

Zangwill Israel

The King of Schnorrers: Grotesques and Fantasies



Israel Zangwill

**The King of Schnorrers:
Grotesques and Fantasies**

«Public Domain»

Zangwill I.

The King of Schnorrers: Grotesques and Fantasies / I. Zangwill —
«Public Domain»,

Содержание

The King of Schnorrers	6
CHAPTER I	6
CHAPTER II	15
CHAPTER III	24
CHAPTER IV	35
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	45

Zangwill Israel

The King of Schnorrers:

Grotesques and Fantasies

Foreword to "The King of Schnorrers."

These episodes make no claim to veracity, while the personages are not even sun-myths. I have merely amused myself and attempted to amuse idlers by incarnating the floating tradition of the Jewish Schnorrer, who is as unique among beggars as Israel among nations. The close of the eighteenth century was chosen for a background, because, while the most picturesque period of Anglo-Jewish history, it has never before been exploited in fiction, whether by novelists or historians. To my friend, Mr. Asher I. Myers, I am indebted for access to his unique collection of Jewish prints and caricatures of the period, and I have not been backward in schnorrinG suggestions from him and other private humourists. My indebtedness to my artists is more obvious, from my old friend George Hutchinson to my newer friend Phil May, who has been good enough to allow me to reproduce from his Annuals the brilliant sketches illustrating two of the shorter stories. Of these shorter stories it only remains to be said there are both tragic and comic, and I will not usurp the critic's prerogative by determining which is which.

I. Z.

*That all men are beggars, 'tis very plain to see,
Though some they are of lowly, and some of high degree:
Your ministers of State will say they never will allow
That kings from subjects beg; but that you know is all bow-wow.
Bow-wow-wow! Fol lol, etc.*

Old Play.

The King of Schnorrers

CHAPTER I SHOWING HOW THE WICKED PHILANTHROPIST WAS TURNED INTO A FISH-PORTER

In the days when Lord George Gordon became a Jew, and was suspected of insanity; when, out of respect for the prophecies, England denied her Jews every civic right except that of paying taxes; when the *Gentleman's Magazine* had ill words for the infidel alien; when Jewish marriages were invalid and bequests for Hebrew colleges void; when a prophet prophesying Primrose Day would have been set in the stocks, though Pitt inclined his private ear to Benjamin Goldsmid's views on the foreign loans – in those days, when Tevele Schiff was Rabbi in Israel, and Dr. de Falk, the Master of the Tetragrammaton, saint and Cabbalistic conjuror, flourished in Wellclose Square, and the composer of "The Death of Nelson" was a choir-boy in the Great Synagogue; Joseph Grobstock, pillar of the same, emerged one afternoon into the spring sunshine at the fag-end of the departing stream of worshippers. In his hand was a large canvas bag, and in his eye a twinkle.

There had been a special service of prayer and thanksgiving for the happy restoration of his Majesty's health, and the cantor had interceded tunefully with Providence on behalf of Royal George and "our most amiable Queen, Charlotte." The congregation was large and fashionable – far more so than when only a heavenly sovereign was concerned – and so the courtyard was thronged with a string of *Schnorrers* (beggars), awaiting the exit of the audience, much as the vestibule of the opera-house is lined by footmen.

They were a motley crew, with tangled beards and long hair that fell in curls, if not the curls of the period; but the gaberdines of the German Ghettoes had been in most cases exchanged for the knee-breeches and many-buttoned jacket of the Londoner. When the clothes one has brought from the Continent wear out, one must needs adopt the attire of one's superiors, or be reduced to buying. Many bore staves, and had their loins girded up with coloured handkerchiefs, as though ready at any moment to return from the Captivity. Their woebegone air was achieved almost entirely by not washing – it owed little to nature, to adventitious aids in the shape of deformities. The merest sprinkling boasted of physical afflictions, and none exposed sores like the lazars of Italy or contortions like the cripples of Constantinople. Such crude methods are eschewed in the fine art of *schnorring*. A green shade might denote weakness of sight, but the stone-blind man bore no braggart placard – his infirmity was an old established concern well known to the public, and conferring upon the proprietor a definite status in the community. He was no anonymous atom, such as drifts blindly through Christendom, vagrant and apologetic. Rarest of all sights in this pageantry of Jewish pauperdom was the hollow trouser-leg or the empty sleeve, or the wooden limb fulfilling either and pushing out a proclamatory peg.

When the pack of *Schnorrers* caught sight of Joseph Grobstock, they fell upon him full-cry, blessing him. He, nothing surprised, brushed pompously through the benedictions, though the twinkle in his eye became a roguish gleam. Outside the iron gates, where the throng was thickest, and where some elegant chariots that had brought worshippers from distant Hackney were preparing to start, he came to a standstill, surrounded by clamouring *Schnorrers*, and dipped his hand slowly and ceremoniously into the bag. There was a moment of breathless expectation among the beggars, and Joseph Grobstock had a moment of exquisite consciousness of importance, as he stood there swelling in the sunshine. There was no middle class to speak of in the eighteenth-century Jewry; the world was divided into rich and poor, and the rich were very, very rich, and the poor very, very poor, so that everyone knew his station. Joseph Grobstock was satisfied with that in which it had pleased God

to place him. He was a jovial, heavy-jowled creature, whose clean-shaven chin was doubling, and he was habited like a person of the first respectability in a beautiful blue body-coat with a row of big yellow buttons. The frilled shirt front, high collar of the very newest fashion, and copious white neckerchief showed off the massive fleshiness of the red throat. His hat was of the Quaker pattern, and his head did not fail of the periwig and the pigtail, the latter being heretical in name only.

What Joseph Grobstock drew from the bag was a small white-paper packet, and his sense of humour led him to place it in the hand furthest from his nose; for it was a broad humour, not a subtle. It enabled him to extract pleasure from seeing a fellow-mortal's hat rollick in the wind, but did little to alleviate the chase for his own. His jokes clapped you on the back, they did not tickle delicately.

Such was the man who now became the complacent cynosure of all eyes, even of those that had no appeal in them, as soon as the principle of his eleemosynary operations had broken on the crowd. The first *Schnorrer*, feverishly tearing open his package, had found a florin, and, as by electricity, all except the blind beggar were aware that Joseph Grobstock was distributing florins. The distributor partook of the general consciousness, and his lips twitched. Silently he dipped again into the bag, and, selecting the hand nearest, put a second white package into it. A wave of joy brightened the grimy face, to change instantly to one of horror.

"You have made a mistake – you have given me a penny!" cried the beggar.

"Keep it for your honesty," replied Joseph Grobstock imperturbably, and affected not to enjoy the laughter of the rest. The third mendicant ceased laughing when he discovered that fold on fold of paper sheltered a tiny sixpence. It was now obvious that the great man was distributing prize-packets, and the excitement of the piebald crowd grew momentarily. Grobstock went on dipping, lynx-eyed against second applications. One of the few pieces of gold in the lucky-bag fell to the solitary lame man, who danced in his joy on his sound leg, while the poor blind man pocketed his halfpenny, unconscious of ill-fortune, and merely wondering why the coin came swathed in paper.

By this time Grobstock could control his face no longer, and the last episodes of the lottery were played to the accompaniment of a broad grin. Keen and complex was his enjoyment. There was not only the general surprise at this novel feat of alms; there were the special surprises of detail written on face after face, as it flashed or fell or frowned in congruity with the contents of the envelope, and for undercurrent a delicious hubbub of interjections and benedictions, a stretching and withdrawing of palms, and a swift shifting of figures, that made the scene a farrago of excitements. So that the broad grin was one of gratification as well as of amusement, and part of the gratification sprang from a real kindness of heart – for Grobstock was an easy-going man with whom the world had gone easy. The *Schnorrers* were exhausted before the packets, but the philanthropist was in no anxiety to be rid of the remnant. Closing the mouth of the considerably lightened bag and clutching it tightly by the throat, and recomposing his face to gravity, he moved slowly down the street like a stately treasure-ship flecked by the sunlight. His way led towards Goodman's Fields, where his mansion was situate, and he knew that the fine weather would bring out *Schnorrers* enough. And, indeed, he had not gone many paces before he met a figure he did not remember having seen before.

Leaning against a post at the head of the narrow passage which led to Bevis Marks was a tall, black-bearded, turbaned personage, a first glance at whom showed him of the true tribe. Mechanically Joseph Grobstock's hand went to the lucky-bag, and he drew out a neatly-folded packet and tendered it to the stranger.

The stranger received the gift graciously, and opened it gravely, the philanthropist loitering awkwardly to mark the issue. Suddenly the dark face became a thunder-cloud, the eyes flashed lightning.

"An evil spirit in your ancestors' bones!" hissed the stranger, from between his flashing teeth. "Did you come here to insult me?"

"Pardon, a thousand pardons!" stammered the magnate, wholly taken aback. "I fancied you were a – a – a – poor man."

"And, therefore, you came to insult me!"

"No, no, I thought to help you," murmured Grobstock, turning from red to scarlet. Was it possible he had foisted his charity upon an undeserving millionaire? No! Through all the clouds of his own confusion and the recipient's anger, the figure of a *Schnorrer* loomed too plain for mistake. None but a *Schnorrer* would wear a home-made turban, issue of a black cap crossed with a white kerchief; none but a *Schnorrer* would unbutton the first nine buttons of his waistcoat, or, if this relaxation were due to the warmth of the weather, counteract it by wearing an over-garment, especially one as heavy as a blanket, with buttons the size of compasses and flaps reaching nearly to his shoe-buckles, even though its length were only congruous with that of his undercoat, which already reached the bottoms of his knee-breeches. Finally, who but a *Schnorrer* would wear this overcoat cloak-wise, with dangling sleeves, full of armless suggestion from a side view? Quite apart from the shabbiness of the snuff-coloured fabric, it was amply evident that the wearer did not dress by rule or measure. Yet the disproportions of his attire did but enhance the picturesqueness of a personality that would be striking even in a bath, though it was not likely to be seen there. The beard was jet black, sweeping and unkempt, and ran up his cheeks to meet the raven hair, so that the vivid face was framed in black; it was a long, tapering face with sanguine lips gleaming at the heart of a black bush; the eyes were large and lambent, set in deep sockets under black arching eyebrows; the nose was long and Coptic; the brow low but broad, with straggling wisps of hair protruding from beneath the turban. His right hand grasped a plain ashen staff.

Worthy Joseph Grobstock found the figure of the mendicant only too impressive; he shrank uneasily before the indignant eyes.

"I meant to help you," he repeated.

"And this is how one helps a brother in Israel?" said the *Schnorrer*, throwing the paper contemptuously into the philanthropist's face. It struck him on the bridge of the nose, but impinged so mildly that he felt at once what was the matter. The packet was empty – the *Schnorrer* had drawn a blank; the only one the good-natured man had put into the bag.

The *Schnorrer's* audacity sobered Joseph Grobstock completely; it might have angered him to chastise the fellow, but it did not. His better nature prevailed; he began to feel shamefaced, fumbled sheepishly in his pocket for a crown; then hesitated, as fearing this peace-offering would not altogether suffice with so rare a spirit, and that he owed the stranger more than silver – an apology to wit. He proceeded honestly to pay it, but with a maladroit manner, as one unaccustomed to the currency.

"You are an impertinent rascal," he said, "but I daresay you feel hurt. Let me assure you I did not know there was nothing in the packet. I did not, indeed."

"Then your steward has robbed me!" exclaimed the *Schnorrer* excitedly. "You let him make up the packets, and he has stolen my money – the thief, the transgressor, thrice-cursed who robs the poor."

"You don't understand," interrupted the magnate meekly. "I made up the packets myself."

"Then, why do you say you did not know what was in them? Go, you mock my misery!"

"Nay, hear me out!" urged Grobstock desperately. "In some I placed gold, in the greater number silver, in a few copper, in one alone – nothing. That is the one you have drawn. It is your misfortune."

"My misfortune!" echoed the *Schnorrer* scornfully. "It is *your* misfortune – I did not even draw it. The Holy One, blessed be He, has punished you for your heartless jesting with the poor – making a sport for yourself of their misfortunes, even as the Philistines sported with Samson. The good deed you might have put to your account by a gratuity to me, God has taken from you. He has declared you unworthy of achieving righteousness through me. Go your way, murderer!"

"Murderer!" repeated the philanthropist, bewildered by this harsh view of his action.

"Yes, murderer! Stands it not in the Talmud that he who shames another is as one who spills his blood? And have you not put me to shame – if anyone had witnessed your almsgiving, would he not have laughed in my beard?"

The pillar of the Synagogue felt as if his paunch were shrinking.

"But the others – " he murmured deprecatingly. "I have not shed their blood – have I not given freely of my hard-earned gold?"

