

most direful of sayings. God help, in his infinite mercy, American-born Jews if, in generations to come, this cruel speech had ever an application! It might arise from their own errors, and the faults of their surroundings. It would mean, however, nothing less than the political degradation of that country in which Christian and Jew live. Mr. Froude has been much blamed, little lauded, for what he wrote in regard to an oppressed race. It was somewhat as follows: that those who could not fight for their freedom did not deserve it.

It sometimes happens that fiction produces effects where facts fail. It is believed, then, that Franzos's stories will not only be of interest to numerous readers, but in the hands of the reformed Jew, by means of the lessons it teaches, help him in his earnest efforts to save his race from retrogression.

BARNET PHILLIPS.

## P R E F A C E .

---

THE following stories, the scene of which is laid in the Podolian Ghetto, were my first literary attempt. They were for the most part written while I was at the university, and were published in various journals. Owing to circumstances, another and later book—"Aus Halb-Asien"—was the first to come out; for this youthful work was not published as a whole until 1876. I mention this, although it is visible from internal evidence, to explain my choice of subjects. The preface to that edition gives a further account of this, and from it I make the following quotations:

"When I took up my pen four years ago, I strongly felt the necessity of making my work as artistic as possible. I wished to write stories, and strove to give them poetic value. For this very reason, it seemed necessary that I should describe the kind of life with which I was best acquainted. This was essentially the case with regard to that of

quotes  
from 1st  
ed.

the Podolian Jews. I therefore became the historian of the Podolian Ghetto, and it was my great desire to give these stories an artistic form; but not at the cost of truth. I have never permitted my love of the beautiful to lead me into the sin of falsifying the facts and conditions of life, and am confident that I have described this strange and outlandish mode of existence precisely as it appeared to me. If in my first published volume my efforts to portray men and manners needed the assistance of my powers as a novelist, so in this book my knowledge of men and manners has to help me in my labors as a novelist. Sometimes the one side of my character takes the upper hand, and sometimes the other; but still they are at bottom inseparable, and it has always been my endeavor to describe facts artistically. However the novelist may be judged, the portrayal of men and manners demands that his words should be believed.

"This request is not superfluous, for it is a very strange mode of life to which I am about to introduce the reader. The influences and counter-influences that affect it are only touched upon in this book. Had I given a full account of them in an introduction, the introduction would in all likelihood have been longer than the book. I have therefore refrained from doing it, and believe that I was right in making this decision. For I have kept before my eyes,

while penning these stories, that I am writing for a Western reader. If he will only trust to my love of truth, and regard the separate stories in combination with each other, he will gain a clear idea of the kind of life I describe without any further particulars. I would repeat one sentence, the truth of which is shown in my first book: 'Every country has the Jews that it deserves'—and it is not the fault of the Polish Jews that they are less civilized than their brethren in the faith in England, Germany, and France. At least, it is not entirely their fault.

"No one can do more than his nature permits. This book is to a certain extent polemical, and the stories are written with an object. I do not deny that this is the case, and do not think it requires any excuse. Still I have never allowed myself to sin against truth in the pursuit of this object. I do not make the Polish Jews out to be either better or worse than they really are. These stories are not written for the purpose of holding up the Eastern Jews to obloquy or admiration, but with the object of throwing as much light as I could in dark places."

The second edition, published in 1877, only differed from the first in a few alterations made in the language; but the third edition (from which this translation is taken) is not only enlarged, but is also changed in several important particulars. I examined

ideology

factuality  
ultimate  
criteria;  
artistry is  
largely

each story carefully, and strove to bring all into a distinct connection with each other, thus giving a clear idea of Polish Judaism regarded as a whole. For this reason new tales were introduced: they describe Jewish customs that had been at first passed over in silence, but which were necessary for the proper appreciation of the subject.

This work has been translated into all European languages, as well as into Hebrew; and now I have the pleasure of being able to lay it before the English public, by whom I hope it will receive as kind a reception as it has been given elsewhere. I hope so less for my own sake than in the interest of the unfortunate people whose life it describes.

KARL EMIL FRANZOS.

VIENNA.

## CONTENTS.

	PAGE
THE SHYLOCK OF BARNOW . . . . .	19
CHANE . . . . .	73
TWO SAVIOURS OF THE PEOPLE . . . . .	123
"THE CHILD OF ATONEMENT" . . . . .	147
ESTERKA REGINA . . . . .	179
"BARON SCHMULE" . . . . .	237
THE PICTURE OF CHRIST . . . . .	255
NAMELESS GRAVES . . . . .	293

Heine set-piece : dog-into-prince on the Sabbath

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

joy finds vent in speech, for all hearts are full of the divine peace of the Sabbath. . . .

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

Christian presence

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

If that be the case, it is foolish to fly from them, Moses Freudenthal! See, they dog your footsteps wherever you go through the narrow gloomy little streets. They whisper in your ear, even though you strive to drown their voices by entering into conversation with the passers-by. They appear before your very eyes in spite of your fixing them upon the votive

syn as holy refuge

The synagogue is a gray weather-beaten building, erected long ago, almost in the middle ages. The country people call it the Judenburg (Jews' stronghold), because the Jews once took refuge in it, and entrenched themselves there, when Prince Czartoryski came to murder and rob them. One of his reasons for doing so was that he wanted sport, and there were no foxes or wild boars to be found in the neighborhood in the hunting season; and another was, that he wanted money. The Jews hid themselves and their property behind the walls and iron bars of the synagogue, and held out until the men of Jagiellnica arrived from their neighboring fortress, and relieved them. At that time the walls of the Judenburg were strong, and the iron-work firm; but the bars are all broken now, or they are lost, and the walls are half in ruins. As if to testify to the importance of the building as a holy refuge, the poorest of the Jews' houses are built round it on three sides. On the fourth side, the sluggish river Lered flows so close to the synagogue that there is only space for two dwellings. One of these is a large new house, painted yellow—an unusual decoration in this vicinity—and the other is a dirty, ruinous cottage clinging forlornly to the bank of the river. The yellow house seems to be shoving its poorer neighbor over the brink, the moldering walls of the hovel hang so directly above the slow sad water. The rich wine-merchant, Ma-

evil P. 80

nasse Silberstein, used to live with his son in the large house, and a very poor man, Nathan Bilkes, had lived for many years in the hovel.

Nathan had been a *dorfgeher* (peddler) as long as his strength had lasted, and then he spent a weak lonely old age upon his hardly earned savings, eked out by the charity of the community. He had become prematurely old and weak, like most people of his hard-working, poverty-stricken class.

A *dorfgeher* means, in the language of his co-religionists, a traveler who gains his livelihood by supplying the surrounding villages with the necessaries of life. On Sundays he tramps out of the town with an enormous pack upon his back, in which is stored all that the heart of a Ruthenian peasant could wish for, except the one thing most desired—for the *dorfgeher* does not sell schnapps.

Everything else he sells: straw hats, leather belts, boots, clasp-knives, flowers, ribbons, corals, love-philters, stuffs for gowns, spindles, linen, tallow, hardware, images of the saints, charms, wax-candles, needles, linen thread, and newspapers of the last week. He sells everything, and all are his customers—from the cavalry officers, who buy his smuggled cigars, and the pastors and gentry, who buy his fine stuffs, to the poorest peasant. Throughout the whole week he goes from village to village, from house to house—in the height of summer and the

גורל ה' 2 1/2 3

## TWO SAVIOURS OF THE PEOPLE.

---

ANY one who was ever in Barnow was sure to make the acquaintance of Frau Hanna, mother of the chief of the Jewish session; and no one could know her without honestly liking and admiring her, she was so good and kind, and so very quick in understanding and entering into the thoughts and feelings of others. But it would be difficult to convey an adequate idea of her loving-kindness and wisdom to those who never knew her. She was called *Babele* (grannie) by everybody who lived in the little town, and not merely by her own grandchildren; and no wonder. She was never too busy or too tired to help those who needed her assistance either in word or deed; and even those who did not require money or advice used to delight in going to see her, and in hearing her stories of old times; for her renown as a story-teller was as great as her reputation for benevolence. Any one passing the old synagogue or *judenburg* about the third hour on a Sabbath afternoon in summer, might see with

storytelling hour

his own eyes what a crowd of attentive listeners she had, and might hear with his own ears how well worth listening to her stories always were. She used to sit on a rug spread out in the shade, with her silent eager auditors, who sometimes numbered fifty men and women, grouped closely around her for fear of losing a single word that fell from her lips. Her stories were all about old days in Barnow—about things that had happened within her own memory, or that she had heard from others. Any attempt to reproduce her stories as she used to relate them would be very difficult, and if I try to do so, it is only because the tale I have chosen is the one she related far oftener than any other. I have heard her tell it scores of times, and will now endeavor to translate it from the Jewish-German in which she used to speak as faithfully as I can:

“Who is great,” began Frau Hanna, “and who is small? Who is mighty, and who is weak? We poor short-sighted mortals are seldom capable of deciding this question rightly. The rich and strong are mighty and great in our eyes, while the poor and feeble are regarded as weak and small. But in very truth it is not so. Greatness does not lie in riches or in brute strength, but a strong will and a good heart. And, my friends, God sometimes shows us this very clearly; indeed, we Jews of Barnow can tell how our eyes were opened to this truth. On two different occasions our

homiletic opening

community was plunged in great danger and suffering from the oppression of the Gentiles around us, and on each of these occasions a saviour came forward from among us, and delivering us from our distresses, turned our mourning into joy. Who were these saviours of the people? Were they the strongest or the richest of the congregation? . . . Listen to me and I will tell you how it all happened.

“When you cross the market-place, you see a great big block of wood sticking out of the ground in front of the Dominican monastery. It is weather-beaten and decayed, and would have been taken away long ago, were it not kept as a memorial of a time of terror and despair.

