

THE RABBI OF BACHARACH [59] (1840)

With kindly greeting, the Legend of the Rabbi of Bacharach is dedicated to his friend HENRY LAUBE by the AUTHOR

A FRAGMENT

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CHAPTER I

On the Lower Rhine, where its banks begin to lose their smiling aspect, where the hills and cliffs with their romantic ruined castles rise more defiantly, and a wilder, sterner majesty prevails, there lies, like a strange and fearful tale of olden times, the gloomy and ancient town of Bacharach. But these walls, with their toothless battlements and blind turrets, in whose nooks and niches the winds whistle and the sparrows build their nests, were not always so decayed and fallen, and in these poverty-stricken, repulsive muddy lanes which one sees through the ruined gate, there did not always reign that dreary silence which only now and then is broken by the crying of children, the scolding of women, and the lowing of cows. These walls were once proud and strong, and these lanes were alive with fresh, free life, power and pomp, joy and sorrow, much love and much hate. For Bacharach once belonged to those municipalities which were founded by the Romans during their rule on the Rhine; and its inhabitants, though the times which came after were very stormy, and though they had to submit first to the Hohenstaufen, and then to the Wittelsbach authority, managed, following the example of the other cities on the Rhine, to maintain a tolerably free commonwealth. This consisted of an alliance of separate social elements, in which the patrician elders and those of the guilds, who were subdivided according to their different trades, both strove for power; so that while they were bound in union to resist and guard against outside robber-nobles, they were, nevertheless, constantly having domestic dissensions over disputed interests. Consequently there was but little social intercourse, much mistrust, and not infrequently actual outbursts of passion. The ruling governor sat in his lofty castle of Sareck, and swooped down like his falcon, whenever he was called, and often when not called. The clergy ruled in darkness by darkening the souls of others. One of the most forsaken and helpless of the social elements, which had been gradually bound down by local laws, was the little Jewish community. This had first settled in Bacharach in the days of the Romans, and during the later persecution of the Jews it had taken in many a flock of fugitive co-religionists.

The great oppression of the Jews began with the crusades, and raged most furiously about the middle of the fourteenth century, at the end of the great pestilence, which, like all other great public disasters, was attributed to the Jews, because people declared they had drawn down the wrath of God, and, with the help of the lepers, had poisoned the wells. The enraged populace, especially the hordes of Flagellants, or half-naked men and women, who, lashing themselves for penance and singing a mad hymn to the Virgin, swept over South Germany and the Rhenish provinces, murdered in those days many thousand Jews, tortured others, or baptized them by

force. There was another accusation which in earlier times and all through the Middle Ages, even to the beginning of the last century, cost much blood and suffering. This was the ridiculous story, recurring with disgusting frequency in chronicle and legend, that the Jews stole the consecrated wafer, and pierced it with knives till blood ran from it; and to this it was added that at the feast of the Passover the Jews slew Christian children to use their blood in the night sacrifice.

[Illustration: BACHARACH ON THE RHINE]

Consequently on the day of this festival the Jews, hated for their wealth, their religion, and the debts due to them, were entirely in the hands of their enemies, who could easily bring about their destruction by spreading the report of such a child-murder, and perhaps even secretly putting a bloody infant's corpse in the house of a Jew thus accused. Then at night they would attack the Jews at their prayers, and murder, plunder, and baptize them; and great miracles would be wrought by the dead child aforesaid, whom the Church would eventually canonize. Saint Werner is one of these holy beings, and in his honor the magnificent abbey of Oberwesel was founded. The latter is now one of the most beautiful ruins on the Rhine, and with the Gothic grandeur of its long ogival windows, proud and lofty pillars, and marvelous stone-carving, it strangely enchants us when we wander by it on some bright, green summer's day, and do not know the story of its origin. In honor of this saint there were also three great churches built on the Rhine, and innumerable Jews murdered and maltreated. All this happened in the year 1287; and in Bacharach, where one of these Saint Werner's churches stood, the Jews suffered much misery and persecution. However, they remained there for two centuries after, protected from such outbreaks of popular rage, though they were continually subject to spite and threats.

Yet the more they were oppressed by hate from without, the more earnestly and tenderly did the Jews of Bacharach cherish their domestic life within, and the deeper was the growth among them of piety and the fear of God. An ideal example of a life given to God was seen in their Rabbi Abraham, who, though still a young man, was famed far and wide for his learning. He was born in Bacharach, and his father, who had been the rabbi there before him, had charged him in his last will to devote his life to that office and never to leave the place unless for fear of life. This command, except for a cabinet full of rare books, was all that his parent, who had lived in poverty and learning, left him. Rabbi Abraham, however, was a very rich man, for he had married the only daughter of his father's brother, who had been a prosperous dealer in jewelry, and whose possessions he had inherited. A few gossips in the community hinted now and then that the Rabbi had married for money. But the women all denied this, declaring that the Rabbi, long ere he went to Spain, had been in love with "Beautiful Sara," and recalling how she had awaited his return for seven years, while, as a matter of fact, he had already wedded her against the will of her father, and even without her own consent, by the betrothal-ring. For every Jew can make a Jewish girl his lawful wife, if he can succeed in putting a ring on her finger, and say at the same time: "I take thee for my wife, according to the law of Moses and Israel." And when Spain was mentioned, the same gossips were wont to smile in the same significant manner, all because of a vague rumor that Rabbi Abraham, though he had studied the holy law industriously enough at the theological school in Toledo, had nevertheless followed Christian customs and become imbued with habits of free

thinking, like many of the Spanish Jews who at that time had attained a very remarkable degree of culture.

And yet in the bottom of their hearts these gossips put no faith in such reports; for ever since his return from Spain the daily life of the Rabbi had been pure, pious, and earnest in every way. He performed every detail of all religious customs and ceremonies with painstaking conscientiousness; he fasted every Monday and Thursday--only on Sabbaths and feast days did he indulge in meat or wine; his time was passed in prayer and study; by day he taught the Law to students, whom his fame had drawn to Bacharach; and by night he gazed on the stars in heaven, or into the eyes of Beautiful Sara. His married life was childless, yet there was no lack of life or gaiety in his home. The great hall in his house, which stood near the synagogue, was open to the whole community, so that people went in and out without ceremony, some to offer short prayers, others to gather news, or to hold a consultation when in trouble. Here the children played on Sabbath mornings while the weekly "section" was being read; here people met for wedding and funeral processions, and quarreled or were reconciled; here, too, those who were cold found a warm stove, and those who were hungry, a well-spread table. And, moreover, the Rabbi, as well as his wife, had a multitude of relatives, brothers and sisters, with their wives and children, and an endless array of uncles and cousins, all of whom looked up to the Rabbi as the head of the family, and so made themselves at home in his house, never failing to dine with him on all great festivals.

Special among these grand gatherings in the Rabbi's house was the annual celebration of the Passover, a very ancient and remarkable feast which the Jews all over the world still hold every year in the month Nissen, in eternal remembrance of their deliverance from Egyptian servitude. This takes place as follows: As soon as it is dark the matron of the family lights the lamps, spreads the table-cloth, places in its midst three flat loaves of unleavened bread, covers them with a napkin, and places on them six little dishes containing symbolical food, that is, an egg, lettuce, horse-radish, the bone of a lamb, and a brown mixture of raisins, cinnamon, and nuts. At this table the father of the family sits with all his relatives and friends, and reads to them from a very curious book called the Agade, whose contents are a strange mixture of legends of their forefathers, wondrous tales of Egypt, disputed questions of theology, prayers, and festival songs. During this feast there is a grand supper, and even during the reading there is at specified times tasting of the symbolical food and nibbling of Passover bread, while four cups of red wine are drunk. Mournfully merry, seriously gay, and mysteriously secret as some old dark legend, is the character of this nocturnal festival, and the traditional singing intonation with which the Agade is read by the father, and now and then reëchoed in chorus by the hearers, first thrills the inmost soul as with a shudder, then calms it as mother's lullaby, and again startles it so suddenly into waking that even those Jews who have long fallen away from the faith of their fathers and run after strange joys and honors, are moved to their very hearts, when by chance the old, well-known tones of the Passover songs ring in their ears.

