still less. And it is a rule that the "ear-ring" lady of the real kind is not an eight-day, bound and helpless little male child. She belongs to the brave, ear-ring race over whom fear has no power.

In this way, I carried on my extra-profession for several years, without any sort of apology.

One day a couple came into my shop. He was old, jealous; she, a young brunette. After the operation, she felt somewhat unwell. At that moment my friend Morgan happened to be in the shop. He said to the husband:

"Shall I fetch some cold water?"

The husband, seeing blood, jumped up in a rage, and shouted at my friend:

"Mind your own business! Is she my wife, or your wife?"

By the time I had brought her round, and stilled the battle, the little instrument had gone rusty.

And, from that sensational, scandalous day—probably ten years ago—my speciality of ear-piercing is also gone rusty.

THE "CAMEO KING"

After the robbery, it was very difficult for me to make a living and pay rent out of the poor watchmaking. I had been struggling several

months when, one day, a "traveller" came into my shop, and offered me four cameo brooches for two shillings. We neither of us knew what they were called, how they were worn, and what material they were made of.

But I risked it! I bought them for the two shillings, and put them in the show window, with their faces bravely turned towards the street, to the public.

That same day, when the sun was about to go down, a girl appeared in my shop. Judging by her appearance, she was a common baggage. She bought one of the four brooches, for which she gave me five shillings. After she had made the purchase, she informed me that the brooches were called "Cameos," and that her grandmother had also had a cameo, once. The good and quick profit made an impression on me, as did the information she had given me. I went over to the library, opposite my shop, to investigate the subject of cameos, and at once borrowed the book on *Cameos*, by Cyril Davenport. It taught me a great deal. It illuminated the great art and the interesting history of cameos, and I immediately began to collect them with burning enthusiasm, with religious fervour.

I loved them as my life. I collected them in the same way that an orphan-philanthropist collects lost children; and I adopted them as my own. In the course of a few years I became the proud "father" of many thousands, the loving "mother"

of a chosen few. Each piece that went through my hands acquired a peculiar charm. The reason? There is no reason. I just loved them. Cameos were my God. "Cameo Corner" was my island, and I crowned myself the "Cameo King."

I brought out a beautiful, illustrated catalogue: *Cameos and Inspiration Jewellery*, which my good friend, that wonderful woman, Mrs Louisa Thomson-Price, helped me to write. The catalogue brought me a good deal of business. Indeed, it was translated into the Chinese, for the National Museum at Peking.

Cameos are gone out of fashion. But it is only now that they are being manufactured in the Land of Israel. No doubt, because the Balfour Declaration was rather delayed!

SAVAGES

In 1910, I began to collect antique watches, particularly the watch-cocks belonging to them. These are finely-cut, perforated and chased flat pieces of gilt brass, and they cover the balance. Many of them are fine as lace. Many have portraits, caricatures of great generals, great watchmakers, or watch-owners. In the good old times, they were all great, and of the same high status.

I knew from books that two hundred years ago, when handicraft was very plentiful, the watch-cocks cost from one to five pounds each to make. But they cost me, on an average, sixpence each.

In a few years I had collected seventeen thousand pieces. It is possible that this represented one of the biggest collections in the world. You may be sure I put a great deal of perseverance and work into the affair. It is hardly likely that it costs more trouble and enthusiasm to create a colony in the Land of Israel.

Since I did not understand watch-cocks thoroughly they were, every one of them, "works of art" to me. And what will not an Epicurean do for art?

But, they had one little fault—they just would not sell. Even I could not sell them. There simply were no buyers on the market.

It almost came to this—that I felt disappointed, and was cast down in my own eyes. However, one day a foreigner with the little beard of a sultan came in to me. He had a subtle brain and a despotic manner. Along with this, he was very punctilious. After a long and bitter bargaining, he ordered hundreds of crosses, ear-rings and nose-rings, all to be made of the watch-cocks. He destined these things for the savages who, for many years, had been providing his firm with ivory for golden money. It transpired that they were tired of the gold. So the firm sent missionaries out there, with a Bible for every separate man and woman. They built a church for the savages, and made the Sunday holy unto them. For a long time, the savages were satisfied. When they grew tired of the church, the Sunday and the Bible, and after they had eaten up the missionaries,

the firm sent several thousand top-hats out to them.

After the last strike, my ornaments, described above, pacified them. They killed the elephants, and delivered the ivory to their masters. The business went with a bang. Imagining that the white weak men were taking all the trouble to manufacture the fine filigree ornaments especially for their sakes, the savages could not be swine, so, with great gusto, they killed elephants the whole week. On Sundays they decorated themselves with my ornaments and the top-hats; and, with a Bible under their bare arms, they went to church, stark naked, feeling themselves well rewarded and highly honoured.

I might have sold all the watch-cocks long ago, if it had not come about that white people began to kill one another, in 1914, when, alas, trading with savages ceased.

FROM FORM TO COLOUR

SOMETIMES there came to my shop a Christian lady: Madame Roberton. She was always wearing rich colours. Her garments were as spring flowers to my wintry graveyard.

The snow-white bold relief and the muddy-coloured background of my cameos were sunnily illuminated and melted by her presence. And, with her open blue eyes, she kidnapped me on a very necessary sea-and-sky journey.

Every time she came in, it was as if she were driving me, with a whip, out of the circumscribed, narrow Temple of Hellenic forms, and forcing me into the endlessly richly-coloured Temple of Judaism.

Her personality converted me, without sermons, and without words, to render homage to light and shadow.

At the rising of the early-morning star of my world of light, I abdicated my "kingdom," and surrendered my "Cameo" crown, and proclaimed myself "Emperor of Colour."

From the day on which the "Cameo" enthusiasm began to cool down, I lost interest in the ordinary old cameos. (I never soiled my hands with modern ones; and with rare, antique ones I am still in love.) So, the fashion grew less and less, and the Italian and Japanese manufacturers who had prepared rubbishy stocks by the million were smashed, like the panes of glass which were broken by the suffragettes.

I have good friends, customers and victims who are still wearing my cameos to this day. But I look upon them as upon monuments and gravestones of the one-time kingdom, which had been created and destroyed by my own hands.

THE BIRTH OF MY INNER LIFE

For three-and-thirty years I wandered about the spiritual world, an exile within an Exile, without

strength, without will-power, believing in neither God nor myself.

I did not understand the Fall of Man, nor the cause of the Fall. I did not realise the greatness of our Holy Law, nor the wonderful beauty of our Prophets.

I thought within myself: "We are a people without a mission. We suffer to no purpose whatever. And perhaps we are really suffering for the sake of a mission? Or, is it because of our sins?"

I was not prepared to gainsay anybody. And I did not care whether my head shook for "Yea," or for "Nay."

So completely indifferent did I feel that I spent my days in playing with beautiful things, in order to forget the years, and the riddle of the world and my own weakness.

Sometimes my heart opened itself, like the never-closed door of a hospital, to the sorrows of mankind and the wounds of my people. And, when every little corner was overfull of pain, then, the door again closed itself over. But, being myself broken and wounded—how could I heal others?

In the autumn of 1916, I was riding all alone on the top of a 'bus, from the West to the North-East of London.

A dark, twilight drizzle accompanied the 'bus, and covered me.

My ever-scattered thoughts, which beat against

the fringes of all subjects, like fragments of a shipwreck, on that twilight became concentrated in a vision which lasted the whole forty minutes of the journey. The vision was as follows:—

I was writing a book, an appeal to all nations to forgive one another the greatest sin they had committed—that of not having forgiven one another until now. And I thought that the whole world was listening to my words and was living in love, and at peace.

When I got off the 'bus, I felt, for the first time in my life, that I had been, for forty minutes, in a world of truth, wherein I had lived a full life, had been of some use. There, in the mighty rock-world, I had built an abiding dwelling-place for myself.

Weeks afterwards, in my sleep, I dreamt I was standing on a high hill, and was addressing a million-headed mass, in the Holy Tongue, using words which I had long ago forgotten, and which I had never known, in a style which was prophetic and rhythmic. I spoke as the prophet of a two-thousand-year Exile, with a new interpretation of the battle of life. I spoke in the Name of the Eternal God, with conviction and authority.

My accursed self-consciousness, which had dogged me for three-and-thirty years, applauded too emphatically this inspired appeal and actually woke me up, and so destroyed the greatest dream of my life. But the divine atmosphere of the dream continued to envelop me; and, to this day,

has not altogether left me. All my life I have seen a light, around and about me—a light thin as a shadow. It has accompanied me on every road. In the deepest darkness, a pencil of light, like the white foam-line of a ship, has always followed after me.

But since that dream the light has become stronger. I have almost embodied myself in it.

By and with the fire of that light I have written *Out of Chaos*.

The book has not attained the high altitude of that dream, because all the time I was concentrating on it I had to do battle with my eternal arch-enemy —"self-consciousness"—and with the Philistines: Disintegration, Scepticism, the Spirit of Mercury, Literary Form, the Twentieth Century, and the perilous Sense of Humour.

THE POET

At the beginning of 1916, I made the acquaintance of "The Poet." I spent a good deal of time with him, and laughed bitterly at whole periods of the war and our Exile. And we also had many serious, constructive talks.

It is inexplicable, but every time we met, around the mutual fire of our friendship, his cunning little black beard caused my little storehouse of humour to flare up; and it blazed away, like my grandfather's uninsured property.

When I was in the mood, he would—partly in a

purely poetical, and partly in a neurotic-coquettish fashion, and also to please me, for he did really love me—jerk open his eyelids, as a window-blind on a powerful spring flies up. He would hint: "It melts in my soul, little brother! Talk. Talk on!"

Like every man, he had virtues and faults, and a little extra. But, not being a perfect model of a saint myself, I shut my eyes to many things, because of his sharp-wittedness and his capacity for firing the soul.

When our conversation reached the heights, he would cry out:

"Good, Good, Good, you surely could have been a great man! May your business be burned down! Why do you not write? A book as thick as this, I would surely have been able to write, if I had been you!"

Apart from the fact that one might accuse him of flattering me, because I rendered him some little financial assistance, for all that, his words were, to me, "Words that came from the heart," and they made a deep impression on me. So long and so broad, until, at the beginning of 1917, I sat down and began to write my book: *Out of Chaos*.

He used to read the chapters whilst the ink was still wet, and the words were still alive. But he never once corrected anything, not a letter, whether he was pleased with it or not. "Write, only write. You were born for it," was his usual comment.

He was not very satisfied. "You are capable

of better," he would say. And: "Oh, Good, I will put you down in a novel!"

Behind my back he ridiculed me, and called me "Messiah."

When I presented him with a copy of the book, specially bound in leather, with the "Tree of Life" in gold, I autographed it, and inscribed in it these words:

"To one of my angels, a remembrance unto death."

Now and again he pilfered something from me when I was looking in another direction. And I remember that on one occasion I deliberately turned away so that he might transgress the Eighth of the Ten Commandments.

I knew that he was starving, and I had no desire to give him hard cash.

In the beginning of 1918, a representative of the moral laws of that period caught him, in the middle of Whitechapel, kissing a girl whom he loved without the legal right to do so, and tore him away. Positively a part of the kiss was torn away, along with him. And he was at once polished out of the country, like a black spot from the blue-white, pure brilliant—England.

THE FORTUNE-TELLER

At the beginning of the phenomenal year of 1917, I was floating, one airy evening, along to my friend the poet, who, at that time, was staying

at a filthy little restaurant in the East End of London.

On entering, I noticed a Jewish sailor perambulating from wall to wall, as he sang Jewish-Oriental and other *motifs*, in a wild fashion.

I started a conversation with him. He told me that he was a distant relative of Sokolov. Originally he came from Lodz. His ship had been torpedoed. He was waiting for another ship. He knew Lermontov's works off by heart, and he had learned how to tell fortunes by cards in China. In brief, the abnormal sailor began to cut the cards. And everyone whose past he revealed went crazy with astonishment. He told the poet, in the presence of his wife, all his old and new love-affairs, and was correct in every detail. Afterwards, he cut the cards for me. I had always been as sceptical as my progressive critics. But the sailor really amazed me. In a few minutes, he told me my life. Eight times he cut the cards, and set them out, and each time he saw and spoke more accurately.

After the first attempt, he told me that he had never met such an extraordinary man. The second time, he said: "It is written here that you are absorbed in an idea. But, what sort?" I did not answer him. After the third attempt, he said more. In brief, on the eighth time of cutting the cards, he spoke in this way: "It is written here that you want to improve the world. You want to show that the world is going the wrong road. But it is too soon. The time has not yet come.

Half the world will be with you, and half against you. But the time has not yet come."

His words were a revelation to me. They made me more devout, and less "wise." And, when I left the restaurant that night, I felt like a man whose thick skin had been stripped off him, and on whom a new, thin, translucent skin had appeared.

FINKELSTEIN-LITVINOV

London Jewry possessed a fine ornament in Mr Finkelstein. He was a great philologist. It is said that he had a profound knowledge of twelve languages; and, along with this, was well versed in the Talmud. Since he was a bachelor all his days, he could dedicate his evenings to attending lectures. He also delivered lectures himself, frequently on contemporary and historical subjects, for, in addition to his other attainments, he was a sound historian.

At the beginning of the war, the Lord came to his aid. He obtained a good position with the Government as correspondence-censor. But he lost the position because of a trifle: a name. In his youth he had added Litvinov to his name, calling himself Finkelstein-Litvinov. And, as the Russian Bolshevik, Litvinov, was famous, and his name a jibe and a jest at every Music-Hall, Finkelstein-Litvinov suffered as a direct consequence, and lost his position.

We are a nice people—as sure as I am a Jew!

Along with having to suffer because of our national names—"Jew," "Sheeny," etc.—we also suffer because of our individual names, surnames and nicknames. If they are Jewish, it is bad for our businesses; and woe unto our children! If they are assimilated names, then our conscience pricks us. And a name one must wear!

His "late-enemy" name Finkelstein and Bolshevistic Litvinov lost him his good, warm position in the world's bath of blood. And he wandered about London, poor, sickly and neglected, because of two "Yiddish" names.

At the end of 1917, after Israel Zangwill had refused to translate my book *Out of Chaos* into English, writing to me, Zangwillistically, that he had not time in which to write his own books, I cast my eyes in the direction of Finkelstein-Litvinov as my translator. Seeing him passing my shop, his head drooped to the first button of his waistcoat, and his hands folded, one into the sleeve of the other, I called him in, and spoke thus to him:

"Mr Finkelstein, do you love peace?"