“You know nothing of those old days, and you may be thankful for it! If I tell you about that time of misery, it is not that I wish to make your hearts heavy with grief for what is past and gone, or to fill them with bitter anger or hate. No; the sorrows of which I speak are over and done with, and those who suffered from them are dead and buried. It is written among the sayings of one of our wise and holy men: ‘Forgive those who have trespassed against you, and return good for evil.’ What I am going to tell you is the history of a great and noble deed that was done by one who lived and suffered during that time of dire distress—a deed that should make your hearts beat high when you hear of it, for

it is as heroic, good, and great as was ever done on the face of the earth.

"Its author was a simple Jewish woman, whose heart had been steeled to heroism by the force of circumstances. Her name was Lea, and she was the wife of a rich and pious man called Samuel. The family was afterward given the surname of Beermann when the Austrians came into the country, and made it the law that our people should have German names as well as their old ones; for at the time when these events took place we had no such names. It was more than a hundred years ago, and we were still living under the rule of the Polish nobles.

"The single-headed white eagle was indeed a cruel bird of prey! Long ago, when it was full-plumaged, when its eyes were clear and piercing, and its talons firm and relentless in their grip, it was a proud and noble bird that held its own against both West and North, and protected all who took refuge under its wing most generously. For three hundred years we lived a free and happy life under the shadow of its wings; but when the eagle grew old and weak, and the other birds of prey round about had deprived it of many of its feathers, it became cowardly, sly, and cruel; and because it did not dare to attack its enemies, it turned its wrath upon the defenseless Jews. The power of the kings of Poland became a subject for children to jest about, and then the letters of free-

dom we had been given of old were no longer of any avail. The nobles became our masters. They oppressed us, extorted money from us, and disposed of our lives and property as it seemed good in their eyes. Oh, that was a time of unspeakable tribulation!

"Barnow belonged even then to the noble family of Bortynski, to whom the good Emperor Joseph afterward gave the title of Graf. Young Joseph Bortynski had entered into possession of his estate that very year. He was a quiet, pious, humble-minded man, and had been educated in a cloister. His ways were different from those of the other young men of his position in the neighborhood, for he hated wine, cards, and women, looked after the management of his property, and prayed four hours a day. He was just and kind in his dealings with his serfs; but we experienced very little of his kindness and justice, for he was hard and cruel to us. He once gave Samuel, the leader of the synagogue, his reason for treating us so badly: 'You crucified my God,' he said. Whenever he was inclined to act toward us with less harshness, he was prevented doing so by his private chaplain, a man who had formerly been his tutor, and who had great influence over him. His name has not come down to us, but he was always talked of as the 'black priest.'

"We Jews used to be very careful of our conduct in those days, and even those of our number who were evil-disposed refrained from deeds of wickedness.



'You crucified my God,' the Graf had said to Samuel, and had then added in a threatening tone: 'I give you fair warning, that if I find any of your people guilty of a crime, I shall burn your town as your God once did to Sodom and Gomorrah.' Our fears may be better imagined than described.

"So the spring of 1773 began. The Easter festival was about to commence, when it was rumored that the Empress-Queen at Vienna intended to deprive the Poles of their remaining power, and to govern the land henceforward by means of her own officials. But so far as we could see, there was no sign of this intention being carried out.

"Samuel, the leader of the synagogue, and his wife Lea, lived in the old house in the market-place that is still known as the 'yellow house.' They were both very much respected by the community: the husband, because of his riches, wisdom, and piety; and the beautiful young wife, because of her gentleness and beneficence. They were in great trouble that Easter, for their only child, a little boy of a year and a half old, had died suddenly a few days before.

"Late one Sunday evening they were sitting together in silent grief. The Easter festival was to begin on the following evening, and Lea was very tired, for she had been busy all day long cleaning and dusting the whole house from top to bottom. Suddenly they were startled by a loud knocking at the house-

*no fixed story  
would give a  
date*

*blood libel story - planted corpse under the bed*

door. Samuel opened the window and looked out. An old peasant-woman was standing at the door with a bundle on her back. On seeing the master of the house, she moaned out a piteous entreaty for admittance. She was too weak, she said, to walk home to her village that evening, and so she begged Samuel to give her shelter for the night.

"'This isn't an inn,' answered Samuel, shortly, at the same time shutting the window.

"'Poor thing,' said Lea, 'ought we to send her away?'

"'We're living in dangerous times,' replied Samuel; 'I don't like to admit a stranger into my house.'

"'But this poor creature is ill and weak,' said Lea.

"And as the old woman outside continued to make an appeal to his pity, Samuel gave way and let her in. The maid-servants were all in bed and asleep, so Lea took her guest to a garret-room, and, after providing her with food and wine, wished her good-night, and left her.

"Next morning the stranger took leave of her hostess very early, and with many expressions of gratitude. Lea was so busy all day making the final preparations for the feast, that she had not time to visit the room that had been occupied by the old woman until late in the afternoon, when she was making a last round of the house to see that no leavened bread was anywhere to be found. The room was perfectly neat and tidy, but she was astonished to find it pervaded by a most disa-

greeable smell. She opened the window, but that had no effect. She hunted about for the cause of the horrible odor. At length, on looking under the bed, she saw what made her blood run cold and her hair stand on end with terror. For under the bed there lay the naked corpse of a half-starved little child, with great wounds in its neck and chest. Lea at once understood what had happened, and struggled hard against the faintness that threatened to overpower her. The old woman had brought the corpse to the house, and had concealed it there, in order that the hideous old story might be revived that the Jews were in the habit of killing Christian children before the feast of the Pass-over; and terrible would be the vengeance taken by the Christians of the neighborhood. Lea recognized the full horrors of her position, and remembered the Graf's warning to her husband. She was nearly overwhelmed with the weight of her misery. For was it not she, and she alone, who, by inducing her husband to admit the woman into the house, had brought all the sorrow, persecution, and death that would surely come upon her home and upon the whole Jewish community? While she sat there shivering with fever and anguish, she heard wild cries, shrieks, and the sound of weeping in the street, and also the clank of swords. 'They are coming,' she muttered, and at the same moment a thought flashed into her mind, far more strange and horrible than a woman's brain had ever before con-

ceived, and yet so noble and self-sacrificing that a woman alone could have entertained it. 'It was my fault,' she said to herself, 'and I alone must bear the consequences.' She rose to her feet, pressed her lips firmly together, and after a struggle regained her composure. Then taking up the child's corpse, she wrapped it in a linen cloth and laid it on her knee.

"She listened; . . . the minutes seemed to drag. Then she heard the young Graf's voice outside speaking passionately to her husband and another member of the session in these words: 'The woman heard the death-rattle distinctly. I will not leave one stone upon another if I find the body.' She heard the men going through all the rooms in the house. As their steps approached the one in which she was seated, she rose and went to the window, below which the roof fell away steeply, and overhung the paved court-yard of the house.

"The door was thrown open violently; the Graf entered, accompanied by the two members of session, and followed by his men-at-arms. Lea sprang forward to meet them with a wild laugh, showed them the child's body, and then flung it out of the window on to the court beneath. . . .

"'I am a murderess,' she cried out to the Graf; 'yes, I am, I am. Take me, bind me, kill me! I murdered my own child last night; I don't deny it. You've come to fetch me; here I am!'

"The men stared at her in speechless amazement.

"Then came furious cries, shouts, and questions. Samuel, strong man as he was, fainted away. The other Jews, at once perceiving the true state of the case, and seeing no other way of saving the whole community from certain death, supported her in her statement. Lea remained firm. The Graf looked at her piercingly, and she returned his gaze without flinching: 'Listen, woman,' he said; 'if you have really committed the crime of which you have confessed yourself guilty, you shall die a death of torture far more terrible than any one has ever yet suffered; but if the other Jews killed the child in order to drink its blood at the feast, you and your husband shall go unpunished, and the others shall alone expiate their crime. I swear this by all that is holy! Now—choose!'

"Lea did not hesitate for a moment. 'It was my child,' she said.

"The Graf had Lea taken to prison and confined in a solitary cell. He quite saw all the improbability of her story, but he did not believe in any greatness of soul in one of our people. 'If it were not true, he thought, 'why should the woman have given herself up?'

"The trial threw no light upon the subject.

"All the Jewish witnesses bore testimony against Lea. One told how she had hated her child; another

how she had threatened to kill it. Fear of death forced these lies from their lips. The only Christian witness was the black priest's housekeeper—the same woman who had gone to Samuel's house on that fatal evening in the disguise of a peasant to bring destruction on the Jewish community. She told how she had heard the death rattle of the child during the night. She could not say more without betraying herself, and so her story tallied with Lea's confession. The 'black priest' took no apparent interest in the trial. He probably thought that one victim would suffice for the time, or it may be that he feared the discovery of his crime.

"The Graf's judges pronounced Lea guilty, and condemned her to be broken on the wheel in the market-place, and there beheaded. The wooden block in front of the Dominican monastery was placed there for this purpose.

"But Lea did not die on the scaffold; she died peacefully in her own house forty years later, surrounded by her children and grandchildren; for Austrian military law was proclaimed in the district before Graf Bortynski's people had had time to execute the sentence pronounced upon Lea, and an Austrian Government official, whose duty it was to try criminal cases, examined the evidence against her. Samuel went to him and told him the whole story, and he, after due inquiry, set Lea free.

*sword by  
the Austrian  
gout!*

"The wooden block is still standing. It reminds us of the old dark days of our oppression. But it also reminds us of the noble and heroic action by which a weak woman saved the community. . . .

