

FRANK ULRICH

SIMON EICHELKATZ;
THE PATRIARCH. TWO
STORIES OF JEWISH LIFE

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Two Stories of Jewish Life

SIMON EICHELKATZ

September 9, 1900.

To-day I was called to attend an old man who lives at the Flour Market, almost opposite the "New" Synagogue. The messenger told me I could not possibly miss the house, because the steps leading up to the old man's rooms were built on the outside; and this is in peculiar contrast to the modern architecture prevailing in the city. In fact, I do not know whether another house so curiously constructed is to be seen anywhere else in the place. And so I found it without much questioning. At any rate, I knew of the New Synagogue. I have never entered it, yet a soft, secret wave of religious feeling creeps over me each time I pass it, and that happens frequently. The synagogue lies on the road to the extensive factory quarter built up by one of the large manufacturers for his employees. My professional duties often take me there.

The synagogue! – I always look at the simple structure, devoid of ornament, with mixed feelings of veneration and awe. I hold tradition in high regard. After all it counts for something that a man is the offspring of a pious race, which cherishes learning and *Yichus*. How does the Hebrew word happen to come to me? The synagogue keeps its grip on what belongs to it – and on me, too! Yet I should not be able to pray within its walls – although it was in such a place as this synagogue that my father taught the word of God.

In fact, is it possible for us moderns still to pray? And then those remarkable Hebrew words, unintelligible to most of us now —*Ovinu Malkenu!* The Church has converted them into the Lord's Prayer, the most fervent of its prayers. *Ovinu Malkenu!* I see myself a little chap standing next to my father. How surcharged these words with belief and faith and hope when spoken by him: *Ovinu Malkenu chosvenu be-Sefer Parnossoh ve-Chalkoloh*– "Give us this day our daily bread!"

Synagogue and church! Hebrew or German or Latin? The shrill call of the Shofar, or the soft sense-enslaving tones of the organ? I believe modern man can pray only in the dumb speech of the heart.

It seems to me, if I were all alone in a synagogue, a devout mood would come over me; I would pray there. In Florence this happened to me once. It was very early in the morning; I was alone in a small church on the other side of the Arno, Santa Maria del Carmine, whose frescoes, painted by Masaccio, declare the joy and jubilation of man over his beauty and greatness. But, I remember, the words were Hebrew that sprang up in my heart, even if they did not pass my lips. So the dumb language of the soul has its familiar tones, its words endeared by association.

Truth compels me to admit that it was Simon Eichelkatz who prompted me to put these thoughts of mine down in writing.

My patient at the Flour Market! When I climbed the steep stairway, thoroughly scoured and strewn with white sand, I little suspected I should soon stand in the presence of one of the most interesting persons it had ever been my good fortune to meet. The stairway led directly into the kitchen. A long, lank individual received me there, and on my asking for Herr Eichelkatz, he answered testily: "I guess he's in the floored room." At the moment I could not imagine what he meant. Then I noticed that the flooring of the kitchen was only of cement, and I realized that he meant to convey that the room in which the patient waited had a wooden flooring.

"Will you lead me there?" I asked politely.

"Lead!" with a deprecating shrug of the shoulders. "Why should I lead? It's right here. They must be led. These new-fashioned people must be led. Can't they walk by themselves?" At these not very friendly words, he pushed a door open and bawled in: "The doctor is here – the Herr Kreisphysikus. I should lead him to you, Reb Shimme. By himself he would never find you. Reb Shimme, should I drive him in with the white or the black horse? It's too far for him, Reb Shimme, the new-fashioned people want to be led; they want to be announced by a vally. Whether they come to a king or to Reb Shimme Eichelkatz, it's all the same, they must be announced."

All this was accompanied by scornful chuckles; and he looked at me angrily, quite taken aback, when I pushed him aside with a sweep of my arm just as he cried out again: "Herr Kenig, the doctor is here!"

I stood in the middle of the room, the "floored" room, and, verily, I stood in the presence of a kingly man, I stood before Simon Eichelkatz.

September 16.

What is it that draws me to this old man? I am almost glad he needs my care as a physician. Remarkable egotism this on my part; but fortunately the sickness is not serious; a slight indisposition, such as often comes in old age. My patient is well on in the seventies, and is really wonderfully fresh and vigorous. A sudden spell of faintness induced his servant to send for me – the wrathful, snarling servant who received me with so little grace on my first visit. Now I am used to Feiweil Silbermann's quirks and sallies. I know his intentions are not bad; and then his great merit in my eyes is his rare fidelity to Simon Eichelkatz. After I had finished examining the patient on my first visit, Feiweil crept after me, caught hold of me as I stood on the lowest step, and anxiously inquired:

"What is the matter with Reb Shimme? Is he, God forbid, really sick? He's never been this way before. I've known him – may he long be spared – these twenty years, but as he was to-day – "

Feiweil tried to take my hand. "I must scold, *nebbich*. That's what he's used to. And if I were suddenly to come along with fine manners, he might think, *Chas ve-Sholem*, it was all over with him. Now, I ask you, Herr Kreisphysikusleben, if a man always scolds and means well, isn't that as good as if a man speaks softly and is false? A treacherous dog doesn't bark. Praised be God, Reb Shimme knows what he's got in me. Twenty years I've been with him, since Madame Eichelkatz died. His only son is professor at the University in Berlin. A *Meshummed*, Herr Doktor. Baptized," he added, his voice growing hoarse. "Since the gracious Madame Eichelkatz died, we live here, at the Flour Market. And he never saw his son again, Herr Doktor. But now, if he should, God forbid, get sick – he's an old man – I don't know what I should do."

Ah! So Simon Eichelkatz has a skeleton in his closet, not an every-day skeleton, either. I should not have suspected it from what I saw of the gentle, gay-spirited old man. As to Feiweil, I set his worries at rest. I told him the illness was not serious, a mere weakness, not unusual in a man of Simon Eichelkatz's age, and it would pass without serious consequences. Feiweil gave me a look of such devout gratitude that I was touched. "Of course," I said, "you must be watchful, and must take good care of him, because at his age every symptom must be taken into account."

"What, symtohn he has?" Feiweil asked, anxious again. "Can symtohn become dangerous? Is it a very bad trouble? Symtohn!" He repeated the word several times. "I've heard of people's getting heart disease, or kidney trouble, may I be forgiven for my sins, or rheumatiz, but to get symtohn!"

I explained the meaning of the word to him, and he breathed a sigh of relief.

"Praised be God, if it's nothing more than that – I'll look out for the symtohns, you can be sure of that, Herr Kreisphysikusleben."

"I'll come again to-morrow to find out how Herr Eichelkatz is doing," I said, "and I hope it won't be necessary to let Herr Professor Eichelkatz know – "

At that moment it occurred to me I had never heard of a university professor of that name.

"He isn't called Eichelkatz at all," Feiwei whispered with spite in his voice. "If a man can have himself baptized, he can throw his father's name away, too. Why not? What should a man be named Eichelkatz for if he's a professor? If he's a professor, it's better for him *evadde* to be named Eichner – such a name!"

Eichner! Professor Friedrich Eichner, the most powerful of modern thinkers, the philosopher of world-wide renown, a son of Simon Eichelkatz!

September 22.

I see the New Synagogue now every day. It was dedicated over forty years ago, but it is still called "New." They had a rabbi come from Berlin to dedicate it, and that after their own rabbi had worked for ten long years to make the building possible, after he had gone to great pains to scrape the money together, after his ardent appeals had succeeded in warming his people up to the undertaking, after he had removed all the difficulties presented by the authorities – after he had brought things so far, his congregation found it in their hearts to humiliate him at the crowning point of his achievement, they found it in their hearts to set him aside at the dedication in favor of another.

Have honor and justice come back to you? Have the years left their traces upon you, O ye, whom I love, my brethren in faith? Forty years! New generations have blossomed since those days when pride and false ambition brought sorrow to a noble spirit, and sought to deprive him of the fruits of his labor, blessed and pleasing to the Lord. Another was permitted to take his place and consecrate the work he had called into being. On the day of his greatest glory they poured gall into his soul, filled his heart with bitterness. But he forgave!

Gradually I am learning all sorts of stories about the congregation. Simon Eichelkatz tells them to me when I visit him, and that happens almost daily. It is now one of my favorite recreations to hunt up this old man, this wise old man; for what he says in that easy, simple way of his always awakens new thoughts in me. He little suspects the abundance, the wealth of ideas that arise and take form in his mind. They all well forth so unconsciously, the most profound and the most exalted. One day a granite rock of Kantian philosophy towers up before me; the next day the trumpet tones of a Nietzsche reveille sound in my ears. And this feeble old man, who gives utterance to these deep thoughts, never read any other book than the book of life, life in a small town remote from the bustle of the world, life in a Jewish community, with its intellectual backwardness and provincial peculiarities. The *Khille*, it is true, with its concentric circles, its conservatism, its solidarity, its self-sufficiency, was rich soil to foster individuality and develop reserve strength. Nothing is wasted there, nothing consumed too quickly in those communities thrown back upon themselves, leading, forced to lead, a life apart from the rest of the world. How much that is of import to the world has gone forth from such communities! When the seed had grown strong and healthy in its native soil, and was then transplanted to fresh soil, how it blossomed forth, fruit-bearing, fructifying!