"Naturally. Who does not?"

"If that is so, then I would ask you to translate my book into English. In English, it will bring peace to the world."

"What is the subject, Mr Good?"

"Love, Mr Finkelstein. But not, God forbid, neighbourly love, or national love, but human, creative, sexual love."

When he became interested, I locked up the shop, sent home my assistants, and, without comment, read the whole of the little book to him. When I had finished, he told me that it was a lofty poem; but he was only a specialist of prose. "But, do you know who could translate it well? Miss Helena Frank."

I had heard of Helena Frank. She had translated very many things from the modern Hebrew and Yiddish classics into English. But, personally, I did not know her. Well, then, how was one to meet her?

Said he: "Take a pen, and write a letter to her at once. I will dictate it."

"MISS H. FRANK.

"DEAR MADAM,

"May I crave your pardon for troubling you," etc., etc., most courteously, nobly and tactfully, as one who has censored thousands of delicate letters from cavaliers to high-born ladies can write.

But, alas, next morning there came a reply from Helena Frank to say that she was too busy, had a pile of work reaching to her head, and could undertake no more translations. What was one to do?

I at once wrote to her, in my insolent way:

"DEAR MISS HELENA FRANK,

"I thank you for your letter. If you knew that by your divine translation of my book, you

might be of the greatest use to mankind, would you still refuse?

"I am certain you would not.

"I will go to you. Or, will you be so kind as to come to me, and hear my message."

Next day she came to my shop. A neighbour lent me a quiet little room, where I read for her several chapters of the Yiddish manuscript. She undertook the translation on condition that I would help her, and that she should be free to "strike" at any time!

I agreed, and she betook herself energetically to the task. I was with her about thirty times; and together we revised and polished every chapter, every sentence; so much so, that, in many instances, the translation is better than the original, excepting for certain lyrical parts, where Yiddish is too completely a language to itself, and simply untranslatable.

It was my very good fortune to have made the acquaintance of such a Jewish Christian, such a democratic aristocrat, such a saint, and such a silent worker, who does a great deal of good every day, and whose whole life is one virtuous act.

When the book was finished, I made her a present of an old cameo, the subject of which was "Moses and the Bulrushes."

Finkelstein-Litvinov, that good Jew and profound Talmudist, I met frequently during his last

years. Life tormented him on all sides. His weapon of defence was passive resistance of great nobility, until he fell, all alone, surrounded by mountains of books, whilst in the contemplation of life. And he was brought to burial in Israel.

May his ashes rest now, at any rate! May heaven forget his earthly name — Finkelstein-Litvinov, and remember only his name of honour: "*Reb* the son of ——!"

May the Angel Michael invite him into Paradise!

THE OPAL RING

MADAME S. came to "Cameo Corner," with all the hope and enthusiasm of a pietist visiting his rabbi, and snatched up all sorts of bits and scraps of silver and bric-a-brac. In this way she accumulated at her home a whole cabinet-ful of little silver vases, bottles, boxes and ornaments—all bargains! And she was prepared to take her oath on it that every bit was genuine, because it came from "Cameo Corner."

Every Friday she wiped off the dust, the spots, the marks and the germs of the weekday ordinariness. And on Saturday and Sunday every bit sparkled like the glow of joy in her face. Such a beautiful collection—may no evil eye harm it! And then, everything was of the best, since it came from "Cameo Corner."

The years flew by, but they never outdistanced her happiness.

On one occasion, she saw on my finger a rare opal ring, to which her heart was strongly drawn.

But my egotistical soul refused to part with the ring.

So, she went into the profaned Holy of Holies, on my side of the counter, and pleaded with me, as with a murderer. "No, no!" I said with brutal stubbornness. "You cannot have the opal. No money and no tears in the world can buy it."

"If you ever part with it, will you let me have it?"

"Yes, you. No one else. You may rest assured, Madame S."

A few days later, there came into my shop my good friend, the sweet artist-singer, Madame T. And she saw the opal ring on my finger.

"Oh, God, what a stone! I never saw anything like it in my life. Just let me see it."

I showed her the ring, and told her it was not for sale.

She became petulant, and pouted like a child. Her mouth became still smaller, showing but two of her beautiful front teeth. She looked at me with Medusa eyes, and said somewhat angrily:

"Surely you will sell it to me. Just see! You have so many beautiful things, whilst I have nothing."

I answered apologetically:

"Do I not every day sell enough beautiful

things which I have no moral right whatever either to buy or to sell? Oh, let me, at least, keep this ring. I want it as badly as I want to live. Why buy it? I will lend it to you at any time."

"No. It belongs to me and to my soul. I shall get ill if you do not sell it to me, very ill. Tell me, rather, how much you want for it."

"Do not ask 'how much.' Alas, I hear these words too many times in the day. Must you, also, ask 'how much?' You offend yourself, me, and the ring, by uttering these the ugliest words in the language—'how much?'"

"Very well," said she. "Do not sell it. Do not sell it." And she left the shop rather angrily.

Meanwhile, Madame S. came to me every week to see if my heart had grown softer. And she consoled herself with the fact that I had not sold the ring to someone else.

A few weeks later, my friend T. telephoned me, and told me in a broken voice that she was ill; and, if I did not want her to die young, I had better be so kind as to sell her the ring. She said she meant this very seriously.

I told her I was very sorry, but I could not part with the ring.

She repeated her statement, only in a much more ailing voice; and my heart was softened, and I promised to let her have the ring, on condition that she was not to offer me any profit, only what it had cost me.

Next day she came for it. I parted with the

ring in the same way that a one-time wealthy mother parts with her beloved daughter who is leaving her home, to serve a friend.

When next Madame S. came to me, I made open confession to her.

"Your misfortune is also my misfortune," I said, and begged her forgiveness.

She forgave me, and bought for herself another beautiful opal ring which was, at the same time, to serve as a memento of the first.

Two or three years later, poor Madame S. became critically ill, and had to undergo an operation. Her family advised her to take off the opal ring, whilst under the operation, because the superstition that opals are unlucky is very popular. But she was not agreeable, and wore the ring.

She wore it under a second operation, and a third. It was only after her death that they took the opal ring off her dead finger. And I bought it back for mere money.

As I am writing this, the opal ring is lying in my waistcoat pocket, mourning after her who had doubly loved it—for its own sake, and because it was a memento of the other.

Day by day it grows paler and paler.

MY LITTLE CHIN

BEHIND my back, which is somewhat bent from birth, by the Exile, by the Gemarrah and by the

watchmaking, there hangs a brass candelabra-mirror. It reflects the days and the nights and the lucky customers that come and go; the passing of the months, the moon which waxeth in the middle of my black head of hair—everything it reflects mysteriously, even to the realistic *littérateurs*. Three branches twist upward from the mirror originally intended to hold candles. But, I have been using these branches a score of years, for hanging hundreds of strings of beads on. Each branch bears a medley of all sorts, and all kinds—up to the Sabbathical, symbolical which find no place in the Breastplate and Ephod of the High Priest.

From every corner of the earth and sea, they have been gathered together; and they are singing in unison an harmonious, world-loristic song.

The wine-red Indian cornelian, the blue Persian turquoise, the black German onyx, and the blood-red Italian coral, the milky Hungarian opal, the fiery ones of Mexico, the grass-green malachite from Siberia, the agate from Scotland with its hieroglyphics imprinted by Nature, and the hard, embedded, dried-up amber from the Land of Israel and Arabia—all these come to life with a gentle song.

Together they rest in peace, on my branches, and sing, each one separately, a song of wonder.

On one occasion there came in, for the first time, an English lady, and she saw the mirror-candlestick with its three Niagara-waterfalls of

petrified colours. She said: "Dear me! Tell me, please, who dares to wear such big beads? They are more suited to Arabian horses."

Said I to her: "The Arabians decorate their horses more beautifully than the Europeans their women."

"Do women really wear them?" she asked again, in amazement.

"Yes. Hundreds and thousands of women wear those beads, in one, two and three strings. But, on the day when I meet a woman who has the courage to wear the whole three mountains of beads on her shoulders—with that woman I will fall passionately in love that very day; and, please God, I will shoot the man who stands in my way."

By accident, or fate, that same day there came into my shop a young lady I knew. She had a great soul—appreciation for the play of colours and for bead-music. She tried on mountain after mountain; and gaped at them.

What was I to do? I had promised, only that day, to fall passionately in love with the woman who had the courage to mortify her soul for the sake of the beads, and who would wear them all at once, even if they should break her precious neck. And here she was, standing before my amazed eyes. What was one to do? What was I to do in the circumstances? Father of the Universe — of the whole world! I was in a terrible dilemma.

Should I really fall passionately in love with her? But surely I have a wife already, and am legally and truly the father of three children. And would the newspapers and posters and paper-boys be able to keep silent about such a scandal? Shall I refrain from falling passionately in love with her? Then—how come I, a slave of my word, to break my word?

But as I am not possessed of the brutal strength of a Jephthah, after having shifted about for a long while, I decided to remain in the dilemma.

Naturally, the blame falls on the shoulders of my small, weak, undecided little chin.

HISTORY REPEATS ITSELF

History repeats itself, and historians still more so. I have already related the miracle which befell my grandfather—how he found a knotted handkerchief which a beggar had lost, and made the Passover with it.

And that which befalls the grandfathers befalls the grandchildren. It is only that there is a difference in the date and in the knotted handkerchief.

To me the miracle happened in this wise:—

At the end of the summer of 1917, after I had neglected my business for many months, because all my thoughts were entirely absorbed by *Out of Chaos*, and after I had been wandering about

drunken with my new mission, in a sober, evaporated age, trade was very bad.

At such a time, the telephone bell rings more frequently and alarmingly than the bells of the fire-brigade. What is it? The bank manager is short of money with which to meet one of my cheques. The telephone bell rings. My heart palpitates. The song vanishes. The pen drops out of my hand.

On one occasion, whilst sitting at my counter, carefully polishing a chapter of *Out of Chaos*, a man came in, and asked: "Have you any agates to sell?" Judging from his poor appearance, I thought: "He will surely want a little stone for a shilling. Not worth my while getting up." And I said: "No."

"If you have, show me."

"If you have? I have several big drawers full of all sorts of agates, of all kinds and colours, like the stones of the seashore, like the too-clever Children of Israel!"

"If you have?"

I stood up, and showed him a deep drawer, filled. He gaped, and bought twenty stones for a pound. Hardly an hour had passed when he came back, and bought a hundred pounds' worth. Next day, he again bought. The day after, he bought once more. Little boxes, gems, little seals, stones and chains, without an end. Everything which my heart desired to sell, he bought —and more. He spoke hardly a word. He only

counted up the amount and paid it. His name I will not tell. And, when he signed a cheque, with his ticklish name, it was a good one.

On the tenth day, he came again; and he took out of his waistcoat pocket a silver sixpence, turned it like a wheel between his fingers, and said:

"I have no more. Can you give me an agate for sixpence?"

I gave him a little stone.

I do not remember now whether I took the sixpence from him or not, but I do remember to this day that the sixpence glittered like the starry firmament of a blow, and was sharp, around and about, like a mill-knife, and that it cut into my conscience. I still feel the wound.

Every few months I see him passing my shop, terribly shabby and ragged. A cold wind passes through my bones when he looks in at my window. It seems to me that the panes of glass are of ice.

Might he not be a grandchild of my grandfather's beggar?

I made about one hundred and fifty pounds out of him, became easier in cash, heavier of purse, and lighter of heart. And the telephone bell rested its little tongue for a while; and the telephone wires their nerves. Then began a new worry. What was I to do with my spare cash? I bought an ugly diamond bracelet for three hundred pounds, and began looking for a customer.

In comes the "Frenchman." In reality, he

was a Polish Jew, twice naturalised, in America and in Switzerland. He had been a heap of years in England. The fine fellow had done me many small favours in the course of a few years. He had lent me small sums of money, and had left with me goods to be sold on commission. And he told me all the cunning little tricks he was playing in Paris and London. I trusted him with the bracelet. And he did me out of one hundred and fifty pounds. And—adieu!

I have long given up all hopes of recovering the money. But if ever he turns honest, and gives it back to me, I will inform you of it in the next edition.

This reminds me that for many years a customer owed me ten pounds. "Nothing doing." Having found out from someone or other that I was writing my life, and, trembling lest, God forbid! I should mention the debt, and so immortalise it, he paid me the ten pounds post-haste.

I shall keep on writing autobiographies.

SOKOLOV

On the intermediate days of a festival, several boys of Alexandrova, between the ages of ten and twelve, banded together, and went off to Warsaw—a journey of six hours by train, with the principal object of seeing Peretz and Sokolov. I was one of those boys.

We had read very little, and we understood

even less, of what those two had written. But, we had a strong desire to see, in the flesh, those two idolised beings, of whom so much had been talked and dreamed, enthusiastically and extravagantly, at all the *Cheders*, and the Houses of Learning, and by all the firesides. Who was it that had told those unbelievable legends about them? Epicureans—those who did not themselves believe in traditional legends.

So, we let ourselves go off to Warsaw. When we got there, we made straight for Sokolov's address, stood at the door of his house, and gazed into the yard in which was the Editorial Office and also the printing-works of the Daily —*Hazefirah*. There, too, stood the house in which he lived. We waited for about two hours, in the hope that he would appear at a door, gate or window. Then, the happiest of the happy, we meant to return home, to relate, on our oaths, that we had, with our own eyes, seen Sokolov himself.

But we waited in vain. He did not appear. One boy said to the other, and the other to a third: "Let us go to Peretz, and come back later."

And we went off to Peretz's house. There we imagined that a white curtain, at which we had been staring for hours, was moving to one side, and that a small part of his face was appearing, with its pitying smile exactly like his photographs. Satisfied now we ran back to see Sokolov.

After having waited some time, we saw distinctly

how he himself was coming out of his own house, and was crossing the yard to the printing-works. He had a bundle of papers in his hand, and a paper cigarette in his mouth. A cap covered half of his curly head of hair.

We were delighted beyond measure. And, in our delight, we ran back to the railway-station to get home, chasing one another on the way.

. . . . . .

A few years later, the Zionist Congress was held in London. A news-item appeared in the *Hazefirah*: "This day Sokolov leaves for the Zionist Congress in London, via the Alexandrova frontier."

From that very moment, I stopped eating and sleeping, flew to every train to meet him, to look at him, and, if my courage would not fail me, to greet him with a "Peace be unto you!"