And so Rabbi Abraham once sat in his great hall surrounded by relatives, disciples, and many other guests, to celebrate the great feast of the Passover. Everything was unusually brilliant; over the table hung the gaily embroidered silk canopy, whose gold fringes touched the floor; the plates of symbolic food shone invitingly, as did the tall wine goblets, adorned with embossed pictures of scenes in holy legends. The men

sat in their black cloaks and black low hats, and white collars, the women, in wonderful glittering garments of Lombard stuffs, wore on their heads and necks ornaments of gold and pearls, while the silver Sabbath lamp cast its festive light on the cheerful, devout faces of parents and children. On the purple velvet cushions of a chair, higher than the others, reclined, as custom requires, Rabbi Abraham, who read and sang the Agade, while the gay assembly joined in, or answered in the appointed places. The Rabbi also wore the prescribed black festival garment, his nobly-formed, but somewhat severe features had a milder expression than usual, his lips smiled through his dark-brown beard as if they would fain say something kind, while in his eyes one could see happy remembrances combined with some strange foreboding. Beautiful Sara, who sat on the high velvet cushion with her husband, as hostess, had on none of her jewelry--nothing but white linen enveloped her slender form and innocent face. This face was touchingly beautiful, even as all Jewish beauty is of a peculiarly moving kind; for the consciousness of the deep wretchedness, the bitter ignominy, and the evil dangers amid which their kindred and friends dwell, imparts to their lovely features an expression of soulful sadness and watchful, loving anxiety, which particularly charms our hearts. So on this evening Beautiful Sara sat looking into the eyes of her husband, yet glancing ever and anon at the beautiful parchment book of the Agade which lay before her, bound in gold and velvet.

[Illustration: HOUSE IN BACHARACH]

It was an old heirloom, with ancient wine stains on it, and had come down from the days of her grandfather; and in it there were many boldly and brightly-colored pictures, which as a little girl she had often looked at so eagerly on Passover evenings. They represented all kinds of Bible incidents--Abraham breaking with a hammer the idols of his father and the angels appearing to him; Moses slaying Mizri; Pharaoh sitting in state on his throne, and the frogs giving him no peace even at the table; his death by drowning--the Lord be praised!--the children of Israel cautiously crossing the Red Sea, and then standing open-mouthed, with their sheep, cows, and oxen, before Mount Sinai; pious King David playing the harp; and, finally, Jerusalem, with its towers and battlements, shining in the splendor of the setting sun.

The second wine-cup had been served, the faces and voices of the guests were growing merrier, and the Rabbi, as he took a loaf of unleavened bread and raised it with a cheerful smile, read these words from the _Agade_: "Behold! This is the food which our fathers ate in Egypt! Let every one who is hungry come and enjoy it! Let every one who is sorrowful come and share the joy of our Passover! This year we celebrate it here, but in years to come in the land of Israel. This year we celebrate it as servants, but in the years to come as sons of freedom!"

Then the hall door opened, and two tall, pale men, wrapped in very loose cloaks, entered and said:

"Peace be with you. We are men of your faith on a journey, and wish to share the Passover-feast with you!" And the Rabbi replied promptly and kindly:

"Peace be with you! Sit ye down near me!" The two strangers immediately sat down at the table, and the Rabbi read on. Several times while the others were repeating a sentence after him, he said an endearing word to his wife; once, alluding to the old humorous saying that on this evening a Hebrew father of a family regards himself as

a king, he said to her, "Rejoice, oh my Queen!" But she replied with a sad smile, "The Prince is wanting," meaning by that a son, who, as a passage in the Agade requires, has to ask his father, with a certain formula of words, what the meaning of the festival is? The Rabbi said nothing, but pointed with his finger to an opened page of the Agade, on which was a pretty picture, showing how the three angels came to Abraham, announcing that he would have a son by his wife Sara, who, meanwhile, urged by feminine curiosity, is slyly listening to it all behind the tent-door. This little sign caused a threefold blush to color the cheeks of Beautiful Sara, who first looked down, and then glanced pleasantly at her husband, who went on chanting the wonderful story how Rabbi Jesua, Rabbi Eliezer, Rabbi Asaria, Rabbi Akiba, and Rabbi Tarphen sat reclining in Bona-Brak, and conversed all night long of the Exodus from Egypt, till their disciples came to tell them that it was daylight, and that the great morning prayer was being read in the synagogue.

While Beautiful Sara sat devoutly listening to and looking at her husband, she saw his face suddenly assume an expression of agony or horror, his cheeks and lips become deathly pale, and his eyes harden like two balls of ice; but almost immediately he regained his previous composure and cheerfulness, his cheeks and lips grew ruddy, and he looked about him gaily--nay, it seemed as if a strange, wild humor, such as was foreign to his nature, had seized him. Beautiful Sara was frightened as she had never been before in all her life, and a cold shudder went through her--due less to the momentary manifestation of dumb horror which she had seen in her husband's face, than to the cheerfulness which followed it, and which was now gradually developing into jubilant hilarity. The Rabbi cocked his cap comically, first on one ear, then on the other, pulled and twisted his beard ludicrously, and sang the Agade texts as if they were tavern-songs; and in the enumeration of the Egyptian plagues, where it is usual to dip the forefinger in the full wine-cup and flip off the drops that adhere, he sprinkled the young girls near him with the red wine, so that there was great wailing over spoiled collars, combined with loud laughter. Every moment Beautiful Sara was becoming more amazed by this convulsive merriment of her husband, and she was oppressed with nameless fears as she gazed on the buzzing swarm of gaily glittering guests who were comfortably enjoying themselves here and there, nibbling the thin Passover cakes, drinking wine, gossiping, or joyfully singing aloud.

Then came the time for supper. All rose to wash, and Beautiful Sara brought the large silver basin, richly adorned with embossed gold figures, which was held before all the guests in turn, while water was poured over their hands. As she was doing this for the Rabbi, he gave her a significant glance, and quietly slipped out of the door. When Beautiful Sara walked out after him, he grasped her hand, and in the greatest haste hurried her through the dark lanes of Bacharach, out of the city gate to the highway which leads along the Rhine to Bingen.

It was one of those spring nights which, to be sure, are mild and starry enough, yet which inspire the soul with strange, uncanny feelings. There was something funereal in the odor of the flowers, the birds chirped spitefully and at the same time apprehensively, the moon cast malicious yellow stripes of light over the dark murmuring stream, the lofty banks of the Rhine looked like vague, threatening giants' heads. The watchman on the tower of Castle Strahleck blew a melancholy blast, and with it rang in jarring discord the funeral bell of Saint Werner's.

Beautiful Sara still had the silver basin in her right hand, while the Rabbi held her left, and she felt that his fingers were ice-cold, and that his arm was trembling; but still she went on with him in silence, perhaps because she had become accustomed to obey her husband blindly and unquestioningly--perhaps, too, because her lips were mute with fear and anxiety.

Below Castle Sonneck, opposite Lorch, about the place where the hamlet of Nieder Rheinbach now lies, there rises a cliff which arches out over the Rhine bank. The Rabbi ascended this with his wife, looked around on every side, and gazed on the stars. Trembling and shivering, as with the pain of death, Beautiful Sara looked at his pale face, which seemed ghastly in the moonlight, and seemed to express by turns pain, terror, piety, and rage. But when the Rabbi suddenly snatched from her hands the silver basin and threw it far out into the Rhine, she could no longer endure the agony of uncertainty, and crying out "*Schadai*, be merciful!" threw herself at his feet and conjured him to explain the dark mystery.

At first unable to speak, the Rabbi moved his lips without uttering a sound; but finally he cried, "Dost thou see the Angel of Death? There below he sweeps over Bacharach. But we have escaped his sword. God be praised!" Then, in a voice still trembling with excitement, he told her that, while he was happily and comfortably singing the Agade, he happened to glance under the table, and saw at his feet the bloody corpse of a little child. "Then I knew," continued the Rabbi, "that our two guests were not of the community of Israel, but of the army of the godless, who had plotted to bring that corpse into the house by stealth so as to accuse us of child-murder, and stir up the people to plunder and murder us. Had I given a sign that I saw through that work of darkness I should have brought destruction on the instant down upon me and mine, and only by craft did I save our lives. Praised be God! Grieve not, Beautiful Sara. Our relatives and friends shall also be saved; it was only my blood which the wretches wanted. I have escaped them, and they will be satisfied with my silver and gold. Come with me, Beautiful Sara, to another land. We will leave misfortune behind us, and so that it may not follow us I have thrown to it the silver ewer, the last of my possessions, as an offering. The God of our fathers will not forsake us. Come down, thou art weary. There is Dumb William standing by his boat; he will row us up the Rhine."

Speechless, and as if every limb were broken, Beautiful Sara sank into the arms of the Rabbi, who slowly bore her to the bank. There stood William, a deaf and dumb but very handsome youth, who, to support his old foster-mother, a neighbor of the Rabbi, caught and sold fish, and kept his boat in this place. It seemed as if he had divined the intention of Abraham, and was waiting for him, for on his silent lips there was an expression of tender sympathy, and his large blue eyes rested as with deep meaning on Beautiful Sara, as he lifted her carefully into the boat.