"For your own diversion," retorted the *Schnorrer* implacably. "But what says the Midrash? There is a wheel rolling in the world – not he who is rich to-day is rich to-morrow, but this one He brings up, and this one He brings down, as is said in the seventy-fifth Psalm. Therefore, lift not up your horn on high, nor speak with a stiff neck."

He towered above the unhappy capitalist, like an ancient prophet denouncing a swollen monarch. The poor man put his hand involuntarily to his high collar as if to explain away his apparent arrogance, but in reality because he was not breathing easily under the *Schnorrer's* attack.

"You are an uncharitable man," he panted hotly, driven to a line of defence he had not anticipated. "I did it not from wantonness, but from faith in Heaven. I know well that God sits turning a wheel – therefore I did not presume to turn it myself. Did I not let Providence select who should have the silver and who the gold, who the copper and who the emptiness? Besides, God alone knows who really needs my assistance – I have made Him my almoner; I have cast my burden on the Lord."

"Epicurean!" shrieked the *Schnorrer*. "Blasphemer! Is it thus you would palter with the sacred texts? Do you forget what the next verse says: 'Bloodthirsty and deceitful men shall not live out half their days'? Shame on you – you a *Gabbai* (treasurer) of the Great Synagogue. You see I know you, Joseph Grobstock. Has not the beadle of your Synagogue boasted to me that you have given him a guinea for brushing your spatterdashes? Would you think of offering *him* a packet? Nay, it is the poor that are trodden on – they whose merits are in excess of those of beadles. But the Lord will find others to take up his loans – for he who hath pity on the poor lendeth to the Lord. You are no true son of Israel."

The *Schnorrer's* tirade was long enough to allow Grobstock to recover his dignity and his breath.

"If you really knew me, you would know that the Lord is considerably in my debt," he rejoined quietly. "When next you would discuss me, speak with the Psalms-men, not the beadle. Never have I neglected the needy. Even now, though you have been insolent and uncharitable, I am ready to befriend you if you are in want."

"If I am in want!" repeated the *Schnorrer* scornfully. "Is there anything I do not want?"

"You are married?"

"You correct me – wife and children are the only things I do *not* lack."

"No pauper does," quoth Grobstock, with a twinkle of restored humour.

"No," assented the *Schnorrer* sternly. "The poor man has the fear of Heaven. He obeys the Law and the Commandments. He marries while he is young – and his spouse is not cursed with barrenness. It is the rich man who transgresses the Judgment, who delays to come under the Canopy."

"Ah! well, here is a guinea – in the name of my wife," broke in Grobstock laughingly. "Or stay – since you do not brush spatterdashes – here is another."

"In the name of my wife," rejoined the *Schnorrer* with dignity, "I thank you."

"Thank me in your own name," said Grobstock. "I mean tell it me."

"I am Manasseh Bueno Barzillai Azevedo da Costa," he answered simply.

"A Sephardi!" exclaimed the philanthropist.

"Is it not written on my face, even as it is written on yours that you are a Tedesco? It is the first time that I have taken gold from one of your lineage."

"Oh, indeed!" murmured Grobstock, beginning to feel small again.

"Yes – are we not far richer than your community? What need have I to take the good deeds away from my own people – they have too few opportunities for beneficence as it is, being so many of them wealthy; brokers and West India merchants, and – "

"But I, too, am a financier, and an East India Director," Grobstock reminded him.

"Maybe; but your community is yet young and struggling – your rich men are as the good men in Sodom for multitude. You are the immigrants of yesterday – refugees from the Ghettoes of Russia and Poland and Germany. But we, as you are aware, have been established here for generations; in the Peninsula our ancestors graced the courts of kings, and controlled the purse-strings of princes; in Holland we held the empery of trade. Ours have been the poets and scholars in Israel. You cannot expect that we should recognise your rabble, which prejudices us in the eyes of England. We made the name of Jew honourable; you degrade it. You are as the mixed multitude which came up with our forefathers out of Egypt."

"Nonsense!" said Grobstock sharply. "All Israel are brethren."

"Esau was the brother of Israel," answered Manasseh sententiously. "But you will excuse me if I go a-marketing, it is such a pleasure to handle gold." There was a note of wistful pathos in the latter remark which took off the edge of the former, and touched Joseph with compunction for bandying words with a hungry man whose loved ones were probably starving patiently at home.

"Certainly, haste away," he said kindly.

"I shall see you again," said Manasseh, with a valedictory wave of his hand, and digging his staff into the cobblestones he journeyed forwards without bestowing a single backward glance upon his benefactor.

Grobstock's road took him to Petticoat Lane in the wake of Manasseh. He had no intention of following him, but did not see why he should change his route for fear of the *Schnorrer*, more especially as Manasseh did not look back. By this time he had become conscious again of the bag he carried, but he had no heart to proceed with the fun. He felt conscience stricken, and had recourse to his pockets instead in his progress through the narrow jostling market-street, where he scarcely ever bought anything personally save fish and good deeds. He was a connoisseur in both. To-day he picked up many a good deed cheap, paying pennies for articles he did not take away – shoe-latchets and cane-strings, barley-sugar and butter-cakes. Suddenly, through a chink in an opaque mass of human beings, he caught sight of a small attractive salmon on a fishmonger's slab. His eye glittered, his chops watered. He elbowed his way to the vendor, whose eye caught a corresponding gleam, and whose finger went to his hat in respectful greeting.

"Good afternoon, Jonathan," said Grobstock jovially, "I'll take that salmon there – how much?"

"Pardon me," said a voice in the crowd, "I am just bargaining for it."

Grobstock started. It was the voice of Manasseh.

"Stop that nonsense, da Costa," responded the fishmonger. "You know you won't give me my price. It is the only one I have left," he added, half for the benefit of Grobstock. "I couldn't let it go under a couple of guineas."

"Here's your money," cried Manasseh with passionate contempt, and sent two golden coins spinning musically upon the slab.

In the crowd sensation, in Grobstock's breast astonishment, indignation, and bitterness. He was struck momentarily dumb. His face purpled. The scales of the salmon shone like a celestial vision that was fading from him by his own stupidity.

"I'll take that salmon, Jonathan," he repeated, spluttering. "Three guineas."

"Pardon me," repeated Manasseh, "it is too late. This is not an auction." He seized the fish by the tail.

Grobstock turned upon him, goaded to the point of apoplexy. "You!" he cried. "You – you – rogue! How dare you buy salmon!"

"Rogue yourself!" retorted Manasseh. "Would you have me steal salmon?"

"You have stolen my money, knave, rascal!"

"Murderer! Shedder of blood! Did you not give me the money as a free-will offering, for the good of your wife's soul? I call on you before all these witnesses to confess yourself a slanderer!"

"Slanderer, indeed! I repeat, you are a knave and a jackanapes. You – a pauper – a beggar – with a wife and children. How can you have the face to go and spend two guineas – two whole guineas – all you have in the world – on a mere luxury like salmon?"

Manasseh elevated his arched eyebrows.

"If I do not buy salmon when I have two guineas," he answered quietly, "when shall I buy salmon? As you say, it is a luxury; very dear. It is only on rare occasions like this that my means run to it." There was a dignified pathos about the rebuke that mollified the magnate. He felt that there was reason in the beggar's point of view – though it was a point to which he would never himself have risen, unaided. But righteous anger still simmered in him; he felt vaguely that there was something to be said in reply, though he also felt that even if he knew what it was, it would have to be said in a lower key to correspond with Manasseh's transition from the high pitch of the opening passages. Not finding the requisite repartee he was silent.

"In the name of my wife," went on Manasseh, swinging the salmon by the tail, "I ask you to clear my good name which you have bespattered in the presence of my very tradesmen. Again I call upon you to confess before these witnesses that you gave me the money yourself in charity. Come! Do you deny it?"

"No, I don't deny it," murmured Grobstock, unable to understand why he appeared to himself like a whipped cur, or how what should have been a boast had been transformed into an apology to a beggar.

"In the name of my wife, I thank you," said Manasseh. "She loves salmon, and fries with unction. And now, since you have no further use for that bag of yours, I will relieve you of its burden by taking my salmon home in it." He took the canvas bag from the limp grasp of the astonished Tedesco, and dropped the fish in. The head protruded, surveying the scene with a cold, glassy, ironical eye.

"Good afternoon all," said the *Schnorrer* courteously.

"One moment," called out the philanthropist, when he found his tongue. "The bag is not empty – there are a number of packets still left in it."

"So much the better!" said Manasseh soothingly. "You will be saved from the temptation to continue shedding the blood of the poor, and I shall be saved from spending *all* your bounty upon salmon – an extravagance you were right to deplore."

"But – but!" began Grobstock.

"No – no 'buts,'" protested Manasseh, waving his bag deprecatingly. "You were right. You admitted you were wrong before; shall I be less magnanimous now? In the presence of all these witnesses I acknowledge the justice of your rebuke. I ought not to have wasted two guineas on one fish. It was not worth it. Come over here, and I will tell you something." He walked out of earshot of the by-standers, turning down a side alley opposite the stall, and beckoned with his salmon bag. The East India Director had no course but to obey. He would probably have followed him in any case, to have it out with him, but now he had a humiliating sense of being at the *Schnorrer's* beck and call.

"Well, what more have you to say?" he demanded gruffly.

"I wish to save you money in future," said the beggar in low, confidential tones. "That Jonathan is a son of the separation! The salmon is not worth two guineas – no, on my soul! If you had not come up I should have got it for twenty-five shillings. Jonathan stuck on the price when he thought you would buy. I trust you will not let me be the loser by your arrival, and that if I should find less than seventeen shillings in the bag you will make it up to me."

The bewildered financier felt his grievance disappearing as by sleight of hand.

Manasseh added winningly: "I know you are a gentleman, capable of behaving as finely as any Sephardi."

This handsome compliment completed the *Schnorrer's* victory, which was sealed by his saying, "And so I should not like you to have it on your soul that you had done a poor man out of a few shillings."

Grobstock could only remark meekly: "You will find more than seventeen shillings in the bag."

"Ah, why were you born a Tedesco!" cried Manasseh ecstatically. "Do you know what I have a mind to do? To come and be your Sabbath-guest! Yes, I will take supper with you next Friday, and we will welcome the Bride – the holy Sabbath – together! Never before have I sat at the table of a Tedesco – but you – you are a man after my own heart. Your soul is a son of Spain. Next Friday at six – do not forget."

"But – but I do not have Sabbath-guests," faltered Grobstock.

"Not have Sabbath-guests! No, no, I will not believe you are of the sons of Belial, whose table is spread only for the rich, who do not proclaim your equality with the poor even once a week. It is your fine nature that would hide its benefactions. Do not I, Manasseh Bueno Barzillai Azevedo da Costa, have at my Sabbath-table every week Yankelé ben Yitzchok – a Pole? And if I have a Tedesco at my table, why should I draw the line there? Why should I not permit you, a Tedesco, to return the hospitality to me, a Sephardi? At six, then! I know your house well – it is an elegant building that does credit to your taste – do not be uneasy – I shall not fail to be punctual. *A Dios!*"

This time he waved his stick fraternally, and stalked down a turning. For an instant Grobstock stood glued to the spot, crushed by a sense of the inevitable. Then a horrible thought occurred to him.

Easy-going man as he was, he might put up with the visitation of Manasseh. But then he had a wife, and, what was worse, a livery servant. How could he expect a livery servant to tolerate such a guest? He might fly from the town on Friday evening, but that would necessitate troublesome explanations. And Manasseh would come again the next Friday. That was certain. Manasseh would be like grim death – his coming, though it might be postponed, was inevitable. Oh, it was too terrible. At all costs he must revoke the invitation(?). Placed between Scylla and Charybdis, between Manasseh and his manservant, he felt he could sooner face the former.

"Da Costa!" he called in agony. "Da Costa!"

The *Schnorrer* turned, and then Grobstock found he was mistaken in imagining he preferred to face da Costa.

"You called me?" enquired the beggar.

"Ye – e – s," faltered the East India Director, and stood paralysed.

"What can I do for you?" said Manasseh graciously.

"Would you mind – very much – if I – if I asked you –"

"Not to come," was in his throat, but stuck there.

"If you asked me –" said Manasseh encouragingly.

"To accept some of my clothes," flashed Grobstock, with a sudden inspiration. After all, Manasseh was a fine figure of a man. If he could get him to doff those musty garments of his he might almost pass him off as a prince of the blood, foreign by his beard – at any rate he could be certain of making him acceptable to the livery servant. He breathed freely again at this happy solution of the situation.

"Your cast-off clothes?" asked Manasseh. Grobstock was not sure whether the tone was supercilious or eager. He hastened to explain. "No, not quite that. Second-hand things I am still wearing. My old clothes were already given away at Passover to Simeon the Psalms-man. These are comparatively new."

"Then I would beg you to excuse me," said Manasseh, with a stately wave of the bag.