Now it seems to me as though Professor Friedrich Eichner could not possibly have been of other parentage. The son, the heir of Simon Eichelkatz! With amazement, with rapture we listened to his lectures, to which students from all the other departments also crowded; and when the world-philosophies he unfolded loomed before our eyes in gigantic proportions, a feeling came over us of shuddering awe and admiration. Who was this man? A radical, an iconoclast. And now, out of the mouth of an old man, I hear ideas, conceptions, truths that might have laid the foundations for the philosophy of the other, the younger, man. Not that the relation between them was that of teacher and pupil; for Professor Friedrich Eichner knew nothing of his father's wisdom, and the father knew nothing of his son's philosophic systems. The father does not mention his son – he probably is ignorant of his son's life, of his son's importance to science. Only once he referred to him, recently, in telling me about the "New" Synagogue. Sunk in thought he said:

"The first *Bar-Mitzvah* that took place there was my son's. I still remember the speech our *Rav* delivered then – about the love of parents and fidelity to those who lead us in our youth – Herr

Kreisphysikus, our Rav was a fine, sensible man, but he did not understand just what a child should be. The child should grow away from us, above us, larger, stronger, and higher – and we mustn't ask anything of him, and we mustn't say to him, 'Come and stay here with me, where it is cramped and stuffy for want of air – enough air for an old man, but too little for you. And you shall not be my child, not a child, a filly, that neighs for the stable where its father and mother roll on the straw like animals. You must keep on growing – you must be a man, not a child.'"

Simon Eichelkatz – Friedrich Eichner!

My heart is tender, and I love my dear mother, whom a kindly fate has preserved for me unto this day; and I bless and honor the memory of my dead father. My opinion about filial and parental relations is entirely different from Simon Eichelkatz's; but it seemed to me as though I were listening to a chapter of Nietzsche's Zarathustra. Never did this name sound in your ears, Simon Eichelkatz. You never left the Kille, and for twenty years you have been living alone with your bodyguard, Feiweil Silbermann. But your son has written great works concerning the Zarathustra doctrine.

September 24.

The members of the Jewish community here are beginning to look upon me as a queer sort of person. In a measure, it is the duty of a new physician of the Jewish belief to associate with the "gentry" among his co-religionists. That is what is expected of me; and certainly I ought long ago to have left my card at the doors of the Jewish families that are well-to-do, and, as they think, aristocratic and cultivated. On my desk lies a long, imposing list of persons of consequence, and it is my firm intention to pay them my respects; my predecessor urgently recommended me to do so. "You will get into things most quickly," he said, "if you make your way among the well-to-do Jewish families. The community has a reputation from of old for setting great store by culture and refinement; and what better for you in a small out-of-the-way place than a stimulus now and then in the form of a visit to some pleasant home? The evenings are long; you can't forever be playing Skat." I certainly can't, because I know precious little about the game – and so the cultivated Jewish families are my future here. For the present I have found something else, which gives me more than I can expect from the stimulus of would-be æsthetic Jewish wives and maidens.

I dearly love my fellow-Jews. But my love for them must not blind me to their weaknesses, and among their weaknesses I count an assumption of culture, a pseudo-refinement of the intellect, which has taken increasing hold upon the daughters of our race. How often I was disagreeably impressed by them in Berlin when they spoke about anything and everything, with that half-culture which produces the feeling that they are not concerned with knowledge, but with the effect to be created by their apparent "information" upon all subjects. What don't they know! What don't they want to know! How often I was tempted to say to one or another of them: "The learning of many things does not cultivate the mind; learn to believe and to think." And must I repeat the same experience here? I am uneasy; my predecessor sentimentalized too much about the "educated" Jewesses. Some of them, he unluckily told me, had been "finished off" in prominent educational institutions in foreign countries. I know all that, and I'm afraid of it, this finishing-off process of the ladies' seminaries! But probably there will be nothing else for me to do. If the winter evenings here are really so long and dreary, I may not be able to resist the torment of hearing young lips, soft and rosy for kissing, put the question to me: "What do you think of Nietzsche's 'Beyond evil and good,'" or "Do you think the painters of the Quattrocento and the Secessionists have anything in common?" How that hurts! Almost a physical pain! At all events it has often spoiled my taste for kissing soft, rosy lips.

If I would seek wisdom, if I would drink at the source of life, here, in this place, I shall not go to youth, but to old age.

I spent some time again with Simon Eichelkatz this afternoon. Outside it was raining and storming. A raw, grey day of autumn, the first this year. Up to this time the weather has been good. Over the small, quiet room a something brooded, something contemplative, genial, spiritual. Half

dream-like, half meditative. Like the dying away of a great melody. I wondered if Simon Eichelkatz had ever heard of *Stimmungen*. I longed to put the question to him. "Tell me, Reb Shimme" (that is how I call him now), "when you are here all by yourself, in this great silence, do you ever have a feeling as if – as if – how should I say? – as if you were a part of your surroundings, as if everything that is about you helped along to give form to certain ideas in your mind?"

I had to smile as I put the question. "Now say *milieu*," I scoffed at myself; and yet I never before felt the significance of the word so strongly as in that moment. The old man looked at me as though he wanted to find the meaning of the incomprehensible question in my face. His gaze, still clear and keen, rested on me thoughtfully, then passed quickly through the room, as though this would bring him enlightenment upon the relevancy of my question. Finally, he said slowly, as though he were formulating his thoughts only with difficulty:

"I hear the silence about me – is that what you mean, Herr Doktor? I hear the silence, and so I am not alone. My soul is not deaf, and everything about me speaks to me. And the table has a language, and the chair on which I sit, and my pipe, Herr Doktor, my long pipe, it talks a good deal – and the *Kiddush* cup here, and the spice-box – I wonder what they have lived through and have to tell about – and when the sun shines outside and peeps through the window, it's one thing, and when it rains like to-day, it's another." He rested his head on his hand. "But the silence is never dead – it lives as I live."

Friedrich Eichner's form rose before me, as it looked several years ago, when I heard him in his lecture room speak on Zarathustra's "still hour."

"That's just what is called *Stimmungen*, Reb Shimme," I said, as in a confused dream. He nodded his head several times, but said nothing in response.

September 25.

To-day Simon Eichelkatz told me about Rabbi Dr. Merzbach. This is his favorite topic. He finds the most forceful expressions when he gets to talking about him. "That was a man!" he exclaims over and over again, "fine, clever, good – much too good for the *Parchonim* in the Khille. My, how it did look when he came here! I remember it as though it were yesterday. The first *Shabbes* in *Shul* – it was still the old *Shul* – they little dreamed a time would come when there would be a 'New Synagogue.' And *he* built it. The old one was almost more below the ground than above it. And that's the way the people here were, too. Black! Black of heart, black of morals! And first he built a new synagogue in the spirits of the people, and then he built a synagogue of stone and wood, so that they could hold their services in a worthy place. That's what he said, Herr Doktor, I can hear him preaching yet; and I learned much from what he said, for I never missed a sermon, and, besides, he was good and friendly toward me and spoke with me as often as he saw me. A great scholar – a real Doktor, not just a *Talmid Chochom*; he knew other things, too. On that first *Shabbes*, the old *Shul* was so full that the people stood out on the street, and they were so quiet, you could hear every word. And there he preached, like Mosheh Rabbenu when he came down from Mount Sinai to the Children of Israel. Not that they were bad, he told them, but that they must become better. And that they must not let themselves be ruled by their instincts and desires, but that each one must work away at himself to become nobler, more intelligent, and that each one could do this, because it was his Divine heritage, which was given to every man when God created him in His image. And they should be proud to be men, and for that they should acquire the dignity of man. It sounded glorious; and even if they didn't understand him, they were so touched, they would cry, and say it was rare good fortune for the congregation that such a man had become their Rav. People came from all the places near here to listen to the sermons of Doktor Salomon Merzbach; and in the wine-room of Heimann at the Ring you heard about nothing else. Whoever was fine, or wanted to be considered fine, stuck to him at first, but still more the plain people and the poor and unfortunate, because to them he was like a messenger of God."

The narrator paused a while, as though he were letting the past take form again in his mind.

"He was gentle with the bad, and friendly and forbearing with the hardened and the malicious, and he explained to them, that if it was their will, they could be good, because the will was given to man to be exerted and to be conquered. I was still young then, and I did not understand him; but one thing I did understand, that a great and good man had come to preach in our wilderness."

Whence had Simon Eichelkatz taken these metaphors, these conceptions, these words? I stood before a great riddle.

"But later," he continued, "I understood what he meant. In ourselves there is nothing good and nothing bad; it is only what we do, how we act that determines the moral worth of things." I had to suppress an exclamation. I jumped up and hastily said good-night. It was positively uncanny to hear the new values, the basic principles of good and evil, conveyed by one so absolutely unsuspecting of their import. The Jews, without doubt, possess philosophic instincts.

When I stepped out into the open air, it was still raining. Impenetrable clouds hung low in the heavens, as if the whole world would sink down into the cold, trickling mass of fog. The steps leading down to the Flour Market were smooth and slippery. I groped my way cautiously.

"Verily, I say unto you: Good and evil that perishes not – there is no such thing. Out of itself it must always reconquer itself."

I said these words half aloud. I shivered, and worn and weary I crept home.

September 26.