1853  
 "And eighty years after that, my friends—eighty years after that—when we were once more in danger of losing our lives, who was it that saved us? Not a woman this time; but a timid little man whom no one could have imagined capable of a courageous action, and whose name I have only to mention to send you into a fit of laughter. It was little Mendele. . . . Ah, see now how you are chuckling! Well, well, I can't blame you, for he is a very queer little man. He knows many a merry tale, and tells them very amusingly. And then it is certainly a very strange thing to see a gray-haired man no taller than a child, and with the ways and heart of a child. He used to dance and sing all day long. I don't think that any one ever saw him quiet. Even now he does not walk down a street, but trots instead; he does not talk, but sings, and his hands seem to have been given him for no other use but to beat time. But—what of that? It is better to keep a cheerful heart than to wear a look of hypocritical solemnity. Mendele Abenstern is a great singer, and we may well be proud of having him for our *chazzán* (deacon). It is true that he sometimes rattles off a touching prayer as if it were a waltz, and

that when reading the Thorah he fidgets about from one leg to the other as if he were a dancer at a theatre. But these little peculiarities of his never interfere with our devotions, for we have been accustomed to Mendele and his ways for the last forty years, and if any one happens to get irritated with him now and then, he takes care not to vent it on the manikin. He can not help remembering, you see, that little Mendele can be grave enough at times, and that the poor *chazzán* once did the town greater service by his gift of song than all the wise and rich could accomplish by their wisdom or their wealth.

"I will tell you how that came to pass.

"You know that a Jew is looked upon nowadays as a man like every one else; and that if any noble or peasant dares to strike or oppress a Jew, the latter can at once bring his assailant before the Austrian district judge at the court-hall, and Herr von Negrusz punishes the offender for his injustice. But before the great year when the Emperor proclaimed that all men had equal rights, it was not so. In these old days, the lord of the manor exercised justice within the bounds of his territory by means of his agent; but what was called justice by these men was generally great injustice. Ah, my friends, those were hard times! The land belonged to the lord of the manor, and so did all the people who lived on it; and the very air and water were his

also. It was not only in the villages that this was the case, but in the towns too, especially when they belonged to a noble, and when their inhabitants were Jews. The noble was lord of all, and ruled over his subjects through his agent or *mandatar*.

“At least it was so with us in Barnow. Our master, Graf Bortynski, lived in Paris all the year round, and gave himself no trouble about his estates or their management. His agent was supreme in Barnow, and was to all intents and purposes our master. So we always used to pray that the *mandatar* might be a good man, who would allow us to live in peace and quietness. And at first God answered our prayers, for stout old Herr Stephan Grudza was as easy-tempered a man as we Jews could have desired. It's true that he used to drink from morning till night, but he was always good-natured in his cups, and would not for the world have made any one miserable when he was merry. But one day, after making a particularly good dinner, he was seized with apoplexy and died. The whole district mourned for him, and so did we Jews of Barnow. For, in the first place, Herr Grudza had been kind to every one; and in the second—who knew what his successor would be like!

“Our fears were well grounded.

“The new *mandatar*, Friedrich Wollmann, was a German. Now the Germans had hitherto treated us less harshly than the Poles. The new agent, however,

was an exception to this rule. He was a tall, thin man, with black hair and bright black eyes. His expression was stern and sad—always, always—no one ever saw him smile. He was a good manager, and soon got the estate into order; he also insisted on the laws being obeyed; taught evil-doers that he was not a man to be trifled with; and I am quite sure that no one with whom he had any dealings defrauded him of a halfpenny. But he hated us Jews with a deadly hatred, and did us all as much harm as he could. He increased our taxes threefold—sent our sons away to be soldiers—disturbed our feasts—and whenever we had a lawsuit with a Christian, the Christian's word was always taken, while ours was disbelieved. He was very hard upon the peasants too—in fact, they said that no other agent at Barnow had ever been known to exact the *robot* due from the villein to his lord with so much severity, and yet in that matter he acted within the letter of the law; and so there was a sort of justice in his mode of procedure. But as soon as he had anything to do with a Jew, he forgot both reason and justice.

“Why did he persecute us so vehemently? No one knew for certain, but we all guessed. It was said that he used to be called Troim Wollmann, and that he was a Christianized Jew from Posen; that he had forsworn his religion from love for a Christian girl, and that the Jews of his native place had persecuted

the same old story

and calumniated him so terribly in consequence of his apostasy, that the girl's parents had broken off their daughter's engagement to him. I do not know who told us this, but no one could deny the probability of the story who ever had looked him in the face, or had watched the mode of treating us.

"So our days were sad and full of foreboding for the future. Wollmann oppressed and squeezed us whether we owed him money or not, and none that displeased him had a chance of escape. Thus matters stood in the autumn before the great year.

"It isn't the pleasantest thing in the world for a Jew to be an Austrian soldier, but if one of our race is sent into the Russian service his fate is worse than death. He is thenceforward lost to God, to his parents, and to himself. Is it, then, a matter for surprise that the Russian Jews should gladly spend their last penny to buy their children's freedom from military service, or that any youth, whose people are too poor to ransom him, should fly over the border to escape his fate? Many such cases are known: some of the fugitives are caught before they have crossed the frontiers of Russia, and it would have been better for them if they had never been born; but some make good their escape into Moldavia, or into our part of Austrian Poland. Well, it happened that about that time a Jewish conscript—born at Berdiewow—escaped over the frontier near Hussintyn, and

story of 2  
draft  
dodger

was sent on to Barnow from thence. The community did what they could for him, and a rich, kind-hearted man, Chaim Grünstein, father-in-law of Moses Freudenthal, took him into his service as groom.

"The Russian Government of course wanted to get the fugitive back into their hands, and our officials received orders to look for him.

"Our *mandatar* got the same order as the others. He at once sent for the elders of our congregation and questioned them on the subject. They were inwardly much afraid, but outwardly they made no sign, and denied all knowledge of the stranger. It was on the eve of the Day of Atonement that this took place—and how could they have entered the presence of God that evening if they had betrayed their brother in the faith? So they remained firm in spite of the agent's threats and rage. When he perceived that they either knew nothing or would confess nothing, he let them go with these dark words of warning: 'It will be the worse for you if I find the youth in Barnow. You do not know me yet, but—I swear that you shall know me then!'

conventional  
time

"The elders went home, and I need hardly tell you that the hearts of the whole community sank on hearing Wollmann's threat. The young man they were protecting was a hard-working honest fellow, but even if he had been different, it wouldn't

have mattered—he was a Jew, and none of them would have forsaken him in his adversity. If he remained in Barnow, the danger to him and to all of them was great, for the *mandatar* would find him out sooner or later—nothing could be kept from him for long. But if they sent him away without a passport or naturalization papers, he would of course be arrested very soon. After a long consultation, Chaim Grünstein had a happy inspiration. One of his relations was a tenant-farmer in Marmaros, in Hungary. The young man should be sent to him on the night following the Day of Atonement, and should be desired to make the whole journey by night for fear of discovery. In this manner he could best escape from his enemies.

“They all agreed that the idea was a good one, and then partook with lightened hearts of the feast which was to strengthen them for their fast on the Day of Atonement. Dusk began to fall. The synagogue was lighted up with numerous wax-candles, and the whole community hastened there with a broken and a contrite heart to confess their sins before God; for at that solemn fast we meet to pray to the Judge of all men to be gracious to us, and of His mercy to forgive us our trespasses. The women were all dressed in white, and the men in white grave-clothes. Chaim Grünstein and his household were there to humble themselves before the Lord, and among them was

the poor fugitive, who was trembling in every limb with fear lest he should fall into the hands of his enemies.

“All were assembled, and divine service was about to begin. Little Mendele had placed the flat of his hand upon his throat in order to bring out the first notes of the ‘Kol-Nidra’ with fitting tremulousness, when he was interrupted by a disturbance at the door. The entrance of the synagogue was beset by the Graf’s men-at-arms, and Herr Wollmann was seen walking up the aisle between the rows of seats. The intruder advanced until he stood beside the ark of the covenant and quite close to little Mendele, who drew back in terror, but the elders of the congregation came forward with quiet humility.

“‘I know that the young man is here,’ said Wollmann; ‘will you give him up now?’

“The men were silent.

“‘Very well,’ continued the *mandatar*, ‘I see that kindness has no effect upon you. I will arrest him after service when you leave the synagogue. And I warn you that both he and you shall have cause to remember this evening. But now, don’t let me disturb you; go on with your prayers. I have time to wait.’

“A silence as of death reigned in the synagogue. It was at length broken by a shrill cry from the women’s gallery. The whole congregation was at

first stupefied with fear. But after a time every one began to regain his self-command, and to raise his eyes to God for help. Without a word each went back to his seat.

“Little Mendele trembled in every limb; but all at once he drew himself up and began to sing the ‘Kol-Nidra,’ that ancient simple melody, which no one who has ever heard can forget. His voice at first sounded weak and quavering, but it gradually gained strength and volume, filled the edifice, thrilled the hearts of all the worshipers, and rose up to the throne of God. Little Mendele never again sang as he did that evening. He seemed as though he were inspired. When he was singing in that marvelous way, he ceased to be the absurd little man he had always hitherto been, and became a priest pleading with God for his people. He reminded us of the former glories of our race, and then of the many, many centuries of ignominy and persecution that had followed. In the sound of his voice we could hear the story of the way in which we had been chased from place to place—never suffered to rest long anywhere; of how we were the poorest of the poor, the most wretched among the miserable of the earth; and how the days of our persecution were not yet ended, but ever new oppressors rose against us and ground us down with an iron hand. The tale of our woes might be heard

in his voice—of our unspeakable woes and our innumerable tears. But there was something else to be heard in it too. It told us in triumphant tones of our pride in our nation, and of our confidence and *trust in God*. Ah me! I can never describe the way little Mendele sang that evening; he made us weep for our desolation, and yet restored our courage and our trust. . . .

“The women were sobbing aloud when he ceased; even the men were weeping; but little Mendele hid his face in his hands and fainted.

“At the beginning of the service Wollmann had kept his eyes fixed on the ark of the covenant, but as it went on he had to turn away. He was very pale, and his knees shook so that, strong man as he was, he could hardly stand. His eyes shone as though through tears. With trembling steps and bowed head he slowly passed Mendele, and walked down the aisle to the entrance-door. Then he gave the soldiers a sign to follow him.