"Oh, but why not?" murmured Grobstock, his blood running cold again.

"I cannot," said Manasseh, shaking his head.

"But they will just about fit you," pleaded the philanthropist.

"That makes it all the more absurd for you to give them to Simeon the Psalms-man," said Manasseh sternly. "Still, since he is your clothes-receiver, I could not think of interfering with his office. It is not etiquette. I am surprised you should ask me if I should mind. Of course I should mind – I should mind very much."

"But he is not my clothes-receiver," protested Grobstock. "Last Passover was the first time I gave them to him, because my cousin, Hyam Rosenstein, who used to have them, has died."

"But surely he considers himself your cousin's heir," said Manasseh. "He expects all your old clothes henceforth."

"No. I gave him no such promise."

Manasseh hesitated.

"Well, in that case – "

"In that case," repeated Grobstock breathlessly.

"On condition that I am to have the appointment permanently, of course."

"Of course," echoed Grobstock eagerly.

"Because you see," Manasseh condescended to explain, "it hurts one's reputation to lose a client."

"Yes, yes, naturally," said Grobstock soothingly. "I quite understand." Then, feeling himself slipping into future embarrassments, he added timidly, "Of course they will not always be so good as the first lot, because – "

"Say no more," Manasseh interrupted reassuringly, "I will come at once and fetch them."

"No. I will send them," cried Grobstock, horrified afresh.

"I could not dream of permitting it. What! Shall I put you to all that trouble which should rightly be mine? I will go at once – the matter shall be settled without delay, I promise you; as it is written, 'I made haste and delayed not!' Follow me!" Grobstock suppressed a groan. Here had all his manœuvring landed him in a worse plight than ever. He would have to present Manasseh to the livery servant without even that clean face which might not unreasonably have been expected for the Sabbath. Despite the text quoted by the erudite *Schnorrer*, he strove to put off the evil hour.

"Had you not better take the salmon home to your wife first?" said he.

"My duty is to enable you to complete your good deed at once. My wife is unaware of the salmon. She is in no suspense."

Even as the *Schnorrer* spake it flashed upon Grobstock that Manasseh was more presentable with the salmon than without it – in fact, that the salmon was the salvation of the situation. When Grobstock bought fish he often hired a man to carry home the spoil. Manasseh would have all the air of such a loafer. Who would suspect that the fish and even the bag belonged to the porter, though purchased with the gentleman's money? Grobstock silently thanked Providence for the ingenious way in which it had contrived to save his self-respect. As a mere fish-carrier Manasseh would attract no second glance from the household; once safely in, it would be comparatively easy to smuggle him out, and when he did come on Friday night it would be in the metamorphosing glories of a body-coat, with his unspeakable undergarment turned into a shirt and his turban knocked into a cocked hat.

They emerged into Aldgate, and then turned down Leman Street, a fashionable quarter, and so into Great Prescott Street. At the critical street corner Grobstock's composure began to desert him: he took out his handsomely ornamented snuff-box and administered to himself a mighty pinch. It did him good, and he walked on and was well nigh arrived at his own door when Manasseh suddenly caught him by a coat button.

"Stand still a second," he cried imperatively.

"What is it?" murmured Grobstock, in alarm.

"You have spilt snuff all down your coat front," Manasseh replied severely. "Hold the bag a moment while I brush it off."

Joseph obeyed, and Manasseh scrupulously removed every particle with such patience that Grobstock's was exhausted.

"Thank you," he said at last, as politely as he could. "That will do."

"No, it will not do," replied Manasseh. "I cannot have my coat spoiled. By the time it comes to me it will be a mass of stains if I don't look after it."

"Oh, is that why you took so much trouble?" said Grobstock, with an uneasy laugh.

"Why else? Do you take me for a beadle, a brusher of gaiters?" enquired Manasseh haughtily. "There now! that is the cleanest I can get it. You would escape these droppings if you held your snuff-box so – " Manasseh gently took the snuff-box and began to explain, walking on a few paces.

"Ah, we are at home!" he cried, breaking off the object-lesson suddenly. He pushed open the gate, ran up the steps of the mansion and knocked thunderously, then snuffed himself magnificently from the bejewelled snuff-box.

Behind came Joseph Grobstock, slouching limply, and carrying Manasseh da Costa's fish.

CHAPTER II

SHOWING HOW THE KING REIGNED

When he realised that he had been turned into a fish-porter, the financier hastened up the steps so as to be at the *Schnorrer's* side when the door opened.

The livery-servant was visibly taken aback by the spectacle of their juxtaposition.

"This salmon to the cook!" cried Grobstock desperately, handing him the bag.

Da Costa looked thunders, and was about to speak, but Grobstock's eye sought his in frantic appeal. "Wait a minute; I will settle with you," he cried, congratulating himself on a phrase that would carry another meaning to Wilkinson's ears. He drew a breath of relief when the flunkey disappeared, and left them standing in the spacious hall with its statues and plants.

"Is this the way you steal my salmon, after all?" demanded da Costa hotly.

"Hush, hush! I didn't mean to steal it! I will pay you for it!"

"I refuse to sell! You coveted it from the first – you have broken the Tenth Commandment, even as these stone figures violate the Second. Your invitation to me to accompany you here at once was a mere trick. Now I understand why you were so eager."

"No, no, da Costa. Seeing that you placed the fish in my hands, I had no option but to give it to Wilkinson, because – because – " Grobstock would have had some difficulty in explaining, but Manasseh saved him the pain.

"You had to give *my* fish to Wilkinson!" he interrupted. "Sir, I thought you were a fine man, a man of honour. I admit that I placed my fish in your hands. But because I had no hesitation in allowing you to carry it, this is how you repay my confidence!"

In the whirl of his thoughts Grobstock grasped at the word "repay" as a swimmer in a whirlpool grasps at a straw.

"I will repay your money!" he cried. "Here are your two guineas. You will get another salmon, and more cheaply. As you pointed out, you could have got this for twenty-five shillings."

"Two guineas!" ejaculated Manasseh contemptuously. "Why you offered Jonathan, the fishmonger, three!"

Grobstock was astounded, but it was beneath him to bargain. And he remembered that, after all, he *would* enjoy the salmon.

"Well, here are three guineas," he said pacifically, offering them.

"Three guineas!" echoed Manasseh, spurning them. "And what of my profit?"

"Profit!" gasped Grobstock.

"Since you have made me a middle-man, since you have forced me into the fish trade, I must have my profits like anybody else."

"Here is a crown extra!"

"And my compensation?"

"What do you mean?" enquired Grobstock, exasperated. "Compensation for what?"

"For what? For two things at the very least," Manasseh said unswervingly. "In the first place," and as he began his logically divided reply his tone assumed the sing-song sacred to Talmudical dialectics, "compensation for not eating the salmon myself. For it is not as if I offered it you – I merely entrusted it to you, and it is ordained in Exodus that if a man shall deliver unto his neighbour an ass, or an ox, or a sheep, or any beast to keep, then for every matter of trespass, whether it be for ox, for ass, for sheep, for raiment, or for any manner of lost thing, the man shall receive double, and therefore you should pay me six guineas. And secondly – "

"Not another farthing!" spluttered Grobstock, red as a turkey-cock.

"Very well," said the *Schnorrer* imperturbably, and, lifting up his voice, he called "Wilkinson!"

"Hush!" commanded Grobstock. "What are you doing?"

"I will tell Wilkinson to bring back my property."

"Wilkinson will not obey you."

"Not obey *me*! A servant! Why he is not even black! All the Sephardim I visit have black pages – much grander than Wilkinson – and they tremble at my nod. At Baron D'Aguilar's mansion in Broad Street Buildings there is a retinue of twenty-four servants, and they – "

"And what is your second claim?"

"Compensation for being degraded to fishmongering. I am not of those who sell things in the streets. I am a son of the Law, a student of the Talmud."

"If a crown piece will satisfy each of these claims – "

"I am not a blood-sucker – as it is said in the Talmud, Tractate Passover, 'God loves the man who gives not way to wrath nor stickles for his rights' – that makes altogether three guineas and three crowns."

"Yes. Here they are."

Wilkinson reappeared. "You called me, sir?" he said.

"No, *I* called you," said Manasseh, "I wished to give you a crown."

And he handed him one of the three. Wilkinson took it, stupefied, and retired.

"Did I not get rid of him cleverly?" said Manasseh. "You see how he obeys me!"

"Ye-es."

"I shall not ask you for more than the bare crown I gave him to save your honour."

"To save my honour!"

"Would you have had me tell him the real reason I called him was that his master was a thief? No, sir, I was careful not to shed your blood in public, though you had no such care for mine."

"Here is the crown!" said Grobstock savagely. "Nay, here are three!" He turned out his breeches-pockets to exhibit their absolute nudity.

"No, no," said Manasseh mildly, "I shall take but two. You had best keep the other – you may want a little silver." He pressed it into the magnate's hand.

"You should not be so prodigal in future," he added, in kindly reproach. "It is bad to be left with nothing in one's pocket – I know the feeling, and can sympathise with you." Grobstock stood speechless, clasping the crown of charity.

Standing thus at the hall door, he had the air of Wilkinson, surprised by a too generous vail.

Da Costa cut short the crisis by offering his host a pinch from the jewel-crusted snuff-box. Grobstock greedily took the whole box, the beggar resigning it to him without protest. In his gratitude for this unexpected favour, Grobstock pocketed the silver insult without further ado, and led the way towards the second-hand clothes. He walked gingerly, so as not to awaken his wife, who was a great amateur of the siesta, and might issue suddenly from her apartment like a spider, but Manasseh stolidly thumped on the stairs with his staff. Happily the carpet was thick.

The clothes hung in a mahogany wardrobe with a plateglass front in Grobstock's elegantly appointed bedchamber.

Grobstock rummaged among them while Manasseh, parting the white Persian curtains lined with pale pink, gazed out of the window towards the Tenterground that stretched in the rear of the mansion. Leaning on his staff, he watched the couples promenading among the sunlit parterres and amid the shrubberies, in the cool freshness of declining day. Here and there the vivid face of a dark-eyed beauty gleamed like a passion-flower. Manasseh surveyed the scene with bland benevolence; at peace with God and man.

He did not deign to bestow a glance upon the garments till Grobstock observed: "There! I think that's all I can spare." Then he turned leisurely and regarded – with the same benign aspect – the litter Grobstock had spread upon the bed – a medley of articles in excellent condition, gorgeous neckerchiefs piled in three-cornered hats, and buckled shoes trampling on white waistcoats. But his

eye had scarcely rested on them a quarter of a minute when a sudden flash came into it, and a spasm crossed his face.

"Excuse me!" he cried, and hastened towards the door.

"What's the matter?" exclaimed Grobstock, in astonished apprehension. Was his gift to be flouted thus?

"I'll be back in a moment," said Manasseh, and hurried down the stairs.

Relieved on one point, Grobstock was still full of vague alarms. He ran out on the landing. "What do you want?" he called down as loudly as he dared.

"My money!" said Manasseh.

Imagining that the *Schnorrer* had left the proceeds of the sale of the salmon in the hall, Joseph Grobstock returned to his room, and occupied himself half-mechanically in sorting the garments he had thrown higgledy-piggledy upon the bed. In so doing he espied amid the heap a pair of pantaloons entirely new and unworn which he had carelessly thrown in. It was while replacing this in the wardrobe that he heard sounds of objurgation. The cook's voice – Hibernian and high-pitched – travelled unmistakably to his ears, and brought fresh trepidation to his heart. He repaired to the landing again, and craned his neck over the balustrade. Happily the sounds were evanescent; in another minute Manasseh's head reappeared, mounting. When his left hand came in sight, Grobstock perceived it was grasping the lucky-bag with which a certain philanthropist had started out so joyously that afternoon. The unlucky-bag he felt inclined to dub it now.

"I have recovered it!" observed the *Schnorrer* cheerfully. "As it is written, 'And David recovered all that the Amalekites had taken.' You see in the excitement of the moment I did not notice that you had stolen my packets of silver as well as my salmon. Luckily your cook had not yet removed the fish from the bag – I chid her all the same for neglecting to put it into water, and she opened her mouth not in wisdom. If she had not been a heathen I should have suspected her of trickery, for I knew nothing of the amount of money in the bag, saving your assurance that it did not fall below seventeen shillings, and it would have been easy for her to replace the fish. Therefore, in the words of David, will I give thanks unto Thee, O Lord, among the heathen."

The mental vision of the irruption of Manasseh into the kitchen was not pleasant to Grobstock. However, he only murmured: "How came you to think of it so suddenly?"

"Looking at your clothes reminded me. I was wondering if you had left anything in the pockets."

The donor started – he knew himself a careless rascal – and made as if he would overhaul his garments. The glitter in Manasseh's eye petrified him.