When I arrived at the station one evening, I could feel the Congress atmosphere in the air. I actually saw Professors Mandelstamm, Yanishevski, Kahn, and other famous delegates, with patriarchal, kingly beards. Any other oppressed nation but ourselves would long ago have been liberated, and been oppressing others, if it had had but one such beard in its midst! I at once realised that my idolised hero, Sokolov, was in that train. My heart began to beat, as with a watchmaker's little hammer. I ran from the engine to the last luggage-van and back. At last I saw him in a first-class carriage.

He was dressed in an English, black-and-white-check sports suit, had an English cap on his head, and a big leather satchel slung from his shoulder by a leather strap. He was conversing with the "Modernist" assimilatory Export-merchant, Kavalski of Alexandrova.

When I had, at last, taken my courage in both hands, and was about to greet Sokolov with a "Peace be unto you!" I suddenly remembered that my trousers were torn in a bad spot; and a terrible shame took possession of me.

"True," thought I within myself, "true, I am turning and twisting about, and can avoid ordinary people noticing the raggedness of my trousers."

I kept close to the wall. I looked every person straight in the eyes, and forced him to follow my eyes, upwards, towards the sky, so that he might see only the untorn parts of my garments. Nothing mattered, so long as they did not see my raggedness.

But I realised that one cannot play a trick like that on Sokolov. Surely he is wise in the knowledge of men! Surely he is so great a psychologist that, with one glance, he could see every tear of you!

I was ashamed to go over to him. I stood hard by the wall of the station, stared at my hero, and was amazed at him.

But the third bell inspired and energised me. I ran into the carriage, held out my hand to him, and wished him luck.

In answer to my short greeting, he deigned to thank me, in Hebrew, before the train moved off.

. . . . . .

In the year 1912 or 1913, there came into my shop a stranger—a vivacious old man dressed in clerical garb, and wearing a wide, long cape. He was bearded, like an orthodox Jew. But his voice was too healthy and strong for a "Child of Jacob." He handed me a gold watch in which he only wanted a new glass fitted.

I took the watch in my hand, looked at it, and said: "This is a Jewish watch." Said he: "And what a Jewish watch! It belongs to the Zionist leader Nahum Sokolov. He is staying at No. 1 Montague Street. The first house from the British Museum. (*Vis-à-vis* the present Offices of the Zionist Organisation.) But, please tell me how you guessed it is a Jewish watch."

I laughed heartily.

"How I guessed?

"I would recognise a Jewish watch miles off, by the groaning of the spring when it is being wound up; by its swift, express rushing, and its sudden log-like crawling; by its loose bridges; by the filed-away points of its spindle; by the marks on its golden balance soldered with tin; by its thin, gold cases which make a crackling sound, like a new machine-oiler; and by its two little 'Mezuzah'-hands, one of which drags westwards, whilst the other drags still farther eastwards, and both of which entangle themselves in the seconds-hand

which throws itself about on all sides, rubs itself against the dirt of the dial, and cannot crawl out, for love or money.

"How I guessed? Surely the Jewish watch is our national wealth.

"And would I not have guessed by the chain alone?"

. . . . . .

The old man who had brought the watch was the famous Priest and Zion-friend, Professor Hechler, of Vienna, Dr Herzl's right hand in many of his diplomatic relations with kings and princes.

And the watch? I myself took that watch to pieces, made a careful diagnosis, and saw that not only the little glass but its whole outlook, body and life were in danger. So, I threw away the worn-out overturned screws of the "Modernist" watch-making, replaced them by the best English screws, cleaned the teeth, and filed down the unnecessary parts. Afterwards, I set the dial on two straight, sound little legs, and cleaned and polished every little bit.

But, to this day, it does not go accurately. It either goes too well, or not at all. But, it does not go accurately.

From that day, there sprang up a great friendship between Sokolov and his family and myself. A year before the war, Sokolov's late, gentle wife bought many beautiful cameos of me. She took them with her to Warsaw, where the aristocrats made them fashionable in Poland, also in Russia.

During the war, Sokolov worked at the British Museum, on his colossal book: *The History of Zionism*, and, as the Museum is quite near my shop, he would sometimes come in to see me, sitting and talking for five or ten minutes. We felt, but did not talk intimate. The first few years I did not understand what attracted him to me.

. . . . . .

Once, in the middle of the war, he was sitting at my counter, bent and care-worn, in an old, ragged coat, buried in thought, under a cloud of cigar smoke. I said to him: "Mr J. L. Garvin, the greatest English journalist, and the editor of *The Observer*, comes in to me. He and his family are very friendly with me. I have spoken with Garvin about Zionism, and have told him that Sokolov happens to be in London —the greatest Hebrew journalist, and Zionist leader. So Garvin said he would like to make your acquaintance. He would like to meet you."

Sokolov was agreeable, and I arranged an interview.

A few days later, Sokolov went to Garvin, and, as he had to pass my place, he called in.

But he was not at all the same Sokolov of the day before yesterday. His bent shoulders were straight as a builder's line; his eyes were clear, and his skin fresh as a sportsman's. Along with this, he was elegantly dressed. He wore the finest top-hat, which made him look a yard taller. And one must not forget the English-diplomatic monocle.

I followed him on his errand to redeem our

Nation with my eyes and my heart. He was illuminating the living street. The gods of High Holborn licked their chaps at the messenger's grace and beauty.

I know that the interview brought a great deal of good to our people.

. . . . . .

Midsummer of 1917, after Sokolov had returned from his national mission to Rome, I wrote him that I was issuing a little book, *Out of Chaos*, and asked him to be so good as to read it before it went to press. He came to me next morning, with his daughter, Dr Celine, and said: "I will read it with pleasure and delight." And he took the manuscript under his arm, in the kindest manner. And this is the critical letter he wrote me:—

LONDON, REGENT PALACE HOTEL,
20. *Tamuz*, 5677.

DEAR MR GOOD,

I have read your work with great interest, and am greatly moved by some of the very appropriate thoughts and expressions. Your tendency is sympathetic, your form delicate, and, in many places, your language is picturesque. However, if you want my opinion about publishing it—and you want to have my opinion without compliments—I would not advise you to issue it in its present form. The goodness and the undoubted delicacy of the work grace the largest part of the book. But, when it comes to the prosaic, that is to say

to the practical things which are therein suggested, then, the work is too weak, and not sufficiently convincing. Also, all the sentences of this kind: "So says God," and the like, are too audacious. Such a prophetic, Messianic form demands too great a strain, and is not possible of achievement, even in the greatest poetical masterpieces.

I am sure you do not expect from me a friendly, but a literary opinion, and I give it to you just as if I were judging the manuscript as an editor without knowing who the author is. But, since I know the author, I can only wish you luck, as an amateur and a layman, in your work, which displays symptoms of fine feeling and high endeavours.

With friendly greetings,

Yours,

N. Sokolov.

I took note of Sokolov's advice. I improved and expanded the work, and set forth the ideas a little more clearly.

In many instances, I struck out the words: "So says God." But this caused me great grief; for, it was only in the name of God that I felt capable of creating that which was epical and truthful. When I write in my own name I am, at best, a small literary talent. Why did I blot out the Name of God?

. . . . . .

All Zionists love Sokolov, respect Weitzman, and are afraid of their wives.

I am like all Zionists.

To this day, I rush off to hear Sokolov speak. And I love him most when he is speaking in Yiddish, on a Jewish theme. At such times, he rises to the very highest pinnacle of lyricism. He croons out a tender song, such as one hears when one puts one's ear to our Mother Rachel's Tomb: the Jewish Ghetto.

. . . . . .

His active Zionist propaganda had improved his Yiddish. He did not always possess such a rich vocabulary in that language.

I remember when, twenty years ago, he came to London on a visit, and spoke on Herzl in Yiddish, he lapsed into German very frequently. But, of late years, the hand-maiden, Yiddish, is serving him better and more loyally than any other Yiddish writer or orator I know of.

. . . . . .

Whilst on the subject, I should like to say that, immediately after the war, my friend, Leopold Pilichowski, whilst painting my portrait, told me that his old friend, Sokolov, was looking for a house in London. He thought that I might know of one. I discovered a house, and went to see it. Noticing that it had a big mosaic of the "Shield of David," I was hypnotised, and the house was rented. Sokolov came with his son to thank me, and he said, laughingly: "For one Jew, at any rate, you have found a national home."

But the national home did not prove a success.

The Sokolovs moved out because there were too many stairs in the house, and also because the owner was a most high-rent-loving co-religionist.

. . . . . .

Last year, I sent Sokolov a copy of my book, *The Songs of Life*. The following characteristically Sokolov letter is worth recording:—

LONDON, N.W.,
14-III-1924.

DEAR MR GOOD,

A real "May-your-health-increase" for your book. I derived a great deal of pleasure from many of your sincere words. The main thing is not the language but the subject matter. You write a rich Yiddish, but you feel still more Yiddish. When one has feelings, and the imagination is stirred, they express themselves in every language. Paganini played on one string; and Gusikov, a Yiddish genius in music, expressed himself on some sort of an instrument made of straw! Our sages say: "God, who said that oil shall burn, can also say that vinegar shall burn."

But, the implement of your feelings is also a beautiful one—Yiddish. I am not a Yiddishist, but, real Yiddish, "God-of-Abraham" Yiddish awakens within me feelings of dreamy longing. It is not the kingdom of the Holy Tongue, but it expresses the warmth, the purity, the Jewish dwelling-place, the sagacity and the wit of the Jewish brain.

Your poesy is mixed with prose; and that is a

virtue. Poesy is like a spice-box—a wonderfully pleasant fragrance, but bears no fruit. Prose is like a "Lulab." Dates grow on the palm-tree, but there is no fragrance in it. Poesy and prose, combined, are like a citron. "Blessed Art Thou Who hast created the spices; and Blessed Art Thou Who hast created the fruit."

Thanks for your "citron."

With respect and love,

N. SOKOLOV.

SHOLOM ASCH

IN the year 1914, the war, with its terrible world-convulsion, flung over here, from France, a certain L. Berson—a rather clever decorative artist. At any rate, he was a fine agitator, a man who could inspire others. He established a Jewish Art Society, the "Ben Uri," which, at the time of writing, has a beautiful—if small—collection of Jewish works of art.

During nearly the whole of the time which has intervened since the Society was established, I have been working for it, have financed it a little, and have idealised it, as far as my strength and my weakness permit.

As the "Ben Uri" organised recitals, public receptions and banquets to foreign authors and artists, and as my shop is, geographically, right n the centre, the very navel, of London, all the visitors came to me, and we made each other's

acquaintance. In this way, I sowed the seeds of many friendships, and also some enmities.

Every woman knows but too well, poor thing! what it means to have a writer or an artist for a husband, knows that their childish caprices, their punctual unpunctuality, and their self-delusions might drive the youngest woman straight into her grave, without even a scrap of a Bill of Divorcement.

I have had dealings with them, have tried to make practical arrangements with them, and derived much pleasure from contact with them, as well as popularity and honour, both of which I love like two lumps of sugar in one cup of tea. But my life was not all honey; for I suffered through them, and tried to follow in their faulty, unbusinesslike footsteps.

. . . . . .

It was early on a Monday morning in March, 1922. One of the two doors of "Cameo Corner" was opened as wide as it could go, and there stood before my eyes a tall, broad-long-bony man, with big, warm eyes, heated up by the fiery end of a cigar which he held between his lips. His upper lip was covered with hair, with a little bald spot in the middle—there where the angel had given him a fillip. His lower lip and chin were completely clean-shaven.

I looked at him, and guessed that he was a wealthy Polish-German corn-merchant who wanted to buy a present of some sort.

No doubt he read my thoughts. He introduced himself to me: "I am Lush." "Lush? Lush?" I repeated within myself. "Who can he be?"

It happens that I have a very dear friend of the name of Lush, and, in honour of that friend, I smiled intimately at the stranger.

But I soon realised that I had not heard him clearly, and that this was no other than Asch—the great, genial, lyrical Sholom Asch.

Five minutes later, we were already deep, deep in conversation, friendship and "spiritual kinship." (We were from the same district—the Kujawkies.) And we began to love one another. In my eyes, he began to take on the appearance of an Oriental prince. In his eyes, I, of course, looked like a little brother-in-law of his, after whom he was just yearning.

As I have said, we began to fling presents at one another. I gave him an antique Hebrew amulet, which my highly-learned friend, the "Haham," Dr Gaster, had wanted me to give him, or sell him. I had said to him: "No, I will never part with this amulet—never!" And he gave me an old silver mantle for the Scroll of the Law. I gave him amber beads, and that sweet Yiddish word:—"Pamiontke" (Souvenir), which he had not heard for eight years. He gave me an édition-de-luxe of his twelve books, which he had actually brought from America for Dr Elaissoff, the critic.

And so it came about that every day, for three

weeks, we enjoyed long hours together, and we gave to one another, and stole from one another, the souls within us.

He used to say of the shop: "How could a Jew place a little Psalm-book in the middle of the street?" He was envious. One could positively hear him swallowing the spittle of envy, when he saw such beautiful brunettes and blondes coming in every minute, bringing with them all the open-heartedness of their *décolletée* blouses and their sapphire eyes, at which he used to go into a fine, lively fit. "A Jew has luck!" he would sigh, most heart-breakingly.

But, God of Abraham! now and again he used to sulk, in a way which one cannot describe in ten autobiographies. Not even a woman in child-birth is so fussy! One might certainly accuse him of having just heard that the three great authors, Mendalle, Peretz and Sholom Aleichem were dead, and that he felt he was the only one who remained—an only literary son to a peevish, chosen people. So to indulge himself in what was forbidden! Listen to a story:—

That same Monday, he told me that he did not like the "Imperial Hotel." My brother Leon went with him, and they rented a beautiful room at a boarding-house. He stretched himself on the bed, in his shoes—and with corns big as a father's!—measured out his full length, as in Sodom, and cried: "Oh, I cannot sleep here! I shall be suffocated!" He paid for the night he had not

slept at the house, and left it. At a second boarding-house, the same story. Ultimately, he went back to the "Imperial." Next day, he moved into a bigger room. And, the day after, he moved into the "Russell Hotel"—one of the finest hotels in London. And, while there, he moved twice, with a great pile of luggage, tipping, right and left, all those who attended on him, like—not comparing them!—a millionaire of the "Joint Distribution Committee of America," to which, unfortunately, he belonged. On the sixth day, he said to me that he could not stay at the "Russell." It was too small for him. He wanted to move to the "Hotel Cecil." I cried out: "What are you saying? The 'Hotel Cecil'? Only millionaires, kings and ex-presidents stay there." Said he: "I must do this, for the sake of my work." I went off to the "Cecil" with him, and booked a room. There, too, he removed to a still bigger room, in which who knows how many kings and princesses on foot had already slept. If, just fancy, there had been dust in that room, it would have been worth thousands in gold and platinum meltings.