“Every one guessed what had happened, but no one spoke of it.

“He sent for Chaim Grünstein on the day after the fast, and, giving him a blank passport, said, ‘It will perhaps be useful to you.’

“From that time forward he treated us with greater toleration; but his power did not last long. The peasants, whom he had formerly oppressed, rose

Sentimental  
reading of the  
liturgy



against him in the spring of the Great Year, and put him to death. . . .

“Now, my friends, this is the story of the Two Saviours of the Jews of Barnow. Let it teach you to think twice before saying who is great and who is small, who is weak and who is mighty!”

“THE CHILD OF ATONEMENT.”

(1872.)

## THE PICTURE OF CHRIST.

---

. . . . How distinctly I can see the little town even<sup>7</sup> now, with its narrow, tortuous, and gloomy streets, its ruined castle on the top of the hill, and its stately monastery near the river! It is to this last that I wish to draw the reader's attention. The Dominican monastery is a huge pile of buildings surrounded by a wall in which one can still see the traces of the old Tartar attacks of long ago. Within the wall is a confused mass of chapels and dwelling-houses, separated from each other by damp, moss-grown courtyards, or by sparsely covered grass-plots. I often went there in my boyhood, and used to like playing among the graves in the little churchyard. I also delighted in listening to the echo of my footsteps in the great empty refectory; but I liked best of all to go to the "Abbot's Chapel," a small Byzantine building which was known by that name, and look up at a picture that had been hung there a short time before. It had been painted by the proud and

beautiful Gräfin Jadwiga Bortynska, lady of the manor of Barnow.] It was a wonderful picture—breathing love and peace. Christ was represented standing on vaporous clouds, His hands stretched out in blessing over the earth. The pale face, which was, as it were, framed in black curls, had an expression of divine love and sublime goodness—perfect man and perfect God.

But I did not think of that when I first saw the picture, for I was then only a thoughtless boy of twelve years old. It was on a bright, warm autumn day that I saw it first. An hour after it was hung up in its place, little Wladik, the sexton's son, showed it to me. The sunshine was falling full upon it at the time, and I almost started as I saw the life-like figure in its dark frame.

"Do you know who it is?" I asked my school-fellow.

"How can you ask?" he exclaimed with boyish indignation. "It is our Lord Jesus Christ, whom the Jews crucified."

"No, Wladik," I answered with the utmost decision, "it isn't; it's Bocher David, who used to teach me until last spring."

Wladik was very angry, and scolded me well for saying such a dreadful thing, but he could not convince me that I was wrong: I knew what I knew. When I went home in the evening I told my father about the picture.

"Silly child," he said with a smile; "who could have painted it?"

"Our Frau Gräfin," I replied.

My father looked grave. "Well, well," he said thoughtfully, "it is almost incredible. . . ."

"What?" I asked quickly. But he told me to be quiet.

I should not then have understood what he meant; but I heard the story afterward when I was older—the sad story of that picture of Christ in the chapel at Barnow—and learned that it was also, as I had supposed, a portrait of my old teacher, Bocher David.

It is a strange story, reader, and will seem all the more extraordinary to you, if you have been brought up in a Western home, and have been accustomed from your infancy to civilization and tolerance of others. It is also sad, very sad. But do not blame me for that, for my heart bleeds when I remember this over-true tale, which must be regarded as one of the dark riddles of life, and as the doing of that eternal, inscrutable Power that deals out darkness or light, happiness or misery, to the weak human heart. . . .

I will now tell you the story.

The small town of Barnow lies in the middle of an immense plain. Close to it is the only hill for several miles around, and on the top of this little hill

are the ruins of a castle where the lords of Barnow, or Barecki Starosts, used to live. The last of this race, an old man, weak in mind as in body, now lives in his cheerless house by the river-side; while the new lord of the manor, Graf Bortynski, lives in a new and splendid castle in the plain, far away from the one-storied cottages, the rickety little houses, the narrow, airless streets of Barnow, and all the want and misery of the people who inhabit them.

↕  
 But these inhabitants of Barnow are happy, their streets are light and airy, and their houses comfortable, in comparison with those who have to live in that part of the town which is built in the unhealthy marshes near the river. It is always dark and gloomy there, however brightly the sun may shine, and dark pestiferous vapors fill the air, although the meadows beyond may be full of flowers. And this wretched part of the town is the most thickly inhabited of all, for it is the Ghetto, the Jews' quarter, or, as they call it in Barnow, the "Gasse."

David was the strangest and most mysterious-looking figure in the "Gasse," which was anyhow only too full of such people—for when plants are kept in the dark they are apt to take eccentric forms. He was the son of the former rabbi of the town. Even in his boyhood he had been the pride and

delight of his father, and indeed of the whole community. His bright young intelligence was early able to comprehend the secrets of the Talmud, its subtleties and riddles, and the boy was looked upon with wondering admiration by all. For, pale and delicate as he was, the Jews of Barnow believed that he would live to become a great scribe, learned in the Scriptures. So they forgave his hastiness and fits of passion.

In course of time the old rabbi died, and left his widow and only child nothing but his great library and the love of the whole congregation. The community did what they could for the widow and orphan, or rather did what they thought proper and necessary. David and his mother were allowed to remain in the small back rooms of their old house, and the front rooms were given to the new rabbi. It was right and fitting that it should be so, but it wounded the child's feelings. David no longer heard the words of praise that he had been accustomed to, although he deserved them more and more every day; so he became ever more defiant, and was consequently very much disliked. It happened one day that he excelled the rabbi in his interpretation of a passage of the Talmud, and afterward told different people that he had done so, and thus made an enemy in the community. He was now as much disliked as he had once been praised. His position grew

unbearable. But as long as his mother lived, he remained at Barnow. She was the only person he obeyed, and she alone could sometimes bring a smile to the grave, sad face of her son. One morning soon after her death, which happened when he was fifteen, David disappeared. No one knew what had become of him. He was soon forgotten, and was only spoken of now and then as the late rabbi's son, a wise and learned youth, but wicked and wrong-headed to an extraordinary degree.

He remained away for twelve long years.

At length he returned unexpectedly, and rented one of the small rickety houses in the little Podolian town. On the following day he went to the elders of the synagogue, and to those men who were appointed to nurse the sick, and told them that he had determined to devote his life to the care of the sick and dying. He said that he knew many simples, and a good deal about the art of healing, and entreated them to grant his request, and not to spare him when he could be of any use. They were astonished at his resolution, and praised him for his goodness. But as time went on they learned really to appreciate his help, and blessed him; then once more his praises were repeated from mouth to mouth as of yore. But there was a certain air of mystery about him, for he made no intimacies in the "Gasse." No one knew what studies he was engaged in when his

night-lamp burned till early morning; no one knew what were his resources, or where he had been during his absence from Barnow. The rabbi, who had long forgotten David's boyish faults, and my father—because he was the town doctor—used to see a good deal of him, and they were the only people with whom he was on familiar terms. It was discovered through them that he had been in the Holy Land, that he had seen the countries of the West, and that he had even crossed the great ocean, and had spent some time in "Amerikum," as it was called in the language of the "Gasse." It was said that he could speak many foreign tongues, that he knew everything, and could do whatever he chose, whether good or evil, for he was a master of the "Cabala," and well acquainted with the great and terrible secrets of the "Sohar," the Cabalist primer; and, finally, that he had sworn to himself that he would never marry, and so he was still a "bocher," or bachelor.

But he either knew nothing of these rumors, or did not care what people said of him. He helped all who were in need of his assistance, without desiring either thanks or payment. And as time passed on, all began to feel a deep respect, and even love, for the pale silent man who did so much for them. His face had quite lost the gloomy passionate expression of his boyhood, and had become at once grave and gentle. While every one felt a fearless confidence in his kind-

THE  
JEWS OF BARNOW

(1873)

STORIES  
BY  
KARL EMIL FRANZOS

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN BY  
M. W. MACDOWALL

NEW YORK  
D. APPLETON AND COMPANY  
1, 3, AND 5 BOND STREET  
1883

NAMELESS GRAVES.

THE last time that I went there was on a beautiful, still autumn day. The sunshine was brightening the landscape, and the only sound to be heard was the faint crackling of the withered leaves on the bushes by the wayside. I followed the winding path that ran through the fields and gardens. I was alone, but I knew the place so well that I did not need to ask my way; for I always go there when I revisit my old home, and every year I become more attached to it. Every year the number of acquaintances to whom it leads me grows more numerous; indeed, the day will soon come when none of them will be found in the little town, for all will be there. . . .

It was the "good place" to which I was going; and as this is the only place to which neither the Pole's whip nor the covetous hand of the wonder-working rabbi can reach, the name is a good one. Here each poor soul is freed from the double ban—and who can count its victims?—that ground him

12th Elul

Aging expatriot,  
home for a visit

1/2 of 1872 or?  
outside of 1872,  
Jew/Gentile  
persecution,  
hasidic  
exploitation

Poles = zaddik  
outside inside

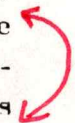
down, and stifled the good that was in him. He is delivered alike from outward humiliation and from the dark night of ignorance. None of these people could have been called really happy until they died. Then, it is true, they know nothing about it, but they feel that it must be so even while they are alive; so they have given their burial-ground the beautiful name of the "good place," and take care to make it as fair to look upon as they can. It never occurs to the Eastern Jews to plant trees or sow annuals there; but the fresh green grass is allowed to cover the graves, and blossoming elders grow by every headstone. Their burial-ground was the only bit of land these people were allowed to possess until a few years ago! . . .