"Do you – do you – mind my looking?" he stammered apologetically.

"Am I a dog?" quoted the *Schnorrer* with dignity. "Am I a thief that you should go over my pockets? If, when I get home," he conceded, commencing to draw distinctions with his thumb, "I should find anything in my pockets that is of no value to anybody but you, do you fear I will not return it? If, on the other hand, I find anything that is of value to me, do you fear I will not keep it?"

"No, but – but – " Grobstock broke down, scarcely grasping the argumentation despite his own clarity of financial insight; he only felt vaguely that the *Schnorrer* was – professionally enough – begging the question.

"But what?" enquired Manasseh. "Surely you need not me to teach you your duty. You cannot be ignorant of the Law of Moses on the point."

"The Law of Moses says nothing on the point!"

"Indeed! What says Deuteronomy? 'When thou reapest thine harvest in thy field, and hast forgot a sheaf in the field, thou shalt not go again to fetch it: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow.' Is it not further forbidden to go over the boughs of thy olive-tree again, or to gather the fallen fruit of thy vineyard? You will admit that Moses would have added a prohibition against searching minutely the pockets of cast-off garments, were it not that for forty years our ancestors had to wander in the wilderness in the same clothes, which miraculously waxed with their growth. No, I

feel sure you will respect the spirit of the law, for when I went down into your kitchen and examined the door-post to see if you had nailed up a *mezuzah* upon it, knowing that many Jews only flaunt *mezuzahs* on door-posts visible to visitors, it rejoiced me to find one below stairs."

Grobstock's magnanimity responded to the appeal. It would be indeed petty to scrutinise his pockets, or to feel the linings for odd coins. After all he had Manasseh's promise to restore papers and everything of no value.

"Well, well," he said pleasantly, consoled by the thought his troubles had now come to an end – for that day at least – "take them away as they are."

"It is all very well to say take them away," replied Manasseh, with a touch of resentment, "but what am I to take them in?"

"Oh – ah – yes! There must be a sack somewhere –"

"And do you think I would carry them away in a sack? Would you have me look like an old clo' man? I must have a box. I see several in the box-room."

"Very well," said Grobstock resignedly. "If there's an empty one you may have it."

Manasseh laid his stick on the dressing-table and carefully examined the boxes, some of which were carelessly open, while every lock had a key sticking in it. They had travelled far and wide with Grobstock, who invariably combined pleasure with business.

"There is none quite empty," announced the *Schnorrer*, "but in this one there are only a few trifles – a pair of galligaskins and such like – so that if you make me a present of them the box *will* be empty, so far as you are concerned."

"All right," said Grobstock, and actually laughed. The nearer the departure of the *Schnorrer*, the higher his spirits rose.

Manasseh dragged the box towards the bed, and then for the first time since his return from the under-regions, surveyed the medley of garments upon it.

The light-hearted philanthropist, watching his face, saw it instantly change to darkness, like a tropical landscape. His own face grew white. The *Schnorrer* uttered an inarticulate cry, and turned a strange, questioning glance upon his patron.

"What is it now?" faltered Grobstock.

"I miss a pair of pantaloons!"

Grobstock grew whiter. "Nonsense! nonsense!" he muttered.

"I – miss – a – pair – of – pantaloons!" reiterated the *Schnorrer* deliberately.

"Oh, no – you have all I can spare there," said Grobstock uneasily. The *Schnorrer* hastily turned over the heap.

Then his eye flashed fire; he banged his fist on the dressing-table to accompany each *staccato* syllable.

"I – miss – a – pair – of – pan – ta – loons!" he shrieked.

The weak and ductile donor had a bad quarter of a minute.

"Perhaps," he stammered at last, "you – m – mean – the new pair I found had got accidentally mixed up with them."

"Of course I mean the new pair! And so you took them away! Just because I wasn't looking. I left the room, thinking I had to do with a man of honour. If you had taken an old pair I shouldn't have minded so much; but to rob a poor man of his brand-new breeches!"

"I must have them," cried Grobstock irascibly. "I have to go to a reception to-morrow, and they are the only pair I shall have to wear. You see I –"

"Oh, very well," interrupted the *Schnorrer*, in low, indifferent tones.

After that there was a dead silence. The *Schnorrer* majestically folded some silk stockings and laid them in the box. Upon them he packed other garments in stern, sorrowful *hauteur*. Grobstock's soul began to tingle with pricks of compunction. Da Costa completed his task, but could not shut the overcrowded box. Grobstock silently seated his weighty person upon the lid. Manasseh neither

resented nor welcomed him. When he had turned the key he mutely tilted the sitter off the box and shouldered it with consummate ease. Then he took his staff and strode from the room. Grobstock would have followed him, but the *Schnorrer* waved him back.

"On Friday, then," the conscience-stricken magnate said feebly.

Manasseh did not reply; he slammed the door instead, shutting in the master of the house.

Grobstock fell back on the bed exhausted, looking not unlike the tumbled litter of clothes he replaced. In a minute or two he raised himself and went to the window, and stood watching the sun set behind the trees of the Tenterground. "At any rate I've done with him," he said, and hummed a tune. The sudden bursting open of the door froze it upon his lips. He was almost relieved to find the intruder was only his wife.

"What have you done with Wilkinson?" she cried vehemently. She was a pale, puffy-faced, portly matron, with a permanent air of remembering the exact figure of her dowry.

"With Wilkinson, my dear? Nothing."

"Well, he isn't in the house. I want him, but cook says you've sent him out."

"I? Oh, no," he returned, with dawning uneasiness, looking away from her sceptical gaze.

Suddenly his pupils dilated. A picture from without had painted itself on his retina. It was a picture of Wilkinson – Wilkinson the austere, Wilkinson the unbending – treading the Tenterground gravel, curved beneath a box! Before him strode the *Schnorrer*.

Never during all his tenure of service in Goodman's Fields had Wilkinson carried anything on his shoulders but his livery. Grobstock would have as soon dreamt of his wife consenting to wear cotton. He rubbed his eyes, but the image persisted.

He clutched at the window curtains to steady himself.

"My Persian curtains!" cried his wife. "What is the matter with you?"

"He must be the Baal Shem himself!" gasped Grobstock unheeding.

"What is it? What are you looking at?"

"N – nothing."

Mrs. Grobstock incredulously approached the window and stared through the panes. She saw Wilkinson in the gardens, but did not recognise him in his new attitude. She concluded that her husband's agitation must have some connection with a beautiful brunette who was tasting the cool of the evening in a sedan chair, and it was with a touch of asperity that she said: "Cook complains of being insulted by a saucy fellow who brought home your fish."

"Oh!" said poor Grobstock. Was he never to be done with the man?

"How came you to send him to her?"

His anger against Manasseh resurged under his wife's peevishness.

"My dear," he cried, "I did not send him anywhere – except to the devil."

"Joseph! You might keep such language for the ears of creatures in sedan chairs."

And Mrs. Grobstock flounced out of the room with a rustle of angry satin.

When Wilkinson reappeared, limp and tired, with his pompousness exuded in perspiration, he sought his master with a message, which he delivered ere the flood of interrogation could burst from Grobstock's lips.

"Mr. da Costa presents his compliments, and says that he has decided on reconsideration not to break his promise to be with you on Friday evening."

"Oh, indeed!" said Grobstock grimly. "And, pray, how came you to carry his box?"

"You told me to, sir!"

"I told you!"

"I mean he told me you told me to," said Wilkinson wonderingly. "Didn't you?"

Grobstock hesitated. Since Manasseh *would* be his guest, was it not imprudent to give him away to the livery-servant? Besides, he felt a secret pleasure in Wilkinson's humiliation – but for the

Schnorrer he would never have known that Wilkinson's gold lace concealed a pliable personality. The proverb "Like master like man" did not occur to Grobstock at this juncture.

"I only meant you to carry it to a coach," he murmured.

"He said it was not worth while – the distance was so short."

"Ah! Did you see his house?" enquired Grobstock curiously.

"Yes; a very fine house in Aldgate, with a handsome portico and two stone lions."

Grobstock strove hard not to look surprised.

"I handed the box to the footman."

Grobstock strove harder.

Wilkinson ended with a weak smile: "Would you believe, sir, I thought at first he brought home your fish! He dresses so peculiarly. He must be an original."

"Yes, yes; an eccentric like Baron D'Aguilar, whom he visits," said Grobstock eagerly. He wondered, indeed, whether he was not speaking the truth. Could he have been the victim of a practical joke, a prank? Did not a natural aristocracy ooze from every pore of his mysterious visitor? Was not every tone, every gesture, that of a man born to rule? "You must remember, too," he added, "that he is a Spaniard."

"Ah, I see," said Wilkinson in profound accents.

"I daresay he dresses like everybody else, though, when he dines or sups out," Grobstock added lightly. "I only brought him in by accident. But go to your mistress! She wants you."

"Yes, sir. Oh, by the way, I forgot to tell you he hopes you will save him a slice of his salmon."

"Go to your mistress!"

"You did not tell me a Spanish nobleman was coming to us on Friday," said his spouse later in the evening.

"No," he admitted curtly.

"But is he?"

"No – at least, not a nobleman."

"What then? I have to learn about my guests from my servants."

"Apparently."

"Oh! and you think that's right!"

"To gossip with your servants? Certainly not."

"If my husband will not tell me anything – if he has only eyes for sedan chairs."

Joseph thought it best to kiss Mrs. Grobstock.

"A fellow-Director, I suppose?" she urged, more mildly.

"A fellow-Israelite. He has promised to come at six."

Manasseh was punctual to the second. Wilkinson ushered him in. The hostess had robed herself in her best to do honour to a situation which her husband awaited with what hope he could. She looked radiant in a gown of blue silk; her hair was done in a tuft and round her neck was an "esclavage," consisting of festoons of gold chains. The Sabbath table was equally festive with its ponderous silver candelabra, coffee-urn, and consecration cup, its flower-vases, and fruit-salvers. The dining-room itself was a handsome apartment; its buffets glittered with Venetian glass and Dresden porcelain, and here and there gilt pedestals supported globes of gold and silver fish.

At the first glance at his guest Grobstock's blood ran cold.

Manasseh had not turned a hair, nor changed a single garment. At the next glance Grobstock's blood boiled. A second figure loomed in Manasseh's wake – a short *Schnorrer*, even dingier than da Costa, and with none of his dignity, a clumsy, stooping *Schnorrer*, with a cajoling grin on his mud-coloured, hairy face. Neither removed his headgear.

Mrs. Grobstock remained glued to her chair in astonishment.

"Peace be unto you," said the King of *Schnorrers*, "I have brought with me my friend Yankelé ben Yitzchok of whom I told you."

Yankelé nodded, grinning harder than ever.

"You never told me he was coming," Grobstock rejoined, with an apoplectic air.

"Did I not tell you that he always supped with me on Friday evenings?" Manasseh reminded him quietly. "It is so good of him to accompany me even here – he will make the necessary third at grace."

The host took a frantic surreptitious glance at his wife. It was evident that her brain was in a whirl, the evidence of her senses conflicting with vague doubts of the possibilities of Spanish grandeeism and with a lingering belief in her husband's sanity.

Grobstock resolved to snatch the benefit of her doubts. "My dear," said he, "this is Mr. da Costa."

"Manasseh Bueno Barzillai Azevedo da Costa," said the *Schnorrer*.

The dame seemed a whit startled and impressed. She bowed, but words of welcome were still congealed in her throat.

"And this is Yankelé ben Yitzchok," added Manasseh. "A poor friend of mine. I do not doubt, Mrs. Grobstock, that as a pious woman, the daughter of Moses Bernberg (his memory for a blessing), you prefer grace with three."

"Any friend of yours is welcome!" She found her lips murmuring the conventional phrase without being able to check their output.

"I never doubted that either," said Manasseh gracefully. "Is not the hospitality of Moses Bernberg's beautiful daughter a proverb?"

Moses Bernberg's daughter could not deny this; her salon was the rendezvous of rich bagmen, brokers and bankers, tempered by occasional young bloods and old bucks not of the Jewish faith (nor any other). But she had never before encountered a personage so magnificently shabby, nor extended her proverbial hospitality to a Polish *Schnorrer* uncompromisingly musty. Joseph did not dare meet her eye.

"Sit down there, Yankelé," he said hurriedly, in ghastly genial accents, and he indicated a chair at the farthest possible point from the hostess. He placed Manasseh next to his Polish parasite, and seated himself as a buffer between his guests and his wife. He was burning with inward indignation at the futile rifling of his wardrobe, but he dared not say anything in the hearing of his spouse.

"It is a beautiful custom, this of the Sabbath guest, is it not, Mrs. Grobstock?" remarked Manasseh as he took his seat. "I never neglect it – even when I go out to the Sabbath-meal as to-night."