The cheapest furs which the mice of the "Cecil" wear cost five hundred guineas each. It is time a legend of this kind was invented! To say nothing of the cats. . . . Is it a trifle—the "Hotel Cecil"!

I will make a confession of confessions: Whilst I was dragging myself about with him, his spendthrift ways influenced me. I began to fling money

about, right and left, and agitate my little head after a multi-millionaire fashion.

If a poor Yiddish writer can do it, then surely I can! Until it came to this, that when, about that time, someone brought to me a terribly big diamond of sixty-six carats, I did not like to confess my poverty by refusing to buy it. I scraped together the money from the most dried-up and meagre sources, melted hundreds of gold ugly and half-beautiful articles, and bought the diamond.

Afterwards I began to love that diamond terribly. It warmed, kissed, stroked me, and melted my heart in those lonely hours when the Spirit of the Lord did not rest on me.

I found out, at the British Museum, through the assistance of the great Mineralogist, my friend Dr Spencer, that it was an historical diamond, and had belonged to the Sultan of Turkey and the Shah of Persia, and that it actually was the famous "Tennant" diamond.

But, in reality, it belonged to me. We loved one another truly. To me it was the diamond eye of the "Golden Calf," when God did not appear.

Within two years, I sold it in real honesty for a far country, and made more than a hundred pounds profit out of it. And it was all because of the spendthrift!

But I must admit that the relations between Asch and myself did not continue the whole time to be amicable, clear and smooth.

On one occasion, this incident took place:—

I was walking with him one night, alongside the Thames, feeling happy and gay. He told me that a tailor was making him a beautiful suit cheap, because it just happened that he, the tailor, was reading his, Asch's, *Mary* at that particular time.

I asked him: "Have you written a book called *Mary*?" Said he: "Have you not read *Mary*?" And, suddenly, he grew sulky, and we walked along a good distance, both of us puffed out with sulkiness, as if we were husband and wife. Neither of us uttered a single word. If he sulked, then I would be sulky too. Go and do what you like with him!

I left him, with a pain-filled, quiet "Good-night," and a casual hand-shake. To this day, my hand aches as a result of that light touch. Next morning we begged one another's pardon, and got photographed together. He went off to Poland. I gave him a little money and a lot of regards for my parents. The money he delivered honestly, the regards too, but a trifle tactlessly; thus, unwittingly, causing pain to my deeply-sensitive father.

At that time, I felt happy and creative. I only lacked something to coquette with. So I bought myself a large black hat, with a broad band, and a dome like that of a Russian church. In that hat, I looked like a born Doctor of Philosophy. And I gave it the name of "The Sholom Asch hat."

The dream of my youth to become a Doctor of Philosophy was realised in the form of a hat with an "attic."

"THE SEED OF CAPTIVITY"

FROM his full-blooded, freshly-cut-out rib, Adam the First expected I do not myself know what! But it turned out to be the old species, in the form of a new sex.

From the fiery temperamental meteor, the planet expects something wonderfully astonishing. But, poor thing! the outcome is only a cold, sleepy stone.

The original, grandiose conceptions of Judah, from whose seed the nation expected that a Messiah would blossom forth, ultimately resulted in a little liver and goose-fat, chopped up with onions.

In March, 1922, I was sitting at a Jewish restaurant in the West End, with Sholom Asch, in the shadow of the "martyr-like steam which rises from a plate of 'lockshen' soup," as my beloved brother, Jacob Meyer—his memory for a blessing! —had described it.

We were talking about the mission of Judaism. I said: "Do you see this piece of a slaughtered and plucked fowl? It sustains Judaism. It is not the Sabbath, nor the language, nor the ethics. We moderns have succeeded in destroying all these, and have retained only the pleasure of the

taste of our dishes. What matters it that our book-shelves are getting mouldy, our National Fund is a desolation, so long as our Jewish dishes live as of old?"

Looking about me, at the restaurant, I saw, sitting at their tables, Russian singers and dancers; American Jazz artists; Italian acrobats; old German merchants and ordinary English "stars"—all fully occupied with the business of eating. It was evident to me that, although the world had long ago come to recognise these people as Gentiles, nevertheless their Jewish fowl-like blood was drawing them, with a thousand magnets, to the Jewish dishes. Here they were, sitting around, and unconsciously showing favour to the Jewish food, and swallowing with a relish the remnants of Judaism.

Meditating on all this, I was inspired to create, on the spot, the following legend; and, as it occurred to me, I told it to Sholom Asch:—

"At the time when we were driven into the Third Exile, cursed by God, the jest and laughing-stock of all our near and distant neighbouring nations; when the heavens refused to let us approach them, and the earth thrust us from it; when the outstretched arms grew withered before their time, and prayers died at their birth—

"At that most critical moment of our critical history, there appeared, behind the gates of Israel Land, in front of the exiles, a whole host of little 'kosher' doves, tiny infants. They

brought with them the tears of their pity, the sympathy of their grace. They brought with them the blood of their little necks, and the marrow of their little bones. They even brought with them a needle in their crops with which to stitch up the stuffed necks, and also a bit of fat for the Passover. And, not only enough feathers for an Exile-bride's bedding, but even enough to provide for a black-bleeding Pogrom, they brought with them from Israel Land. And they took an oath to accompany, feed and warm the unfortunate nation, until the last day of its Exile. And see! now they have carried out the provision of their oath."

The legend pleased Asch very much, and he said: "Write it down. A fine legend! What good does it do you to make a fool of yourself with messages from God? You had better write such legends."

That same night and the following day I worked hard, positively sweated. I wanted to make a humoristic *feuilleton* of it, like a writer. But I could not succeed; on no account.

About two weeks later, one morning I was lying in bed. My eldest child, Joseph Arthur, was then nine years of age. "Daddy," he begged of me, as his habit was, "tell me a little story." And I told him the above legend.

To him it was far, far more than a fable. He became aware, for the first time, that we are not as other peoples, but that we are an Exile-suffering,

hated people—a secret which I neither could nor would disclose to him. I had, indeed, told him hundreds of stories, about fairies and murders, but never a word about specific Jewish history, lest it should break his young little heart.

The child became unrecognisable. He grew pale as the sheets. His black-white onyx eyes overflowed with tears, and he said to me, chokingly: "Daddy, what you have told me to-day I will make a drawing of."

Knowing that he had a natural aptitude for drawing, I said to him: "Yes, my child. Make a drawing of it. But, do not forget to make the clouds dreadfully black."

When I came home from business that evening, my eyes beheld a great Exile picture. The picture, like the Exile itself, had been guided and flung aside by the Hand of God. I saw, for the first time, truly Jewish black clouds, dreadful as the fists of mysterious black hands. In front walked two colossal figures, drawn in eternal lines. They were carrying the "Torah" and the "Menorah," which is the candlestick used in Jewish ritual. Both were extinguished. A darkness! A child was tearing itself from its mother; a mother was crying out to the sky. There were many naked figures, shrivelled and withered by the unending Jewish agony. And in a little corner, in a river of tears, a crowd of fowls and little herrings were swimming after the exiles—a rescuing army. The national reserves!

That same evening, I wrote my poem, "The Seed of Captivity," which is included in my book, *The Songs of Life*, as well as the above-described drawing by my son, Joseph Arthur.

YIDDISH

At "Purim," 1919, when my lyrical hymns of praise to Yiddish appeared for the first time, in the monthly journal, *Renaissance*, there came in to my shop the gifted Zionist orator, Dr Shmarya Levin, and said:

"I have only just read your 'Yiddish.' I am boiling fearfully with annoyance. Just because it is a good thing, it may do much harm to the Hebrew language. I must come to your 'Ben Uri' ball to-night, to address the people, and to prove to them how mistaken you are, with your lore of Yiddish."

I answered him:

"With the greatest of pleasure. Come! The 'Ben Uri' will erect a platform especially for that purpose."

He came. The platform was ready. But his sharp eye noticed that the bulk of the people were not interested in the polemic, nor in Yiddish, nor even in the Hebrew, because English was their language, and he was very eloquently-silent! Let it be said in his praise!

But the hymn of praise to Yiddish procured me many enemies, particularly in the Land of Israel, amongst the Hebraists.

I was misunderstood by both parties.

In truth, many a time I wanted to sing the praises of Hebrew, but I could not rise to the lofty plane of the theme.

Often I stand in front of a brutal, archaic work of art, and find no word to utter, because of my great amazement. When I see the gracefulness of an old Hellenic figure in bronze or terra-cotta, I am speechless with wonder. And how much greater is my wonder when I stand wrapped around by a ragged "Exile" language, before the "Kingdom" of the Holy Tongue, the language created in the remotest times, by prophets of the living word—the language that was the sword of liberation in Egypt and in the Desert.

How could I—how could I, under the wings of a language whose every feather wilts at the root and bleeds at the point, sing, with my lyre, the magic of the Hebrew melody?

But Yiddish is, after all, the language of our "Exile," of the last, dying breath of the eternal agony of the living. It is not the language of the living word, but of the living self.

And, in that language God inspired me, that I might sing the song of love and life.

WAISTCOAT POCKETS

THE lining of my waistcoat pockets is always getting tattered, like my soul, by little ornaments, little idols, and by beautiful fragments of all sorts:

A Greek intaglio ring with the figure of Mercury —bought for forty silver shekels—rubs up against an old wedding-ring with the piquant old English motto "My hart and I untill I dy"; a tiny scrap of black opal—my lucky month's stone; a little lost pearl which had been picked up under the counter; a Renaissance ring, showing Cupid lying bound in chains, in a crystal cage; a Roman ring depicting a Roman soldier treading on a Jewish captive; a little bit of engraved glass, showing a black slave on his knees, pleading: "Am I, then, not a man and a brother?" along with a little lost key, and a poor, perspiring bit of lead-pencil. And under the fluff and ragged ends of the lining an emerald is always playing at blind-man's buff with a little moonstone.

When I buy an old—to me, a new—beautiful thing, I hand it over to my most devoted, noble and true Christian friend, José da Graça, a staunch Roman Catholic, to take home with him, and show to his dear sister and grand-nephew, so that, next day, he might give me his judgment on it, and guess what I paid for it. It is only after he has returned it to me that I put it in my waistcoat pocket, where it is warmed, familiarised and baptized. And when a customer turns up, the article is either given away, or sold for half nothing. Or else it brings in a good profit.

In any case, the profit is always a matter of mood as well as luck.

As a rule, when treating my "patients," if my

five windows, show-cases, counters and iron safe cannot produce the little stone or the little ring that is wanted, and after all other possible "remedies" have been resorted to in vain, then, I put my snuff-fingers into my waistcoat pocket, and out comes the "elixir."

Miracles — what? Yes, true! Wonderful miracles! How does a Jew put it: "I will tell you a better story."

On one occasion, I was walking in the City, a mile from my shop, amidst a sea of people and mud. I saw glittering a tiny bit of gold. I picked it up, and put it—where?—into my little "Scotland Yard"— my waistcoat pocket. And, nothing happened.

A week later, an old customer of mine, the owner of an estate, came into the shop. She brought me a free-will offering of new-laid eggs, and a brooch to be repaired. What had happened to it was that one of the little angels had lost a little wing. I pretended to know nothing, but thrust the two above-mentioned fingers into my waistcoat pocket, and produced the lost-found little golden wing, and soldered it on. We stared at one another. Words failed us. Great was the marvel!

Some time later, whilst walking along Piccadilly Circus, in broad daylight, there glittered up at me a little spot of greenery. I drew near, lifted it up, and saw that it was a Chinese, pure jade ear-ring. And I at once lodged it in my waistcoat pocket,

thinking within myself: "It would be phenomenal if the lady who had lost the little ear-ring should just come to me, and I should have it."

Half-an-hour later, on entering my shop, I saw my devoted and kindly assistant of the last ten years, Miss Cook, serving the well-known collector, Mrs Neville Jackson. She was looking for a jade ear-ring to replace the one she had lost. On the instant, I dived into my waistcoat pocket, and joyfully took out the ear-ring I had found. To my great surprise, it was not, alas! the one Mrs Jackson had lost.

A year later, the estate-owner lost the most precious treasure of her life—her only daughter. She came into my shop. The tears were rolling down her face, and fell on to her shoes. And there I stood, with fainting heart, and could not help her at all. I could not even find a word of consolation.

At Christmas I sent a consolation-gift to the beautiful little girl of the dead daughter—a crystal briolet in the shape of a tear, to wear on a black ribbon, around her sweet little orphaned neck.

ON THE THRESHOLD OF MARTYRDOM

When, like ripe fruit, the fruits of war—German bombs—were falling on mother London, and on the children-towns on the road to London, killing hundreds and shattering the nerves of thousands, I sent my wife and children to Brighton.

During an air-raid my wife was the heroine, and showed extraordinary courage. My soul trembled like a coward's, my teeth knocked together, like a doctor's "rat-a-tat." My wife doctored me. She gave me a little brandy to warm me, and I was calmed by her self-control.

As, at that time, it did not appeal to me to address God in Psalms, I used, on such occasions, to mutter a prayer from a manuscript of my own. And it served as an anti-air-raid remedy!

Men in the bombed areas passed the time very nicely playing cards, betting on horses, and carrying on "love" affairs. If a man had nothing at all to amuse him, he worked overtime.

I spent the evenings in the streets and parks of London, looking on at life, like a spy of God who was also spying on himself. I experienced a great deal, and wrote down something of my dreams in my book: *Out of Chaos*. For Englishmen and Naturalised British subjects there were the slaughter-fields of France, and free movement at home. But aliens "at home" were restricted in their movements. When an alien changed his address he had to notify the police at once. And a fat policeman wrote down the new address in a fat book. To this day, this regulation has not been completely done away with.

Naturally, it was necessary, as necessary as the war itself, and it was also, then, to the interest of every country, to torture its aliens.

On one occasion, towards the end of 1917,

when I was coming up from Brighton, I forgot to register myself. (At that time, I was still an alien. It was not until the middle of 1924 that I became naturalised.) The first day I thought of registering, it just happened that my right foot was aching a little.