The "good place" at Barnow is as sweet a spot as is to be found anywhere. I have already described what it was like in late spring when the elders were in blossom, filling the air with a perfume that was almost too powerful, and when the red and purple berries were beginning to show among the leaves. In autumn the bushes are shorn of much of their former beauty, but they are pleasant to look at even then in their own way. The air in September is so wonderfully clear and bright, and the autumnal tints are so vivid, that they lend the somewhat uninteresting landscape a beauty of their own. The moor is never a cheerful place, and it looks more calm and

solemn than ever in autumn; but not *triste*—the heather glows with too deep a red, and the foliage of the limes fades into too soft a yellow for that. Here and there a pond may be seen with its dark, clear waters. Any one going to the burial-ground through country such as this, can not fail, I think, to be impressed with its quiet beauty. But perhaps I am not a good judge of that; perhaps one must have been born in a moorland country to be able to appreciate it. . . .

The "good place" lies on a hill, from which one has an extensive view on all sides. From thence one can see ten ponds, hard by which some villages are situated, whose houses, roofed with brown thatch, resemble collections of bee-hives; and finally, at the foot of the hill is the town, which has a very respectable appearance from there, although, in reality, it is neither more nor less than a wretchedly dirty hole. One is able to breathe more freely when enjoying such an extensive view, such a wide horizon-line. For to east, north, and south the only limit is the sky, and on gray days the same is the case to the west. But when the air is clear and bright, one can see what looks like a curiously-shaped blue-gray bank of cloud on the western horizon. On seeing it for the first time one is inclined to believe that a storm is brewing there. But the cloud neither increases nor decreases in size, and though its out-

panorama



of to  
Western  
"cultivated"  
cemeteries

natural  
surroundings  
are  
splendid

line may seem to shift now and then, it stands fast for ever—it is the Carpathian range of mountains. . . .

But it is beautiful close to where one is standing also. It is true that the queer, twisted branches of the elders are now leafless and bare of blossom and fruit, but they are interlaced with a delicate network of spiders' webs that tremble and glow with prismatic colors in the sunlight. Their deep-red leaves cover the graves, and between the hillocks are flowering asters. The graves are well cared for; the Jewish people have a great reverence for the majesty of Death.

To the Jews, Death is a mighty and somewhat stern ruler, who is kindly disposed to poor humanity, and draws them to him in mercy. These people do not like to die, but death is easier and pleasanter to them than to others, for their belief in immortality is more absolute than that of any other nation. This belief is not merely founded on self-love, but on love to God. Is not God all-just? and where would be His justice if He did not requite them in the other world for all the misery heaped upon them while they lived on earth? And yet they cling to this earth, and regard all the blessedness of heaven as a state of transition, a preparation and foretaste of the fuller blessedness of earth after the coming of the Messiah. It is therefore serving God to bury the dead. It is therefore serving God to tend the

Myth

unique belief system

graves of those who are gone. Even the oldest and most weather-beaten gravestone is propped up and steadied by some great-grandson, or perhaps one who was no blood relation of the deceased, and who was only moved to do it because the sleeper had once been a man like himself who had felt the joys and sorrows of humanity. He was a Jew, and he should find his resting-place in order when the trumpet should sound. (Some people may look upon this belief as ludicrous, but I could never feel it so. . . .)

Christian addressee

One's heart and mind are full of many thoughts as one wanders up the hill between the rows of graves. I do not mean those eternal questions which one generation inherits as a legacy of torment from those that have preceded it, and to which only fools suppose they can give an adequate answer. Verily, we all hope for such an answer, for we are all fools, poor fools, with an eternal bandage covering our eyes, and an eternal thirst for knowledge filling our spirits. But why touch unnecessarily on such deep subjects? I mean questions of a different kind from these. Whoever, for example, walks through that part of the cemetery where the hill slopes down gently to the plain below, near the river, can not help thinking of the evil consequences of two Polish nobles determining to show themselves humane at the same time. On four hundred headstones the same year is chiseled as the date of death—the same year, the same day, the

hist of persecution



disposition of the manuscript : in the black time of the Polish nobility  
Jewish/Magnate Nexus : disastrous

same hour—it is an unspeakable history. Wet? no! drowned in blood and tears! And it all came from a contemporaneous desire for the exercise of the virtue of humanity! During the time that the Polish kings had power in the land, the Jagellons protected the Jews, who paid them tribute in return. But as the royal authority became of less and less account—still existent, more because it refused to die than because

- any remnant of power remained to it—the Waywodes,
- and in the flat land the Starosts, snatched at the chance of taking the Jews under their protection; they were one and all so filled to overflowing with the milk of human kindness. A large and rich Jewish community lived in Barnow, so it was regarded as doing God good service to take care of so great a number of men who were capable of paying considerable taxes with ease. Two Starosts—those of Tulste and of Old Barnow—drew up in battle array, one at each side of the town, and each sent a message to the following effect to the Jewish community: "If you do not choose me as your protector, I shall at once put you and your possessions to fire and sword." The unfortunate Jews had not much time granted them in which to deliberate; they quickly gathered together all the ready money that they could, and bought the protection of both. This conduct brought down further misfortunes upon the poor people. The Starosts were both philanthropists, and both wished to fulfill the duty they had under-

taken. Neither trusted the other with a work of such importance, and each determined to put his rival to the proof; so the Starost of Old Barnow began to murder and plunder the Jews at one end of the town, and then waited to see whether the other would do his duty and protect his *protégés*. But, unfortunately, his rival was equally determined to try the worth of his promises, and had been doing exactly the same at the other end. Thus neither gained his object. Good men seldom attain what they strive for! The terrible carnage lasted for three days and three nights. . . .

The mild autumn sunshine falls as softly on the graves of these murdered people as elsewhere, and the asters are larger and more perfect between these closely massed hillocks; the grasshoppers chirp merrily in the grass and moss that cover them, and the autumn threads spun by the busy spider wave to and fro in the gentle breeze. Peace and quiet reign here also—a peace as restful as in any other part of the "good place;" and yet it seems to me as though a sudden cry must arise from these graves, as though a piercing, agonized cry must break the stillness of all around; and that cry would not be one of mourning, but of accusation, and not alone of the Starosts of Tulste and Old Barnow. . . .

There are many other graves besides these that bear the same date . . . those, for instance, that were filled in the days when a Czartoryski hunted

P. Wojewoda

heard  
irony

the Jews because there was so little game left in the neighborhood. And then, again, in this very century, in those three terrible summers when the wrath of God—the cholera—raged throughout the great plain. Grass makes more resistance against the scythe than these people did, in their narrow pestiferous streets, against the great plague. The graves are innumerable, and the field in which they lie is a very large one; but the community now living in Barnow is much smaller than one would think on seeing the cemetery. But the very poorest creature who is given a resting-place and headstone there, has it in perpetuity; none will disturb his rest until, as they say, the last trumpet sounds. . . .

*true egalitarianism*  
The headstone on every grave is of the same shape. No eccentric monumental tablets are to be seen, and no artistically carved figure is represented on any of the gravestones—the Jewish faith forbids all such adornments. The only difference in these stones lies in the fact that those of the poor are small, and those of the rich large; that the inscription on the poor man's headstone shows him to have been an honest man, and that on the rich man's makes him out to have been the noblest man who ever lived—that is all; for even the arrangement of the inscription is strictly ordained in the Talmudim. The insignia of the tribe is put first, then the name of the deceased, followed by those of his parents, and after that his

occupation in life. Sometimes this last is passed over in silence, for "usurer" or "informer" would not look well upon a tomb, to say nothing of worse things. In such cases the friends content themselves with putting, "He was indefatigable in the study of his religion, and loved his children"—and, as a rule, this was true.

Whoever reads these inscriptions will see that he need go no further in search of the island of the blessed, or of the garden of Eden, where angels walk about in human form—that is to say, if he believes the inscriptions. The Semitic race goes further in showing reverence for the dead than any other. The Romans contented themselves with "*De mortuis nil nisi bonum.*" They demanded that the dead should be spoken of with kindness and respect, maintaining that such conduct was only seemly in face of the majesty of death and the helplessness of the dead. The Semites go further than this: they exact that only good should be spoken of the dead. And if any man is so terrible a sinner that no good is to be found in him, they keep silence regarding him. . . .

They keep silence. The worst anathema known to this people is, "His name shall be blotted out." And so in such cases they do not inscribe his name upon his headstone. There is many a nameless grave in Podolian burial-grounds. This is meant as a punishment, as a requital of the evil the man had done while on earth.

*Mock Eden*

*Introduces theme of nameless graves*

And, again, it is meant in mercy: for on the day when the kingdom of God shall come, the heavenly trumpets can not alone waken the sleepers; the angel of eternal life is to do that. He will go from stone to stone, and call the dead by the name inscribed on the headstone—the righteous to unspeakable blessedness, and the wicked to unspeakable punishment. If no name is carved upon the stone, he will perhaps pass on without arousing the sleeper. Perhaps!—all hope that it may be so, in mercy to the sinner! . . .

There are many nameless graves in the "good place" at Barnow, and in some cases the punishment may have been well deserved. It is often the hardest that has reached the criminal. The black deed has been done, and the darkness of the Ghetto hid the crime. The Podolian Jews fear the world, and a Christian is supreme in the imperial court of justice. They do not like to deliver their sinful brother into the hands of an alien. They punish him themselves as they best can: he must spend much money on good objects, or make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, or fast every second day for years. His crime is hidden as long as he lives, and it is only after his death that it is discovered.

Some very curious things are also looked upon as crimes, and punished in the same way. Whoever hears of such can hardly help asking a very bitter question—a very ancient and grimly bitter question,

Myth:  
no resurrection  
for these  
dead  
souls

Jews. autonomy =  
cruel &  
unusual  
punishment

that can never die out as long as the human race continues to exist on the face of the earth. . . .