The late Miss Bernberg was suddenly reminded of auld lang syne: her father (who according to a wag of the period had divided his time between the Law and the profits) having been a depository of ancient tradition. Perhaps these obsolescent customs, unsuited to prosperous times, had lingered longer among the Spanish grandees. She seized an early opportunity, when the Sephardic *Schnorrer* was taking his coffee from Wilkinson, of putting the question to her husband, who fell in weakly with her illusions. He knew there was no danger of Manasseh's beggarly status leaking out; no expressions of gratitude were likely to fall from that gentleman's lips. He even hinted that da Costa dressed so fustily to keep his poor friend in countenance. Nevertheless, Mrs. Grobstock, while not without admiration for the Quixotism, was not without resentment for being dragged into it. She felt that such charity should begin and end at home.

"I see you did save me a slice of salmon," said Manasseh, manipulating his fish.

"What salmon was that?" asked the hostess, pricking up her ears.

"One I had from Mr. da Costa on Wednesday," said the host.

"Oh, that! It was delicious. I am sure it was very kind of you, Mr. da Costa, to make us such a nice present," said the hostess, her resentment diminishing. "We had company last night, and everybody praised it till none was left. This is another, but I hope it is to your liking," she finished anxiously.

"Yes, it's very fair, very fair, indeed. I don't know when I've tasted better, except at the house of the President of the *Deputados*. But Yankelé here is a connoisseur in fish, not easy to please. What say you, Yankelé?"

Yankelé munched a muffled approval.

"Help yourself to more bread and butter, Yankelé," said Manasseh. "Make yourself at home – remember you're my guest." Silently he added: "The other fork!"

Grobstock's irritation found vent in a complaint that the salad wanted vinegar.

"How can you say so? It's perfect," said Mrs. Grobstock. "Salad is cook's speciality."

Manasseh tasted it critically. "On salads you must come to me," he said. "It does not want vinegar," was his verdict; "but a little more oil would certainly improve it. Oh, there is no one dresses salad like Hyman!"

Hyman's fame as the *Kosher chef* who superintended the big dinners at the London Tavern had reached Mrs. Grobstock's ears, and she was proportionately impressed.

"They say his pastry is so good," she observed, to be in the running.

"Yes," said Manasseh, "in kneading and puffing he stands alone."

"Our cook's tarts are quite as nice," said Grobstock roughly.

"We shall see," Manasseh replied guardedly. "Though, as for almond-cakes, Hyman himself makes none better than I get from my cousin, Barzillai of Fenchurch Street."

"Your cousin!" exclaimed Grobstock, "the West Indian merchant!"

"The same – formerly of Barbadoes. Still, your cook knows how to make coffee, though I can tell you do not get it direct from the plantation like the wardens of my Synagogue."

Grobstock was once again piqued with curiosity as to the *Schnorrer's* identity.

"You accuse me of having stone figures in my house," he said boldly, "but what about the lions in front of yours?"

"I have no lions," said Manasseh.

"Wilkinson told me so. Didn't you, Wilkinson?"

"Wilkinson is a slanderer. That was the house of Nathaniel Furtado."

Grobstock began to choke with chagrin. He perceived at once that the *Schnorrer* had merely had the clothes conveyed direct to the house of a wealthy private dealer.

"Take care!" exclaimed the *Schnorrer* anxiously, "you are spluttering sauce all over that waistcoat, without any consideration for me."

Joseph suppressed himself with an effort. Open discussion would betray matters to his wife, and he was now too deeply enmeshed in falsehoods by default. But he managed to whisper angrily, "Why did you tell Wilkinson I ordered him to carry your box?"

"To save your credit in his eyes. How was he to know we had quarrelled? He would have thought you discourteous to your guest."

"That's all very fine. But why did you sell my clothes?"

"You did not expect me to wear them? No, I know my station, thank God."

"What is that you are saying, Mr. da Costa?" asked the hostess.

"Oh, we are talking of Dan Mendoza," replied Grobstock glibly; "wondering if he'll beat Dick Humphreys at Doncaster."

"Oh, Joseph, didn't you have enough of Dan Mendoza at supper last night?" protested his wife.

"It is not a subject *I* ever talk about," said the *Schnorrer*, fixing his host with a reproachful glance.

Grobstock desperately touched his foot under the table, knowing he was selling his soul to the King of *Schnorrers*, but too flaccid to face the moment.

"No, da Costa doesn't usually," he admitted. "Only Dan Mendoza being a Portuguese I happened to ask if he was ever seen in the Synagogue."

"If I had my way," growled da Costa, "he should be excommunicated – a bruiser, a defacer of God's image!"

"By gad, no!" cried Grobstock, stirred up. "If you had seen him lick the Badger in thirty-five minutes on a twenty-four foot stage – "

"Joseph! Joseph! Remember it is the Sabbath!" cried Mrs. Grobstock.

"I would willingly exchange our Dan Mendoza for your David Levi," said da Costa severely.

David Levi was the literary ornament of the Ghetto; a shoe-maker and hat-dresser who cultivated Hebrew philology and the Muses, and broke a lance in defence of his creed with Dr. Priestley, the discoverer of Oxygen, and Tom Paine, the discoverer of Reason.

"Pshaw! David Levi! The mad hatter!" cried Grobstock. "He makes nothing at all out of his books."

"You should subscribe for more copies," retorted Manasseh.

"I would if you wrote them," rejoined Grobstock, with a grimace.

"I got six copies of his *Lingua Sacra*," Manasseh declared with dignity, "and a dozen of his translation of the Pentateuch."

"You can afford it!" snarled Grobstock, with grim humour. "I have to earn my money."

"It is very good of Mr. da Costa, all the same," interposed the hostess. "How many men, born to great possessions, remain quite indifferent to learning!"

"True, most true," said da Costa. "Men-of-the-Earth, most of them."

After supper he trolled the Hebrew grace hilariously, assisted by Yankelé, and ere he left he said to the hostess, "May the Lord bless you with children!"

"Thank you," she answered, much moved.

"You see I should be so pleased to marry your daughter if you had one."

"You are very complimentary," she murmured, but her husband's exclamation drowned hers, "You marry my daughter!"

"Who else moves among better circles – would be more easily able to find her a suitable match?"

"Oh, in *that* sense," said Grobstock, mollified in one direction, irritated in another.

"In what other sense? You do not think I, a Sephardi, would marry her myself!"

"My daughter does not need your assistance," replied Grobstock shortly.

"Not yet," admitted Manasseh, rising to go; "but when the time comes, where will you find a better marriage broker? I have had a finger in the marriage of greater men's daughters. You see, when I recommend a maiden or a young man it is from no surface knowledge. I have seen them in the intimacy of their homes – above all I am able to say whether they are of a good, charitable disposition. Good Sabbath!"

"Good Sabbath," murmured the host and hostess in farewell. Mrs. Grobstock thought he need not be above shaking hands, for all his grand acquaintances.

"This way, Yankelé," said Manasseh, showing him to the door. "I am so glad you were able to come – you must come again."

CHAPTER III

SHOWING HOW HIS MAJESTY WENT TO THE THEATRE AND WAS WOODED

As Manasseh the Great, first beggar in Europe, sauntered across Goodman's Fields, attended by his Polish parasite, both serenely digesting the supper provided by the Treasurer of the Great Synagogue, Joseph Grobstock, a martial music clove suddenly the quiet evening air, and set the *Schnorrers'* pulses bounding. From the Tenterground emerged a squad of recruits, picturesque in white fatigue dress, against which the mounted officers showed gallant in blue surtouts and scarlet-striped trousers.

"Ah!" said da Costa, with swelling breast. "There go my soldiers!"

"Your soldiers!" ejaculated Yankelé in astonishment.

"Yes – do you not see they are returning to the India House in Leadenhall Street?"

"And vat of dat?" said Yankelé, shrugging his shoulders and spreading out his palms.

"What of that? Surely you have not forgotten that the clodpate at whose house I have just entertained you is a Director of the East India Company, whose soldiers these are?"

"Oh," said Yankelé, his mystified face relaxing in a smile. The smile fled before the stern look in the Spaniard's eyes; he hastened to conceal his amusement. Yankelé was by nature a droll, and it cost him a good deal to take his patron as seriously as that potentate took himself. Perhaps if Manasseh Bueno Barzillai Azevedo da Costa had had more humour he would have had less momentum. Your man of action is blind in one eye. Cæsar would not have come and conquered if he had really seen.

Wounded by that temporary twinkle in his client's eye, the patron moved on silently, in step with the military air.

"It is a beautiful night," observed Yankelé in contrition. The words had hardly passed his lips before he became conscious that he had spoken the truth. The moon was peeping from behind a white cloud, and the air was soft, and broken shadows of foliage lay across the path, and the music was a song of love and bravery. Somehow, Yankelé began to think of da Costa's lovely daughter. Her face floated in the moonlight.

Manasseh shrugged his shoulders, unappeased.

"When one has supped well, it is always a beautiful night," he said testily. It was as if the cloud had overspread the moon, and a thick veil had fallen over the face of da Costa's lovely daughter. But Yankelé recovered himself quickly.

"Ah, yes," he said, "you have indeed made it a beautiful night for me."

The King of *Schnorrers* waved his staff deprecatingly.

"It is always a beautiful night ven I am mid *you*," added Yankelé, undaunted.

"It is strange," replied Manasseh musingly, "that I should have admitted to my hearth and Grobstock's table one who is, after all, but a half-brother in Israel."

"But Grobstock is also a Tedesco," protested Yankelé.

"That is also what I wonder at," rejoined da Costa. "I cannot make out how I have come to be so familiar with him."

"You see!" ventured the Tedesco timidly. "P'raps ven Grobstock had really had a girl you might even have come to marry her."

"Guard your tongue! A Sephardi cannot marry a Tedesco! It would be a degradation."

"Yes – but de oder vay round. A Tedesco *can* marry a Sephardi, not so? Dat is a rise. If Grobstock's daughter had married you, she would have married above her," he ended, with an ingenuous air.

"True," admitted Manasseh. "But then, as Grobstock's daughter does not exist, and my wife does –!"

"Ah, but if you vas me," said Yankelé, "would you rader marry a Tedesco or a Sephardi?"

"A Sephardi, of course. But –"

"I vill be guided by you," interrupted the Pole hastily. "You be de visest man I have ever known."

"But –" Manasseh repeated.

"Do not deny it. You be! Instantly vill I seek out a Sephardi maiden and ved her. P'raps you crown your counsel by choosing von for me. Vat?"

Manasseh was visibly mollified.

"How do I know your taste?" he asked hesitatingly.

"Oh, any Spanish girl would be a prize," replied Yankelé. "Even ven she had a face like a Passover cake. But still I prefer a Pentecost blossom."

"What kind of beauty do you like best?"

"Your daughter's style," plumply answered the Pole.

"But there are not many like that," said da Costa unsuspiciously.

"No – she is like de Rose of Sharon. But den dere are not many handsome faders."

Manasseh bethought himself. "There is Gabriel, the corpse-watcher's daughter. People consider his figure and deportment good."

"Pooh! Offal! She's ugly enough to keep de Messiah from coming. Vy, she's like cut out of de fader's face! Besides, consider his occupation! You would not advise dat I marry into such a low family! Be you not my benefactor?"

"Well, but I cannot think of any good-looking girl that would be suitable."

Yankelé looked at him with a roguish, insinuating smile. "Say not dat! Have you not told Grobstock you be de first of marriage-brokers?"

But Manasseh shook his head.

"No, you be quite right," said Yankelé humbly; "I could not get a really beaudiful girl unless I married your Deborah herself."

"No, I am afraid not," said Manasseh sympathetically.

Yankelé took the plunge.

"Ah, vy can I not hope to call you fader-in-law?"

Manasseh's face was contorted by a spasm of astonishment and indignation. He came to a standstill.

"Dat must be a fine piece," said Yankelé quickly, indicating a flamboyant picture of a fearsome phantom hovering over a sombre moat.

They had arrived at Leman Street, and had stopped before Goodman's Fields Theatre. Manasseh's brow cleared.

"It is *The Castle Spectre*," he said graciously. "Would you like to see it?"

"But it is half over –"

"Oh, no," said da Costa, scanning the play bill. "There was a farce by O'Keefe to start with. The night is yet young. The drama will be just beginning."

"But it is de Sabbath – ve must not pay."

Manasseh's brow clouded again in wrathful righteous surprise. "Did you think I was going to pay?" he gasped.

"N-n-no," stammered the Pole, abashed. "But you haven't got no orders?"

"Orders? Me? Will you do me the pleasure of accepting a seat in my box?"

"In your box?"

"Yes, there is plenty of room. Come this way," said Manasseh. "I haven't been to the play myself for over a year. I am too busy always. It will be an agreeable change."

Yankelé hung back, bewildered.

"Through this door," said Manasseh encouragingly. "Come – you shall lead the way."