Now I know about how Dr. Salomon Merzbach looked. Simon Eichelkatz owns an old daguerreotype of him, which he cherishes carefully and honors as a holy relic. He showed it to me when I was there this morning. On the shining, mirror-like surface, the features were almost obliterated; but when I shaded it with my hand, they came out more distinctly. A fine, noble face, a lovable expression, and endlessly good. In the eyes a gleam as of hidden scorn, but benevolence, too, and good humor – perhaps some sadness. He looks, not as one who scoffs at the weaknesses of his fellow-men, but as one who pities them, sympathizes with them. The supernal humor of the wise man plays about the strong mouth with its somewhat sensuous lips. In studying the features, one feels the greatness and goodness of a pure nature. A narrow line of beard frames the face and rounds off under the strong chin, giving the countenance a clerical expression, reminding one more of a pastor than of a rabbi.

It was as though Simon Eichelkatz had guessed the tenor of my thoughts; for he suddenly said:

"What a fuss there was about the beard! The Orthodox raged, 'A Rav should wear a smooth face!' 'He looks as though he were shaved!' they screamed, although they knew perfectly well that a smooth skin can be gotten without a knife, with *aurum*— excuse me, Herr Kreisphysikus, *aurum-stinkum* is what we always called it when we were children. But the Orthodox wouldn't let on they knew anything about – stinkum! And how they did bother him on account of his beard and his tolerance! Right after his first great speech – I told you of it – they got together in the afternoon at *Sholosh Sudes*, at Reb Dovidel Kessler's, and began to agitate against him. 'What nonsense,' they screamed, 'there is no good and no evil! He's *meshugge!* What sort of *Chochmes* is that? And he wears a new-fashioned beard, like a – priest, and a gown and a cap – and the *Talles* as narrow as a necktie – that wants to be a Rav.'"

That very day an opposition party was formed, which was against all the changes and necessary reforms Dr. Merzbach introduced. They worked in secret, like a mole underground, for no opposition dared show itself openly, because the richer and more intelligent in the congregation stuck to him. The young people especially were his faithful followers. On the Saturdays when he preached, the synagogue was always filled to overflowing. Besides, in the afternoon he got together in his house all who wanted to be enlightened on religious and moral questions; and they flocked to him like disciples to their master – to this man, who wanted to throw light upon the darkness of their ideas and notions.

A nickname was soon coined for his opponents; they were called the "Saints." An underhand, double-tongued, cringing, vile lot they were in their libellous attacks upon Dr. Merzbach.

In telling me these things, even at this late day something like righteous indignation came over Simon Eichelkatz, usually so tranquil and unruffled.

"And all that the Khille owed him, too!" he exclaimed. "He improved our speech; through the power and beauty of his sermons he awakened in us the endeavor to cultivate a better, more refined language than the jargon we then spoke. Even now, when we get excited over what we're saying, it sometimes comes back to us. The younger generation had it easy; it glided right into the newer, better times. It was harder for us older men – we had little time for learning; but whoever wanted to understand him, he could – he could.

"I was already a married man when he came here. I had my business, and unfortunately I couldn't go to school any more; yet I did learn from him – to speak, Herr Kreisphysikus, and perhaps to think – though that came much later. Working and attending to business, you can't get to it. But I saw and heard everything the new rabbi undertook, and I followed it with interest, even though at that time I couldn't have a say in congregational affairs. And do you know what he did then? He started a school, a Jewish school, with nothing but trained teachers, the boys' school separate from the girls'. And you learned everything there, just as in the Christian schools. When he delivered the address at the opening of the school, he said that we were enjoying the blessings of the year 1848, which had brought us Jews the liberty, as citizens, to make use of all the privileges of culture and progress. And around him were the boys and girls dressed in their holiday clothes, and the parents full of gratitude. But the 'Saints' turned against him in these spiritual efforts, too, and the word 'progress' was like a red rag to a bull with them."

Simon Eichelkatz had a specially good day to-day. He related everything so vividly. It was as though the struggles of that time were still stirring in him. Naturally, the young business man, already the head of a household, placed himself entirely on the side of the liberals, who adhered to the rabbi, while the "others" spoke of the "new-fashioned" Rav with scorn and fanatical virulence, and made every attempt to overturn the institutions he had introduced.

"The changes he made in the service, above all a choir led by a cantor with musical training, also excited their anger. They came forward quite openly and arranged their own service under the leadership of Dovidel Kessler. But Rabbi Merzbach had consideration and pity for his enemies, and paid no attention to the way they threw mud at him. He was nothing less than a good, great man, and he would not let himself be hindered in his work. And for ten years of wicked struggles and bitter ill-will, he built his new synagogue in the hearts of his people, and at last the ground was prepared for it. Things became better, and, besides, he gave the people a common goal, the building of a new house of worship. Now they had an outlet for their energy – but an outlet, too, for their ambition and their vanity.

"That's the way it must be, Herr Kreisphysikus. The highest often comes forth from the lowest. And finally the synagogue stood there finished. What joy there was! And what a reward! But now I ask you, Herr Doktor, can't life be without the riff-raff? Is dirt a constituent of cleanliness?"

Again those remarkable observations!

"Are poisoned wells necessary, and evil-smelling fires, and foul dreams, and maggots in the bread of life?"

Comparisons from Zarathustra are always forcing themselves into my mind. Whence this wisdom, Simon Eichelkatz? And do you suspect there is an answer to these questions?

"Verily, we have no abiding-places prepared for the unclean. Unto their bodies our happiness would be an icy cave, and unto their spirits as well. Like strong winds we would live above them, neighbors to the eagles, neighbors to the snow, neighbors to the sun; thus do the strong winds live."

My eye fell again on the daguerreotype – were you a strong wind, Rabbi Dr. Merzbach? You blew away many a crumbling ruin of the past. Yet you knew naught of the new values. You did not

know that you must call to your enemies, to them that spit at you: "Take heed that ye spit not in the face of the wind." You lived in the times of the daguerreotype.

I asked Simon Eichelkatz for permission to make a number of copies of the picture with my excellent photographic apparatus which I use for the Röntgen rays.

September 28.

The *Rebbetzin!* The word brings a wealth of pictures before my mind. I see my good mother living quietly, modestly, in the little town in which my father of blessed memory was rabbi. When he died – it was just when I was taking the state examination – I wanted to persuade her to move with me to Berlin. She would not. "Here I am at home, here is the grave of my husband of blessed memory, here are the graves of my dear parents and of my brothers and sisters; here lie your two sisters, who died young – here is my world. Everybody knows me, and I know everybody. What should I do in Berlin among nothing but strangers? I would worry and never feel at ease, and I would only hinder you in your profession. Leave me where I am. Old trees should not be transplanted. And here I can live decently on what I have. In the big city, where living is high, it wouldn't hold out. If only you will write often to me, and visit me every year, I shall have a happy, blessed old age."

This is the arrangement I have kept up, and hope to keep up many more years. My dear little mother is well and robust; and in the modest corner she has fitted up for herself, dwell genuine peace and true humility. Humility! That is not exactly the characteristic mark of a Rebbetzin. The real Rebbetzin, the one who is exactly what a Rebbetzin should be, is proud and conscious of her dignity. The more modest and simple the Rav, the haughtier and more exigent the Rebbetzin.

"And that's altogether natural," said Simon Eichelkatz to me to-day. "The Jews like to lead the people they employ a dance, and they are hard-hearted and domineering toward the weak and the dependent."

This is an unexplained trait in the soul of the Jewish race. Possibly, it is due to the fact that they are often contentious and want the last word in an argument. And then comes a man, fine, tranquil, peace-loving, thoughtful, as were most of the rabbis, especially in those days, fifty years ago, and immediately the spirit of contradiction stirs in the people; and the more they love and respect their rabbi, the more they worry and pester him. Everything in which they themselves are lacking – Talmudic learning, knowledge and culture, goodness, modesty, and self-effacement, the utmost piety and self-sacrifice – all this they demand of him.

"In a way he was to take upon himself all the *Tzores* and wickedness and stupidity of the *Baale-Batim*," continued Simon Eichelkatz, "and the more aggressions they allowed themselves, the more virtue they expected of him. A wonder! *Nu*, Dr. Merzbach held up his end, and really atoned for the sins of the 'black' Khille."

At that time conditions were probably similar to these in all places in which rabbis of modern culture and academic training began to carry light and truth to the minds of the Jews, who through the persecutions and oppressions under which they had so long languished had become distrustful, secretive, cowardly, and embittered. It was no slight task. And many a rabbi, weak and faint-hearted, wrecked himself in the attempt. In that case, it was a piece of good fortune if the Rebbetzin saw to it that her husband did not suffer all that was put upon him, if she stood shoulder to shoulder with him, protecting, guarding him, warding off what foolishness, ill-nature, and tyrannical whims hatched against him. Usually the relation was this: the Rav they loved but vexed, the Rebbetzin they hated but feared. A certain equilibrium was thus maintained.

"And our Rebbetzin, Frau Dr. Merzbach, *she* was their match!" cried Simon Eichelkatz. "She was proud, and she looked down on the members of the congregation almost disdainfully. They couldn't hold a candle to her so far as family and position went; for she was the daughter of one of the best and most prominent families; and the piety and learning of her father and grandfather were known in all Israel. How could anyone in the Khille compare with her in breeding and birth?"