For example, an old beggar once formed part of the Jewish community at Barnow—a discharged soldier who had been crippled in the wars. No one did anything for him. The Christians would not help him because he was a Jew, and the Jews would not do it because he had eaten Christian food for so long, and because he was in the habit of swearing most blasphemously. Perhaps neither of these sins was entirely his own fault: for no army in the world has ever put its commissariat under the charge of a rabbi since the Maccabees fell asleep; and as for profane swearing, it may be as much part and parcel of an old soldier as an acorn is of an oak. But, however that may be, his co-religionists took both of these circumstances in very bad part, and provided him with nothing but daily lumps of black bread, and on Friday afternoons with seven kreutzers. Even an old beggar could not live properly in Barnow on so small an allowance, and the poor old man suffered frequently from the pangs of hunger. So when the Day of Atonement came round again—the strictest fast-day in the whole year—he found no pleasure in abstaining from food, for hunger was no unusual feeling with him. He was discovered on that day behind a pillar of the bridge with a bit of sausage in his hand. He was not ill-treated, nor was his allow-

מבוסס על  
אגדה

found eating on  
יום כיפור

ance diminished: and yet fate would have been kind to him had he died in that hour: for were I to relate all that happened to the old man, I think that the hardest heart could not fail to be touched. But fate is seldom kind: he lived for many years. When he died, his rich relations put a headstone on his grave, but left it blank. But I think—I think, that the dead soldier is not nearly so much pained by this, as he was by much that they did to him when he was alive. . . .

Close to the old soldier sleeps a man who met with a like fate. A very strange man he was—Chaim Lippener by name, and by trade a shoemaker. People who follow that trade have often a great liking for philosophical speculation, perhaps because of the sedentary life they lead. Our Chaim was also a philosopher after his own fashion. He never rose above the basis of all investigation—doubt; and his favorite expression was, "Who knows the truth?" As the pale little man felt himself unable to answer the question by means of speculation, he determined to try whether experience could not help him. He went from one sect to the other—from the "Chassidim," or enthusiasts, to the "Misnagdim," who were zealous for the Scriptures; then he joined the former again, and afterward went over to the "Karaites." Then he took refuge under the banner of the wonder-working rabbi of Sadagóra, after which he remained

among the "Aschkenasim"—those are in favor of German culture—for a year, and finally became a Cabalist. This he was for a long time; and as his boots and shoes were good and well-made, people troubled themselves very little about his midnight studies and his profoundly mystical talk. But one cold, white moonlight night, when some men who had remained until an unusually late hour at the wine-shop were returning home, they found a man kneeling motionlessly in the snow at the foot of the great crucifix at the Dominican monastery, his arms stretched out as though to embrace the Christ. They stood still and gazed at the unwonted sight in astonishment, but their surprise was changed into horror when they saw that the solitary worshiper was none other than Chaim. They drew nearer, but he did not hear their footsteps. Suddenly he began to speak aloud, and in a sobbing, tremulous voice uttered a prayer in the holy language: it was the blessing which is prescribed to the traveler when he sees the sun rise as he journeys along. The listeners were at once filled with pious wrath; they threw themselves upon the little man, beat him unmercifully, and chased him home. Next morning there was great excitement in the "Gasse;" even the most indifferent went up to the synagogue to pray, partly from religious motives, to entreat God not to avenge the sin of the individual upon the community—and partly

theme of  
apostasy

Jewish  
"sects"

from curiosity, for every one wanted to know what penance the rabbi and the council would impose upon the sinner. The congregation did not disperse as usual after the conclusion of the service. The council took their plans. But the culprit was not there, for the excitement and the beating he had undergone had proved too much for his feeble strength—he had fallen ill. As his presence was necessary, some men were sent to fetch him. They brought him on a mattress. A great clamor arose as he was borne up the aisle, and all those who stood near relieved their hearts by spitting upon him. Then the rabbi commanded silence, and began a long speech, in which the place where eternal darkness and eternal cold reign, the place to which the wicked are relegated after death, took a prominent part. Having thus spoken, he turned to the accused and asked him what he had to say in his own favor. But whether it was that the sick man could not speak, or that he had nothing to say, none can tell—he remained silent, and only shook his head. This conduct increased the general indignation; the rabbi made a solemn remonstrance, and the others spat upon the offender. At length the little man raised himself upon his pillows, looked at the zealots with quiet earnestness, and began to speak. The words he uttered were few, and consisted merely of his favorite question, "Who knows the truth?" The

scene that followed may easily be imagined. Those men who were not carried away by fanatical zeal, protected Chaim with their own bodies: had they not done so, his offense had been washed out in his blood then and there. At last, quiet being restored, the rabbi was able to pronounce judgment. I do not remember what the fine imposed on Chaim Lippener amounted to; but so much I know, that he had to leave wife and child, and set out on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, from whence he was never to return. He was commanded to tell every community he passed on the way what he had done, and to request them to kick him and spit upon him.

He was never able to set out on his pilgrimage, for he fell into a decline, and faded away like snow before the sun. He prayed so much during the last months of his illness, that every one was convinced that he was converted, and had turned from the error of his ways. I am the only person who knew better; and as it can no longer injure Chaim to tell the truth, I will now do so.

When I came home for the holidays in July, his wife came and asked me to go and see him, but begged that it might be in the evening, that no one might notice it. I did so. The sick man was very weak, but he had an immense folio volume resting on his knees, in which he was reading eagerly. After making long and rather confused excuses for the

*banishment*

*narrator - as -  
eyewitness*

trouble he had given me, he said that he wanted to know whether it was true that the Christians had Holy Scriptures as well as the Jews. When I told him that they had, he begged me to try and get him the book. This request affected me curiously, almost painfully; but it was the wish of a dying man, and—"Who knows the truth?" I found some difficulty in fulfilling my promise, for Chaim could only read Hebrew. I sent to Vienna for a translation the English Bible Society had made for mission purposes in Palestine. The book was a fortnight in coming, and when it arrived I could not give it to the man; but it did not matter, for he probably knew more then, than he could have learned from that book and all the books in the world. . . .

Ah yes! these were strange, very strange, crimes. On that autumn day, as I stood beside the two graves, I felt inclined to stoop down and say to the dead: "Forgive your poor brothers; do not be angry with them, for they know not what they do!" . . .

What a peculiar history the Jews have had! Their strong religion, founded on a rock, was once a protection to them, and saved them from the axes and clubs of their enemies. They would have been destroyed without that protection, for the blows aimed at them were heavy and hard to parry; and for that very reason, they clung to it the more tenaciously, until at last, instead of enlightening their hearts, they

hot request:  
N.T.

Jews at  
Golgotha!

Ideology

made of it a bandage for their eyes. They were not so much to be pitied for this long ago, for then all the world went about with their eyes bandaged. But now, when the light of day is shining in the West, and the dawn has at last broken in the East, they have not raised the bandage one inch. I do not want them to do it too quickly, nor do I want them to throw away their faith; I only desire that they should open their eyes to the light which is shining more and more around them. . . .

It must be so; and it will be so. Necessity is the only divinity in which one can believe without doubting or despairing.

Light will come to them; but no one can tell how long the light will last, or count the victims it will destroy.

It is only by accident one hears of them. The living are silent, and the graves are silent, especially those that are nameless. The history of those nameless graves may be shown by a mark of interrogation, hard but not impossible to decipher.

My curiosity was excited by the last of those blank headstones set up in the cemetery at Barnow. I found it the last time I went there on the beautiful September afternoon I have before described.

It was a solitary grave standing apart from the rest. It lay in the hollow near the river, and close to the broken hedge. This in itself was strange, for the

Ben

3rd nameless  
grave

dead are generally buried next to each other as their turn comes to die. A family seldom has a plot of ground set apart for itself—very seldom; for all who sleep here are members of the same family.

An exception had been made with regard to this grave. Not another headstone was to be seen far and wide; but to the right and left of it, as close to it as possible, were two other graves—small graves, unmarked by aught save the tiny hillocks they made. So small were they, that one could scarcely see them under their covering of juniper-bushes and red heather.

It was easy to guess who slept there: little boys who had died before they were eight days old, before they had been given a name; and she who lay between them must have been their mother, for the headstone was that of a woman—one could tell that from its shape.

Hitherto men alone had been given nameless graves, because they alone commit crimes, whether real or imaginary. The Jewish woman is good and pious. It was the first woman's grave I had ever seen with a blank headstone.

What had she done?

I puzzled long in the calm sunny stillness of that autumn day. I made up one story after another, each more extraordinary than the preceding one, to account for it; but again I was to learn that truth is often stranger than fiction.

As I sat thinking on the grave, looking from me, and hardly seeing the rainbow tints that the clouds of dancing insects took in the clear air whenever a ray of sunshine touched their wings, I suddenly heard the monotonous drawling sound of mournful voices, and looking up, saw two old men advancing toward me along the hedgerow.

They were busied in the exercise of a pious rite that I had not seen for so long, that, now that I saw it again, it struck me as it would have struck a stranger. Each of the men was carrying a short yellow wooden stick in his right hand, and round each of the sticks a thread was wound closely and thickly, uniting them to each other; for one end of the thread was wound round one stick, and the other end was wound round the other stick. Whenever the men stood still, they held the two sticks close together, and sang their strange duet in mournful unison. Then one of them ceased singing, held his stick perpendicularly, and stood as though rooted to the spot; while the other walked on slowly and gravely by the side of the hedge, singing in high nasal tones, and unwinding the thread as he went, in such a manner as to keep it straight and tight. After having gone about thirty paces, he stood still and silent. The other, meanwhile, began to advance toward him, singing in his turn, and winding up the thread, so that the ball on the one stick grew larger

alcane  
customs  
סגור / כוונ

and larger, while that on the other stick grew smaller. Thus there were alternately one duet and two solos.

This is called "measuring the boundaries;" and although it is only done after this fashion in some of the Podolian cemeteries, it is yet done in some way or other wherever the Jews are to be found. On the anniversary of the day on which a near and dear relation has deceased, it is the custom to measure the borders of the burial-ground in which he rests with a thread, that is afterward used for some pious purpose, such as to form the wick of candles offered in sacrifice, or to sew a prayer-mantle. The custom is the outcome of a sad gloomy symbolism, but it would take up too much room were I to attempt to explain it.