"But dey vill not admit me!"

"Will not admit you! When I give you a seat in my box! Are you mad? Now you shall just go in without me – I insist upon it. I will show you Manasseh Bueno Barzillai Azevedo da Costa is a man whose word is the Law of Moses; true as the Talmud. Walk straight through the portico, and, if the attendant endeavours to stop you, simply tell him Mr. da Costa has given you a seat in his box."

Not daring to exhibit scepticism – nay, almost confident in the powers of his extraordinary protector, Yankelé put his foot on the threshold of the lobby.

"But you be coming, too?" he said, turning back.

"Oh, yes, I don't intend to miss the performance. Have no fear."

Yankelé walked boldly ahead, and brushed by the door-keeper of the little theatre without appearing conscious of him; indeed, the official was almost impressed into letting the *Schnorrer* pass unquestioned as one who had gone out between the acts. But the visitor was too dingy for anything but the stage-door – he had the air of those nondescript beings who hang mysteriously about the hinder recesses of playhouses. Recovering himself just in time, the functionary (a meek little Cockney) hailed the intruder with a backward-drawing "Hi!"

"Vat you vant?" said Yankelé, turning his head.

"Where's your ticket?"

"Don't vant no ticket."

"Don't you? I does," rejoined the little man, who was a humorist.

"Mr. da Costa has given me a seat in his box."

"Oh, indeed! You'd swear to that in the box?"

"By my head. He gave it me."

"A seat in his box?"

"Yes."

"Mr. da Costa, you vos a-sayin', I think?"

"The same."

"Ah! this vay, then!"

And the humorist pointed to the street.

Yankelé did not budge.

"This vay, my lud!" cried the little humorist peremptorily.

"I tells you I'm going into Mr. da Costa's box!"

"And I tells you you're a-goin' into the gutter." And the official seized him by the scruff of the neck and began pushing him forwards with his knee.

"Now then! what's this?"

A stern, angry voice broke like a thunderclap upon the humorist's ears. He released his hold of the *Schnorrer* and looked up, to behold a strange, shabby, stalwart figure towering over him in censorious majesty.

"Why are you hustling this poor man?" demanded Manasseh.

"He wanted to sneak in," the little Cockney replied, half apologetically, half resentfully. "Expect 'e 'ails from Saffron 'Ill, and 'as 'is eye on the vipes. Told me some gammon – a cock-and-bull story about having a seat in a box."

"In Mr. da Costa's box, I suppose?" said Manasseh, ominously calm, with a menacing glitter in his eye.

"Ye-es," said the humorist, astonished and vaguely alarmed. Then the storm burst.

"You impertinent scoundrel! You jackanapes! You low, beggarly rapsallion! And so you refused to show my guest into my box!"

"Are you Mr. da Costa?" faltered the humorist.

"Yes, *I* am Mr. da Costa, but *you* won't much longer be door-keeper, if this is the way you treat people who come to see your pieces. Because, forsooth, the man looks poor, you think you can bully him safely – forgive me, Yankelé, I am so sorry I did not manage to come here before you, and spare you this insulting treatment! And as for you, my fine fellow, let me tell you that you make a great mistake in judging from appearances. There are some good friends of mine who could buy up your theatre and you and your miserable little soul at a moment's notice, and to look at them you would think they were cadgers. One of these days – hark you! – you will kick out a person of quality, and be kicked out yourself."

"I – I'm very sorry, sir."

"Don't say that to me. It is my guest you owe an apology to. Yes – and, by Heaven! you shall pay it, though he is no plutocrat, but only what he appears. Surely, because I wish to give a treat to a poor man who has, perhaps, never been to the play in his life, I am not bound to send him to the gallery – I can give him a corner in my box if I choose. There is no rule against that, I presume?"

"No, sir, I can't say as there is," said the humorist humbly. "But you will allow, sir, it's rather unusual."

"Unusual! Of course, it's unusual. Kindness and consideration for the poor are always unusual. The poor are trodden upon at every opportunity, treated like dogs, not men. If I had invited a drunken fop, you'd have met him hat in hand (no, no, you needn't take it off to me now; it's too late). But a sober, poor man – by gad! I shall report your incivility to the management, and you'll be lucky if I don't thrash you with this stick into the bargain."

"But 'ow vos I to know, sir?"

"Don't speak to me, I tell you. If you have anything to urge in extenuation of your disgraceful behaviour, address your remarks to my guest."

"You'll overlook it this time, sir," said the little humorist, turning to Yankelé.

"Next time, p'raps, you believe me ven I say I have a seat in Mr. da Costa's box," replied Yankelé, in gentle reproach.

"Well, if *you're* satisfied, Yankelé," said Manasseh, with a touch of scorn, "I have no more to say. Go along, my man, show us to our box."

The official bowed and led them into the corridor. Suddenly he turned back.

"What box is it, please?" he said timidly.

"Blockhead!" cried Manasseh. "Which box should it be? The empty one, of course."

"But, sir, there are two boxes empty," urged the poor humorist deprecatingly, "the stage-box and the one by the gallery."

"Dolt! Do I look the sort of person who is content with a box on the ceiling? Go back to your post, sir – I'll find the box myself – Heaven send you wisdom – go back, some one might sneak in while you are away, and it would just serve you right."

The little man slunk back half dazed, glad to escape from this overwhelming personality, and in a few seconds Manasseh stalked into the empty box, followed by Yankelé, whose mouth was a grin and whose eye a twinkle. As the Spaniard took his seat there was a slight outburst of clapping and stamping from a house impatient for the end of the *entr'acte*.

Manasseh craned his head over the box to see the house, which in turn craned to see him, glad of any diversion, and some people, imagining the applause had reference to the new-comer, whose head appeared to be that of a foreigner of distinction, joined in it. The contagion spread, and in a minute Manasseh was the cynosure of all eyes and the unmistakable recipient of an "ovation." He bowed twice or thrice in unruffled dignity.

There were some who recognised him, but they joined in the reception with wondering amusement. Not a few, indeed, of the audience were Jews, for Goodman's Fields was the Ghetto Theatre, and the Sabbath was not a sufficient deterrent to a lax generation. The audiences – mainly German and Poles – came to the little unfashionable playhouse as one happy family. Distinctions of

rank were trivial, and gallery held converse with circle, and pit colloqued with box. Supper parties were held on the benches.

In a box that gave on the pit a portly Jewess sat stiffly, arrayed in the very pink of fashion, in a spangled robe of India muslin, with a diamond necklace and crescent, her head crowned by terraces of curls and flowers.

"Betsy!" called up a jovial feminine voice from the pit, when the applause had subsided.

"Betsy" did not move, but her cheeks grew hot and red. She had got on in the world, and did not care to recognise her old crony.

"Betsy!" iterated the well-meaning woman. "By your life and mine, you must taste a piece of my fried fish." And she held up a slice of cold plaice, beautifully browned.

Betsy drew back, striving unsuccessfully to look unconscious. To her relief the curtain rose, and *The Castle Spectre* walked. Yankelé, who had scarcely seen anything but private theatricals, representing the discomfiture of the wicked Haman and the triumph of Queen Esther (a rôle he had once played himself, in his mother's old clothes), was delighted with the thrills and terrors of the ghostly melodrama. It was not till the conclusion of the second act that the emotion the beautiful but injured heroine cost him welled over again into matrimonial speech.

"Ve vind up de night glorious," he said.

"I am glad you like it. It is certainly an enjoyable performance," Manasseh answered with stately satisfaction.

"Your daughter, Deborah," Yankelé ventured timidly, "do she ever go to de play?"

"No, I do not take my womankind about. Their duty lies at home. As it is written, I call my wife not 'wife' but 'home.'"

"But dink how dey would enjoy deirselves!"

"We are not sent here to enjoy ourselves."

"True – most true," said Yankelé, pulling a smug face. "Ve be sent here to obey de Law of Moses. But do not remind me I be a sinner in Israel."

"How so?"

"I am twenty-five – yet I have no vife."

"I daresay you had plenty in Poland."

"By my soul, not. Only von, and her I gave *gett* (divorce) for barrenness. You can write to de Rabbi of my town."

"Why should I write? It's not my affair."

"But I vant it to be your affair."

Manasseh glared. "Do you begin that again?" he murmured.

"It is not so much dat I desire your daughter for a vife as you for a fader-in-law."

"It cannot be!" said Manasseh more gently.

"Oh dat I had been born a Sephardi!" said Yankelé with a hopeless groan.

"It is too late now," said da Costa soothingly.

"Dey say it's never too late to mend," moaned the Pole. "Is dere no vay for me to be converted to Spanish Judaism? I could easily pronounce Hebrew in your superior vay."

"Our Judaism differs in no essential respect from yours – it is a question of blood. You cannot change your blood. As it is said, 'And the blood is the life.'"

"I know, I know dat I aspire too high. Oh, vy did you become my friend, vy did you make me believe you cared for me – so dat I tink of you day and night – and now, ven I ask you to be my fader-in-law, you say it cannot be. It is like a knife in de heart! Tink how proud and happy I should be to call you my fader-in-law. All my life would be devoted to you – my von thought to be vordy of such a man."

"You are not the first I have been compelled to refuse," said Manasseh, with emotion.

"Vat helps me dat dere be other *Schlemihls* (unlucky persons)?" quoted Yankelé, with a sob. "How can I live midout you for a fader-in-law?"

"I am sorry for you – more sorry than I have ever been."

"Den you do care for me! I vill not give up hope. I vill not take no for no answer. Vat is dis blood dat it should divide Jew from Jew, dat it should prevent me becoming de son-in-law of de only man I have ever loved? Say not so. Let me ask you again – in a month or a year – even twelve months would I vait, ven you would only promise not to pledge yourself to anoder man."

"But if I became your father-in-law – mind, I only say if – not only would I not keep you, but you would have to keep my Deborah."

"And supposing?"

"But you are not able to keep a wife!"

"Not able? Who told you dat?" cried Yankelé indignantly.

"You yourself! Why, when I first befriended you, you told me you were blood-poor."

"Dat I told you as a *Schnorrer*. But now I speak to you as a suitor."

"True," admitted Manasseh, instantly appreciating the distinction.

"And as a suitor I tell you I can *schnorr* enough to keep two vives."

"But do you tell this to da Costa the father or da Costa the marriage-broker?"

"Hush!" from all parts of the house as the curtain went up and the house settled down. But Yankelé was no longer in *rapport* with the play; the spectre had ceased to thrill and the heroine to touch. His mind was busy with feverish calculations of income, scraping together every penny he could raise by hook or crook. He even drew out a crumpled piece of paper and a pencil, but thrust them back into his pocket when he saw Manasseh's eye.

"I forgot," he murmured apologetically. "Being at de play made me forget it was de Sabbath." And he pursued his calculations mentally; this being naturally less work.

When the play was over the two beggars walked out into the cool night air.

"I find," Yankelé began eagerly in the vestibule, "I make at least von hundred and fifty pounds" – he paused to acknowledge the farewell salutation of the little door-keeper at his elbow – "a hundred and fifty a year."

"Indeed!" said Manasseh, in respectful astonishment.

"Yes! I have reckoned it all up. Ten are de sources of charity – "

"As it is written," interrupted Manasseh with unction, "'With ten sayings was the world created; there were ten generations from Noah to Abraham; with ten trials our father Abraham was tried; ten miracles were wrought for our fathers in Egypt and ten at the Red Sea; and ten things were created on the eve of the Sabbath in the twilight!' And now it shall be added, 'Ten good deeds the poor man affords the rich man.' Proceed, Yankelé."

"First comes my allowance from de Synagogue – eight pounds. Vonce a week I call and receive half-a-crown."

"Is that all? Our Synagogue allows three-and-six."

"Ah!" sighed the Pole wistfully. "Did I not say you be a superior race?"

"But that only makes six pound ten!"

"I know – de oder tirty shillings I allow for Passover cakes and groceries. Den for Synagogue-knocking I get ten guin – "

"Stop! stop!" cried Manasseh, with a sudden scruple. "Ought I to listen to financial details on the Sabbath?"

"Certainly, ven dey be connected vid my marriage – vich is a Commandment. It is de Law ve really discuss."

"You are right. Go on, then. But remember, even if you can prove you can *schnorr* enough to keep a wife, I do not bind myself to consent."

"You be already a fader to me – vy vill you not be a fader-in-law? Anyhow, you vill find me a fader-in-law," he added hastily, seeing the blackness gathering again on da Costa's brow.

"Nay, nay, we must not talk of business on the Sabbath," said Manasseh evasively. "Proceed with your statement of income."

"Ten guineas for Synagogue-knocking. I have twenty clients who –"

"Stop a minute! I cannot pass that item."

"Vy not? It is true."

"Maybe! But Synagogue-knocking is distinctly *work*!"

"Vork?"