Here goes the story of the foot:—

In my fourteenth year, I was bathing in a river with a crowd of boys in the village of Rotshintz. On the banks of the river stood a soda-water factory, and, close by it, a slaughter-house. The river was exploited for the soda-water. There was a place for washing the bottles and siphons, and all the broken ones were thrown into the river. From the open wounds of the slaughter-house, blood poured into the river. Nevertheless, scamps enjoyed themselves in the water.

Whilst bathing, I felt a sensation, as if a cold iron were touching my warm body. Darkness fell before my eyes on seeing a deep cut. I did not bandage it, but dressed quickly, and ran into the House of Learning. I was afraid to tell my grandfather or grandmother, because they had warned me not to bathe in that dangerous water.

But, when the bleeding and the pain had reached a point beyond endurance, I told my grandfather. He at once took me to a doctor. The doctor knew that my grandfather, "Samuel the Comb-maker," was a poor man, and that, therefore, it would not pay him to wash his grandchild's foot carefully. He merely bandaged

it, and, subsequently, it healed up. But, ever since then, when the weather is very damp, my foot aches a little.

Really, the main object of this book is to describe the spiritual sorrows and heart-aches of a business-man, not merely the foot-aches. But, as the last has now been described, let it go into the book. "What I wrote I wrote."

So, as I was saying, my foot ached a little. "It is not dangerous to the soul," I thought. I would go to register myself on the morrow. The war was not coming to an end just yet!

Next day I remembered that I was to go, but it happened just when I was making up a tassel of cornelians. I searched amongst thousands for the most beautiful, and with silver wire plaited them together, until they looked like one big bunch of grapes. I played so long with the "cluster of camphire" that the registration office was closed. Afterwards, I absolutely forgot that I was an alien. In this way, eight days went by.

On the ninth day, a telegram arrived from the police. They wanted me. I rushed off to them at once. A policeman asked me: "Why have you not registered yourself?" It just happened that I was in an exceptionally irritable mood, and I answered, rather sullenly: "I forgot."

"Forgot," said he, "is no excuse for the English law."

"I forgot that it is no excuse," I answered.

"For failing to register," said he, with a smile, "you may be brought up before the magistrate."

"Very well," I retorted, angrily and foolishly; for as everybody knows one can easily cover such an offence with a nice kind word, or a sweet smile. "Very well. Take me before the magistrate."

He did so. But, first of all, a policeman took me to the central police-station. There, my fingerprints were taken on black wax. Afterwards they led me to the police-court. There I was kept several hours in a beautiful, clean office, to wait my turn—"First come, first served," says the Englishman.

I had always ridiculed the bad habit which martyrs have of uttering a few final words before they are crucified. Woe to the mockery! Surely I myself had prepared a flaming-fiery speech. I burned like a pine-knot. And who knows what sort of rhetorical defence of aliens I might have composed. But, alas, when they called me into the box, the magistrate merely asked the policeman:

"Is there anything against him in the past?"

"No, your Worship."

"Twenty shillings."

I paid at once, net cash, with the dirtiest war pound-note. The whole thing had taken a minute. Never had the State earned money quicker.

The flaming-fiery oration glowed for several days in my heated chalk-oven of annoyance. But, so soon as the oven cooled down, there remained of my undelivered oration, ashes and—nothing.

Since those days, cool, cause-seeking reason has taken up the controlling rein of my life's-conduct, and has been leading me, to this day, along the well-guarded and illumined highway of law-abiding remembering, and—naturalisation!

But I cannot close this chapter without also making the usual and universal remark made by all criminals and political jail-birds, to their interviewers: "The warders and the police were very good to me."

ERNEST RHYS

THERE exists an ever-tepid wall which forms a division between heaven and hell.

If the wicked man gets too hot, he goes over to the tepid wall, and cools his scalding bones. On the other hand, if the virtuous man feels too cold, he goes over to that same wall, and warms his frozen limbs.

My business is just like that tepid wall. After having been a whole day at the British Museum, absorbed in the "Torah," and in His Works, the soul of the saint grows cold, and he comes in to me. He rubs himself against the magnet of amber, warms himself in the flame of opal at my sinful, living shop-keeping business.

Passes by a slum landlord, a hot profiteer of daily-baked bread. Then, he cools himself at my place, in the crystal reflections which emanate from the works of art.

One of those saints was Ernest Rhys, the

famous poet, folk-lorist and editor of "Everyman's Library," who has already edited over a thousand books, many of them classics in world-literature.

Many a time, after a day's research at the Museum, studying that which once lived, he would pay a visit to the living, vibrating "Cameo Corner."

We did not know one another. That is to say, I did not know that he was a man who excavates the buried treasures of the world's literature and brings them to life in the English tongue. Nor did he know that, under my masks of sorrow, gaiety and laughter, I concealed the tidings of a new life.

At the end of 1917, it somehow came about that he had to give me his name and address, after we had been meeting for five or six years.

"Are you the Editor, Ernest Rhys?" I asked him, in amazement.

"Yes. I am he."

"So! Then I will confess to you that I am Moysheh Oyved. I have just written a book of life itself, to save mankind."

"Can I see it? May I see it?"

"To-morrow afternoon, you shall see it, and judge it."

. . . . . .

Next day, he came with his wife, Grace Rhys —a poet from the heights of her soul to the tips of her toes. They opened the English version, in

manuscript, of my book, read a short chapter, and looked one another full in the face, with eyes of wonderment.

"Let me take it home," he said to me, "before you hand it over to the printers. I will correct the English."

He corrected it, and called the book *My Greatest Jewel.*

. . . . . .

In the summer of 1922, Ernest Rhys proposed my name as a guest of honour at a monthly dinner of the P.E.N. Club.

I arrived there in cuffs and a starched shirt-front, and came upon about a hundred and twenty English writers and artists, and six foreign. The guests of honour all wore cuffs.

John Galsworthy, the famous dramatist and novelist, presided. According to custom, he called out the name, branch of art, and nationality of each guest of honour.

When it came to my turn, he announced: "Moysheh Oyved, a Polish poet."

It was a smack in the face the finger-marks of which will remain for a long time to come.

The reason why this happened was that John Galsworthy is an æsthetic gentleman, a man who is full of pity for the living, and who is a friend of the Jews. It seems that he did not want to offend me before such a large audience by announcing that Moysheh Oyved was a Jew.

After dinner, I ran across an anti-Semitic woman,

whose anti-Semitic arguments were very feeble and banal. I have much more to say against Jews than she has; but, for the sake of my people, I did her no harm, and let her live!

Last Christmas, Ernest Rhys made me a present of several books, amongst which was the *Autobiography of Benvenuto Cellini*, the great Florentine goldsmith and sculptor of the sixteenth century. Reading this truly wonderful book, I was reminded that I, too, had something of a life; I felt impelled to write it.

And this is the result.

DR MAX NORDAU

THE echo of my book, *Out of Chaos*, in the Jewish world, both here and abroad, could not have been softer.

Modern Yiddish and Hebrew literature, the purely human, religious, social, and even the national, suffer greatly from ape-sickness.

It will imitate the West and the East, its own past; it will even imitate the ape! But, it will not do as its own inner nature dictates, for which purpose God has bestowed special organic senses upon it, since the very creation of the world. It also suffers terribly from this, that it has very few pretty girls amongst its newspaper-readers and book-consumers. And this is a great drawback to a normal circulation.

What is Jewish art, and what are its peculiarities?

Characteristically Jewish is that which is pregnant with the cosmos, with the eternal. Let it be the broad jest; let it be the deep agony; let it be heartfelt pity, or soul-destroying grief; let it be doing battle with God, or the great, terrible "no." So long as the word or the line is limitless, fathomless and incomprehensible, it is purely Jewish, and beloved in the eyes of God—in the eyes of the God of the Prophets.

That the spring is fragrant, roses red, and *littérateurs* blue—this is not "kosher," Jewish.

My bleeding book which had torn and peeled itself off the mechanical tree of up-to-date creativeness, and which, true to the spirit of the God of our forefathers, had developed into a beautifully clear and courageous being, was ignored by the modern pen-artists, as if the ultimatum had not been addressed to them—as if they were not in question.

I was not in need of their encouragement. I already had means of livelihood, beautiful things and God in my heart. I merely wished that they should have enough life in them to declare war. But they had not. And this annoyed and pained me.

Things stood so, when there came to London Dr Max Nordau, the National "Tribune," who expressed his opinion of my book, at the top of his voice, so that all might hear. It amazed and consoled me, and moved me deeply. This is the story:—

At the beginning of 1920, two years after the book had appeared, as I was walking, one morning, from the post-office to my shop, it seemed to me as if a flash of lightning had passed before my eyes.

As everyone knows, there is no lightning in London in the winter. I did not believe my own eyes, but turned round to see from which source the lightning had flashed, and, with its brilliancy, had forced my eyes to blink. Had God resilvered the sky afresh, from His side, and blessed us with a brand-new sky? Or, perhaps it was the Divine Presence that, broken, wandered about, flashing here and there, and finding no place of peace?

Hardly had I put these questions to myself, when the answer came to me, leaving no possibility of an illusion — the silvery lion-dove head of Dr Max Nordau. I had seen his photograph hundreds of times, and I at once recognised him. Surely, there is not in the whole world a second Dr Nordau in the flesh! I had too much respect for him to stop him and talk to him in the street. I knew that his address was the Zionist Organisation Offices, but a minute's walk from my shop. So I sent him copies of my book, *Out of Chaos*, in Yiddish and English, with a letter, asking him to be so kind as to read it. "Herzl came to you with his book to get back the Jewish soil. I come to win the Jewish soul," I wrote.

And this is his reply:—

77 Gt. Russell Street, W.1.
2nd February 1920.

Dear Sir,

At last I have found the two hours necessary to read, re-read and enjoy your *Out of Chaos*. I read it in English, as I am not sufficiently conversant with Yiddish to feel it entirely. The translation, however, must be masterly to judge from the wonderful "Song of the Daughter of Zion" (chapter xx), which reveals a great poet.

You have impressed me deeply. I find with unutterable amazement reviving in you that unique spirit; an unparalleled mixture of ecstatic lyricism, of unfathomable mysticism and of prophetic rapture, which characterises our Psalms, our Prophets, and, perhaps most of all, Jesus. Do not be shocked by this approachment. Your trend of thought and feeling is strangely akin to that of the Nazarene. Your invocations of God, the utterances you put in His mouth, your passionate cries, your exhortations, your preaching, blaming, comforting remind me of the Sermon on the Mount, and of the loving speeches of the Galilean reformer to His disciples. But the wonderful thing is that most obviously you have not drawn your inspiration from the Christian Gospel, you have found it in your subconsciousness, in your Jewish heredity, of your mouth speaks the immutable, eternal spirit of Israel, that same spirit that has also animated Jesus and Isaiah,

Ibn Gabirol, and Yehuda Halevy, and of which there is a touch in the best creations of Heine.

This spirit has kept us alive through the most abominable centuries. It gives new hope and strength to see how living it is in a contemporary Jew, in you.

I would have been poorer had I continued to ignore your book. I thank you for having revealed it to me.

Yours admiringly,
Dr M. NORDAU.

MY BROTHER JACOB

THE war had cut the thread of the regular correspondence between myself and my family in Poland. Excepting for my brother, Leon, who volunteered and served over two years in France, with the English army—with him I corresponded frequently.

But so soon as the blood-and-fire flood subsided, although the earth was still red and the sky was still scalding, there again began to fly letters, backwards and forwards. And so, to this day.

One cannot imagine the joy of my family when they received our first letters telling them that we had passed through the hell, and that, thanks to the Almighty, we had all our limbs and organs, and that we were plus two little war children, to whom my wife had given birth—a little soul-girl Sarah Rivkah (Sylvia), and a fiery little boy,

Yitzchog Yacov (Isadore). How amazed were my relatives in Poland to hear that, in the middle of the tragedy, I had written and published *Out of Chaos*. But above all was their joy great that Leon had come out whole and untouched from the devouring lions' den.

On the other hand, we were overjoyed at the miracle which God had wrought to them, at such a merciless time, particularly when we heard the news that a first child had been born to my sister Pessa, thirteen years after her marriage.

. . . . . .

I must pause here, in order to mention my new-born brother, Jacob Meyer ("Jacob") whom the end of the war had revealed to me.

Before the war, he was a lad of fifteen, not particularly gifted, excepting with a good memory and a sweet grace. But during the war his eyes were opened, his heart grew broad, and his brain sharp and his soul expanded. His first letters at once revealed something exceptional in him.

He had a good command of the Russian, Polish, German and Yiddish language and literature. He also had a good knowledge of Hebrew literature both ancient and modern. But all this knowledge did not make of him a monotonous lexicon; for he was endowed with a keen sense of humour which preserved his childish *naïveté*, fresh and full of sap.

He stamped every thought, idea, theory and opinion with a style of his own—the mark of his

personality which possessed culture, education and a sensitive humour.

I, who have read little, have a poor memory and do not know a single language fluently, to whom it is, at times, hard labour to write down a clear sentence, thought within myself: "Now, I have at last found my Aaron the High Priest, who will throw open a window to let out the flame of my message, which is burning the bones within me, and for which I can find no outlet. He, with his polished steel pen, will penetrate the stopped-up ears of those who are slaves to senseless dogmas and ideas. And, together, we will bring a new meaning of holiness into our unmoral and disharmonious life."

And a great soul-love, which outdistanced a thousand times our mere flesh-and-blood relationship, sprang up, and grew between us.

In the course of the two and a half years he spent at Berlin, during part of which time he attended the University as a free student, and afterwards, when, for two years, he served as a soldier in the Polish army, scarcely two weeks passed without our writing one to the other. So much was this the case that, in those five years from the Armistice until the middle of 1923, all my writing energies went into my letters to Jacob. If there was left to me a remnant of time or energy, it was expended in passionate chess-playing with my brother, Leon.

In this way, months and years passed, until the

midsummer of 1923, when I was seized with a longing to go home for a few weeks, to see all my loved ones, especially Jacob.

On a beautiful summer's evening, July, 1923, the tedious express train drew nearer to the station at Thoren. Thoren is a town before Alexandrova. My brother was stationed there.