The glance of the silent youth roused Beautiful Sara from her lethargy, and she realized at once that all which her husband had told her was not a mere dream. A stream of bitter tears poured over her cheeks, which were as white as her garment. Thus she sat in the boat, a weeping image of white marble, and beside her sat her husband and Dumb William, who was busily rowing.

Whether it is due to the measured beat of the oars, or to the rocking of the boat, or to the fresh perfume from those steep banks whereon joy grows, it ever happens that

even the most sorrowful heart is marvelously relieved when on a night in spring it is lightly borne along in a small boat on the dear, limpid waters of the Rhine. For, in truth, kind-hearted, old Father Rhine cannot bear to see his children weep, and so, drying their tears, he rocks them on his trusty arm, and tells them his most beautiful stories, and promises them his most golden treasures, perhaps even the old, old, long-sunk Nibelungen hoard. Gradually the tears of Beautiful Sara ceased to flow; her extreme sorrow seemed to be washed away by the whispering waves, while the hills about her home bade her the tenderest farewell. But especially cordial seemed the farewell greeting of Kedrich, her favorite mountain; and far up on its summit, in the strange moonlight, she imagined she saw a lady with outstretched arms, while active little dwarfs swarmed out of their caverns in the rocks, and a rider came rushing down the side in full gallop. Beautiful Sara felt as if she were a child again, and were sitting once more in the lap of her aunt from Lorch, who was telling her brave tales of the bold knight who freed the stolen damsel from the dwarfs, and many other true stories of the wonderful Wisperthal over there, where the birds talk as sensibly as men, and of Gingerbread Land, where good, obedient children go, and of enchanted princesses, singing trees, crystal castles, golden bridges, laughing water-fairies.... But suddenly in the midst of these pleasant tales, which began to send forth notes of music and to gleam with lovely light, Beautiful Sara heard the voice of her father, scolding the poor aunt for putting such nonsense into the child's head. Then it seemed to her as if they set her on the little stool before her father's velvet-covered chair, and that he with a soft hand smoothed her long hair, smiling as if well pleased, while he rocked himself comfortably in his loose, Sabbath dressing-gown of blue silk. Yes, it must be the Sabbath, for the flowered cover was spread on the table, all the utensils in the room were polished like looking-glasses, the white-bearded usher sat beside her father, eating raisins and talking in Hebrew; even little Abraham came in with a very large book, and modestly begged leave of his uncle to expound a portion of the Holy Scripture, that he might prove that he had learned much during the past week, and therefore deserved much praise--and a corresponding quantity of cakes.... Then the lad laid the book on the broad arm of the chair, and set forth the history of Jacob and Rachel--how Jacob raised his voice and wept when he first saw his cousin Rachel, how he talked so confidently with her by the well, how he had to serve seven years for her, and how quickly the time passed, and how he at last married and loved her for ever and ever.... Then all at once Beautiful Sara remembered how her father cried with merry voice, "Wilt thou not also marry thy cousin Sara like that?" To which little Abraham gravely replied, "That I will, and she shall wait seven years too." These memories stole like twilight shadows through the soul of the young wife, and she recalled how she and her little cousin--now so great a man and her husband--played together as children in the leafy tabernacle; how delighted they were with the gay carpets, flowers, mirrors, and gilded apples; how little Abraham caressed her more and more tenderly, till little by little he began to grow larger and more self-interested, and at last became a man and scarcely noticed her at all.... And now she sits in her room alone on a Saturday evening; the moon shines in brightly. Suddenly the door flies open, and cousin Abraham, in traveling garb, and as pale as death, enters, grasps her hand, puts a gold ring on her finger, and says, solemnly, "I hereby take thee to be my wife, according to the laws of God and of Israel." "But now," he adds, with a trembling voice, "now I must go to Spain. Farewell! For seven years thou must wait for me." With that he hurried away, and Sara, weeping, told the tale to her father, who roared and raged, "Cut off thy hair, for thou art now a married woman." Then he wanted to ride after Abraham to compel him to write a letter of divorce; but Abraham was over the hills and far away, and the father silently returned to his house. And

when Beautiful Sara was helping him to draw off his boots, and trying to soothe him, saying that Abraham would return in seven years, he cursed, and cried, "Seven years shalt thou be a beggar," and shortly after he died.

And so old memories swept through her soul like a hurried play of shadows, the images intermixing and blending strangely, while between them came and went half-familiar, half-strange bearded faces, and large flowers with marvelously spreading foliage. Then the Rhine seemed to murmur the melodies of the *_Agade_*, and from its waters the pictures, as large as life, but wild and distorted, came forth one by one. There was Father Abraham anxiously breaking the idols into pieces which immediately flew together again; Mizri defending himself fiercely against the maddened Moses; Mount Sinai flashing and flaming; King Pharaoh swimming in the Red Sea, holding his pointed gold crown tightly in his teeth, while frogs with human faces swam along behind, in the foaming, roaring waves, and a dark giant-hand rose up threatening from below.

Yonder was the Mouse Tower of Bishop Hatto, and the boat was just shooting through the Bingen Eddy. By this time Beautiful Sara had somewhat awakened from her dreams, and she gazed at the hills on the shore, on the summits of which lights of castles were gleaming, and at the foot of which the mist, shimmering in the moonlight, was beginning to rise. Suddenly she seemed to see her friends and relatives, as they, with corpse-like faces and flowing shrouds, passed in awful procession along the Rhine.... The world grew dark before her eyes, an icy current ran through her soul, and, as if in sleep, she only heard the Rabbi repeating the night-prayer slowly and painfully, as if at a deathbed. Dreamily she stammered the words, "Ten thousand to the right, ten thousand to the left, to protect the king from the terrors of the night."

Then all at once the oppressive gloom and terror passed away, the dark curtain was torn from heaven, and far above there appeared the holy city Jerusalem, with its towers and gates; the Temple gleamed in golden splendor, and in its fore-court Sara saw her father in his yellow Sabbath dressing-gown, smiling as if well pleased. All her friends and relatives were looking out from the round windows of the Temple, cordially greeting her; in the Holy of Holies knelt pious King David, with his purple mantle and golden crown; sweetly rang his song and the tones of his harp, and smiling happily, Beautiful Sara awoke.

CHAPTER II

As Beautiful Sara opened her eyes they were almost dazzled by the rays of the sun. The high towers of a great city rose before her, and Dumb William, with his oar upright, was standing in the boat, pushing and guiding it through the lively confusion of many vessels, gay with their pennons and streamers, whose crews were either gazing idly at passers-by, or else were busily loading with chests, bales, and casks the lighters which were to bear them to the shore. And with it all was a deafening noise, the constant halloh cry of steersmen, the calling of traders from the shore, and the scolding of the custom-house officials who, in their red coats and with their white maces and white faces, jumped from boat to boat.

"Yes, Beautiful Sara," said the Rabbi, cheerfully smiling to his wife, "this is the famous, free, imperial, and commercial city of Frankfort-on-the-Main, and we are now

passing along the river Main. Do you see those pleasant-looking houses up there, surrounded by green hills? That is Sachsenhausen, from which our lame Gumpert brings us the fine myrrh for the Feast of the Tabernacles. Here you see the strong Main Bridge with its thirteen arches, over which many men, wagons, and horses can safely pass. In the middle of it stands the little house where Aunty Täubchen says there lives a baptized Jew, who pays six farthings, on account of the Jewish community, to every man who brings him a dead rat; for the Jews are obliged to deliver annually to the State council five thousand rats' tails for tribute."

At the thought of this war, which the Frankfort Jews were obliged to wage with the rats, Beautiful Sara burst out laughing. The bright sunlight, and the new gay world now before her, had driven all the terrors and horrors of the past night from her soul, and as she was helped ashore from the boat by Dumb William and her husband, she felt inspired as with a sense of joyful safety. Dumb William for a long time fixed his beautiful, deep-blue eyes on hers, half sadly, half cheerfully, and then, casting a significant glance at the Rabbi, sprang back into his boat and was soon out of sight.