"Well, if going round early in the morning to knock at the doors of twenty pious persons, and rouse them for morning service, isn't work, then the Christian bell-ringer is a beggar. No, no! Profits from this source I cannot regard as legitimate."

"But most *Schnorrers* be Synagogue-knockers!"

"Most *Schnorrers* are Congregation-men or Psalms-men," retorted the Spaniard witheringly. "But I call it debasing. What! To assist at the services for a fee! To worship one's Maker for hire! Under such conditions to pray is to work." His breast swelled with majesty and scorn.

"I cannot call it vork," protested the *Schnorrer*. "Vy at dat rate you would make out dat de minister vorks? or de preacher? Vy, I reckon fourteen pounds a year to my services as Congregation-man."

"Fourteen pounds! As much as that?"

"Yes, you see dere's my private customers as vell as de Synagogue. Ven dere is mourning in a house dey cannot always get together ten friends for de services, so I make von. How can you call that vork? It is friendship. And the more dey pay me de more friendship I feel," asserted Yankelé with a twinkle. "Den de Synagogue allows me a little extra for announcing de dead."

In those primitive times, when a Jewish newspaper was undreamt of, the day's obituary was published by a peripatetic *Schnorrer*, who went about the Ghetto rattling a pyx – a copper money-box with a handle and a lid closed by a padlock. On hearing this death-rattle, anyone who felt curious would ask the *Schnorrer*:

"Who's dead to-day?"

"So-and-so ben So-and-so – funeral on such a day – mourning service at such an hour," the *Schnorrer* would reply, and the enquirer would piously put something into the "byx," as it was called. The collection was handed over to the Holy Society – in other words, the Burial Society.

"P'raps you call that vork?" concluded Yankelé, in timid challenge.

"Of course I do. What do you call it?"

"Valking exercise. It keeps me healty. Vonce von of my customers (from whom I *schnorred* half-a-crown a week) said he was tired of my coming and getting it every Friday. He wanted to compound mid me for six pound a year, but I wouldn't."

"But it was a very fair offer. He only deducted ten shillings for the interest on his money."

"Dat I didn't mind. But I wanted a pound more for his depriving me of my valking exercise, and dat he wouldn't pay, so he still goes on giving me de half-crown a week. Some of dese charitable persons are terribly mean. But vat I vant to say is dat I carry de byx mostly in the streets vere my customers lay, and it gives me more standing as a *Schnorrer*."

"No, no, that is a delusion. What! Are you weak-minded enough to believe that? All the philanthropists say so, of course, but surely you know that *schnorring* and work should never be mixed. A man cannot do two things properly. He must choose his profession, and stick to it. A friend of mine once succumbed to the advice of the philanthropists instead of asking mine. He had one of the best provincial rounds in the kingdom, but in every town he weakly listened to the lectures of the president of the congregation inculcating work, and at last he actually invested the savings of years in jewellery, and went round trying to peddle it. The presidents all bought something to encourage him

(though they beat down the price so that there was no profit in it), and they all expressed their pleasure at his working for his living, and showing a manly independence. 'But I *schnorr* also,' he reminded them, holding out his hand when they had finished. It was in vain. No one gave him a farthing. He had blundered beyond redemption. At one blow he had destroyed one of the most profitable connections a *Schnorrer* ever had, and without even getting anything for the goodwill. So if you will be guided by me, Yankelé, you will do nothing to assist the philanthropists to keep you. It destroys their satisfaction. A *Schnorrer* cannot be too careful. And once you begin to work, where are you to draw the line?"

"But you be a marriage-broker yourself," said Yankelé imprudently.

"That!" thundered Manasseh angrily, "That is not work! That is pleasure!"

"Vy look! Dere is Hennery Simons," cried Yankelé, hoping to divert his attention. But he only made matters worse.

Henry Simons was a character variously known as the Tumbling Jew, Harry the Dancer, and the Juggling Jew. He was afterwards to become famous as the hero of a slander case which deluged England with pamphlets for and against, but for the present he had merely outraged the feelings of his fellow *Schnorrers* by budding out in a direction so rare as to suggest preliminary baptism. He stood now playing antic and sleight-of-hand tricks – surrounded by a crowd – a curious figure crowned by a velvet skull-cap from which wisps of hair protruded, with a scarlet handkerchief thrust through his girdle. His face was an olive oval, bordered by ragged tufts of beard and stamped with melancholy.

"You see the results of working," cried Manasseh. "It brings temptation to work on Sabbath. That Epicurean there is profaning the Holy Day. Come away! A *Schnorrer* is far more certain of The-World-To-Come. No, decidedly, I will not give my daughter to a worker, or to a *Schnorrer* who makes illegitimate profits."

"But I *make* de profits all de same," persisted Yankelé.

"You make them to-day – but to-morrow? There is no certainty about them. Work of whatever kind is by its very nature unreliable. At any moment trade may be slack. People may become less pious, and you lose your Synagogue-knocking. Or more pious – and they won't want congregation-men."

"But new Synagogues spring up," urged Yankelé.

"New Synagogues are full of enthusiasm," retorted Manasseh. "The members are their own congregation-men."

Yankelé had his roguish twinkle. "At first," he admitted, "but de *Schnorrer* waits his time."

Manasseh shook his head. "*Schnorr*ing is the only occupation that is regular all the year round," he said. "Everything else may fail – the greatest commercial houses may totter to the ground; as it is written, 'He humbleth the proud.' But the *Schnorrer* is always secure. Whoever falls, there are always enough left to look after *him*. If you were a father, Yankelé, you would understand my feelings. How can a man allow his daughter's future happiness to repose on a basis so uncertain as work? No, no. What do you make by your district visiting? Everything turns on that."

"Twenty-five shilling a week!"

"Really?"

"Law of Moses! In sixpences, shillings, and half-crowns. Vy in Houndsditch alone, I have two streets all except a few houses."

"But are they safe? Population shifts. Good streets go down."

"Dat twenty-five shillings is as safe as Mocatta's business. I have it all written down at home – you can inspect de books if you choose."

"No, no," said Manasseh, with a grand wave of his stick. "If I did not believe you, I should not entertain your proposal for a moment. It rejoices me exceedingly to find you have devoted so much attention to this branch. I always held strongly that the rich should be visited in their own homes, and I grieve to see this personal touch, this contact with the very people to whom you give the good deeds, being replaced by lifeless circulars. One owes it to one's position in life to afford the wealthy

classes the opportunity of charity warm from the heart; they should not be neglected and driven in their turn to write cheques in cold blood, losing all that human sympathy which comes from personal intercourse – as it is written, 'Charity delivers from death.' But do you think charity that is given publicly through a secretary and advertised in annual reports has so great a redeeming power as that slipped privately into the hands of the poor man, who makes a point of keeping secret from every donor what he has received from the others?"

"I am glad you don't call collecting de money vork," said Yankelé, with a touch of sarcasm which was lost on da Costa.

"No, so long as the donor can't show any 'value received' in return. And there's more friendship in *such* a call, Yankelé, than in going to a house of mourning to pray for a fee."

"Oh," said Yankelé, wincing. "Den p'raps you strike out all my Year-Time item!"

"Year-Time! What's that?"

"Don't you know?" said the Pole, astonished. "Ven a man has Year-Time, he feels charitable for de day."

"Do you mean when he commemorates the anniversary of the death of one of his family? We Sephardim call that 'making years'! But are there enough Year-Times, as you call them, in your Synagogue?"

"Dere might be more – I only make about fifteen pounds. Our colony is, as you say, too new. De Globe Road Cemetery is as empty as a Synagogue on veek-days. De faders have left *deir* faders on de Continent, and kept many Year-Times out of de country. But in a few years many faders and moders must die off here, and every parent leaves two or tree sons to have Year-Times, and every child two or tree broders and a fader. Den every day more German Jews come here – vich means more and more to die. I tink indeed it would be fair to double this item."

"No, no; stick to facts. It is an iniquity to speculate in the misfortunes of our fellow-creatures."

"Somebody must die dat I may live," retorted Yankelé roguishly; "de vorld is so created. Did you not quote, 'Charity delivers from death'? If people lived for ever, *Schnorrers* could not live at all."

"Hush! The world could not exist without *Schnorrers*. As it is written, 'And Repentance and Prayer and Charity avert the evil decree.' Charity is put last – it is the climax – the greatest thing on earth. And the *Schnorrer* is the greatest man on earth; for it stands in the Talmud, 'He who causes is greater than he who does.' Therefore, the *Schnorrer* who causes charity is even greater than he who gives it."

"Talk of de devil," said Yankelé, who had much difficulty in keeping his countenance when Manasseh became magnificent and dithyrambic. "Vy, dere is Greenbaum, whose fader vas buried yesterday. Let us cross over by accident and vish him long life."

"Greenbaum dead! Was that the Greenbaum on 'Change, who was such a rascal with the wenches?"

"De same," said Yankelé. Then approaching the son, he cried, "Good Sabbath, Mr. Greenbaum; I vish you long life. Vat a blow for de community!"

"It comforts me to hear you say so," said the son, with a sob in his voice.

"Ah, yes!" said Yankelé chokingly. "Your fader vas a great and good man – just my size."

"I've already given them away to Baruch the glazier," replied the mourner.

"But he has his glaziering," remonstrated Yankelé. "I have noting but de clothes I stand in, and dey don't fit me half so vell as your fader's vould have done."

"Baruch has been very unfortunate," replied Greenbaum defensively. "He had a misfortune in the winter, and he has never got straight yet. A child of his died, and, unhappily, just when the snowballing was at its height, so that he lost seven days by the mourning." And he moved away.

"Did I not say work was uncertain?" cried Manasseh.

"Not all," maintained the *Schnorrer*. "What of de six guineas I make by carrying round de Palm-branch on Tabernacles to be shaken by de voomans who cannot attend Synagogue, and by blowing de trumpet for de same voomans on New Year, so dat dey may break deir fasts?"

"The amount is too small to deserve discussion. Pass on."

"Dere is a smaller amount – just half dat – I get from de presents to de poor at de Feast of Lots, and from de Bridegrooms of de Beginning and de Bridegrooms of de Law at de Rejoicing of de Law, and dere is about four pounds ten a year from de sale of clothes given to me. Den I have a lot o' meals given me – dis, I have reckoned, is as good as seven pounds. And, lastly, I cannot count de odds and ends under ten guineas. You know dere are always legacies, gifts, distributions – all unexpected. You never know who'll break out next."

"Yes, I think it's not too high a percentage of your income to expect from unexpected sources," admitted Manasseh. "I have myself lingered about 'Change Alley or Sampson's Coffee House just when the jobbers have pulled off a special coup, and they have paid me quite a high percentage on their profits."

"And I," boasted Yankelé, stung to noble emulation, "have made two sov'rans in von minute out of Gideon de bullion-broker. He likes to give *Schnorrers* sov'rans, as if in mistake for shillings, to see vat dey'll do. De fools hurry off, or move slowly away, as if not noticing, or put it quickly in de pocket. But dose who have visdom tell him he's made a mistake, and he gives dem anoder sov'ran. Honesty is de best policy with Gideon. Den dere is Rabbi de Falk, de Baal Shem – de great Cabbalist. Ven –"

"But," interrupted Manasseh impatiently, "you haven't made out your hundred and fifty a year." Yankelé's face fell. "Not if you cut out so many items."

"No, but even all inclusive it only comes to a hundred and forty-three pounds nineteen shillings."

"Nonsense!" said Yankelé, staggered. "How can you know so exact?"

"Do you think I cannot do simple addition?" responded Manasseh sternly. "Are not these your ten items?"

		£	s.	d.
1.	Synagogue Pension, with Passover extras	8	0	0
2.	Synagogue-knocking	10	10	0
3.	District Visiting	65	0	0
4.	As Congregation-man and Pyx-bearer	14	0	0
5.	Year-Times	15	0	0
6.	Palm-branch and Trumpet Fees	6	6	0
7.	Purim-presents, &c.	3	3	0
8.	Sale of Clothes	4	10	0
9.	Equivalent of Free Meals	7	0	0
10.	Miscellanea, the unexpected	10	10	0
	Total	£143	19	0

"A child could sum it up," concluded Manasseh severely. Yankelé was subdued to genuine respect and consternation by da Costa's marvellous memory and arithmetical genius. But he rallied immediately. "Of course, I also reckoned on a dowry mid my bride, if only a hundred pounds."

"Well, invested in Consols, that would not bring you four pounds more," replied Manasseh instantly.

"The rest vill be made up in extra free meals," Yankelé answered no less quickly. "For ven I take your daughter off your hands you vill be able to afford to invite me more often to your table dan you do now."

"Not at all," retorted Manasseh, "for now that I know how well off you are I shall no longer feel I am doing a charity."