Simon Eichelkatz went on to tell me how these tradesmen and business men seemed like vassals to her. That was how she had been used to see the members of the congregation approach her father in his house; and she knew that was how they had approached her grandfather, with the deepest respect and devotion. And so the free way in which the people dared meet her husband, this forwardness and familiarity, wounded her beyond measure. And fearless and self-confident as she was, she made no secret of her feelings. This gave rise to eternal jarring; and again and again the Rav tried to reconcile her to the situation. But though she revered her husband as a saint and loved him with the self-surrender and faithfulness of a Jewish wife, she would not abandon her ground. Perhaps just because she loved him. She unconsciously felt that one could not get around the "rabble" merely with benevolence and mildness; firmness and haughtiness were also necessary in dealing with them. It is not unlikely that Dr. Merzbach could not have fought the fight to the finish if it had not been for his courageous wife. Certain it is that she kept many a slight from him, many an ill-natured offense. They all took care to let her alone; and when Frau Dr. Merzbach walked along the Ring, many a one slunk off around the corner, because his conscience pricked him on account of some gossip, some intrigue, or some petty persecution – these were the weapons with which the "Saints" agitated against the noble man. With his beautiful nature, he was no match for them, but they trembled before the Rebbetzin.

"And believe me, Herr Kreisphysikus," Simon Eichelkatz commented, "she was right; nothing else was left for her to do. That was the only way to get the better of that lying pack of hypocrites. If they hadn't been afraid of her, they would have fought even harder against the man who wanted to bring them the blessings of a regulated, proper life. They prepared enough bitterness for him, and he would probably have gotten tired and discouraged, gone to pieces sometimes, if his life in his own home had not weighed in the balance against the lowness of the Khillé.

"And that's where the Rebbetzin was remarkable. She was just as clever as she was proud; and even her hottest opponents – and not all of them were of the Orthodox; some of the 'gentry' were envious of her and fought her – well, even her hottest opponents admitted that she was intelligent, and knew how to tackle things, that she tried to acquire modern culture, and that she gathered the better elements in the congregation about her. And her house was gay and refined, people felt at home there. Nowhere did one pass one's time so well as at Dr. Merzbach's."

The rabbi's house on his Friday evenings became a centre for the cultivated people, the people who held high places in the intellectual world of the congregation and the city. Christians, too, entered the circle.

"You can imagine, Herr Doktor, what bad blood that made. But the Rebbetzin didn't concern herself about it, and nobody could get a hold on her, because no fault could be found with her piety. Many said she was more orthodox than the Rav. There was some truth in this. He, being a great Talmudist, might find some freer interpretation of the laws, he might open up new ways, while she stuck fast to what had been sacred to her in her grandfather's and her father's home. I remember how he once came to my office on a very hot day, and took his hat off, and wiped his forehead, and then sat there without anything on his head, when suddenly his wife appeared outside in the store. He snatched up his hat, smiling in an embarrassed way, and said: 'God forbid my wife should see me sitting here without my cap.'"

Such trivialities and externalities invested her with glamour. Besides, there was her great philanthropy and her public work. Not a charitable institution belonging to the city or the congregation but that she was at the head of it. And outwardly cold and reserved, always carrying herself with great dignity, she still would willingly sacrifice herself in a good cause.

"During the cholera epidemic," continued Simon Eichelkatz, "I saw her at sick-beds, and I know what a heart she had, for all her fine intellect. But the others came no nearer to her, because they judged her according to her understanding alone, and that often made her appear hard and cold. But she didn't bother about things of that sort. She did not even have the wish to come nearer to those people; they seemed rude and uncultivated to her, and she was not in sympathy with them. Dr.

Merzbach sometimes tried to make her change her opinion, but that was the point on which she would not yield, perhaps she couldn't. This was probably the one dark cloud on their blessed union, and it was a union that lasted through forty-three years of perfect agreement, of the purest and highest joy, of the greatest contentment.

"The Rebbetzin felt at home only in her own house; to the Khille she always remained a stranger. And do you know, Herr Kreisphysikus, when I come to think about it, I believe the Rebbetzin is always a stranger in the congregation? She can't fit herself in."

I had to smile. I thought of my mother, who was so different. But, to be sure, times have changed, and manners with them. And then the narrow little community in which my father worked, among friendly, kindly men and women! The "Rebbetzin" is probably a phenomenon belonging to a past epoch.

September 30.

Autumn is now completely upon us. Raw, gloomy, chilly, with everlasting rains. The city is not beautiful in this garb, and I would certainly succumb to my tendency to melancholy, if I did not have my profession and – Simon Eichelkatz.

He speaks about every possible thing. Only when the talk takes a personal turn, touching upon incidents in his life, he becomes monosyllabic and reserved. Consequently, I really know very little about him. With the exception of the hints once thrown out by Feiwei Silbermann about his "baptized" son Friedrich Eichner, I have learned nothing about him. It goes against me to question a servant, but I feel sure something lurks behind the sharp, ironic manner in which Feiwei on every occasion says "the gracious Madame Eichelkatz." Clearly, Madame Eichelkatz did not suit his taste. And I learn nothing from the people, either. I have not yet left my card with "the first Jewish families" of the congregation, and so I have not yet established any connections. But I really want to very soon. At present I feel more at home among the dead members of this congregation, all of whom, I hope, Simon Eichelkatz will by and by bring to life for me.

This world that has sunk into the past stirs my imagination, and I take deep interest in the figures that glided through the narrow streets fifty years ago. What constituted incidents in this world, what occupied these men, how they lived, loved, and hated – all this has a certain historic charm for me, heightened on account of my racial bias.

Yesterday Simon Eichelkatz promised to tell me all sorts of things during the fall and winter. I wonder whether I shouldn't wait a little while before I present my visiting cards. When once you begin, there are invitations and social obligations from which you cannot withdraw – and then there would be an end to the long talks with Simon. And I must carefully consider whether I am likely to laugh so heartily in the "aesthetic salons" of the fine Jewish houses as I did yesterday, when Simon told me the story of Teacher Sandberg. Scarcely! The young ladies would undoubtedly find the affair "shocking." But I want to record it here, and I will call it "The Adventure of Teacher Sandberg."

It was on the hottest and longest of Jewish fast days, *Shivoh oser be-Tamuz*. The sun glared down pitilessly. Not a breath of air to freshen, to quicken the heavy atmosphere. The Khille began the "three weeks" with a full fast day, on which the faithful partook neither of meat nor drink. The male members of the congregation strictly observed the customs, although to be pious was especially hard on this day in midsummer, when daylight continues endlessly. The length of the fast has become a byword, and a very tall man is said "to be as long as Shivoh oser be-Tamuz." But neither heat nor length prevented the faithful from keeping the fast recalling the destruction of the sanctuary on Zion. And so the congregation made itself penitential; it fasted, prayed, perspired, groaned, and denied itself every refreshment. The people crawled into the shadow of the houses to escape the heat and the tormenting thirst it caused. In vain! The awful sultriness penetrated everywhere, and brooded over the streets and dwellings, over field and meadow. The fasting men endured it with a certain apathy – after all, they were used to it; it repeated itself every year, and no one could remember that Shivoh

oser be-Tamuz had ever fallen on a cool day. It couldn't be otherwise – in midsummer, the season of ripening fruits, of the harvest. You just had to accept the situation, and, in addition to the tortures of hunger and thirst, suffer those of heat as well. But on Shivoh oser be-Tamuz in 1853 a great fright came to swell the list of agonies in the Khille at Reissnitz.

Toward noon the report spread that the teacher Sandberg was missing. He had been seen in Shul at the morning service, and from there he had gone home, but after that he could not be traced further. Two boys who had been playing "cat" that morning in the street, declared they had seen him in front of his house, and then had noticed him go around the corner along the street leading to the so-called "Behnisch" meadows. That was the last that could be found out about Teacher Sandberg.

According to Simon Eichelkatz's description, he was a most singular individual. Extremely tall, and thin as a broom-stick, with a peculiar gait, rather pushing and scraping himself along the ground than walking. Summer and winter he wore a black silk cloth about his neck, above which showed only a very narrow line of white. His head was usually inclined to the left side in talking, and his whole face was cast into shadow by his large, beaked nose, ugly beyond belief. This nose of his was the butt of his pupils, the alphabet class of the congregational school. Sometimes it was a cause of terror to them as well, especially to the new pupils, who always needed some time to grow accustomed to it. But that happened as soon as Teacher Sandberg looked at them with his good-humored eyes, often gleaming with gayety, which allayed the fright produced by the uglier organ. In fact, it was the eloquence of his eyes that made the teacher a general favorite. Everyone liked the odd fellow; and from many a shop and window, sympathetic glances followed his figure as, with hands in his trouser pockets, he slouched along to school. One can therefore imagine the amazement caused by the news of his disappearance. Inquiry was made for him in the houses of neighboring families, the synagogue yard was searched, – perhaps he had taken refuge there from the heat, – every nook and cranny of his house, including the shop and cellar, were carefully investigated, the absurdest surmises as to his whereabouts were set afloat. Was he in some saloon? Impossible, on this fast day! His wife cried and sobbed, his children bawled – her husband, their father – where was he? Gone! As if swallowed by an earthquake! Not a single clue as to where he had disappeared. Some of the people, his weeping wife at their head, went to the "Behnisch" meadows. But he was not there; nor had he been seen by the harvesters taking their midday rest on the fresh stacks of hay. And why should he be there, in the maddening heat of high noon, hungry and thirsty from his fast? The mystery remained unsolved and began to assume a more and more terrifying aspect. What had driven him from his room? Whither had he wandered? Soon the word "accident" was anxiously whispered from mouth to mouth. But what could the nature of the accident be? In awe-stricken tones they hinted at murder! Suicide! God forbid that such suppositions should reach the ears of the wife and children! Crowds gathered in the White Suburb. They looked up and down the Gass, they glanced at the windows of Teacher Sandberg's house; they questioned one another, they propounded all sorts of theories, they debated and took counsel – Teacher Sandberg remained in the land of the unknown.