"Dumb William much resembles my brother who died," said Beautiful Sara. "All the angels are alike," answered the Rabbi; and, taking his wife by the hand, led her through the dense crowd on the shore, where, as it was the time of the Easter Fair, a great number of wooden booths had been erected by traders. Then passing through the gloomy Main Gate, they found themselves in quite as noisy a crowd. Here, in a narrow street, the shops stood close beside one another, every house, as was usual in Frankfort, being specially adapted to trade. There were no windows on the ground floor, but broad, open arches, so that the passer-by, looking in, could see at a glance all there was for sale. And how astonished Beautiful Sara was at the mass of magnificent wares, and at the splendor, such as she had never seen before! Here stood Venetians, who offered cheaply all the luxuries of the Orient and Italy, and Beautiful Sara was enchanted by the sight of the ornaments and jewels, the gay caps and bodices, the gold bangles and necklaces, and the whole display of finery which women so admire and love to wear. The richly embroidered stuffs of velvet and silk seemed fairly to speak to Beautiful Sara, and to flash and sparkle strange wonders back into her memory, and she really felt as if she were a little girl again, and as if Aunty Täubchen had kept her promise and taken her to the Frankfort Fair, and as if she were now at last standing before the beautiful garments of which she had heard so much. With a secret joy she reflected what she should take back with her to Bacharach, and which of her two little cousins, Posy and Birdy, would prefer that blue silk girdle, and whether the green stockings would suit little Gottschalk. But all at once it flashed on her, "Ah, Lord! they are all grown up now, and yesterday they were slain!" She shuddered, and the pictures of the previous night filled her soul with all their horror again. But the gold-embroidered cloths glittered once more with a thousand roguish eyes, and drove the gloomy thoughts from her mind, and when she looked into her husband's face she saw that it was free from clouds, and bore its habitual, serious gentleness. "Shut your eyes, Sara!" said the Rabbi, and he led his wife on through the crowd.

What a gay, active throng! Most prominent were the tradesmen, who were loudly vying one another in offering bargains, or talking together and summing on their fingers, or, following heavily loaded porters, who at a dog-trot were leading the way to their lodgings. By the faces of others one could see that they came from curiosity. The stout councilman was recognizable by his scarlet cloak and golden chain; a

black, expensive-looking, swelling waistcoat betrayed the honorable and proud citizen. An iron spike-helmet, a yellow leather jerkin, and rattling spurs, weighing a pound, indicated the heavy cavalry-man. Under little black velvet caps, which came together in a point over the brow, there was many a rosy girl-face, and the young fellows who ran along after them, like hunting-dogs on the scent, showed that they were finished dandies by their saucily feathered caps, their squeaking peaked shoes, and their colored silk garments, some of which were green on one side and red on the other, or else striped like a rainbow on the right and checkered with harlequin squares of many colors on the left, so that the mad youths looked as if they were divided in the middle.

Carried along by the crowd, the Rabbi and his wife arrived at the Römer. This is the great market-place of the city, surrounded by houses with high gables, and takes its name from an immense building, "the Römer," which was bought by the magistracy and dedicated as the town-hall. In it the German Emperor was elected, and before it tournaments were often held. King Maximilian, who was passionately fond of this sport, was then in Frankfort, and in his honor the day before there had been great tilting in the Römer. Many idle men still stood on or about the scaffolding, which was being removed by carpenters, telling how the Duke of Brunswick and the Margrave of Brandenburg had charged one another amid the sound of drums and of trumpets, and how Lord Walter the Vagabond had knocked the Knight of the Bear out of his saddle so violently that the splinters of the lances flew high into the air, while the tall, fair-haired King Max, standing among his courtiers upon the balcony, rubbed his hands for joy. The golden banners were still to be seen on the balconies and in the Gothic windows of the town-hall. The other houses of the market-place were still likewise festively bedecked and adorned with shields, especially the Limburg house, on whose banner was painted a maiden with a sparrow-hawk in her hand, and a monkey holding out to her a mirror. Many knights and ladies standing on the balcony were engaged in animated conversation, or looking at the crowd below, which, in wild groups and processions, surged back and forth. What a multitude of idlers of all ages and ranks were crowded together here to gratify their curiosity! There was laughing, grumbling, stealing, rib-poking, hurraing, while every now and then blared the trumpet of the mountebank, who, in a red cloak and with his clown and monkey, stood on a high stand loudly boasting of his own skill, and sounding the praises of his marvelous tinctures and salves, ere he solemnly examined the glass of urine brought by some old woman, or applied himself to pull a poor peasant's tooth. Two fencing-masters, dancing about in gay ribbons and brandishing their rapiers, met as if by accident and began to cut and pass with great apparent anger; but after a long bout each declared that the other was invincible, and took up a collection. Then the newly-organized guild of archers marched by with drummers and pipers, and these were followed by the constable, who was carrying a red flag at the head of a flock of traveling strumpets, hailing from the brothel known as "The Ass," in Würzburg, and bound for Rosendale, where the highly honorable authorities had assigned them quarters during the fair. "Shut your eyes, Sara," said the Rabbi. For indeed these fantastic, and altogether too scantily clad women, among whom were a few really beautiful girls, behaved in a most immodest manner, baring their bold, white breasts, chaffing those who went by with shameless words, and swinging their long walking sticks; and using the latter as hobby-horses, they rode down toward the gate of St. Katherine, singing in shrill tones the witch-song--

"Where is the goat? the hellish beast;
Where is the goat? Oh bring him quick!
And if there is no goat, at least
We'll ride upon the stick."

This wild sing-song, which rang afar, was finally drowned out by the long-drawn, sacred tones of a church procession. It was a solemn train of bare-headed and bare-footed monks, who carried burning wax tapers, banners with pictures of the saints, and large silver crucifixes. Before it ran boys clad in red and white gowns, bearing censers of smoking frankincense. In the middle of the procession, under a beautiful canopy, marched priests in white robes adorned with costly lace, or in bright-colored, silk stoles; one of them held in his hand a sun-like, golden vessel, which, on arriving at a shrine by the market-corner, he raised on high, while he half-sang, half-spoke in Latin--when all at once a little bell rang, and all the people around, becoming silent, fell to their knees and made the sign of the cross. "Shut your eyes, Sara!" cried the Rabbi again, and he hastily drew her away through a labyrinth of narrow, crooked streets, and at last over the desolate, empty place which separated the new Jewish quarter from the rest of the city.

Before that time the Jews dwelt between the Cathedral and the bank of the Main, that is, from the bridge down as far as the Lumpenbrunnen, and from the Mehlwage as far as Saint Bartholomew's. But the Catholic priests obtained a Papal bull forbidding the Jews to live so near the high church, for which reason the magistrates assigned them a place on the Wollgraben, where they built their present quarter. This was surrounded by high walls, the gate of which was held by iron chains to keep out the rabble. For here, too, the Jews lived in misery and anxiety, and with far more vivid memories of previous suffering than they have at present. In 1240 the unrestrained populace had caused awful bloodshed among them, which people called the first Jewish massacre. In 1349, when the Flagellants, in passing through the town, set fire to it, and accused the Jews of the deed, the latter were nearly all murdered or burned alive in their own houses; this was called the second Jewish massacre. After this the Jews were often threatened with similar slaughter, and during the internal dissensions of Frankfort, especially during a dispute between the council and the guilds, the mob was often on the point of breaking into the Jewish quarter, which, as has been said, was surrounded by a wall. The latter had two gates in it, which on Catholic holidays were closed from without and on Jewish holidays from within, and before each gate was a watch-house with city soldiers.

When the Rabbi with his wife came to the entrance to the Jewish quarter, the soldiers, as one could see through the open windows, lay on the wooden bench inside the watch-house, while out before the door in the sunshine sat the drummer beating capriciously on his large drum. He was a heavy, fat fellow, wearing a jerkin and hose of fiery yellow, greatly puffed out at his arms and thighs, and profusely dotted with small red tufts, sewed on, which looked as if innumerable tongues were protruding from him. His breast and back were padded with cushions of black cloth, against which hung his drum. He had on his head a flat, round black cap, which in roundness and flatness was equaled by his face, and the latter was also in keeping with his dress, being an orange-yellow, spotted with red pimples, and distorted into a gaping grin. So the fellow sat and drummed to the melody of a song which the Flagellants had sung at the Jewish massacre, while he gurgled, in a coarse, beery voice--

"Our dear Lady true
Walked in the morning dew,
Kyrie eleison!"

"Hans, that is a terrible tune," cried a voice from behind the closed gate of the Jewish quarter. "Yes, Hans, and a bad song too--doesn't suit the drum; doesn't suit it at all--by my soul--not the day of the fair and on Easter morning--bad song--dangerous song--Jack, Jacky, little drum--Jacky boy--I'm a lone man--and if thou lovest me, the Star, the tall Star, the tall Nose Star--then stop it!" These words were uttered by the unseen speaker, now in hasty anxiety, now in a sighing drawl, with a tone which alternated between mild softness and harsh hoarseness, such as one hears in consumptive people. The drummer was not moved, and went on drumming and singing--

"There came a little youth,
His beard had run away, in truth,
Halleluja!"