A few minutes after I had entered the waiting-room, there came in my old friend, Chayim, with a young man Hertzki, the husband of my youngest sister, Etteshi, whom I was seeing for the first time. Chayim cried: "Moysheh Oyved!" We fell into each other's arms, and kissed each other, but without tears, as becomes hard men! I inquired eagerly about my father, and my mother, and all my people. But where was Jacob?

They gave me news of everybody. My mother was very feeble; my father was well; and Jacob had obtained special permission to be with me the whole time of my visit. He was waiting for me at the station at Alexandrova.

Being too impatient to wait for the train, we hired a cart to which two horses were harnessed, and we drove through several pitch-dark forests. We were terribly shaken as the cart was dragged along the bad hills-and-hollows road, and were almost—almost—overturned. The driver lost his way a few times, and cut into the deep sand of new roads. It was already four o'clock when we gained the highroad, and found ourselves on the

irregularly stone-paved street in which my dear ones lived, and where their hearts were beating for me, day and night. The iron hoops of the wheels and the iron shoes of the horses rattled against the crooked stones, throwing out sparks like the "Fiery Chariot" on a quiet star-lit night. But my heart rattled still more. Was it a trifle! I had not seen the village of my love for sixteen years — and such years! Years in which two Empires had come to blows, because of the village!

"Ah, poor little village," thought I, "how much blood has every stone of yours cost?"

I paid a million marks for the fare. Then I crossed the sacred threshold of my parents' agony and yearning, entered the corridor of a little kitchen, afterwards came into the sitting-room, where, at last, my eyes rested upon my old father, who was looking well, and young for his age. Beside him was my brother Jacob in the uniform of the Polish army. Then I passed on, to the third and last room, and I saw my mother.

She was sitting up in bed, her back bent like a bow. Her sunken cheeks were flaming red, and the great wonder-eyes of her youth were dimmed and wrinkled up, scarcely to be recognised.

"Oh, mother, mother!" "Moysheh Oyved, darling!" And we broke into the sobbing of a lifetime.

The strange world around us has to be informed about life, and is always wanting story-books and

poems, very badly. But a mother, especially a mother like my mother, knows everything, untold and unsung. That sobbing told the story of the war: What Leon had gone through; the Balfour Declaration; the pogroms against half-a-million Jews in the Ukraine; the echo of joy; the laughter of children—every instant of the joy and the pain, the terror and the hope of our maimed Messianic life.

Oh, tears, tears! How could we have lived without you? Without bread, without water, without love—but only not without you, tears!

I looked at Jacob, and in his finely-shaped brow I saw my mother's eyes—the eyes of her youth, but much stronger.

A shadow of tremulousness passed over them.

His form was slender and firm, of medium height. His nose was not the unindividual Grecian, nor the ugly "Exile" one, but was a manly, characteristic nose. Every feature of his face betrayed his modest nature. But his lips curled up in a smile of bitter scorn. As for his fiery Holy-Temple-lit eyes, the most beautiful that the Jewish revival has created in many of our young Jews, they penetrated my very soul.

Jerusalem! Jerusalem! Beautiful, more beautiful than you, are the eyes which are turned towards you!

And, from the first moment, fear took hold of my heart. It was just as if something had whispered to me: Such a joy must be cherished, and one

must always pray for him! Such a divine phenomenon does not last long. Be on your guard!

Soon after this, my three sisters, all of whom had become mothers in the interval, came in. What a delight this family gathering was! God be thanked for it! But, very soon, Nature exercised her rights, and I had to lie down and rest, terribly tired after the journey, the excitement and having been awake so many nights. (Since I was a child, sleep has been my principal sustenance.)

Next morning, I saw my three brothers-in-law, Jacob, David and Hertzki, all their new little children, and their homes. I bathed in their atmosphere. But I did not let go my hold of my great youngest brother, Jacob, for one moment during the whole two weeks of my visit. I ignored the dearest, offended the nearest, by my "bad" attitude. But I could not help myself, so sincerely was I attached to him. Even my talks with other folks had to pass first through his ears.

On the hill of the Swiss Dolinyes, outside Alexandrova, we lay, reading *Out of Chaos*. I explained that which was unsaid, and entrusted him with "The Holy Name." I expounded the great ideals of Judaism, and the meaning and the ultimate object of the life of man, whilst we were lying there, in the green wood, not far from the cemetery.

And, all the time, my heart prayed for him, without words—prayed that he should live, and

that we might be destined to work together for the salvation of mankind.

Shortly before leaving, I drank a glass of "To life!" wine, and, over the glass, I said to my assembled family, in the absence of Jacob: "To-morrow I am going back to London. London, the heart of the world, calls me back. I am going to serve, not to be served. But take care of Jacob. I love him so passionately. He is not only a crown for the Jewish people, but for all mankind."

I could say no more. I felt suffocated. And we all burst out crying.

Next morning, Jacob went back to Thoren, to the army. He had, in all, only two more weeks to serve. And I went back to London, across Germany. With me went a more wretched mood than had harassed me the whole time of my visit.

The same day on which I had bidden farewell to everybody, I saw an indescribable sunset through the windows of the express train. The sun, red as the blood of a pigeon, was flying as swiftly as an eagle, and dropped into the horizon like a comet. Such a giant sun, and such a swift disappearing, my eyes had never witnessed before, in all the forty years of rising and setting suns I had known. Who can tell if there was a more magnificent setting of the sun in all the forty years the Jews journeyed in the Wilderness?

And it came to pass that only a few days later Jacob was prostrated with internal inflammation. The military doctor treated him in a most brutal

fashion; and within two weeks the vital spark had fled from him, and his two pure, beautiful sunny eyes — the mirrors of his soul — were extinguished.

I sat in the dark and mourned, not only because he was my Jacob, but because he had died too young for him to become your Jacob.

His letters had enriched me, and his eyes had fructified me. He was the greatest soul-friend of my father; and, for my mother he had washed the floors on Fridays. But to you he is a loss you do not yet realise. You feel that you are missing a spiritual light; and you do not know that, over there, somewhere afar off, there was extinguished a sunny soul which had been lit to illuminate the whole world.

So I carry his life and his death within myself, sealed with blood.

THE MIRACLE

Half-a-minute's walk from "Cameo Corner" is a Bible depot, in the window of which are set out Old and New Testaments, just as freshly-cut-up calves are shown in a butcher-shop: the blood is still dripping, the steam is still rising. That is how the Testaments are set out, opened up in the window.

Of late years, I have developed the habit, when passing the depot, of licking myself, like a dog, with a passage or two. I feel an electrical thrill on seeing

the Word of God. Then I go my way, like any child of man, floating on my winged feet.

A whole minute's walk from "Cameo Corner" is the British Museum—the Atlantic Ocean of historians, artists, and idlers who want to discover a new world, bury an old one, or just go and take their lives.

Although there come here, from the whole world, students and scholars to study and learn, and idlers to look about them, for the sake of saying: "I have been"; nevertheless, there always rests a feeling of Sabbath calm and quiet, about the entrance and carriage-drive of the Museum. Is it an echo of the Hush-silence within? Maybe! Hundreds of pigeons strut about, in and out of the professorial legs, and are not frightened. The footsteps of ordinary individuals leave no marks in the sand. It is just as if there were no such things in the world as soles and uppers and heels with nails, but only professors, poets and writers!

Exactly opposite the Museum lived my friend, Harendra N. Maitra—an Indian idealist. He occupied a room with three windows on the second floor.

When I was weary of the turmoil of business, I used to go and visit him. I always found the atmosphere of his Indian-furnished room full of the spices of restfulness and peace. I was always wishing to have such a room, where I might study and meditate, and write pure, sincere things and serve the Holy Name—Blessed be He!—without

hindrance. I felt that the inspiration of "Cameo Corner" was already written out. At home I did not have the opportunity. So I wandered about, terribly fretted, positively unsupermanly. Only now and again I used to write a poem or a little song. But, it was not exactly the thing. So I thought I would make for myself a holy place, light therein a perpetual lamp, decorate it in a sanctified-Jewish fashion; and there the Divine Presence would rest on me once more, and I would create works of worth.

I bought of my friend Maitra, his room and furniture, and paid him a high price. He went off to America. I remained in perplexity: "What was I to do? How was I to begin to make it sanctified-Jewish? What is sanctified-Jewish? How does one buy such furniture? How does one paint such walls? What is one to do with the sharp, four-square windows and door which thrust themselves into one's eyes? And how is one to lock—with what sort of an iron lock?—such a holy door? And, one must do everything in secret, because a foreseeing wife would not allow one to do such mad things; and practical folks would stone one with ridicule. What was I to do?"

First of all, I sold the furniture for a few pounds, with the exception of the orange-and-lemon-colour linen curtains, which pleased me very much.

I had the dilapidated walls repaired and painted with a fresco that resembled the Hebrew letter

"Alef," the windows and doors repaired and enamelled in white. I bought an old brass Syrian hanging-lamp, perforated, with six different coloured little panes of glass; a table; a chair; an ink-stand, and a new pen and holder. I folded my hands, and turned up my eyes, and waited for inspiration. And, I am still waiting, to this day!

Ultimately, a miracle happened. The Syrian perpetual-lamp refused to burn, on any account whatever. I bought the best oil, and the most expensive woollen wicks, but the lamp kept going out. For two weeks I continued to light it. I came in the morning and in the evening, but still the lamp went out. More than once I took the pen in my hand, and dipped it in the ink, but in vain. I could not write. I made a start, thank God, but got no farther. I rubbed my high forehead, and even that did not help me. Until I realised that one cannot entice the Divine Presence as one entices a foolish customer, of a nation of customers. It comes when It will, and to whom It will. In the old-young times, It fell passionately in love with shepherds. To-day, It is, as it were, somewhat married to me, a merchant, a rag-proletarian.

Often, It fades from out my hands. In the middle of talking, in the middle of a word—It is gone! The artist in me completes the other half of the sentence. When It returns, It is outraged at the travesty, and cries out: "It is unworthy of you!" So, I put the blame on Its disappearance.

But, generally speaking, It is enjoying a fairly happy old age with me. May things never be worse! Of better there is no need to speak!

No doubt you want to know what became of the "sanctified" room? And the perpetual lamp? Well, I hung the "perpetual" lamp in the doorway of "Cameo Corner," fixed into it a good electric lamp, and it burns in all kinds of weather. A pleasure! And it never burns itself out. Marvellous!

I let the room to the "Amnuth" Company, of which I am one of the directors. There we exhibited for sale the products of the Bezalel School at Jerusalem.

At the opening ceremony, the Very Rev. The Haham, Dr Gaster, delivered an eloquent, inaugural oration. Mr Pilichowski and Dr Oppenheimer also spoke. Fruit was distributed, and tea and cakes were handed round. But all this was of no use. The concern did not pay, and we only just managed to give it up in time.

A QUESTION IN PARLIAMENT

BEFORE Christmas is to me the jolliest time of the year, the greatest festival of my life, which is all festivals. At that season, people from far and wide come to me for beautiful things; and I bedeck them, one by one, with ornaments of joy and jewels of beauty.

In comes a beautiful woman. She has black

eyes, like two ripe, black cherries. She has sons and daughters, sheep and cattle, and, what is more important, she has servants. But, she is beadless. I entreat her to wear old red corals. I prevail, and am satisfied, more than satisfied.

After that comes an engaged young lady, deeply in love, wearing a very valuable diamond ring on her "legal" finger. But the other, more feeling, fingers are poor and naked and put to shame. I see to it that she should clothe the first finger with a big, barbaric ring. Let it, too, know something of a beautiful and wealthy life.

Comes in a woman who appears to be an emancipated young man, shorn like a lamb, who smokes cigarettes, and wears mannish cuffs. Surely this is good enough, one thinks. Nevertheless, she will not be completely emancipated until she wears a pair of long, independent ear-rings, and a big silver gypsy-ring on the smallest of her manicured fingers.

And that is how whole days pass by, as full of joy as are the years.

And it is no wonder. Does not a piece of old, red, dreamy, warm amber sing more lovingly and more devotedly than any kind of a poem? And are not the not-too-symmetrically-cut big rubies more revolutionary than a brochure by Trotsky or Kautsky? What realistic-futuristic pictures can compare with the Creator's marvellous paintings on agates and jaspers? And the flame of opals—

are they, then, not more eloquent than the tongue of Demosthenes?

I was all the time conscious that, to stand here like this for so many years, not preaching, it is true, but in a practical way spreading beauty that harmonises with the nature of men and cultivates them, means that I am thwarting every fallacy, old and new, which smothers the spirit. I knew that, although I never preached morality or took part in politics, nevertheless, with my undermining of ugliness, I was bringing destruction upon hatred, and, in my own way, was introducing a little goodness, peace and love into the world. You may ask: How was the business carried on? Very rarely did I insult a beautiful thing by putting a price on it. Seldom did I profane a work of art by showing it to a coarse creature. My prices for such articles have never been in accordance with the price I happen to pay for them, and are not the same for everybody. To the rich, I sell at a profit; to the poor, very often at a loss. If rich people are refined, I forgive them for being rich, and treat them as if they were poor. Always the price is according to the article, and relative to the quality of the customer.

Once, towards the end of 1917, just before Christmas, I was selling a green jade Chinese Mandarin chain of one hundred and eight lucky beads to a lady. The lady had light, sea-colour eyes, and the chain of one hundred and eight beads, around her neck and shoulders, formed

a sort of bodyguard of green eyes, a protecting sea which encircled and effectually defended her from any evil eye which might have been cast on her. In the middle of the business, my friend C., the well-known writer, came in, and called me aside by a wink of the eye. What was it? The matter was this: The Hon. Reginald Terrell, M.P., was, that day, going to ask a question of the Home Secretary, in Parliament — a question relating to me. Thus warned, if I happened to have any illegal or compromising papers, I would know what to do. The question had this bearing:—

"Whether Moysheh Oyved was the same person as Edward Good, of 'Cameo Corner'? Whether the Home Secretary had read his writings? Whether he, the Home Secretary, was going to take steps? And, if so, of what nature?"

I answered my friend instantly:

"I have no documents or papers to destroy. I belong to no political party or movement, and do not know what all this means. I am absolutely innocent."

But, in my heart I thought: Surely I am a greater danger to darkness than an official revolutionist is to light. Surely I have explosive literature: a pile of beautiful things. And, surely, I have an indestructible, illegal document about me: my restless Jewish heart.

But, how does the Hon. Reginald Terrell, M.P., come to understand this?

That same day the Home Secretary replied to the M.P.:—

"Moysheh Oyved and Edward Good are the same man. He had read his writings. But the authorities advise him to take no action."