I watched the men for a time, and then went up to them, and asked whose was the grave that had interested me.

They looked at me mistrustfully.

"Why do you ask?" one of them at length answered, with hesitation.

"Because I want to know."

"And why do you want to know?"

A direct answer would have been too long, so I made him an indirect and shorter reply.

One of the two worthy but extremely dirty old men—so dirty that one looked at them in wonder—had a very red nose—a circumstance from which one

might infer that he was subject to constant thirst, and was of a cheerful disposition. It is always easy to make one's self understood by a person of that kind.

I looked at the man smilingly, as though he were an old friend, and at the same time put my hand in my pocket. . . . "Well—who is it?" I asked.

He watched my movements with visible interest, but did not give way as yet.

"Isn't the name engraved upon the stone?" he inquired.

"I should not have asked you what it was if it had been there."

"Why isn't it there?"

My hand came out of my pocket, but the old man was not yet gained over.

"Why?" he repeated; "because it is a sin even to think of the name of her who lies there! Why should I sin by telling you what it is? why should you sin by listening to it? why should Reb Nathan here sin by listening to us both?"

"Money spent on the poor will wash out the sin," I replied calmly, pressing something into the old man's hand.

But the venerable gentleman was evidently very particular about any matter that might affect the salvation of his soul, so he counted the silver I had given him in a whisper, as if to make sure that I had

reticent  
to tell the  
story:

domestic

build-up

explanation



given him enough. His face now expressed satisfaction; but Reb Nathan, in his turn, began to feel uneasy. He might easily have gone away, and so escaped the sin of listening; but instead of that, he chose another course of action, although he had not a red nose.

When these preliminaries were all settled, the first said, "Whose grave is that?" and the other answered, "Lea Rendar's." Which, being interpreted, means, "Lea, the daughter of the innkeeper, lies there." But I still looked inquiringly at the two men.

"Every one knew her!" they exclaimed, in astonishment. "Lea of the yellow Karezma (inn); the wife of Long Ruben, who lives near the town-hall; Lea with the long hair."

I knew now whom they meant, and my curiosity was turned into an anxious interest.

"What! she was a sinner?" I cried, in amazement.

"Was she a sinner?" exclaimed Reb Abraham, the red-nosed man. "Could there have been a greater than she? No: there never was a greater! She trod the law under her feet! And who will be damned for it? She and her husband—Ruben of the town-hall! For had he not permitted it, the transgression had never been perpetrated."

"Another person will also be damned for her sin,"

cried Reb Nathan—"Gawriel Rendar, her father; for if he had brought her up differently, she would never have committed such a trespass against the law."

"Ah, yes, of course," assented Abraham. Then, seized with a sudden revulsion of feeling, he pitied the man in whose house his nose had gained its rosy hue, and added more gently: "Perhaps the Almighty may forgive Gawriel after all. How could the poor father ever have guessed that she would do such a horrible thing? None of Jewish birth could ever have thought it! But as for Ruben—that's different; he is certainly condemned!"

"Was the crime really so terrible?"

"Terrible, did you say?—most abominable! Didn't you hear of it? An extraordinary story!—a most remarkable and unheard-of story!"

They then told me this "remarkable and unheard-of story." And truly it deserved the adjectives they applied to it, although in a different sense from that in which they used them.

I can hardly describe my feelings as I write down what I then heard. In the first place, the whole affair sounds so incredible. Only those few people in the West who have a slight knowledge of this ignorant fanatical Eastern Judaism, will be able to comprehend that such things can really be. All others will shake their heads. I can only say that it is a true story;

*vouches for its accuracy*

Typical masochistic setting: the evil inn

I did not invent it: it really took place. Besides that, the story is a very sad one. It fills one with sorrow when one thinks of it. . . .

Lea was a very lovely girl. She did not inherit her beauty from either of her parents; for her mother was a dumpy, little red-faced woman, and Gawriel Rendar, landlord of the large yellow inn on the way to Old Barnow, was an awkward giant with a muddy complexion, and a face much pitted with small-pox. The two sons, who hung about the house, were by no means ornamental members of society. In short, they were a rascally-looking lot, and their chief occupation was to provide bad spirits for the thirsty, and fling those who had imbibed too much of the villainous compound they sold out-of-doors in a rough-and-ready manner. It was in this house and among these people that the loveliest, merriest child grew up into a gentle modest girl. Lea Bergheimer was more like a sunbeam than any one I ever knew.

Her head was crowned with a wealth of shining golden hair. A Jewess is seldom fair; and when she happens to be so, is, as a general rule, anything but good-looking. The beautiful women of this race have either brown or black hair. But Lea was an exception. Indeed, she was not at all of the Jewish type except in her slender, upright, graceful figure.

Her face was of the highest Germanic type: small, delicate features, rosy cheeks, and deep violet eyes.

Rendar =  
liminal  
figure

rowdy  
brothers

excursus  
on Jew.  
fem.  
beauty

The expression of her face was bright and intelligent. There is a seventeenth-century picture in one of the side rooms of the Belvedere at Vienna of a Viennese burgher maiden painted by an Italian. The original was a German girl, but the artist has given her face the impress of the "spirit, fire, and dew" that animate so many Southern natures. That picture might have been a portrait of Lea, the resemblance to her was so strong.

The darkest place may be lighted by a sunbeam; so pretty Lea brought light and joy into the noisy inn. It is scarcely necessary to say how devoted her parents and brothers were to her, and how in their awkward way they delighted to do her honor, watching over her and anticipating her slightest wish in the most touching way. Old Gawriel was well-to-do in the world, for his spirit-shop stood in a central place, and no landlord in Podolia understood better than he the art of watering schnapps, and of doubling the chalked score of any one who went upon tick. But he spent so much upon Lea, that it was really wonderful that he was able to lay by anything. He did not have the girl educated—she learned nothing but what Jewish women in Eastern Europe are taught; but he used to dress her on week-days as rich men did not dress their daughters on New-Year's day.

Her family had unintentionally done their best to

cf to bourgeoisie  
Portrait

crossed  
deal. up

fatal error

*arranged  
mar. up*

make her vain and coquettish. And other people had done their part; the women through their jealousy, and the men through their admiration. Lea awakened feelings in the hearts of the young men of Barnow such as were seldom to be found there. For, as a general rule, the long-haired Jewish youth never even thinks of any girl until his father tells him that he has chosen a wife for him. He sometimes sees his bride for the first time at his betrothal, but in a great many cases he does not see her until his marriage-day; and then, whether she pleases him or not, he makes up his mind to get used to her, and generally succeeds. But many thought of Lea; and as she walked down the street, people would turn and look at her—a thing hitherto unknown. *<*Even in the "Klaus," where the quiet, dreamy, and very dirty Talmudists bent over their heavy folios, her name was sometimes mentioned, followed by many a deep sigh.*>*

Beautiful Lea knew nothing of this. But other people took care that she should not remain in doubt as to whether she pleased them or not. The school-boys who came home to Barnow for the holidays were all in love with her and Esterka Regina, another beautiful Jewish girl whose life was a sad one. Then there were the young nobles, who were in the habit of stopping at the door of Gawriel's inn for a glass of schnapps and a little conversation. But the boldest of all were the hussar officers, who got into the habit

of spending hours in the bar-room, without making any way with the girl.

Lea was vain, but she was thoroughly good and modest. Jewish women are, as a rule, kind, charitable, and sympathetic with others; but Lea was even more so than the generality—so the poor used to bless her and reverence her. The girl's great weakness was, that she was in love with her own beauty, and especially with that of her splendid hair. *tragic flaw* When she loosened her heavy plaits, her hair used to infold her like a mantle of cloth-of-gold, descending to her knees—a mantle of which any queen would have been proud. It was this that gained for her her nickname of "Lea with the long hair." . . .

The Jews of Barnow were firmly convinced that Lea would never marry. The women hoped and the men feared that it would be so. She grew up, was seventeen, eighteen, nineteen years old, and yet had never deemed any of her suitors worthy of her hand. Such a thing was unheard of among the Podolian Jews, who usually marry at a very early age. But old Gawriel acted differently from most fathers—he let his daughter decide her own fate.

Lea's answer to all her suitors was a short, resolute "No." And after the day when Josef Purzelbaum was dismissed in like fashion, although he was the son of the richest man in the whole district—and also little Chaim Machmirdas, who was nearly connected

by marriage with the great rabbi of Sadagóra—no other suitor ventured to come forward. The rejection of a member of the holy family of Sadagóra filled every one with amazement, and many looked upon it as tantamount to blasphemy. But Lea was not to be moved, and continued to drive the match-makers to despair. In the end these good people scarcely dared to set foot in the inn, although there are no quieter and more considerate men in the world than the Jewish match-makers in Podolia. But one of them, Herr Itzig Türkischgelb, used to say: "I am an old man, but I have not yet given up the hope of living to see Lea's marriage and the coming of the Messiah. But, truly, I think the latter will take place first." Itzig Türkischgelb always liked his joke.

At last Lea's engagement was announced. And when the name of the fortunate suitor was made known, the astonishment of all was even greater than at the fact of the engagement. For Ruben Rosenmann—or Ruben of the town-hall, as he was called, because of the position of his shop—was neither rich nor of a pious family; and besides that he was a widower. He was a handsome man, tall and dignified, and of a grave and serious disposition. He was particular about his dress, and wore his caftan about a span shorter than any one else. He had spent two years in a large town called Brody, and had learned to read, speak, and write High German. Perhaps this

Comic  
1/32

was the reason that he was looked upon as a free-thinker, which he certainly was not, for he followed all the commands, not only of religion, but also of superstition, with a slavish obedience.