"Jack," again cried the voice of the invisible speaker, "Jack, I'm a lone man, and that is a dangerous song, and I don't like it; I have my reasons for it, and if you love me, sing something else, and tomorrow we will drink together."

At the word "drink" Jack ceased his drumming and singing, and said in friendly tone, "The devil take the Jews! But thou, dear Nose Star, art my friend, I protect thee; and if we drink together often enough I shall have thee converted. Yea, I shall be thy godfather, and when thou art baptized thou shalt be eternally happy; and if thou hast genius and wilt study industriously under me, thou mayest even become a drummer. Yes, Nose Star, thou mayest yet become something great. I will drum the whole catechism into thee when we drink together tomorrow. But now open the gate, for here are two strangers who wish to enter."

"Open the gate?" cried Nose Star, and his voice almost deserted him. "That can't be done in such a hurry, my dear Jack; one can't tell--one can never tell, you know--and I'm a lone man. Veitel Oxhead has the key, and he is now standing in the corner mumbling his eighteen-prayer, and he must not be interrupted. And Jäkel the Fool is here too, but he is making water; I'm a lone man."

"The devil take the Jews!" cried the drummer, and, laughing loudly at this, his one and only joke, he trudged off to the guard-room and lay down on the bench.

While the Rabbi stood with his wife before the locked gate, there rose from behind it a snarling, nasal, somewhat mocking voice. "Starry--don't groan so much. Take the keys from Oxhead's coat pockets, or else go stick your nose in the keyhole, and so unlock the gate. The people have been standing and waiting a long time." "People!" cried the anxious voice of the man called Nose Star, "I thought there was only one! I beg you, Fool--dear Jäkel Fool--look out and see who is there."

A small, well-grated window in the gate opened, and there appeared in it a yellow cap with two horns, and the funny, wrinkled, and twisted jest-maker's face of Jäkel the Fool. The window was immediately shut again, and he cried angrily, "Open the gate--it is only a man and a woman."

"A man and a woman!" groaned Nose Star. "Yes, but when the gate's opened the woman will take her skirt off, and become a man; and then there'll be two men, and there are only three of us!"

"Don't be a hare," replied Jäkel the Fool. "Be a man and show courage!"

"Courage!" cried Nose Star, laughing with bitter vexation. "Hare! Hare is a bad comparison. The hare is an unclean animal. Courage! I was not put here to be courageous, but cautious. When too many come I am to give the alarm. But I alone cannot keep them back. My arm is weak, I have a seton, and I'm a lone man. If one were to shoot at me, I should be a dead man. Then that rich man, Mendel Reiss, would sit on the Sabbath at his table, and wipe the raisin-sauce from his mouth, and rub his belly, and perhaps say, 'Tall Nose Star was a brave fellow after all; if it had not been for him, perhaps they would have burst open the gate. He let himself be shot for us. He was a brave fellow; too bad that he's dead!'"

Here the voice became tender and tearful, but all at once it rose to a hasty and almost angry tone. "Courage! and so that the rich Mendel Reiss may wipe away the raisin-sauce from his mouth, and rub his belly, and call me a brave fellow, I'm to let myself be shot! Courage! Be a man! Little Strauss was a man, and yesterday went to the Römer to see the tilting, thinking they would not know him because he wore a frock of violet velvet--three florins a yard--covered with fox-tails and embroidered with gold--quite magnificent; and they dusted his violet frock for him till it lost its color, and his own back became violet and did not look human. Courage, indeed! The crippled Leser was courageous, and called our scoundrel of a magistrate a blackguard, and they hung him up by the feet between two dogs, while Jack drummed. Courage! Don't be a hare! Among many dogs the hare is helpless. I'm a lone man, and I am really afraid."

"That I'll swear to," cried Jäkel.

"Yes; I *have* fear," replied Nose Star, sighing. "I know that it runs in my blood, and I got it from my dear mother"--

"Yes, yes," interrupted Jäkel, "and your mother got it from her father, and he from his, and so all thy ancestors one from the other, back to the forefather who marched under King Saul against the Philistines, and was the first to take to his heels. But look! Oxheady is all ready--he has bowed his head for the fourth time; now he is jumping like a flea at the Holy, Holy, Holy, and feeling cautiously in his pocket."

In fact the keys rattled, the gate grated and creaked and opened, and the Rabbi led his wife into the empty Jews' Street. The man who opened it was a little fellow with a good-naturedly sour face, who nodded dreamily, like one who did not like to be disturbed in his thoughts, and after he had carefully closed the gate again, without saying a word he sank into a corner, constantly mumbling his prayers. Less taciturn was Jäkel the Fool, a short, somewhat bow-legged fellow, with a large, red, laughing face, and an enormous leg-of-mutton hand, which he now stretched out of the wide sleeve of his gaily-chequered jacket in welcome. Behind him a tall, lean figure showed, or rather, hid itself--the slender neck feathered with a fine white cambric ruff,

and the thin, pale face strangely adorned with an incredibly long nose, which peered with anxious curiosity in every direction.

"God's welcome to a pleasant feast-day!" cried Jäkel the Fool. "Do not be astonished that our street is so empty and quiet just now. All our people are in the synagogue, and you have come just in time to hear the history of the sacrifice of Isaac read. I know it--'tis an interesting story, and if I had not already heard it thirty-three times, I would willingly listen to it again this year. And it is an important history, too, for if Abraham had really killed Isaac and not the goat, then there would be more goats in the world now--and fewer Jews." And then with mad, merry grimaces, Jäkel began to sing the following song from the *Agade*:^[60]

"A kid, a kid, which my father bought for two pieces of money.

A kid!

A kid!

There came a cat which ate the kid, which my father bought for two pieces of money. A kid!

There came a dog, who bit the cat, who ate the kid, which my father bought for two pieces of money. A kid!

There came a stick, which beat the dog, who bit the cat, who ate the kid, which my father bought for two pieces of money.

A kid! A kid!

There came a fire, which burnt the stick, which beat the dog, who bit the cat, who ate the kid, which my father bought for two pieces of money.

A kid! A kid!

There came the water, which quenched the fire, which burnt the stick, which beat the dog, who bit the cat, who ate the kid, which my father bought for two pieces of money. A kid! A kid!

There came an ox, who drank the water, which quenched the fire, which burnt the stick, which beat the dog, who bit the cat, who ate the kid, which my father bought for two pieces of money. A kid! A kid!

There came the butcher, who slew the ox, who drank the water, which quenched the fire, which burnt the stick, which beat the dog, who bit the cat, that ate the kid, which my father bought for two pieces of money.

A kid! A kid!

"Then came the Angel of Death, who slew the butcher, who killed the ox, who drank the water, which quenched the fire, which burnt the stick, which beat the dog, who bit the cat, who ate the kid, which my father bought for two pieces of money. A kid! A kid!"^[61]

"Yes, beautiful lady," added the singer, "and the day will come when the Angel of Death will slay the slayer, and all our blood come over Edom, for God is a God of vengeance."

But all at once, casting aside with a violent effort the seriousness into which he had involuntarily fallen, Jäkel plunged again into his mad buffoonery, and went on in his harsh jester tones, "Don't be afraid, beautiful lady, Nose Star will not harm you. He is only dangerous to old Schnapper-Elle. She has fallen in love with his nose--which, faith! deserves it. Yea, for it is as beautiful as the tower which looketh forth toward Damascus, and as lofty as a cedar of Lebanon. Outwardly it gleameth like gold loaf and syrup, and inwardly it is all music and loveliness. It bloometh in summer and in winter it is frozen up--but in summer and winter it is petted and pulled by the white hands of Schnapper-Elle. Yes, she is madly in love with him. She nurses him, and feeds him, and for her age she is young enough. When he is fat enough, she means to marry him; and whoever comes to Frankfort, three hundred years hence, will not be able to see the heavens for Nose Stars."

"Ah, you are Jäkel the Fool," exclaimed the Rabbi, laughing. "I mark it by your words. I have often heard of you."

"Yes--yes," replied Jäkel, with comical modesty. "Yes, that is what reputation does. A man is often known far and wide as a bigger fool than he himself has any idea of. However, I take great pains to be a fool, and jump and shake myself to make the bells ring; others have an easier time. But tell me, Rabbi, why do you journey on a holiday?"

"My justification," replied the Rabbi, "is in the Talmud, where it says, 'Danger drives away the Sabbath.'"