Now, it is worth while to explain that the M.P. was not a wicked man, and not a fool. At that time, immediately after the Bolshevist Revolution, rumours were going about that the Bolsheviks were nationalising women. (No doubt a Russian had, somewhere over there, nationalised a Jewish woman!) And it seems that the M.P. believed this. Who can refuse to believe a thing which the newspapers are printing in leaded type? At that time, too, I had written, and also delivered, several lectures in English on the ever-painful and delicate sex-question, and I had put forward the suggestion that the only way to solve the problem was to establish National Committees, presided over by a High Priest, which might give spiritual and scientific advice to those wishing to marry or already married. The M.P. had misunderstood me, and mixed me up with a Bolshevik rumour.

I wrote him a letter explaining the matter, but he never answered it.

One thing, however, can be stated here with certainty, which is that if ever I caught him in my shop and sold him some beautiful thing, I would, by its essence, have proved much more to him than my feeble pen has done, and certainly have profited more.

Next morning, I was again sitting in the bright glass window of my shop, satisfying the hungry and the thirsty with art and colour. And, just as I was providing them with sustenance, so, in the same way, I awoke in them a soul-thirst and heart-craving for understanding that which soars above art, and is more illuminating than light and colour.

MISS STIRLING

HER shorn head of hair looked like the straw roof of a village hut at the time when the sun gilds it with a spray of rays. It covered and sheltered two open, infant-like lips, and two astonished eyes.

Although I have the greatest respect for universities, museums and archives, I cannot understand why they should have plagued her with dead documents.

Sometimes, in the busiest war-time days, she used to desert her studies at the British Museum, and come and hide herself in my four corners of beauty, feeling in her own element.

She would stand, with her bright head, on that side of the counter where the shorn victims of mine always stand, with books under her arm. I stood opposite her, with my tousled black-haired roof looking like a Ghetto-ruin, on the profitable side of the counter, with bags of spoil in my pockets. And we used to play with the little earth-stones and sea-shells, without the sound of words; and laugh at the foolishness of the world and at our-

selves, endlessly. But, we each laughed differently. Her laugh was like the echo of pure, English-silver bells, complete. Whilst my laugh was like that of Jewish virgin gold bells, cracked.

Apart from being the pioneer of bobbed hair, Miss Stirling was also a cameo-and-beads heroine.

She would surely now be wearing the longest, jolliest ear-rings and the biggest, tightest "choker," but for a misfortune. Like all modern intellectual women, she is legally married, is an excellent housekeeper, and, *à la mode*, devoted, heart and soul, to Jacobean furniture, to her husband, her amber "choker," and her two little children—a pair of godly golden ear-rings.

NUMBER 13

For twenty-seven years I lived without a lucky number, and there really was trouble. I had no money, no property, no rich friends, and I had not even any children. It was only after my first child, Joseph Arthur, was born that he brought with him the lucky number—13. And, since then, a matter of nearly thirteen years, it has been an altogether different world. In times of stress, the number 13 comes to my aid. Not only in connection with business, but also in many more important matters, I can depend on my lucky number. This is the story, in brief:—

On the 13th December 1912, my wife went into the hospital; and on the 13th January 1913,

she came home, with our first child, Joseph Arthur, the artist. And she had given birth to the child in No. 13 bed.

In connection with this important event there is a good joke. It is worth while forgetting the theme for a moment in order to tell the joke.

At the time when my first-born came into the world, a notice was hanging in my window: "A boy wanted urgently." It is easy to understand that I wanted a boy for the shop. But, in truth, I wanted still more urgently a boy for my home, so that I might be a father! Like all watchmakers!

Since that time, when it comes to 13, or the 13th, I am a different man, do the jolliest business, and have sufficient energy to checkmate my partner, write a lively letter, and crack a real good joke even with the rottenest material.

I do not envy the customer who comes in to my shop on the 13th. I sell him enough jewellery to satisfy all his little wives, if he happens to be a polygamist.

If I tell you that that is the only day on which I do not feel too lazy to get up early on a frosty morning, it will save further details and ink.

But, one really important experience must be related here:—

It was in 1917, when I was writing the tenth chapter of *Out of Chaos*. I was composing the "Councils of Love." I sat there, trying to determine

how many "Councillors" a "Council of Love" should consist of. I was about to put down eleven, then, fifteen, when, like an inspiration, it suddenly occurred to me to make it thirteen. A few months later there fell into my hands a little English book. It was the reprint of a lecture delivered at the London University by a man whose name was, I believe, Wassilevsky, on *Chassidism*. And there, to my great surprise, it was proved, seriously and scientifically, that the number 13 played a great part in the "Kaballah," in the Middle Ages.

The numerical interpretation of the word "ONE" (the Divine Being) in Hebrew, adds up 13. And "LOVE" in Hebrew also adds up 13. From this the "Kaballists" have concluded that GOD and LOVE are ONE.

I was really amazed and delighted to find that unconsciously I had done the exactly correct thing when I created that "Council of Love."

THE CORNELIAN FASHION

IT was in the spring of 1918, in the hour between the afternoon and the evening prayers.

Cameos had ceased to sell; beads had not yet begun. Christmas was long gone, and American customers had not yet arrived.

I could not do business in weapons of war, for example: soldiers' wristlet watches, or ladies' hat-pins; nor could I deal in lost or stolen property,

say, sticks and umbrellas; so, my hands were clean, and my pockets empty. But, my accounts had to be met, and I was not by any means happy.

A tall, handsome woman, accompanied by a dapper little man, both Italians, came in to my shop.

He sat down, and at once fell asleep. I served her.

She was lucky to catch me in a lively, selling mood, awake to every want of hers, and patient with her every caprice, so that, when she asked for a string of cornelians, she had it about her neck on the instant.

It reached to the middle of her bosom. She asked to try on a longer chain, and had it immediately. The second one reached to the glass counter-case. But, the third reached to her knees. And the fourth, which I had made up especially for the window, with the sole purpose of attracting attention and shocking the general public, and which I never hoped to sell, reached to her very ankles.

The heroic woman stood there, wearing all four heavy chains, and looking like an Italian Madonna, decorated with ornaments which had been stolen cunningly off an Indian goddess.

She asked me if I had ear-rings to match. I told her that I had, and before I was finished saying this, I had made a pair of long ear-rings, the lower beads of which were as big as duck-eggs, and the upper as big as normally big ear-rings.

In between the two beads there was a long silver chain. A few minutes later, she was already wearing them in her ears, and was reflecting herself in them as in a mirror.

Said she to me, softly:

"I see you are a born artist. I, too. I am an Italian Opera-singer, prima-donna at the Covent Garden Opera. Hush-sh! He who is sitting here, snoring, is my agent. My life, my fate, my career—everything is in his hands. You hear? Tell me in a whisper, darling, how much you want for the four strings and the ear-rings. But, softly, my sweet one, so that he shall not waken up. He must not know. Hush!"

I whispered to her: "Fifteen pounds."

Very quietly she took out from the depths of her stocking three "fivers," and paid me.

But the notes were new, and crackled, like the underclothing of a bride of bygone days. The agent heard in his sleep the pleasant shuffling and crackling. He shook himself as energetically as he could, and woke up to see where the sounds were coming from.

But before he had finished rubbing his eyes, I had already paid an account with the notes!

When they left the shop, although it was, by this time, very dark, and although Central London "stocks" business men, not children, for all that, there gathered together a crowd of young scamps, who at once followed after the pair, staring with great amazement at the tall, handsome,

good-humoured courageous woman who was bound in red chains from head to foot, and at the small, sleepy agent in whose little hands lay her life, her fate, and her brilliant career.

Next day, red cornelians became the raging red fashion in England.

That was what the newspapers themselves wrote.

And I had the finest selection of cornelians in Great Britain!

"DIAMOND EAR-RINGS" AND "THE AMERICAN"

AT the beginning of 1920, I bought 300 old gem rings: Egyptian, Greek, Roman, Etruscan, Renaissance, and Eighteenth-Century. I bought the whole lot for an absurd £600.

Many of them had crowned the collection of Signor Medina, an Italian Jew of the seventeenth century. Many of them had come from Lord Arundel's collection. Some were from the world-famous art-collection of the First Duke of Marlborough; whilst others had belonged to the Polish national hero, Prince Ponitovski. A portion of them had come from other, doubtful historical sources.

Nearly every gem ring was a valuable heirloom of antiquity, a choice specimen of the glyptic art, engraved by the skilful hands of great spirits. They had once graced palaces, museums, cabinets,

and noble hands, no less than those brutal fingers which had left their nail-marks deeply embedded on the passing generations—marks which are still unhealed, to this day.

Every separate ring had been a silent witness to more than one robbery, murder, and profitable transaction. More than once, it had been drowned and washed up again by the sea, buried and exhumed, pledged and left unredeemed. More than one collector had stroked it gently and kissed it. More than one girl had sold herself for it, and more than one plagiarist had copied it—the ring and the girl.

Having wandered about, in this way, for many hundreds of years, they revived collectively when they came into my joyful hands.

It happened on one of those days when I wind up my fantasy, and let it run like a watch without a balance. How I was throwing out from the show-case in my window all the cunning little rubbishy articles, and replacing them with only the three hundred genuine rings. Each of those rings bore a little note, on parchment thick as a slate, on which was inscribed its history and pedigree, as in a museum. And there was a catalogue to accompany it.

I imagined myself selling the rings, one by one, and making three hundred poor folks happy for ever and ever, whilst I gained two or three thousand pounds on the transaction. I told myself that, with that money, I would issue a Journal—a unique

Journal, in which the most expensive truths would be printed, on art paper. It would be sold at a penny a thick copy, illustrations, supplements, and postage—free!

As I was indulging in this dream, an American came in, dressed in a dirty black straw hat, with the rest of his clothes to match. He saw the whole collection of rings, and asked me the price of one which represented a nude Venus. I said it was £10, not thinking that he would buy it. He then asked how much I wanted for the whole lot. I said that I would sell it for £800, cash down.

"All right. It is mine."

"All right. It is yours."

But I thought within myself: "He will certainly not buy it. There is nothing to fear. And, if he does, it will also be well. A quick sale. It will ease my finances. I shall be able to repay the £600 I borrowed at 15 per cent. interest. Who can say how long it will take me to sell them one by one? Well, so be it! Let there be an end to the affair!"

Next day the American came again, bought a Wedgwood plaque for £10, paid, and said he had no more money. As he was speaking, a cheque fell out of the outer pocket of his overcoat. I picked it up, and saw that it was an "open" banker's cheque for £1800. I handed it to him, at which he said: "Oh, that is for an automobile." (I very nearly wrote "autobiography.") "But I have no money for the ring-collection." My business instinct told me

on the instant that the man was honest, and good as gold, and reminded me that I was in a desperate strait for money. On the other hand the profits on the whole transaction would amount to no more than a miserly £200; whilst the treasure in question was great and might have given joy to three hundred souls. In addition I would have to give up at once all hopes of realising the dream of but a few hours before, lock, stock and barrel, as it were. However, I said to him: "It does not matter. Take it without money. Take it. You will pay me another time. Only, please take it with you now."

I repacked the whole collection into the original red morocco-leather ring-case, the original case which that great English artist, Sir Joshua Reynolds, had used as part of the background for his historical portrait of the First Duke of Marlborough. The American took the packet under his arm, and said:

"I will see you at lunch-time to-morrow, and give you some money."

He called a taxi, and disappeared, instantly swallowed up by the street traffic as a coin is swallowed up by the autumn mud of Oshentshin.

I did not know his name, and did not have his address, nevertheless, my heart said to me: "Don't worry. Don't be afraid. It will be all right."

When I got home that evening, and told my wife the story of what had happened, minimising it by reducing the £800 to £300, so that she

should not be fretted a whole £800 worth, she was very angry with me. "How could you think of doing such a mad thing?" she said. "That's why you have nothing. It is again the story of the diamond ear-rings. I told you not to trust him, and you lost £200. Other folks keep servants and buy houses, whilst I have to toil all by myself. You trust everybody. You give to everybody. Only for your own wife and children there is nothing. You have never had anything and never will have."

And so forth, as is the habit of women, from time immemorial.

She really did open my eyes to my foolish action. And my eyes remained open the whole of that night. They did not even blink. I flung myself about, from right to left and from left to right, in the length and in the breadth.

"Surely, £800!" I repeated to myself, as the foolishness I had done began to dawn on me. "I could have made my whole family happy. Is it a trifle—£800! And such a collection, the like of which one comes across only once in a lifetime! And to be such a good-for-nothing as not even to take the man's name and address! Such a thing has never been heard of! Is that what a business man does? Surely, not even a writer would have done such an idiotic thing!"

I hate to be melodramatic, and keep the nerves of strange readers on edge. I am also lacking in the language, the terminology and the art of

describing a situation in all its nuances. That is to say, I generally avoid attempting to spin out the threads of the most important incidents, lest they should drag after me, when the tapestry of my life is completed.

But you may rest assured that a description of the hours—years, rather—of that long night, and of the next day, would have filled three printed folios, and gone into six editions, if they had happened to fall into the hands of an experienced writer, with a rich Warsaw vocabulary! Oh, how he would have bored the reader, brought oily tears into his eyes and run on for chapters and chapters! But I will skip the incidents of that night, and at once lead my impatient reader to the keen, joyful moment of the story, bring him to it with one giant leap!

Next day, at about five o'clock, the American at last came in, now dressed like a hundred lords. He paid me and bought more, and more and more; suggested an excellent remedy for my poor blood-circulation; and advised me to eat oranges every night. He gave me his good name and wealthy address, and bought more, and still more. He put me on my feet, my golden feet.

Nights afterwards, I could not sleep because I was too happy!

Four years later, the American came back, and he said to me:

"Do you know, Mr Good, all the things I bought from you are still lying in a cellar, packed

in the boxes, exactly as you sent them to me. I neither wanted them, nor have the time to look at them. But if you could be so speculating and daring as to trust me with so much goods without knowing who or what I was, then you deserve all the business you have done. Do you still eat oranges every night?"

I told him I did. But the truth was that as soon as the money had gone from me, I gave up eating the oranges.

And, now, when my wife says: "Diamond earrings," I retort: "The American."

DREAMS

EACH moment of the day we live through, hammers our bones, kisses our limbs and whips our souls beyond counting, until we grow weary, and drop down. Then, the day itself, also weary, comes to visit us at night, in our dreams, as they are termed. And those dreams chatter incomprehensibly to us, tell us crazy things, hurly-burly, here, there, and far, far!