When Lea was asked why she had chosen him of all people, her only answer was, "Because I like him." It was an unheard-of reason for a Podolian Jewess to give: so no one believed that it could be the real reason. Many questions were asked of the match-makers, but they could throw no light on the subject. Even Türkischgelb had to confess that this engagement was not brought about by his diplomacy. Ruben had sent him to Lea; but the girl had refused to listen to him, saying, "Let him come and speak to me himself if he has anything to say."

married for  
love

Ruben went to see her. The two young people had a long conversation that lasted fully two hours. No one, not even the girl's parents, knew what they had talked about during their interview. But old Gawriel heard Ruben say in a loud impressive voice: "Very well—if you have set your heart upon it, I consent. It is not a sin in the sight of God, although our people regard it as such. Keep your secret carefully; for, were it discovered, it would cause the destruction of us both." The father tried in vain to persuade Lea to tell him her secret.

The marriage took place soon afterward. Lea was lovelier than ever as she stood under the "trau-

himmel." And yet her richest ornament, her golden hair, was wanting. No married woman is allowed to wear her own hair, which is always cut short, and sometimes even shaved, before the wedding. The head is then covered with a high erection made of wool or silk, called a *scheitel*. Stern and ancient custom demands this. For a married woman to wear her own hair, would not merely be regarded as immodest, but as a terrible sin against God. Lea permitted no one to lay a finger on her hair, but locking herself into her room, cut it off with her own hands. . . .

Contrary to expectation, the marriage was a happy one; and more wonderful still, Lea was a humble, obedient wife. The most envious could not deny that Ruben was a lucky fellow. No one knew it better than he did, and, when he heard that Lea hoped soon to be a mother, his joy knew no bounds. But, unfortunately, this hope was not fulfilled; the child was born dead, and before it was expected. The doctor said it was in consequence of a chill from which Lea had been suffering; but the rabbi of Barnow was of a different opinion. He sent for Lea, and asked if she had not broken some commandment in secret, and so brought down upon herself the judgment of God. Lea turned very pale, but answered firmly, "No, rabbi."

This happened in spring. One autumn day, a

usuality of  
Jew. custom

children  
die in  
succession

year and a half afterward, Lea had a son; but it only lived six days. The doctor said it had died of apoplexy, like many other new-born babies. Lea wept bitterly; but when the rabbi came to her and repeated the question he had before asked her, she again answered shortly and firmly, "No, rabbi."

In the following summer Lea knew that she was to become a mother for the third time. She felt oppressed by a foreboding that the same sorrow as before would come to her. She took every precaution, and Ruben watched over her anxiously and tenderly. But when the Day of Atonement came round, she insisted on spending the whole day in the synagogue fasting, in spite of her husband's remonstrances and the doctor's having forbidden her to do so.

That was the cause of her destruction.

The old synagogue was dreadfully close that day, and worse than close; it was filled with a most disagreeable and sickening odor of candles, and of an uncleanly congregation that had spent hours within its walls praying and weeping. It was an atmosphere in which the strongest person might have been overcome with faintness; so that its effects on a delicate woman in Lea's condition may be readily imagined. Her head began to swim, and, uttering a low cry, she fell from her prayer-stool in a swoon.

The women quickly surrounded her, and tried to

3rd

climax

bring her to herself. They loosened her dress, and thrust two or three smelling-bottles under her nose at the same time.

All at once they started back: a wild shriek from a hundred throats echoed through the building; it was followed by silence—the silence of dread. . . .

Lea's *scheitel* had become displaced, and her glorious hair, which had been confined within the *scheitel*, flowed over her shoulders, and crowned her pale beautiful face as with a golden halo.

That was Lea's secret.

The scene that followed can not be described; an idea of it can hardly be conveyed to a stranger. The stillness was broken by wild shouts of rage, curses, and struggling. Quick as lightning the news flew to the body of the synagogue, where the men were praying; and its effect was the same there as in the women's part. At first horror and astonishment produced an intense stillness; then the men seemed filled with an insane fury, and rushed into the women's "school." Had Lea just confessed that she had murdered her children—and the Jews regarded infanticide as the worst of crimes, as even more wicked than parricide—their wrath could not have been greater. But in the eyes of these ignorant, superstitious people, Lea's hair had borne silent witness that she was indeed guilty! . . .

It was the holiest day in the year, and she against

whom their wrath was raised was a weak woman, and was, moreover, in a condition that ought to have pleaded for her with the most savage of men. But who knows how far pious zeal might not have led these fanatics? It had often before carried them to incredible lengths. Ruben forced his way through the ranks of infuriated men, his anger and pain giving him strength to do so. He lifted his wife like a child, and, supporting her with his left arm, pushed a way for himself and her through the crowd by a vigorous use of his right arm. He then rushed down-stairs, and home through the streets, pursued by the curses of his co-religionists. The October wind blew his wife's hair sharply in his pale face as he ran, and almost blinded him.

Lea soon recovered from her faint; but when she looked round and saw her hair hanging about her like a cloud, she shrieked out, and fell into violent convulsions. The doctor hastened to her; but he only succeeded in saving the life of the mother, not that of the child. Next morning the Jews of Barnow told each other that the judgment of God had fallen upon the sinner for the third time.

Ruben was as though petrified with grief. And when he was summoned before the rabbi in council that very morning, he obeyed the mandate as calmly as if he had not been the culprit to be tried. He returned no answer to the curses that were heaped

upon him, and, when put upon his defense, gave short and bold replies to the questions addressed to him. He was asked whether he had known of his wife's sin. Yes, he said, he had. Why had he suffered her to commit such a wickedness? Because it was not wicked in his eyes. Did he recognize what had now befallen him as a judgment of God? No; because he believed in an all-wise, all-merciful God. Would he at least consent to cut off his wife's hair now? No, for that would be breaking the promise he had made her when they were engaged. Did he know the punishment he was bringing upon himself by continuing in his sin? He did, and would know how to bear it.

o7x This punishment was the "great *cherem*," or excommunication—the worst punishment that the community could inflict upon one of its members. Whoever is thus excluded from the congregation is outlawed by them, and it is regarded as a good deed to do him as much harm as possible, both socially and in his business relations. Neither he nor anything that belonged to him might be touched except in enmity; his presence could only be permitted with the object of doing him an injury. *Cherem* loosens the holiest ties, and what in other cases would be a terrible sin is, under such circumstances, regarded as a sacred duty—the wife may forsake her husband, the son may raise his hand against his father.

It is a war of all against one—a merciless war, in which all means of attack are admissible. No love, no friendship, can venture to break down the barrier of excommunication, contempt, and loathing that incloses the culprit. It is a fate too awful to contemplate, a punishment terrible enough to break the most iron will. He who falls under this ban, generally hastens to make his peace with the rabbi on any terms, however humiliating.

Ruben thought this too high a price to pay, although he felt the curse of the excommunication doubly, both in his person and his work. No customers came to his shop. But he did not give way. He turned for protection to those who were bound to help him, and appealed to the imperial court of justice in Barnow. It is a punishable offense in Austria to use the *cherem* as a means of extortion; and, in the best case, when there is real and just cause for the infliction of punishment on an offender, it is nothing but an audacious attempt of a community to arrogate to itself the functions of the state. The sympathy of Herr Julko von Negrusz, district judge of Barnow, was aroused by Ruben's tale, and he did what he could to help him; but naturally he could not do much. He summoned the rabbi before his court, and punished every injury or indignity that was put upon Ruben which could be proved against any one in particular. But in most cases

the mischief was done in the dead of night, and the prosecution of the rabbi only served to increase the fanatical rage of the people. As for the shop, Herr von Negrusz had no power to force any one to buy their sugar and coffee from Ruben if they did not wish to do so.

The war of parties lasted all winter, and well into the spring. In April the rabbi was sentenced to six weeks' imprisonment. When he was set free, the community showed their joy by illuminating the streets and breaking Ruben's windows; otherwise, nothing was changed—Ruben remained firm. He was growing visibly poorer. His father-in-law continually entreated him to give way, but in vain. More than that, Lea, who had wept away all her youth and beauty during that terrible winter, and who, now that the spring was come, knew that she was again to become a mother, entreated her husband to allow her to cut off her hair. Perhaps the poor woman had been so influenced by the superstition of her neighbors, that she had really begun to think that it might cause the death of her child were she to continue to wear it. But Ruben shook his head sternly, and answered—"No; keep your hair; and if there is a God, He will not desert us—He will give me the victory."

In most cases it is a dangerous thing to place one's belief in the existence of God on the answer to a question such as this. It was so here: Ruben was conquered. What remains to be told I will relate in a few words as possible. . . .

In the following November another son was born to Lea. The child was a strong, healthy little fellow, and the mother's heart was at rest about him. Six

days passed; then the rabbi summoned his most faithful adherents to his presence. "The father is under the ban of *cherem*, and the mother wears her own hair; but the child is innocent. If we remain idle, the child must die as his brother died, because the mother continues to sin."

This was what the rabbi said—that is to say, it was probably he who spoke; but the originator of the horrible deed was never discovered. This was the deed of darkness perpetrated by the zealots.

About midnight of the sixth day after the baby's birth, some masked men burst into Ruben's house, overpowered both him and the nurse, dragged Lea out of bed, and cut off her hair.

Two days later Lea died in consequence of the fright she had had. The child, which had taken a fit soon after the men had broken into the house, died a few hours before its mother.

Ruben remained at Barnow until the judicial examination was over, although he hoped but little from it; for when the Jews are determined to be silent, no power on earth can make them speak.

Then he went away. Many years have passed away since then. He, probably, has also found rest, and sleeps away the dark sorrows of his life in some other corner of the world.

I have already described Lea's grave, and there is nothing more to be said.

I must add a few words in conclusion, that come from the bottom of my heart:

Forgive them, be not angry with them, for they know not what they do!

*Melodramatic  
ending*