"Danger!" screamed the tall Nose Star, in mortal terror. "Danger! danger! Drummer Jack!--drum, drum. Danger! danger! Drummer Jack!" From without resounded the deep, beery voice of Drummer Jack, "Death and destruction! The devil take the Jews. That's the third time today that you've roused me out of a sound sleep, Nose Star! Don't make me mad! For when I am mad I'm the very devil himself; and then as sure as I'm a Christian, I'll up with my gun and shoot through the grated window in your gate--and then fellow, let everybody look out for his nose!"

"Don't shoot! don't shoot! I'm a lonely man," wailed Nose Star piteously, pressing his face against the wall, and trembling and murmuring prayers in this position.

"But say, what has happened?" cried Jäkel the Fool, with all the impatient curiosity which was even then characteristic of the Frankfort Jews.

But the Rabbi impatiently broke loose from them, and went his way along the Jews' Street. "See, Sara!" he exclaimed, "how badly guarded is our Israel. False friends guard its gates without, and within its watchers are Folly and Fear."

They wandered slowly through the long empty street, where only here and there the head of some young girl showed itself in a window, against the polished panes of which the sun was brilliantly reflected. At that time the houses in the Jewish quarter were still neat and new, and much lower than they now are, since it was only later on that the Jews, as their number greatly increased, while they could not enlarge their quarter, built one story over another, squeezed themselves together like sardines, and were thus stunted both in body and soul. That part of the Jewish quarter which

remained standing after the great fire, and which is called the Old Lane, those high blackened houses, where a grinning, sweaty race of people bargains and chaffers, is a horrible relic of the Middle Ages. The older synagogue exists no more; it was less capacious than the present one, which was built later, after the Nuremberg exiles were taken into the community, and lay more to the north.

The Rabbi had no need to ask where it was. He recognized it from afar by the buzz of many loud voices. In the court of the House of God he parted from his wife, and after washing his hands at the fountain there, he entered the lower part of the synagogue where the men pray, while Sara ascended a flight of stairs and entered the place reserved for women. The latter was a kind of gallery with three rows of seats painted a reddish brown, whose backs were fitted with a hanging board, which held the prayer-books, and which could be raised and lowered. Here the women either sat gossiping or stood up in deep prayer. They often went and peered with curiosity through the large grating on the eastern side, through the thin, green lattice of which one could look down on the lower floor of the synagogue. There, behind high praying-desks, stood the men in their black cloaks, their pointed beards shooting out over white ruffs, and their skull-capped heads more or less concealed by a four-cornered scarf of white wool or silk, furnished with the prescribed tassels, and in some instances also adorned with gold lace. The walls of the synagogue were uniformly white-washed, and no ornament was to be seen other than the gilded iron grating around the square stage, where extracts from the Law were read, and the holy ark, a costly embossed chest, apparently supported by marble columns with gorgeous capitals, whose flower-and leaf-work shot up in beautiful profusion, and covered with a curtain of purple velvet, on which a pious inscription was worked in gold spangles, pearls, and many colored gems. Here hung the silver memorial-lamp, and there also rose a trellised dais, on whose crossed iron bars were all kinds of sacred utensils, among them the seven-branched candlestick. Before the latter, his countenance toward the ark, stood the choir-leader, whose song was accompanied, as if instrumentally, by the voices of his two assistants, the bass and the treble. The Jews have banished all instrumental music from their church, maintaining that hymns in praise of God are more edifying when they rise from the warm breast of man, than from the cold pipes of an organ.

Beautiful Sara felt a childish delight when the choir-leader, an admirable tenor, raised his voice and sounded forth the ancient, solemn melodies, which she knew so well, in a fresher loveliness than she had ever dreamed of, while the bass sang in harmony the deep, dark notes, and, in the pauses, the treble's voice trilled sweetly and daintily. Such singing Beautiful Sara had never heard in the synagogue of Bacharach, where the presiding elder, David Levi, was the leader; for when this elderly, trembling man, with his broken, bleating voice, tried to trill like a young girl, and in his forced effort to do so, shook his limp and drooping arm feverishly, it inspired laughter rather than devotion.

A sense of pious satisfaction, not unmingled with feminine curiosity, drew Beautiful Sara to the grating, where she could look down on the lower floor, or the so-called men's division. She had never before seen so many of her faith together, and it cheered her heart to be in such a multitude of those so closely allied by race, thought, and sufferings. And her soul was still more deeply moved when three old men reverentially approached the sacred ark, drew aside the glittering curtain, raised the lid, and very carefully brought forth the Book which God wrote with His own hand,

and for the maintenance of which Jews have suffered so much--so much misery and hate, disgrace and death--a thousand years' martyrdom. This Book--a great roll of parchment--was wrapped like a princely child in a gaily embroidered scarlet cloak of velvet; above, on both wooden rollers, were two little silver shrines, in which many pomegranates and small bells jingled and rang prettily, while before, on a silver chain, hung gold shields with many colored gems. The choir-leader took the Book, and, as if it really were a child--a child for whom one has greatly suffered, and whom one loves all the more on that account--he rocked it in his arms, skipped about with it here and there, pressed it to his breast, and, thrilled by its holy touch, broke forth into such a devout hymn of praise and thanksgiving, that it seemed to Beautiful Sara as if the pillars under the holy ark began to bloom; and the strange and lovely flowers and leaves on the capitals shot ever higher, the tones of the treble were converted into the notes of the nightingale, the vaulted ceiling of the synagogue resounded with the tremendous tones of the bass singer, while the glory of God shone down from the blue heavens. Yes, it was a beautiful psalm. The congregation sang in chorus the concluding verse, and then the choir-leader walked slowly to the raised platform in the middle of the synagogue bearing the holy Book, while men and boys crowded about him, eager to kiss its velvet covering, or even to touch it. On the platform, the velvet cover, as well as the wrappings covered with illuminated letters, were removed, and the choir-leader, in the peculiar intonation which in the Passover service is still more peculiarly modulated, read the edifying narrative of the temptation of Abraham.

Beautiful Sara had modestly withdrawn from the grating, and a stout, much ornamented woman of middle age, with a forward, but benevolent manner, had with a nod invited her to share her prayer-book. This lady was evidently no great scholar, for as she mumbled to herself the prayers as the women do, not being allowed to take part in the singing, Sara observed that she made the best she could of many words, and skipped several good lines altogether. But after a while the watery blue eyes of the good woman were languidly raised, an insipid smile spread over her red and white porcelain face, and in a voice which she strove to make as genteel as possible, she said to Beautiful Sara, "He sings very well. But I have heard far better singing in Holland. You are a stranger, and perhaps do not know that the choir-leader is from Worms, and that they will keep him here if he will be content with four hundred florins a year. He is a charming man, and his hands are as white as alabaster. I admire beautiful hands; they make one altogether beautiful." Having said this, the good lady laid her own hand, which was really a fine one, on the shelf before her, and with a polite nod which intimated that she did not like to be interrupted while speaking, she added, "The little singer is a mere child, and looks very much worn out. The basso is too ugly for anything; our Star once made the witty remark: 'The bass singer is a bigger fool than even a basso is expected to be!' All three eat in my restaurant--perhaps you don't know that I'm Elle Schnapper?"

Beautiful Sara expressed thanks for this information, whereupon Schnapper-Elle proceeded to narrate in detail how she had once been in Amsterdam, how she had been subjected to the advances of men on account of her beauty, how she had come to Frankfort three days before Whit-suntide and married Schnapper, how he had died, and what touching things he had finally said on his deathbed, and how hard it was to carry on the restaurant business and keep one's hands nice. Several times she glanced aside with a contemptuous air, apparently at some giggling girls, who seemed to be eyeing her clothes. And the latter were indeed remarkable enough--a

very loose skirt of white satin, on which all the animals of Noah's Ark were embroidered in gaudy colors; a jacket of gold cloth, like a cuirass, with sleeves of red velvet, yellow slashed; a very high cap on her head, with a mighty ruff of stiff white linen around her neck, which also had around it a silver chain hung with all kinds of coins, cameos, and curiosities, among them a large picture of the city of Amsterdam, which rested on her bosom.

But the dresses of the other women were no less remarkable. They consisted of a variety of fashions of different ages, and many a woman there was so covered with gold and diamonds as to look like a wandering jeweler's shop. It is true that there was at that time a fashion of dress prescribed by law to the Frankfort Jews, and to distinguish them from Christians the men had to wear yellow rings on their cloaks, and the women very stiff, blue-striped veils on their caps. However, in the Jewish quarter the law was little observed, and there, in the synagogue, especially on festival days, the women put on as much magnificent apparel as they could--partly to arouse envy of others, and partly to advertise the wealth and credit of their husbands.