Sometimes they talk in the clearest terms, bringing back to our recollection that which was long forgotten; and, sometimes foretell that which will be long in coming. They deliver these messages in terms which, in our waking hours, they would not have the courage to utter, nor we the courage to hear or understand.

Not all the Press of Fleet Street could print

the dreams of even one man. And I will attempt no more than to relate a fragment of a long series of such dreams.

In the midsummer of 1923, I dreamt that the "Ben Uri" Society held a bazaar. Towards it, I contributed a brass-enamelled ornament worth only a trifling sum. Coming back from the bazaar, I found a young man, drunk as Lot, sitting near me on the top of a 'bus. His head was resting against his mother's shoulder. He was wearing the ornament I had contributed to the bazaar; but it had assumed a different appearance in my eyes. I saw that it was of pure gold, wrought with wonderful, richly-coloured enamel, and some beautiful little pearls were suspended from it. As I was looking at it I said to myself: "Surely I could have made of it ten pairs of ear-rings, earned a good profit, and also given joy to twenty ears. Why on earth did I give it for such a drunkard to wear?"

The annoyance with myself woke me up. I lay there for hours thinking of my dream.

Next morning, my brother, Leon, came into the shop. (He goes to auctions and buys for me.) I asked him:

"Anything on to-day?"

"No. Excepting at Sotheby's. Judging from their catalogue there is nothing there suitable for us."

"Go and have a look. You won't lose anything by going. There may be something."

He went. An hour later he returned, and said excitedly:

"Listen. At Sotheby's there are about ten pairs of rare ear-rings."

I took out a lead-pencil, and said to him as I was drawing a sketch:

"See. This is what the ear-rings look like. Persian enamel in the shape of bells, with pearl drops."

"How do you know?"

"I know."

"How?"

"I dreamt it."

"You dreamt it?"

"Yes. I am not joking."

I went with him to see the ear-rings. They were identical with those I had seen in my dream, and of which I had made the rough sketch for him.

And I bought them all, whilst wide-awake, for something like fifty pounds.

If a customer finds favour in my eyes, I sell him a pair of those ear-rings, and say to him: "These are not just ear-rings. They are dreams."

Dreams of guinea-gold, enamelled in birds and flowers, ornamented with blossoming seed-pearls.

It is superfluous to add that this dream was, by way of a change, a very profitable one.

I hear a voice within me saying: "If it is superfluous, then why add it? That is the course all writers take."

Well, how am I to argue with the voice of my conscience, when I, who am myself a bit of a sinful writer, am killing myself with this autobiography, yet cannot help myself, poor thing!

MY HOST OF FRIENDS

I HAVE a valuable collection of Collectors; but my jolly host of friends outdistances everything, conquers all worlds, myself and themselves.

From every class, religion, ideal and period there is a friend who sits in a warm little corner of my heart—my heart of ten thousand warm little corners.

When BEEBAN throws open my door, she brings in with her the middle ages of the times before Christ. Her eyes cast themselves on my check-patterned walls, and imprint on them a fresco which is overflowing with religious perfection. The entirely broken, wire-plaited chain of my Jewish merchant-life fuses and is blended into a hammered-out vessel.

My smiling little angels and little cherubim, with their charmingly chiselled, refined figures, acquire new faces of eternal peace. So I fold my hands and feet like Buddha, and utter words like Moysheh Oyved.

Suddenly, Louis Golding crashes in. On the instant, he lights my stove. If it so happens that the fire is not laid, then the stove, meanwhile, burns and consumes the poker, the tongs, and all

the other dedicated vessels of yesterday's ashes. Golding? Golding causes the fire to burn of itself!

That is how I am dominated and influenced by my conquering host of friends, to serve them with joy and with sorrow, amidst the rare moments of destroying and creating everlastingly.

THE OAK CHEST OF DRAWERS

My most highly-esteemed treasure—it may shock you to hear this, refined reader—is not the old Georgian silver, nor the cameos, nor the beads, nor the Empire jewels, nor even the masterpieces of the Renaissance, but the oak chest of drawers, packed to the brim with bits of brass, and copper and silver precious things. This oak chest of drawers is the Tut-an-khamen Tomb of "Cameo Corner."

You will find in it a gypsy ring, a Byzantine ear-ring, a Tibetan nose-ring, a broken piece of a Scandinavian breastplate, fragments belonging to lost tribes and forgotten epochs. You will find everything there, if only you explore long enough, and with burning desire. The mixed-up entangled heap is reserved for connoisseurs who prefer old, sacred records to modern poetry; crumbs from a king's table to a free-trade loaf.

When a gentle, futuristic old soul comes in, it is not the five literary show-cases of the window that are thrown open for her, but the oak chest

of drawers. We betake ourselves to the bits of "records," and, quicker than time flies, we piece together the old fragments, and re-create a living ornament, full of primitive, cubistic strength.

When the good old soul is going away, the ground rejoices in her footsteps. The earth recalls to mind that, once upon a time, hundreds and thousands of years ago, the cold peoples of the West trampled upon her, carrying just such a living ornament as the good old soul is carrying now.

And the earth which in the twentieth century can still paint such beautiful landscapes is surely a judge of true art!

It happened once that a New Yorker came to "the little old village," as London is called by my friend Goldsmith. A three-thousand-pound motor-car spat him out, as the whale spat Jonah; and, by accident, he fell into "Cameo Corner."

He was greatly interested, not in the ripe wine of the antique, but in the artful history which was printed, black on yellow, on the label of the cobweb-covered, mouldy bottle. Or, he was like the real Epicure who will not touch cheese with the end of a fork if he does not see the cheese-mites.

He said to me:

"Just listen, mister. Where does that old chair come from?"

"I do not know, sir," I replied.

"To which bishop or lord did that candelabra-mirror belong?"

"I do not know."

Catching sight of the above-mentioned chest of drawers, he opened it, pulled out a fragment, ridiculed it, and said:

"Can you tell me the history of this bit of rubbish, and what carat silver it is?"

At this, the last bubble of my patience burst, and I said to him:

"I am an ordinary jeweller. I do not understand metallurgy, and I do not know history nor alchemy."

"Then, what do you know?" he demanded angrily.

With a business-man's wink of the left eye, I answered:

"I know my customers."

. . . . . .

After the New Yorker had left, my conscience laid me down on God's foot-stool, and gave me forty lashes, arguing thus:

"Why did you lose your patience with a wealthy customer? In what way was his offence worse than other people's, or than yours? Do you not, then, sell the years of your life, and me, too, your conscience, to wealthy folks, for big money, and to poor folks, for small change? What good is it to you to see-saw on the holy and profane plank? If you serve Mammon, then serve him faithfully, 'with all your heart, and with all your soul.'"

Oh, how every stroke hurt. Shrieking was of no use, and every lash fell on an aching wound

that unceasingly pleaded: "Oh! Heal me! Heal me!"

THE GREATEST JEWEL

THE auctioneer-firm, Christie's, is, without the shadow of a doubt, the first in the world for the most expensive jewels and the rarest classical works of art. A hundred and fifty years the firm has been selling works of art belonging to dead or bankrupt lords and millionaires, to new-born newly-created lords and millionaires. As the sea does not overflow, so, neither does it become exhausted.

There, under the auctioneer's hammer, old crowns are shattered to fragments, democratised, and sold piecemeal; and there, too, old fragments are hammered together to make new crowns. There, world-famous collections are taken asunder, cut-up, and scattered all over the seas and the dry lands: and there, too, national museums and galleries collect their material, and build up their exhibitions.

On the 21st January 1925, there lay under the hammer the jewel of all jewels. On the outside it was ugly as a black onyx-stone on a yellowish strata, like eyes looking out of a jaundiced body. But, inside, it was hard and flashing like the diamond, blood-red as the ruby, and fresher than the greenest emerald.

I bought this greatest of all jewels—a big old Scroll of the Laws—for twenty guineas.

But, my shop, my dwelling-place, is packed with light-minded ornaments, pleasing gems and dead rubbish. I had no home for such a terribly holy jewel; and I sold it again, for twenty pounds, to my friend, Councillor Howitt, Mayor of Richmond. Piously I lost twenty shillings on the pathetic transaction. But I felt extremely grateful.

No! The Holy Law is not the best merchandise.

Marriage-certificates, you see, are an altogether, entirely different affair.

But that is another story, which really requires a volume, a chapter at least, a heading, all to itself. However, I will take the opportunity of smuggling it in just here, hoping that the critics will not notice my transgression, and I will make it brief.

Not long ago I bought of a good Zionist some two hundred Russian Ikons. I could not insult him, so I offered him fifty pounds. But the Zionist wanted at least another "fiver." A stubborn Zionist!

Later, he flung over to me two illuminated Italian Parchment Hebrew marriage-certificates, one of the seventeenth, the other of the early eighteenth century, and said:

"Fifty-five pounds the whole lot. Good?"

Really I ought not to tell that the manuscripts alone were worth the Royal Mint. I secured such a bargain that I am positively ashamed to speak of it. Stolen goods are much more expensive —to the original owner!

The fact of the matter is that the Ikons I cannot sell; and the marriage-certificates I will not. So, there!

THE GOLDEN CHAIN

For a long time there hung in the window an old yellow-gold chain, of seventy-five beads, each bead a prayer wrought of pure gold. Virgin gold wire—living veins—bound prayer to prayer.

At all seasons it hung there: in the yellow autumn, in the white winter, in the green spring, and in the silvery summer.

Daily the shutters were rolled up, and thousands passed the dawn in my window, but no one saw its greatness, no one inquired where its glowing beauty had had its origin. And it hurt to have to go on asking:—

"Where are my apostles? Where are my disciples? Where are my priests? Surely, many many years one gave to the other his heart. Where are they who ignore? Where are the blind contemners of the golden chain of antiquity?"

In due time there was added to the golden chain a brilliant, big as a full-grown hazel-nut, and fiery as the last rays of the sun which the night swoops down upon to swallow up. Then it was that the people saw the glory of the chain. But, they desired to separate the brilliant from its new partner, so that they might gain possession of the chain.

I said to them:

"No, O priests and disciples. It is too late now. The chain was wrought by the heart-beats of a divine goldsmith of antiquity, and you did not see it, and you did not hear it.

"Prayer made a solemn covenant with prayer that they would not part with the glory of the brilliant."

Now the brilliant is shining like a crown into a royal and loyal faithful heart, encircled by the golden chain of seventy-five beads. All the beads are beautifully bent and damaged, and are like unto seventy-five exiled wise old men, who are sitting around a young prophet listening to his fiery words.

EPILOGUE

THUS the living days of my years go by. Some crawl past like a funeral of black oxen; some fly by like a wedding of white doves; others, with their joys and sorrows, stand for ever before my eyes.

Each day provides newly-planted, freshly-grown and torn-out impressions.

One is permitted to convey with pen or tongue only the peeled-off shells and husks of one's life. But, the little inner kernel, choking with messages of hope, is never disclosed.

The drunken joy which dances and sways in one's heart never grows still or becomes sober.

The scalding, burning tear—the driving force of every creation—cools—never!

MY FATHER'S GENEALOGICAL LETTER

AT the beginning of January, of the current year, I wrote to my father, asking him to give me a short résumé of the history of my ancestors; and, in reply, I received the following illuminating letter, the contents of which is as follows:—

. . . . . .

With the help of God—Blessed be His Holy Name!—this 10th day of January 1925—Saturday night.

MY DEAR SON, MOYSHEH OYVED. (May you live long!)

I think I have already written to you once, but as you ask me to write again, and because you say you will be grateful, I am pleased to do so. As a matter of fact, dear son, you amused me greatly. To oblige you, nothing would be too difficult for me. Even if I had to conjure it direct from Heaven I would do it for you, dear son. Let me, therefore begin.

Firstly: My father—may he rest in peace!—who was born at Nashelsk, in the province of Lomza, was a highly-respected man, and a master of "Midrash." (Homiletics.) The name of his father, that is to say, my grandfather, was Judah—of blessed memory! And the said Judah's father was a great scholar who, at an advanced age, went to Palestine, and died there.

Secondly: My dear mother—may she rest in peace!—was called Pearl, daughter of Moses—of blessed memory! She was pious and virtuous. Her father was a ritual slaughterer, being one of six brothers, all ritual slaughterers, and well-versed in the Holy Law. Concerning my mother's mother I have no other information beyond this, that her descendants at Nashelsk were all merchants and men of wealth.

Thirdly: Up to the age of ten I attended *Cheder*, and was a diligent pupil. And I continued my studies under the very learned Rabbi Berish Graubard of Bendeen. At the age of eleven I was taken by my mother—may she rest in peace!—to the town of Sheps to study under the very learned Rabbi Michal Goldshlak, with whom I remained until the age of thirteen, after which I received instruction from the very great Rabbi Abraham Bornstein. At the age of seventeen I married your dear mother—may she live long!—who belonged to Skampa, having been granted the privilege of free board and residence for life. A misfortune, however, befell us. A fire broke out, which impoverished us. And, later, my father-in-law died. I was thus obliged to take the position of ritual slaughterer and cantor, in which capacity I acted at Oshentshin for three years, and at Alexandrova for thirty years.

Your dear mother was a daughter of the philanthropist, Chayim Jacob Burshten, a much respected man, and learned in the "Midrash." Your mother's mother was Sarah Rebecca, daughter of Jacob Belt, who was formerly known as Kempner, because he originated from Kempen, near Posen, Prussia. He was an educated Jew of the old school and had five daughters, all rare beauties, of exceptional charm and modesty. All the great men in Israel of the time visited at his house, which became a rendezvous of great scholars. There was only one son, and he held a Government appointment as a teacher. The mother of your grandmother, Sarah Rebecca—may she rest in peace!—was of noble birth, being a daughter of Joseph the preacher and "Kaballist."

This is all I know.

Not all were so fortunate as Rabbi A—may he rest in peace! He used to tell me that he had in his possession a genealogical tree written in golden characters, and that this document traced his ancestry back to Eli the Priest. But he did not show it to me, because he had never seen it himself. It was merely a beautiful dream in which he lived to the end of his days. But, I am free from such fantastic illusions, and everything I tell you is the truth—the unvarnished truth.

And now, keep well, and may God grant you all that your heart desires, so that you may acquire knowledge, wisdom and greatness.

Your loving father who kisses you,

YECHIAL.