All forgot hunger and thirst, no one remembered that he was mortifying his flesh. What signifies so slight a sacrifice as compared with the awful fate that had befallen Teacher Sandberg? Fear and pity crept over the spirits of the people. What had happened? All the inhabitants of the city joined in the hunt with the relatives and co-religionists of the lost man. The whole little world was up and doing, excited, amazed, searching – and still Teacher Sandberg remained in the land of the unknown.

At two in the afternoon the rumor had spread from the White Suburb to the Ring, and penetrated into the quiet study of the rabbi. He immediately hurried to Teacher Sandberg's home, accompanied by the president, Herr Manasse, and the chairman of the board, Herr Karfunkelstein. He was also joined by all the other men in the congregation, by many women and children; and all streamed to the place excited and terrified, to get news of Teacher Sandberg's fate. The crowd in front of the unfortunate man's house was now so great that even the highly respected police also repaired thither; now all the citizens had assembled, and they talked with bated breath of the "unheard-of

case." The rabbi and the president went inside the house to get the details again from the wife. The crowd waited outside expectantly. The rays of the midday sun beat down mercilessly. But no one thought of heat, hunger, or thirst. Everyone was occupied with Teacher Sandberg alone.

"Sandberg had to choose exactly Shivoh oser be-Tamuz to get lost on," said little Freund, the dealer in smoked meats. "He himself is as long as Shivoh oser be-Tamuz, and he had to have a misfortune just on the fast day."

"Just as if you were to put a fur coat on in this heat," said another man.

"No jokes," warned a third; "it's a sad business."

At that moment a man pushed his way through the crowd, breathless, gasping, in the greatest excitement. He was carrying a bag in which something swayed back and forth. The people looked at him with horror on their faces, and made way for him, carefully avoiding contact with the sack.

"Do you think it can be Sandberg's head that he's dragging in the bag?" The little dealer in smoked meat put the question anxiously.

"You can't tell!" answered his neighbor.

The man with the sack stepped into the passage way of the house, and the universal gaze was fastened with terrified curiosity upon the entrance. Minutes of the greatest expectation! That shuddering sense of oppression which precedes some dreadful occurrence had taken hold of all present. Not a single remark was passed, no sound was heard; the next moment was awaited in sheer breathless tension. A heavy weight rested on their spirits, the atmosphere was leaden, as before a storm; and yet the blue of the heavens was undimmed, not a single cloud flecked the horizon, and the sun's rays flamed with the heat of midsummer. So it was from a clear sky that a thunderbolt was to strike the expectant throng, and now – the rabbi came out to the top of the steps leading from the passage-way down to the street, on each side of him one of the directors, and behind him, in the open doorway, the man with the bag, now hanging over his shoulder empty. From within came sounds of mourning, crying, and sobbing. Expectation had reached its height, and the voice of Dr. Merzbach rang out through absolute quiet, as he said with deep seriousness:

"Beloved congregation! It has pleased the Almighty Father to let a sad and awful event occur in our midst on this fast day. Our highly respected teacher, Sandberg, whom we all know and love, the guide and instructor of our children, has met with a misfortune, a fact no longer permitting of doubt, since this man, a miller's apprentice from the Garetzki mill, found a pair of boots near the dam, and a red woolen handkerchief, which Frau Sandberg recognizes as unmistakably belonging to her husband. The miller met some hay-makers and learned from them that search was being made in the city for a lost man, and he came here immediately with the articles he had found. There can no longer be doubt as to the terrible truth, and we must bear with resignation the severe stroke the Lord has sent down upon the unfortunate family, so rudely robbed of its support and protection, and upon the community at large. On a day of atonement and repentance God has inflicted so hard a trial upon us."

At these words the people began to lament and weep. "*Waigeschrieen!* God cares nothing for our repentance!" some exclaimed, while others hit their breasts and cried: "*Oshamnu, bogadnu...*"

With great difficulty the rabbi succeeded in allaying the excitement. "Be sensible; keep quiet; we must see if it isn't possible still to help the unfortunate man, or at least we must find his corpse."

The words had an uncanny ring. A dark shadow seemed to creep over the bright day, the brilliant sunshine.

"It will be necessary for us to divide into bands to examine the banks of the stream from the mill-dam as far as the large sluice gate at the miner's dam. The water is shallow because of the drought of the past days, so there is still hope that some trace of him may be discovered. It would be well to take along a few persons who know how to swim, and provide others with poles. Our president will also see to it that the police help us in our search, and he will ask Garetzki, the proprietor of the mill, to let the water at the dam run off."

These directions, thoughtfully and quietly given, did not fail of their effect. Search parties were formed on the instant by Herr Moritz Liepmann, and sent in various directions. As they went toward the river, the wit of the Khille, Reb Shmul Eisner, even at that critical moment could not repress the remark: "The idea of making *Tashlich* on Shivoh oser be-Tamuz."

Many Christians in the city joined the expedition, and the people sallied forth in the parching heat to hunt for Teacher Sandberg. The rabbi and the two trustees accompanied the crowd as far as the meadows bordering on the stream, and here a small posse branched off to go along the mill-race, to carry on the search along the tributary stream as well. Then Dr. Merzbach and his companions went to the meeting-room of the congregation in order to receive word there of the results of the investigation. Up and down the river went the people looking for Teacher Sandberg in the shallow spots. In vain! With the exception of a few irregular foot-prints in the moist soil near the mill-dam, nothing of note was discovered. Even the foot-prints were not of much significance, since they disappeared a short distance beyond the slope. Teacher Sandberg had completely disappeared. But one supposition was possible, that he had met with an accident. Probably in the glowing heat he had used the handkerchief to wipe away the perspiration, and had taken off his boots to cool his feet in the water, and in doing so had stepped into a deep spot, or overcome in the water by the heat, he had fainted, and drowned. A hundred guesses were made. But what remained the least explicable part of the mystery was why the teacher had gone out at all in the heat of high noon. In the meantime the day wore on. Hour after hour passed by. The searchers returned home dead-tired, hungry, and thirsty. In their zeal they had forgotten they were fasting; but at last the needs of the body asserted themselves. One by one they returned to the city. Each brought back the report of their vain endeavors; and when the last came back shortly before sunset, everybody was sure that Teacher Sandberg was no longer among the living. The rabbi once more went to Frau Sandberg to speak words of comfort to her and her children, and then the fateful day neared its end. There was scarcely a *Minyan* present at the evening services in the Shul. Pretty nearly every one remained at home with his family, doubly alive to the blessing of life in the face of this enigmatic death, and relishing the breaking of the fast with heightened appetite. For not a soul had lived through a fast day such as this before. When late in the evening the full moon hung above the houses, casting its white light on the open square and the streets, and the evening coolness had freshened the sultry air of the day, the people's spirits were re-animated, and they came out of their narrow dwellings into the open. All thronged to the Ring, the market place.

They felt the need of talking over the day's event. Before their doors sat the fathers of families, on green-painted benches, smoking their pipes, and discussing all the circumstances of the case. The women collected in groups, sympathizing with Frau Sandberg and breaking their heads over the problem as to what she would do, nebbich, now she was robbed of her supporter. The young people promenaded up and down, chatted in an undertone, and tried to be serious, in accord with the gravity of the situation, though they did not always succeed in banishing their youthful spirits. On the corner of Tarnowitzer Street stood Reb Shmul Eisner, the wit of the congregation. Half aloud he said to his neighbor: "Everybody is certainly happy not to be so famous as Teacher Sandberg is to-day."

The rabbi also came to the Ring, and with him the Rebbetzin. He wanted to go once again to the wife of the unfortunate man, and the Rebbetzin would not absent herself from a place where help and comfort were needed. Near the great fountain, called the *Kashte*, next to the city hall, the rabbi was detained by some members of his congregation. Everyone was eager to hear something about the day's happenings directly from his mouth. At the same time the mayor and two aldermen came down the steps of the city hall. When they noticed Dr. Merzbach, they went up to him to tell him that it had just been decided to let the water off at the dam early the next morning, through the large sluice, in order, if possible, to recover the corpse of Teacher Sandberg; for it was not likely that with the water so shallow, the body had been carried down stream; it had probably been caught somewhere in the canal. A shudder ran through the crowd. Those standing near the mayor listened to what he said with bated breath and passed on his words to their neighbors. Like wildfire it spread through

the crowd: "To-morrow they'll recover the body of Teacher Sandberg." From the Kashte rose the primitive figure of a Neptune, trident in hand; and the silver moonlight gleamed on the large fountain and the listening throngs about it.

"To-morrow they'll recover the body of Teacher Sandberg."