While passages from the Books of Moses are being read on the lower floor of the synagogue, the devotion is usually somewhat lulled. Many make themselves comfortable and sit down, whispering perhaps business affairs with a friend, or go out into the court to get a little fresh air. Small boys take the liberty of visiting their mothers in the women's balcony; and here worship is still more loosely observed, as there is gossiping, chattering, and laughing, while, as always happens, the young quizz the old, and the latter censure the light-headedness of the girls and the general degeneracy of the age.

And just as there was a choir-leader on the floor below, so was there a gossip-leader in the balcony above. This was Puppy Reiss, a vulgar, greenish woman, who found out about everybody's troubles, and always had a scandal on her tongue. The usual butt of her pointed sayings was poor Schnapper-Elle, and she could mock right well the affected genteel airs and languishing manner with which the latter accepted the insincere compliments of young men.

"Do you know," cried Puppy Reiss, "Schnapper-Elle said yesterday, 'If I were not beautiful and clever, and beloved, I had rather not be alive.'"

Then there was loud tittering, and Schnapper-Elle, who was not far distant, noting that this was all at her expense, lifted her nose in scorn, and sailed away, like a proud galley, to some remote corner. Then Birdie Ochs, a plump and somewhat awkward lady, remarked compassionately that Schnapper-Elle might be a little vain and small of mind, but that she was an honest, generous soul, and did much good to many folk in need.

"Particularly to Nose Star," snapped Puppy Reiss. And all who knew of this tender relation laughed all the louder.

"Don't you know," added Puppy spitefully, "that Nose Star now sleeps in Schnapper-Elle's house! But just look at Susy Flörsheim down there, wearing the necklace which Daniel Fläsch pawned to her husband! Fläsch's wife is vexed about it--*that* is plain. And now she is talking to Mrs. Flörsheim. *How* amiably they shake hands!--and hate each other like Midian and Moab! How sweetly they smile on each other! Oh, you

dear souls, *don't* eat each other up out of pure love! I'll just steal up and listen to them!"

And so, like a sneaking wildcat, Puppy Reiss crept up and listened to the two women bewailing to each other how they had worked all the past week to clean up the house and scour the kitchen things, and complaining about all they had to do before Passover, so that not a crumb of leavened bread should stick to anything. And such troubles as they had baking the unleavened bread! Mrs. Fläsch had special cause for complaint--for she had had no end of trouble over it in the public bakery, where, according to the ticket she drew, she could not bake till the afternoon of the very last day, just before Passover Eve; and then old Hannah had kneaded the dough badly, and the maids had rolled it too thin, and half of it was scorched in baking, and worst of all, rain came pouring through the bake-house roof; and so, wet and weary, they had had to work till late in the night.

"And, my dear Mrs. Flörsheim," said Mrs. Fläsch, with gracious friendliness most insincere, "you were a little to blame for that, because you did not send your people to help me in baking."

"Ah! pardon," replied the other. "My servants were so busy--the goods for the fair had to be packed--my husband"--

"Yes, I know," interrupted Mrs. Fläsch, with cutting irony in her speech. "I know that you have much to do--many pledges and a good business, and necklaces"--

And a bitter word was just about to slip from the lips of the speaker, and Dame Flörsheim had turned as red as a lobster, when Puppy Reiss cried out loudly, "For God's sake!--the strange lady lies dying--water! water!"

Beautiful Sara lay in a faint, as pale as death, while a swarm of excited women crowded around her, one holding her head, another her arm, while some old women sprinkled her with the glasses of water which hung behind their prayer desks for washing the hands in case they should by accident touch their own bodies. Others held under her nose an old lemon full of spices, which was left over from the last feast-day, when it had served for smelling and strengthening the nerves. Exhausted and sighing deeply, Beautiful Sara at last opened her eyes, and with mute glances thanked them for their kind care. But now the eighteen-prayer, which no one dared neglect, was being solemnly chanted below, and the busy women hurried back to their places and offered the prayer as the rite ordains, that is, standing up with their faces turned toward the east, which is that part of the heavens where Jerusalem lies. Birdie Ochs, Schnapper-Elle, and Puppy Reiss stayed to the last with Beautiful Sara--the first two to aid her as much as possible, the other two to find out why she had fainted so suddenly.

Beautiful Sara had swooned from a singular cause. It is a custom in the synagogue that any one who has escaped a great danger shall, after the reading of the extracts from the Law, appear in public and return thanks for his divine deliverance. As Rabbi Abraham rose to his feet to make his prayer, and Beautiful Sara recognized her husband's voice, she noticed that his voice gradually subsided into the mournful murmur of a prayer for the dead. She heard the names of her dear kinsfolk, accompanied by the words which convey the blessing on the departed; and the last

hope vanished from her soul, for it was torn by the certainty that those dear ones had really been slain, that her little niece was dead, that her little cousins Posy and Birdy were dead, that little Gottschalk too was dead--all murdered and dead! And she, too, would have succumbed to the agony of this realization, had not a kind swoon poured forgetfulness over her senses.

CHAPTER III

When Beautiful Sara, after divine service was ended, went down into the courtyard of the synagogue, the Rabbi stood there waiting for her. He nodded to her with a cheerful expression, and accompanied her out into the street, where there was no longer silence but a noisy multitude. It was like a swarm of ants--bearded men in black coats, women gleaming and fluttering like gold-chafers, boys in new clothes carrying prayer-books after their parents, young girls who, because they could not enter the synagogue, now came bounding to their parents, bowing their curly heads to receive their blessing--all gay and merry, and walking up and down the street in the happy anticipation of a good dinner, the savory odor of which--causing their mouths to water--rose from many black pots, marked with chalk, and carried by smiling girls from the large community kitchens.

In this multitude particularly conspicuous was the form of a Spanish cavalier, whose youthful features bore that fascinating pallor which ladies generally attribute to an unfortunate--and men, on the contrary, to a very fortunate--love affair. His gait, although naturally carefree, had in it, however, a somewhat affected daintiness. The feathers in his cap were agitated more by the aristocratic motion of his head than by the wind; and his golden spurs, and the jeweled hilt of his sword, which he bore on his arm, rattled rather more than was necessary. A white cavalier's cloak enveloped his slender limbs in an apparently careless manner, but, in reality, betrayed the most careful arrangement of the folds. Passing and repassing, partly with curiosity, partly with an air of a connoisseur, he approached the women walking by, looked calmly at them, paused when he thought a face was worth the trouble, gave to many a pretty girl a passing compliment, and went his way heedless as to its effect. He had met Beautiful Sara more than once, but every time had seemed to be repelled by her commanding look, or else by the enigmatical smile of her husband. Finally, however, proudly conquering all diffidence, he boldly faced both, and with foppish confidence made, in a tenderly gallant tone, the following speech: "Señora!--list to me!--I swear--by the roses of both the kingdoms of Castile, by the Aragonese hyacinths and the pomegranate blossoms of Andalusia! by the sun which illumines all Spain, with its flowers, onions, pea-soups, forests, mountains, mules, he-goats, and Old Christians! by the canopy of heaven, on which this sun is merely a golden tassel! and by the God who abides in heaven and meditates day and night over the creation of new forms of lovely women!--I swear that you, Señora, are the fairest dame whom I have seen in all the German realm, and if you please to accept my service, then I pray of you the favor, grace, and leave to call myself your knight and bear your colors henceforth in jest or earnest!"

A flush of pain rose in the face of Beautiful Sara, and with one of those glances which cut the deeper when they come from gentle eyes, and with a tone such as is bitterest coming from a beautiful voice, the lady answered, as one deeply hurt:

"My noble lord, if you will be my knight you must fight whole races, and in the battle there will be little thanks to win and less honor; and if you will wear my colors, then you must sew yellow rings on your cloak, or bind yourself with a blue-striped scarf, for such are my colors--the colors of my house, the House of Israel, which is wretched indeed, one mocked in the streets by the sons of fortune."

A sudden purple red shot into the cheeks of the Spaniard; an inexpressible confusion seemed to have seized him as he stammered--

"Señora, you misunderstood me--an innocent jest--but, by God, no mockery, no scorn of Israel. I myself am sprung from that house; my grandfather was a Jew, perhaps even my father."

"And it is very certain, Señor, that your uncle is one," suddenly exclaimed the Rabbi, who had calmly witnessed this scene; and with a merry, quizzical glance, he added, "And I myself will vouch that Don Isaac Abarbanel, nephew of the great Rabbi, is sprung from the best blood of Israel, if not from the royal race of David!"