All of a sudden a shrill cry rang out and was echoed by the mass of human beings, stirred to the highest pitch of excitement. Horror-struck they scattered in confusion and took to their heels, only now and then looking back fearsomely at a gruesome vision which presented itself to their sight. In one second the Ring was vacated, every one had hidden in the houses. There – slowly and meditatively, like a ghost, Teacher Sandberg stalked across the square, in the garb in which the good Lord had created him. He was absolutely naked, not a shred of clothing upon him; his hands at his legs, as though in his usual fashion he were hiding them in trouser pockets, his feet scraping along the ground.

The Ring looked as though it had been swept. Only the rabbi, the two trustees, the mayor, the aldermen, and the Rebbetzin remained at the Kashte. The Rebbetzin, when the singular figure approached, faced about in confusion and eagerly contemplated the Neptune, who, although a river god, wore much more clothing than Teacher Sandberg. The moonlight glistened on the trident and bathed the entire tragi-comic scene in its pale light. The teacher shuffled close up to the gentlemen, who regarded him with glances of astonishment mixed with disapproval. Was this object Sandberg or his ghost? How could he be wandering about through the city across the Ring past all these people in so scanty a costume? The thing was unheard of; the like of it had never been seen. Presumably the man was dead, and here he was strolling about – and in what a state!

Some of the bolder spirits crept out of their houses again, and here and there a curious face bobbed up behind the window panes. The situation was tense. The Rebbetzin still had her back turned to the group; and the Neptune looked very shy, as if to say: "We barbarians are better people after all; none of us would dare saunter about the Ring in bright moonlight without a shred of clothing on."

Finally the rabbi recovered enough self-possession to address the man standing before him in the garb in which the Lord had fashioned him.

"Is that you, Sandberg?" he asked in a tone of mingled severity and mildness.

"Yes, Herr Rabbiner, it's I," came the plaintive reply.

"Your wife, your children, the congregation, the city, all are mourning you as dead."

"God forbid!" the teacher exclaimed. "Why should I be dead? I am alive, Herr Rabbiner, praised be God, even if something very disagreeable did happen to me."

"He will catch cold, if he doesn't look out." Shmul Eisner, who had come up in the meantime, tossed the joke to another bystander. But no one thought of offering the naked man a bit of clothing. The amazement was still too great. So the audience was continued, and Teacher Sandberg, in the primitive garb in which he was, related his adventure before a college of judges consisting of the rabbinate and the municipal authorities.

In the morning he had gone to take a bath, and had undressed behind some bushes at the edge of the stream near the Petershof dam, where not a soul passes at that hour of the day. He dived into the refreshing depths. The water was delicious. Forgotten the torturing heat, forgotten the hunger and thirst of the fast day! He struck off down stream and let himself be carried along by the soft waves, gently warmed and brightened by the sun. After half an hour, possibly longer, he swam back to the spot where he had undressed – but horror of horrors! his clothes had disappeared. Not a thing had been left behind, not even a shirt to cover his body. Utterly distraught, he ran up and down the bank, hunting for his clothes, calling, crying out, imploring, beseeching help from somewhere. Nothing stirred. Had someone played a trick on him? Had tramps passed by and taken the clothes along as profitable booty? He was absolutely ignorant of how the thing had happened. But one thing was clear; he must hide himself until night, and then find some way of creeping home. He reckoned on the probability that the people, tired out by the fast, would go to bed earlier than usual. So, resigned and thoroughly worn out by the excitement of the fearful adventure, he slid into a field of corn in full ear,

ripe for harvesting, and crawled way into its depths to hide himself completely. He dropped down exhausted; the corn-stalks waved high over his head, the crickets chirped, the ragged robins and wild poppies nodded about him. He again began to meditate upon his peculiar position. What happened after that he could not remember. He must have fallen into a deep sleep, and so failed to hear the call of the search parties. When he awoke, the moon was high in the heavens. He did not know what time it was; but he supposed it must be late at night, for he was chilled to the marrow, and dew lay upon the field from which he emerged. Then he wended his way homeward, through the meadows wrapt in solitude and nocturnal quiet. With beating heart he slipped past the houses along the deserted streets. It was like a city of the dead. He thought it must be long past midnight, that everybody was buried in sleep. It could not occur to him that the people, because of his disappearance, had congregated at the Ring. Emboldened by the quiet, he stepped along at a livelier pace, and even calculated that by crossing the Ring and going down Rybniker Street he could reach his home sooner. He was not in the least afraid of meeting anyone at that time except the nightwatch, to whom he could easily explain his plight. So he came through a narrow side street, which ran from the Flour Market and opened right on the Ring and landed – where his appearance was welcomed as a ghost by the excited crowd. And now he was standing before the gentlemen, and he could not have done otherwise, so help him God – Amen!

His savior in need was the Rebbetzin. With averted face she listened to the half-comic, half-pitiful narrative, and suddenly she let her large black mantilla fall to the ground behind her. Shmul Eisner, who noticed the act, and immediately perceived its purpose, sprang forward, picked up the shawl, and hung it about the teacher's trembling limbs. Then, draped in the Rebbetzin's black mantilla, the teacher was led to the shelter of his home, to wife and child.

"Won't Frau Teacher Sandberg be jealous, though," exclaimed Reb Shmul, the joker, "when she sees him coming home with nothing on but the mantilla of the Rebbetzin."

"The chief thing is, he is here," replied his companion. And that is what the whole congregation thought, when it sought its well-deserved rest.

October 6.

My position keeps me very busy. In a mining district accidents occur almost daily. Besides, the whisky fiend has to be reckoned with, leading, as it does, to all sorts of excesses, brawls, and murderous assaults. Scarcely a day passes but that I have to make trips into the country, which offers small cheer now in the grey autumn weather and in this dispiriting region. My disposition, naturally inclined to be sombre, becomes still more melancholy; and when I ride through the rain-soaked country, past forges, furnaces, and culm heaps, covered with a thick pall of smoke, with the immediate prospect of seeing dead or injured victims, and having to set down a record of human misery and woe, my mood becomes ever blacker and blacker. I never find time to attend to patients among the upper classes. I believe I am given up as a hopeless case – a Jewish Kreisphysikus, sans wife, who doesn't seek introductions, must be either an abnormality or a capricious, stuck-up fool, at any rate a person not to be reckoned with seriously. My colleagues probably have the same opinion of me. After the inevitable initial formalities, I did not come in contact with them; if chance brings us together, we give each other a cool if courteous greeting.

This exclusiveness has its advantages. The time left free from my duties belongs to me entirely, and I do not spend it thriftlessly in society to which I am indifferent. It has not been my experience that intercourse with many people is of any profit. One gets so little, and gives so much, much too much of what is best and noblest in one's nature, especially if one is a man of feeling, intellect, and ardent temperament. The strongest chord is almost never touched. In the most favorable circumstances, the exchange of courtesies is purely formal, and the acts of friendship are entirely perfunctory. These merely external amenities make men vulgar and untrue, I would not like to use an even stronger expression and say dishonest. Heine's words occur to me:

Weisse, höfliche Manschetten,
Ach wenn sie nur Herzen hätten,
Herzen in der Brust und Liebe, — wahre Liebe in den Herzen,
Denn mich tötet ihr Gesänge von erlogenen Liebesschmerzen.

Perhaps such principles produce loneliness; but they strengthen one; at all events they do not embitter the mind and spirit, as some maintain. I have never been sadder than in the midst of many people, among whom I did not find – one human being! And nothing has a happier influence on me than to find a human being where I least expect one – Simon Eichelkatz, for example.

Yesterday, after an interval of several days, I went to see him late in the evening. I was worn out and unnerved by my official visit to a neighboring place, the centre of the Silesian coal-mining district. Two workmen had gotten into a fight in a tavern, and the host, in trying to separate them and smooth over their differences, himself became enraged and threw out the more aggressive of the two. The reeling, sodden wretch lost his balance, and, tumbling down the steps, knocked his head on a stone. His skull was crushed, and he died in a few minutes from contusion of the brain. When I reached the spot, a mob of wild, excited forms had gathered about the scene of the drama. Policemen stood on guard; and a cloth covered the corpse, which was not to be disturbed until after an inspection by the officials of the locality. I could do nothing more than affirm that the victim was dead, the examination showed that death had occurred as a result of a fall caused by violent mishandling. The author of the deed was a Jew. He was immediately imprisoned, and with great difficulty was withdrawn from the summary lynch-justice of the enraged crowd. Defrauded of the prisoner, they turned against his family and his property. The windows of his house were smashed in; the shop was utterly destroyed, and the whisky – that ruinous, unholy "dispeller of cares" – flowed from the casks into the street. His wife and children tried to save their goods and possessions from the fury of the vandals, but received kicks and blows for their efforts. It was a horrid scene. The policemen did not succeed in restoring order and quiet for some time. Is it possible they had not received sufficient power from the authorities? Was there some other reason? At any rate I had to interpose and try to allay the turmoil. At last the crowd dispersed; but ever and again the echo reached my ears of assassin – murderer – Jew – assassin – dirty thief – cheat – Jew – Jew – liar.

All this had utterly depressed and unnerved me. I really wanted to stay at home; but I reconsidered and decided it was better to substitute a pure, peaceful picture for these torturing impressions, and I went to my old friend. I found him gay and friendly as ever, despite the lateness of the hour. But my mood did not escape his searching gaze; and on his questioning me, I told him what had happened. As was his wont, he rubbed his forehead with his forefinger and thumb, and looked thoughtfully into space. Finally he said:

"That's the way it is to-day, and that's the way it's always been. If a man of some other religion commits a wrong, it's a bad man that did it; but if it happens among our people, then it's the 'Jew'! That's a bitter pill we have to swallow, Herr Doktor, a very bitter pill. But it *is* so, and it doesn't change, even though the world is said to be so cultured and progressive, and humane – the Jew remains a Jew! In the eyes of the *Goy* he's something peculiar, something disgraceful! And for that reason the Jews must stick to the Jew; because the others don't, and never did, and never will. We have nothing to expect or hope from them – and we needn't be afraid of them, neither, we Jews, if we stick together. Then, if something should happen as to-day, Herr Kreisphysikus, it's a misfortune, but not a calamity. Because the man who did it, is a wicked brute who by accident is a Jew, and might just as well have been a *Goy*. What has religion to do with these matters, anyhow? Does a *Goy* do something bad because he's a Christian, or a Jew because he's an Israelite? Religion teaches both of them to be good, upright, and pious; and if they aren't, how can religion help it? Religion is not to be blamed; only good can result from religion. Whether Jew or Christian, it remains the same. Each can learn from his own

religion; for there is something moral in every religion; and for that reason everybody should honor his own religion and stick to it. The deeds of men must be judged according to the nature of each man, not according to his religion. Because, if the Jew at Raudnitz chucked out the *Shikker* so roughly that he died, the Jew did it because he has an angry, wild, ungovernable temper. Do you suppose he was thinking of his religion? If he only had! The *Shikker* would be alive if he had. Because the Jewish belief forbids the Jew to be sinful or violent, and to kill; just as their belief forbids the Goyim. And the world won't be better until all understand that a man must have respect for his neighbor, because he is a man. When each and everyone feels that he is master of his honor and his dignity, he will also find his rights – not as a Jew and not as a Christian, but as a man!"

I stared at the old man fixedly. Whence these ideas on the rights and dignity of man? Whence these opinions animated by the spirit of humanitarianism? Here, in the Jewish community? If he had suddenly begun to unriddle the problem of "the thing in itself," I should scarcely have been astonished. Notions had arisen in the mind of this simple man, on the philosophy of human rights and the philosophy of religion, worthy of a great scholar, although he had never heard a word of the notable thinkers who had constructed these ideas into an enduring cosmic edifice.

October 11.

The affair in Raudnitz had a sad sequel, and gave me a great deal to do. The prisoner hanged himself in jail. The coroner's inquest and the attendant formalities occupied most of my time. I was compelled to drive repeatedly to Raudnitz, and I became acquainted with the unfortunate family of the accused who had taken justice into his own hands. The wife, well-mannered, had a rather hard expression; the two daughters were educated and well-bred; the aged mother of the man was pathetic in her old Jewish humility and pious resignation. A fearful fate had overtaken the unsuspecting folk who a few days before had been living in quiet happiness. I asked the woman what could possibly have driven her husband to his desperate deed. In the most unfavorable circumstances he would have been punished for homicide through carelessness, and the sentence would certainly have been light, since he could have proved that the fatal fall of the victim was primarily due to his drunkenness.

"But the shame, Herr Doktor, the shame. For months he would have been in jail undergoing examination and cross-questioning; then he'd surely have remained in prison a couple of years – for they would never have acquitted him entirely. He didn't want to live through all that – the shame, Herr Kreisphysikus, shame before his children, and the sorrow for his mother. It would have lasted years, long, long years; and so he ended it at one stroke. He knew me, and he felt sure I wouldn't lose my head, and would provide for the children. He was certain of it, and knew he would be a greater burden to his family if he was buried alive in prison than if lying dead beneath the earth. It is terribly painful, but there is an end of it; the other would have been an eternal shame. That is the way he reasoned; he killed himself for the sake of his children."

I shuddered, when I heard the affair discussed so rationally and cold-bloodedly. Was it heartlessness or keensightedness that made them so hard and unloving? Hadn't the woman loved and respected her husband? Yet did she not judge his deed as the outcome of reasoned consideration, his voluntary death as a sacrifice to his family, as a martyr's death?

A question rose to my lips.

"But tell me, my dear Mrs. Schlochauer, your husband must surely have thought that he would hurt you deeply, you with whom he lived happily and whom he certainly loved and respected. And he must have felt that he would give his old mother infinite pain."

An odd smile drew the corners of her mouth, and some moments passed before she roused herself from a sort of trance, and said: "His mother is very old, Herr Doktor, eighty-two years old; she hasn't much more to expect from life, I am sure he thought of that. And as for his love for me " – she hesitated – "he was always considerate of me, and respectful, but love? In a decent Jewish family the love of man and wife is their love for their children."

What had moved the soul of this woman to such conclusions on married life?

Yesterday I learned by chance that she was the daughter of a teacher in Beuthen, and had herself been trained as a teacher. The community had granted her a scholarship, to complete her course for the teacher's examinations at the Seminary in Breslau. There she became acquainted with a young painter, a Christian, and a love affair, as pure as it was ardent, developed between them. When her parents heard of the affair, they made her come home immediately. Her studies were interrupted, and she took up life again in her parents' house, the fountain of her emotions sealed, the bitter sorrow of an unhappy love swelling her heart. What was her inner development after this first, hard disillusionment, this spiritual conflict? Who can tell?

When, some years later, the first flush of youth past, her father expressed to her his wish that she marry Schlochauer in Raudnitz, the well-to-do proprietor of a distillery, in order to lighten his own troubles in bringing up his numerous offspring, she obeyed without a murmur. Her husband respected her, and offered no objection to her assisting her family and so enabling her brothers to study. He loved her, too – for she presented him with four children. Two died young – and as for the two remaining daughters, she would provide for them carefully. Her husband would not be deceived in her; the sacrifice of his life was not made in vain.

"When everything is settled, Herr Kreisphysikus, I am going to sell the business and the house, and move to Berlin. We have some means, Herr Doktor; my husband was a good manager. In Berlin we are not well known; and grass grows over everything that happens. No matter if a person here and there knows something about it; it is quickly forgotten. People have no time there to gossip about private affairs. I have three brothers in Berlin, all in respected positions. So, in the large city, I shall live free from care with my daughters; they are still young and will get over the pain and horror of the present."

"And you, Frau Schlochauer?" I hastily asked.

"I? I shall do my duty."

The words sounded so natural, yet it made a painful impression on me to see how collected she was, how quietly and circumspectly she looked into the future from out of the confusion and distress of the moment. Perhaps she divined the course of my thoughts, for suddenly she continued:

"Don't wonder that I speak of this matter so calmly. You become accustomed to such things if for twenty years you live with a business man in this neighborhood, among such rude, rough folk. You learn to be on the lookout, to be careful and practical. And you forget that once you regarded the world with different eyes."

She uttered the last words softly, with downward glance. When I heard the history of her youth yesterday, I saw her in my mind's eye again, and a feeling of boundless pity for this woman swept over me – not for what she was suffering now – now that she was steeled and experienced – but for her youth, the youth she had lost because practical considerations and hindrances determined the course of her life.

But now I must tell about a remarkable acquaintance I made yesterday, the man who told me what I know of Frau Schlochauer's history. He introduces some humor into the affair.

"Herr Jonas Goldstücker."

The visiting card with this name printed in large Roman characters lies before me and seems to throw a crafty and comical smile at me. In fact my new acquaintance is very amusing. The card was brought in to me at the end of my afternoon office hours. Herr Jonas Goldstücker! I thought it was a patient, and had him admitted even though the time for receiving patients was past. A few moments later an elderly man sat before me, well-preserved and decently dressed. He was perfectly open in letting his curious gaze rove through my room, and I felt that in a minute period of time he had a thorough survey. His inventory took in all the objects in the room, myself included. His sly eyes seemed ever to be investigating and inspecting, and although he frequently pressed them shut,

or glanced into space over his nickel-plated *pince-nez*, one felt correctly catalogued and pigeonholed. Herr Jonas Goldstücker began to interest me. Without waiting for me to ask his business, he said:

"I knew, Herr Kreisphysikus, that you always stay at home a little while after your office hours, and that's the reason I chose this time for coming to you; I thought we would not be disturbed now."

So he was acquainted with my habits, with something about my private life; he wanted to speak to me without outside interruption – did this man know of some secret? Did a matter calling for discretion lead him to me? But he gave me no time for surmise, and added:

"You certainly don't run after practice among well-to-do patients; no one can reproach you with that – you live like a hermit; and outside of Simon Eichelkatz no one has had the honor of seeing you at his home."

My face must have looked very stupid, or it must have expressed great amazement at his intimate tone and his familiarity with my affairs; because he laughed and said:

"Yes, Herr Kreisphysikus, in a little town you get to know people, and all about them."

"But I don't know *you*," I interrupted, my patience at last exhausted.

"I am Jonas Goldstücker."

"So your card tells me. But I should like to permit myself the question, to what I owe the honor of your visit."

"O, you'll soon find out, Herr Kreisphysikus. I am not sick, as you see. Quite another reason brings me to you. But if I should need medical advice, I shall not fail to come to you, although Sanitätsrat Ehrlich has been treating me for six years – since the time his daughter Annie married Herr Rechtsanwalt Bobrecker of Leobschütz. An excellent match. Any day Bobrecker might have gotten sixty thousand marks, and Löwenberg, the wool manufacturer in Oppeln, would have given him as much as seventy-five thousand, but he wanted to marry a girl from an educated family, and no other. Well, the daughter of Sanitätsrat Ehrlich is no vain delusion."