The chain of the sword rattled under the Spaniard's cloak, his cheeks became deadly white, his upper lip twitched as with scorn in which there was pain, and angry death grinned in his eyes, as in an utterly changed, ice-cold, keen voice he said:

"Señor Rabbi, you know me. Well, then, you know also who I am. And if the fox knows that I belong to the blood of the lion, let him beware and not bring his fox-beard into danger of death, nor provoke my anger. Only he who feels like the lion can understand his weakness."

"Oh, I understand it well," answered the Rabbi, and a melancholy seriousness came over his brow. "I understand it well, how the proud lion, out of pride, casts aside his princely coat and goes about disguised in the scaly armor of the crocodile, because it is the fashion to be a grinning, cunning, greedy crocodile! What can you expect the lesser beasts to be when the lion denies his nature? But beware, Don Isaac, thou wert not made for the element of the crocodile. For water--thou knowest well what I mean--is thy evil fortune, and thou shalt drown. Water is not thy element; the weakest trout can live in it better than the king of the forest. Hast thou forgotten how the current of the Tagus was about to draw thee under--?"

Bursting into loud laughter, Don Isaac suddenly threw his arms round the Rabbi's neck, covered his mouth with kisses, leapt with jingling spurs high into the air, so that the passing Jews shrank back in alarm, and in his own natural hearty and joyous voice cried--

"Truly thou art Abraham of Bacharach! And it was a good joke, and more than that, a friendly act, when thou, in Toledo, didst leap from the Alcantara bridge into the water, and grasp by the hair thy friend, who could drink better than he could swim, and drew him to dry land. I came very near making a really deep investigation as to whether there is actually gold in the bed of the Tagus, and whether the Romans were right in calling it the golden river. I assure you that I shiver even now at the mere thought of that water-party."

Saying this the Spaniard made a gesture as if he were shaking water from his garments. The countenance of the Rabbi expressed great joy as he again and again pressed his friend's hand, saying every time--

"I am indeed glad."

"And so, indeed, am I," answered the other. "It is seven years now since we met, and when we parted I was as yet a mere greenhorn, and thou--thou wert already a staid and serious man. But whatever became of the beautiful Doña who in those days cost thee so many sighs, which thou didst accompany with the lute?"

"Hush, hush! the Doña hears us--she is my wife, and thou thyself hast given her today proof of thy taste and poetic skill."

It was not without some trace of his former embarrassment that the Spaniard greeted the beautiful lady, who amiably regretted that she, by expressing herself so plainly, had pained a friend of her husband.

"Ah, Señora," replied Don Isaac, "he who grasps too clumsily at a rose must not complain if the thorns scratch. When the star of evening reflects its golden light in the azure flood"--

"I beg of you!" interrupted the Rabbi, "to cease! If we wait till the star of evening reflects its golden light in the azure flood, my wife will starve, for she has eaten nothing since yesterday, and suffered much in the mean-while."

"Well, then, I will take you to the best restaurant of Israel," said Don Isaac, "to the house of my friend Schnapper-Elle, which is not far away. I already smell the savory odors from the kitchen! Oh, didst thou but know, O Abraham, how this odor appeals to me. This it is which, since I have dwelt in this city, has so often lured me to the tents of Jacob. Intercourse with God's people is not a hobby of mine, and truly it is not to pray, but to eat, that I visit the Jews' Street."

"Thou hast never loved us, Don Isaac."

"Well," continued the Spaniard, "I like your food much better than your creed--which wants the right sauce. I never could rightly digest you. Even in your best days, under the rule of my ancestor David, who was king over Judah and Israel, I never could have held out, and certainly I should some fine morning have run away from Mount Zion and emigrated to Phoenicia or Babylon, where the joys of life foamed in the temple of the gods."

"Thou blasphemest, Isaac, blasphemest the one God," murmured the Rabbi grimly. "Thou art much worse than a Christian--thou art a heathen, a servant of idols."

"Yes, I am a heathen, and the melancholy, self-tormenting Nazarenes are quite as little to my taste as the dry and joyless Hebrews. May our dear Lady of Sidon, holy Astarte, forgive me, that I kneel before the many sorrowed Mother of the Crucified and pray. Only my knee and my tongue worship death--my heart remains true to life. But do not look so sourly," continued the Spaniard, as he saw what little gratification his words seemed to give the Rabbi. "Do not look at me with disdain. My nose is not

a renegade. When once by chance I came into this street at dinner time, and the well-known savory odors of the Jewish kitchen rose to my nose, I was seized with the same yearning which our fathers felt for the fleshpots of Egypt--pleasant tasting memories of youth came back to me. In imagination I saw again the carp with brown raisin sauce which my aunt prepared so sustainingly for Friday eve; I saw once more the steamed mutton with garlic and horseradish, which might have raised the dead, and the soup with dreamily swimming dumplings in it--and my soul melted like the notes of an enamored nightingale--and since then I have been eating in the restaurant of my friend Doña Schnapper-Elle."

Meanwhile they had arrived at this highly lauded place, where Schnapper-Elle stood at the door cordially greeting the strangers who had come to the fair, and who, led by hunger, were now streaming in. Behind her, sticking his head out over her shoulder, was the tall Nose Star, anxiously and inquisitively observing them. Don Isaac with an exaggerated air of dignity approached the landlady, who returned his satirical reverence with endless curtsies. Thereupon he drew the glove from his right hand, wrapped it, the hand, in the fold of his cloak, and grasping Schnapper-Elle's hand, slowly drew it over his moustache, saying: "Señora! your eyes rival the brilliancy of the sun! But as eggs, the longer they are boiled the harder they become, so *vice versa* my heart grows softer the longer it is cooked in the flaming flashes of your eyes. From the yolk of my heart flies up the winged god Amor and seeks a confiding nest in your bosom. And oh, Señora, wherewith shall I compare that bosom? For in all the world there is no flower, no fruit, which is like to it! It is the one thing of its kind! Though the wind tears away the leaves from the tenderest rose, your bosom is still a winter rose which defies all storms. Though the sour lemon, the older it grows the yellower and more wrinkled it becomes, your bosom rivals in color and softness the sweetest pineapple. Oh, Señora, if the city of Amsterdam be as beautiful as you told me yesterday, and the day before, and every day, the ground on which it rests is far lovelier still."

The cavalier spoke these last words with affected earnestness, and squinted longingly at the large medallion which hung from Schnapper-Elle's neck. Nose Star looked down with inquisitive eyes, and the much-bepraised bosom heaved so that the whole city of Amsterdam rocked from side to side.

"Ah!" sighed Schnapper-Elle, "virtue is worth more than beauty. What use is my beauty to me? My youth is passing away, and since Schnapper is gone--anyhow, he had handsome hands--what avails beauty?"

With that she sighed again, and like an echo, all but inaudible, Nose Star sighed behind her. "Of what avail is your beauty?" cried Don Isaac. "Oh, Dona Schnapper-Elle, do not sin against the goodness of creative Nature! Do not scorn her most charming gifts, or she will reap most terrible revenge. Those blessed, blessing eyes will become glassy balls, those winsome lips grow flat and unattractive, that chaste and charming form be changed into an unwieldy barrel of tallow, and the city of Amsterdam at last rest on a spongy bog." Thus he sketched piece by piece the appearance of Schnapper-Elle, so that the poor woman was bewildered, and sought to escape the uncanny compliments of the cavalier. She was delighted to see Beautiful Sara appear at this instant, as it gave her an opportunity to inquire whether she had quite recovered from her swoon. Thereupon she plunged into lively chatter, in which she fully developed her sham gentility, mingled with real kindness of heart,

and related with more prolixity than discretion the awful story of how she herself had almost fainted with horror when she, as innocent and inexperienced as could be, arrived in a canal boat at Amsterdam, and the rascally porter, who carried her trunk, led her--not to a respectable hotel, but oh, horrors!--to an infamous brothel! She could tell what it was the moment she entered, by the brandy-drinking, and by the immoral sights! And she would, as she said, really have swooned, if it had not been that during the six weeks she stayed in the disorderly house she only once ventured to close her eyes.

"I dared not," she added, "on account of my virtue. And all that was owing to my beauty! But virtue will stay--when good looks pass away."

Don Isaac was on the point of throwing some critical light on the details of this story when, fortunately, Squinting Aaron Hirschkuh from Homburg-on-the-Lahn came with a white napkin on his arm, and bitterly bewailed that the soup was already served, and that the boarders were seated at table, but that the landlady was missing.

(The conclusion and the chapters which follow are lost, not from any fault of the author.)