My breath was completely taken away by this information regarding private matters.

Next came the abrupt question:

"In general, Herr Kreisphysikus, are you in favor of wet or dry treatment in rheumatism?"

A patient after all! I breathed more freely. Herr Jonas Goldstücker had given me a creepy sensation.

"I don't understand what you mean by that."

"I mean, are you in favor of massage and electricity or in favor of baths?"

The impudent assurance of the question utterly astounded me, and I wanted to give him a brusque reply, when he continued:

"Sanitätsrat Ehrlich is an excellent physician; but he's a bit antiquated already, Herr Kreisphysikus. The young doctors of to-day make a much more lymphatic impression."

Doubtless, he meant "emphatic," because a few moments later another pretentious word was incorrectly applied.

"But Sanitätsrat Ehrlich after all has the largest practice in the congregation; and people would look on it as bigamy if anyone were to say anything against him."

I was only slightly acquainted with my colleague, and I did not know that doubt of his powers would be regarded as blasphemy – probably what Jonas Goldstücker meant to say. The humor of the situation at last began to dawn upon me, and I awaited the further utterances of my remarkable guest in amused curiosity.

"And his house, Herr Kreisphysikus, his house! Really, very fine. The Frau Sanitätsträtin knows how to do the honors and to keep her distance."

What he meant by this was not exactly clear to me; but I learned that the youngest daughter of my colleague Ehrlich was a ravishing maiden, as Herr Jonas Goldstücker assured me.

"Very highly educated, speaks every language, plays the piano as well as Leubuscher (I didn't know of the performer), and only Chopin, Rubinstein, Offenbach, Brahm."

"Brahms, Herr Goldstücker, Brahms."

"Why, yes, I said Brahm, Herr Kreisphysikus. And what she doesn't know, besides! And quite a housekeeper, too; she learned cooking. No, not a soul can find a thing to say against Miss Edith – Edith, a pretty name, Herr Kreisphysikus, Edith."

He was silent for a moment. I was on the point of telling him that all this had very little interest for me, and that he should come to the real object of his visit; but he continued to impress me as a man of the better classes, with fairly decent manners, calling for a certain amount of consideration. So I maintained my attitude of expectancy, and listened to his digressions and discourses on this theme and that. In the course of his remarks he exclaimed:

"It's really a shame that you don't visit at Sanitätsrat Ehrlich's, though I can imagine you haven't very much time. And now you must be having a good deal of annoyance with that affair in Raudnitz. A terrible misfortune, terrible. That Herr Schlochauer must have had a fearful temper; because it isn't so easy to throw a man out of your place and kill him outright. It must be very trying to his wife; she is an educated woman, daughter of the teacher Weiss, in Beuthen. She never thought she would marry a thoroughly uneducated saloon-keeper. But he got along very well, and you never heard any talk about her not living happily with him. She always had what she needed, and much more. She could help her own family and give her two daughters a good education – very different from what would have happened if she'd gotten her painter. What a sad picture they'd have made, she and her picture-maker."

He laughed complacently at his pun, and I meditated over the ideal Jewish marriage. Then I was made acquainted with the story of Frau Rosalie Schlochauer's youthful love.

"But that he should have gone and taken his life! It's really awful to bring about a misfortune so deliberately. However, a sister-in-law of Frau Schlochauer, a cousin of my wife, married to the book-dealer Grosser, told me that the widow is remarkably calm. Frau Grosser herself is half dead from the excitement, and she can't possibly comprehend how Frau Schlochauer can be so collected. The idea of hanging himself in prison! Absurd! If he had waited, for all we know he might have been set free. At any rate he would not have gotten more than three or four years. In no circumstances would he have been put into the penitentiary. Herr Rechtsanwalt Cassirer told me yesterday that the jury would certainly have agreed on *dolus eventualiter*."

Of course, what Herr Jonas Goldstücker wanted to say was *dolus eventualis*. But a little thing like that didn't matter to him, and I continued to wonder how he came to know everybody and associate with the best families. He was evidently on a most intimate footing with the heads of the community.

"Frau Schlochauer," he said, after a while, "will doubtless move away from Raudnitz. Life for her there in these circumstances is impossible. And what should she do with two daughters, who are almost grown up and will soon be marriageable? She will certainly go to Berlin. Her brothers live there; one of them is a lawyer, another is a physician, and the third owns a large shirtwaist factory. There she will have someone to cling to."

I had a mental picture of Frau Schlochauer, quiet in her grief, earnest, thoughtful, as she unfolded to me her plans for the future. And this man knew it all. He had guessed it and now expressed his opinion on events in the life of a stranger.

"In Berlin people don't bother about such stories. There Frau Schlochauer is the sister of the lawyer Weiss and the doctor Weiss; she is the rich Frau Schlochauer with two pretty, well-bred daughters. That's enough. The girls will make very good matches. They say the property amounts to a great deal, much more than you'd think by looking at Herr Schlochauer. There he was working all day and thinking of nothing but how to serve his customers. He left culture and education to his wife – and now the money, in addition. The sale of the big house and the distillery may bring in as much as four hundred thousand marks. Yesterday Rothmann, the banker, told me Schlochauer had been well off, almost rich. Some of his money he placed with Rothmann, the rest with the Breslau Diskonto

Bank; and Rothmann knows the amount of his deposits. If Frau Schlochauer, when the time comes, will give each daughter one hundred thousands marks – for the present she won't use more than the interest on her money – she will be able to do very well with them. Of course, she won't get the sort of person that looks out for a so-called fine family. People like that ask after every possible thing, and are sure to find out about the detention in prison and the suicide. There are some who won't suffer the tiniest speck on the family name – but there are enough young people, too, who haul in without questioning and think, 'Let by-gones be by-gones.' Sometimes even physicians and lawyers aren't so particular about 'antecedents.'"

I looked at my watch. The act should have been an indication to him that I was getting impatient, and was displeased with the familiarity of his talk; but he seemed not to comprehend the delicate hint. For he suddenly broke out with:

"Herr Rabbiner Grünbaum in Loslau was a brother of your mother, wasn't he, Herr Kreisphysikus? I knew him very well. I'm from Loslau, too. A fine man, and very good and friendly. He was very much loved in the Khille, and my blessed mother always used to say: 'Fine as silk, fine as silk.' I knew your father, too, Herr Kreisphysikus; once when he was in Loslau, at the funeral of your uncle, I saw him, and I heard the sermon he delivered. Great, really great! So touching! The whole congregation shed tears. Your father must have been a splendid pulpit orator. A pity he was in such a small congregation. He belonged in Breslau or Berlin. But, God bless me, good can be accomplished in the smallest of places; and he certainly did do good. Herr Doktor Feilchenstein was in Johannisbad with me this summer, and he couldn't get through telling me about your parents, Herr Kreisphysikus, and what a pious, good old lady your mother is. No wonder, either, if she's a sister of Herr Rabbiner Grünbaum, of Loslau. And Doktor Feilchenstein told me of you, too. You know, I mean your cousin from Frankfort-on-the-Oder. When he heard that I was from Raudnitz, he asked after you, and sent his regards. He refused to believe that I hadn't met you, when you'd been here since April. But, dear me, in summer everybody, of course, is away, and it's no time for visiting. But now, Herr Kreisphysikus, it's October already, and you haven't made any visits yet."

What gave the man the right to remonstrate with me on this subject? To be sure, he seemed well acquainted with my family affairs – my cousin sent messages by him. I pondered a while; the name "Jonas Goldstücker" was not on my visiting list. Curious! All I said was: "You must leave me to judge of that."

"But I beg of you, Herr Kreisphysikus, you misunderstand me. I assure you I did not mean to instruct you in matters of social form. How could you think such a thing? All I meant was, how should families here get to know and appreciate you, if you keep yourself at such a distance? And your cousin, Doctor Feilchenstein, told me what an excellent person you are, how earnest and thorough, and how you had opened up a career for yourself when you were comparatively young. Not out of the thirties and a Physikus already – and how much pleasure you are giving your old mother."

Since I last saw my cousin he must have developed into a garrulous old woman. What had possessed him to tell an utter stranger so much of my life, to praise me, and speak of my relations with my quiet, reserved little mother? I couldn't believe my ears, and I was about to give expression to my amazement when he continued:

"And how happy your dear mother would be if you would soon present her with a nice daughter-in-law! If the girl is fine and educated, your mother might even live with you, and end her days under your roof. Many young girls, to be sure, are not in favor of such an arrangement; but that depends, and Edith Ehrlich is such a clever person..."

I jumped from my seat, and came near laughing out loud. At last the mystery was solved. Herr Jonas Goldstücker, who honored me with so curious and intimate a visit, was a *Shadchen*, the marriage broker of the congregation!

It was highly entertaining. But apparently he did not care to notice that I took the matter as a joke, for he remained quietly seated and continued:

"And Herr Sanitätsrat prefers a physician, who might take up his practice later..."

"Marry into the profession, so to speak," I interjected.

"Yes, Herr Kreisphysikus. But that's only by the way. In addition he will give his daughter fifty thousand marks, just as much as Rechtsanwalt Bobrecker got, and if you – you might pay a visit there anyway – I am sure if you once get to know Miss Edith, you will see that the description I gave of her is true from head to foot. She has a beautiful head of chestnut brown hair..."

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