"Oh, yes, you vill," said Yankelé insinuatingly. "You are too much a man of honour to know as a private philanthropist vat I have told de marriage-broker, de fader-in-law and de fellow *Schnorrer*. Besides, I vould have de free meals from you as de son-in-law, not de *Schnorrer*."

"In that relation I should also have free meals from you," rejoined Manasseh.

"I never dared to tink you vould do me de honour. But even so I can never give you such good meals as you give me. So dere is still a balance in my favour."

"That is true," said da Costa thoughtfully. "But you have still about a guinea to make up."

Yankelé was driven into a corner at last. But he flashed back, without perceptible pause, "You do not allow for vat I save by my piety. I fast twenty times a year, and surely dat is at least anoder guinea per annum."

"But you will have children," retorted da Costa.

Yankelé shrugged his shoulders.

"Dat is de affair of de Holy One, blessed be He. Ven He sends dem He vill provide for dem. You must not forget, too, dat mid *your* daughter de dowry vould be noting so small as a hundred pounds."

"My daughter will have a dowry befitting her station, certainly," said Manasseh, with his grandest manner; "but then I had looked forward to her marrying a king of *Schnorrers*."

"Vell, but ven I marry her I shall be."

"How so?"

"I shall have *schnorred* your daughter – the most precious thing in the world! And *schnorred* her from a king of *Schnorrers*, too!! And I shall have *schnorred* your services as marriage-broker into de bargain!!!"

CHAPTER IV

SHOWING HOW THE ROYAL WEDDING WAS ARRANGED

Manasseh Bueno Barzillai Azevedo da Costa was so impressed by his would-be son-in-law's last argument that he perpended it in silence for a full minute. When he replied, his tone showed even more respect than had been infused into it by the statement of the aspirant's income. Manasseh was not of those to whom money is a fetish; he regarded it merely as something to be had for the asking. It was intellect for which he reserved his admiration. That was strictly not transferable.

"It is true," he said, "that if I yielded to your importunities and gave you my daughter, you would thereby have approved yourself a king of *Schnorrers*, of a rank suitable to my daughter's, but an analysis of your argument will show that you are begging the question."

"Vat more proof do you vant of my begging powers?" demanded Yankelé, spreading out his palms and shrugging his shoulders.

"Much greater proof," replied Manasseh. "I ought to have some instance of your powers. The only time I have seen you try to *schnorr* you failed."

"Me! ven?" exclaimed Yankelé indignantly.

"Why, this very night. When you asked young Weinstein for his dead father's clothes!"

"But he had already given them away!" protested the Pole.

"What of that? If anyone had given away *my* clothes, I should have demanded compensation. You must really be above rebuffs of that kind, Yankelé, if you are to be my son-in-law. No, no, I remember the dictum of the Sages: 'To give your daughter to an uncultured man is like throwing her bound to a lion.'"

"But you have also seen me *schnorr* mid success," remonstrated the suitor.

"Never!" protested Manasseh vehemently.

"Often!"

"From whom?"

"From you!" said Yankelé boldly.

"From *me*!" sneered Manasseh, accentuating the pronoun with infinite contempt. "What does that prove? I am a generous man. The test is to *schnorr* from a miser."

"I *vill schnorr* from a miser!" announced Yankelé desperately.

"You will!"

"Yes. Choose your miser."

"No, I leave it to you," said da Costa politely.

"Vell, Sam Lazarus, de butcher shop!"

"No, not Sam Lazarus, he once gave a *Schnorrer* I know elevenpence."

"Elevenpence?" incredulously murmured Yankelé.

"Yes, it was the only way he could pass a shilling. It wasn't bad, only cracked, but he could get no one to take it except a *Schnorrer*. He made the man give him a penny change though. 'Tis true the man afterwards laid out the shilling at Lazarus's shop. Still a really great miser would have added that cracked shilling to his hoard rather than the perfect penny."

"No," argued Yankelé, "dere would be no difference, since he does not spend."

"True," said da Costa reflectively, "but by that same token a miser is not the most difficult person to tackle."

"How do you make dat out?"

"Is it not obvious? Already we see Lazarus giving away elevenpence. A miser who spends nothing on himself may, in exceptional cases, be induced to give away something. It is the man who indulges himself in every luxury and gives away nothing who is the hardest to *schnorr* from. He has a *use* for his money – himself! If you diminish his store you hurt him in the tenderest part – you rob

him of creature comforts. To *schnorr* from such a one I should regard as a higher and nobler thing than to *schnorr* from a mere miser."

"Vell, name your man."

"No – I couldn't think of taking it out of your hands," said Manasseh again with his stately bow. "Whomever you select I will abide by. If I could not rely on your honour, would I dream of you as a son-in-law?"

"Den I vill go to Mendel Jacobs, of Mary Axe."

"Mendel Jacobs – oh, no! Why, he's married! A married man cannot be entirely devoted to himself."

"Vy not? Is not a vife a creature comfort? P'raps also she comes cheaper dan a housekeeper."

"We will not argue it. I will not have Mendel Jacobs."

"Simon Kelutski, de vine-merchant."

"He! He is quite generous with his snuff-box. I have myself been offered a pinch. Of course I did not accept it."

Yankelé selected several other names, but Manasseh barred them all, and at last had an inspiration of his own.

"Isn't there a Rabbi in your community whose stinginess is proverbial? Let me see, what's his name?"

"A Rabbi!" murmured Yankelé disingenuously, while his heart began to palpitate with alarm.

"Yes, isn't there – Rabbi Bloater!"

Yankelé shook his head. Ruin stared him in the face – his fondest hopes were crumbling.

"I know it's some fishy name – Rabbi Haddock – no it isn't. It's Rabbi Remorse something."

Yankelé saw it was all over with him.

"P'raps you mean Rabbi Remorse Red-herring," he said feebly, for his voice failed him.

"Ah, yes! Rabbi Remorse Red-herring," said Manasseh. "From all I hear – for I have never seen the man – a king of guzzlers and toppers, and the meanest of mankind. Now if you could dine with *him* you might indeed be called a king of *Schnorrers*."

Yankelé was pale and trembling. "But *he* is married!" he urged, with a happy thought.

"Dine with him to-morrow," said Manasseh inexorably. "He fares extra royally on the Sabbath. Obtain admission to his table, and you shall be admitted into my family."

"But you do not know the man – it is impossible!" cried Yankelé.

"That is the excuse of the bad *Schnorrer*. You have heard my ultimatum. No dinner, no wife. No wife – no dowry!"

"Vat vould dis dowry be?" asked Yankelé, by way of diversion.

"Oh, unique – quite unique. First of all there would be all the money she gets from the Synagogue. Our Synagogue gives considerable dowries to portionless girls. There are large bequests for the purpose."

Yankelé's eyes glittered.

"Ah, vat gentlemen you Spaniards be!"

"Then I daresay I should hand over to my son-in-law all my Jerusalem land."

"Have you property in de Holy Land?" said Yankelé.

"First class, with an unquestionable title. And, of course, I would give you some province or other in this country."

"What!" gasped Yankelé.

"Could I do less?" said Manasseh blandly. "My own flesh and blood, remember! Ah, here is my door. It is too late to ask you in. Good Sabbath! Don't forget your appointment to dine with Rabbi Remorse Red-herring to-morrow."

"Good Sabbath!" faltered Yankelé, and crawled home heavy-hearted to Dinah's Buildings, Tripe Yard, Whitechapel, where the memory of him lingers even unto this day.

Rabbi Remorse Red-herring was an unofficial preacher who officiated at mourning services in private houses, having a gift of well-turned eulogy. He was a big, burly man with overlapping stomach and a red beard, and his spiritual consolations drew tears. His clients knew him to be vastly self-indulgent in private life, and abstemious in the matter of benevolence; but they did not confound the rôles. As a mourning preacher he gave every satisfaction: he was regular and punctual, and did not keep the congregation waiting, and he had had considerable experience in showing that there was yet balm in Gilead.

He had about five ways of showing it – the variants depending upon the circumstances. If, as not infrequently happened, the person deceased was a stranger to him, he would enquire in the passage: "Was it man or woman? Boy or girl? Married or single? Any children? Young 'uns or old 'uns?"

When these questions had been answered, he was ready. He knew exactly which of his five consolatory addresses to deliver – they were all sufficiently vague and general to cover considerable variety of circumstance, and even when he misheard the replies in the passage, and dilated on the grief of a departed widower's relict, the results were not fatal throughout. The few impossible passages might be explained by the mishearing of the audience. Sometimes – very rarely – he would venture on a supplementary sentence or two fitting the specific occasion, but very cautiously, for a man with a reputation for extempore addresses cannot be too wary of speaking on the spur of the moment.

Off obituary lines he was a failure; at any rate, his one attempt to preach from an English Synagogue pulpit resulted in a nickname. His theme was Remorse, which he explained with much care to the congregation.

"For instance," said the preacher, "the other day I was walking over London Bridge, when I saw a fishwife standing with a basket of red-herrings. I says, 'How much?' She says, 'Two for three-halfpence.' I says, 'Oh, that's frightfully dear! I can easily get three for twopence.' But she wouldn't part with them at that price, so I went on, thinking I'd meet another woman with a similar lot over the water. They were lovely fat herrings, and my chaps watered in anticipation of the treat of eating them. But when I got to the other end of the bridge there was no other fishwife to be seen. So I resolved to turn back to the first fishwife, for, after all, I reflected, the herrings were really very cheap, and I had only complained in the way of business. But when I got back the woman was just sold out. I could have torn my hair with vexation. Now, that's what I call Remorse."

After that the Rabbi was what the congregation called Remorse; also Red-herring.

The Rabbi's fondness for concrete exemplification of abstract ideas was not, however, to be stifled, and there was one illustration of Charity which found a place in all the five sermons of consolation.

"If you have a pair of old breeches, send them to the Rabbi."

Rabbi Remorse Red-herring was, however, as is the way of preachers, himself aught but a concrete exemplification of the virtues he inculcated. He lived generously – through other people's generosity – but no one could boast of having received a farthing from him over and above what was due to them; while *Schnorrers* (who deemed considerable sums due to them) regarded him in the light of a defalcating bankrupt. He, for his part, had a countervailing grudge against the world, fancying the work he did for it but feebly remunerated. "I get so little," ran his bitter plaint, "that I couldn't live, *if it were not for the fasts*." And, indeed, the fasts of the religion were worth much more to him than to Yankelé; his meals were so profuse that his savings from this source were quite a little revenue. As Yankelé had pointed out, he was married. And his wife had given him a child, but it died at the age of seven, bequeathing to him the only poignant sorrow of his life. He was too jealous to call in a rival consolation preacher during those dark days, and none of his own five sermons seemed to fit the case. It was some months before he took his meals regularly.

At no time had anyone else taken meals in his house, except by law entitled. Though she had only two to cook for, his wife habitually provided for three, counting her husband no mere unit. Herself she reckoned as a half.

It was with intelligible perturbation, therefore, that Yankelé, dressed in some other man's best, approached the house of Rabbi Remorse Red-herring about a quarter of an hour before the Sabbath mid-day meal, intent on sharing it with him.

"No dinner, no marriage!" was da Costa's stern ukase.

What wonder if the inaccessible meal took upon itself the grandiosity of a wedding feast! Deborah da Costa's lovely face tantalised him like a mirage.

The Sabbath day was bleak, but chiller was his heart. The Rabbi had apartments in Steward Street, Spitalfields, an elegant suite on the ground-floor, for he stinted himself in nothing but charity. At the entrance was a porch – a pointed Gothic arch of wood supported by two pillars. As Yankelé mounted the three wooden steps, breathing as painfully as if they were three hundred, and wondering if he would ever get merely as far as the other side of the door, he was assailed by the temptation to go and dine peacefully at home, and represent to da Costa that he had feasted with the Rabbi. Manasseh would never know, Manasseh had taken no steps to ascertain if he satisfied the test or not. Such carelessness, he told himself in righteous indignation, deserved fitting punishment. But, on the other hand, he recalled Manasseh's trust in him; Manasseh believed him a man of honour, and the patron's elevation of soul awoke an answering chivalry in the parasite.

He decided to make the attempt at least, for there would be plenty of time to say he had succeeded, after he had failed.

Vibrating with tremors of nobility as well as of apprehension, Yankelé lifted the knocker. He had no programme, trusting to chance and mother-wit.

Mrs. Remorse Red-herring half opened the door.

"I wish to see de Rabbi," he said, putting one foot within.

"He is engaged," said the wife – a tiny thin creature who had been plump and pretty. "He is very busy talking with a gentleman."

"Oh, but I can wait."

"But the Rabbi will be having his dinner soon."

"I can wait till after dinner," said Yankelé obligingly.

"Oh, but the Rabbi sits long at table."

"I don't mind," said Yankelé with undiminished placidity, "de longer de better."

The poor woman looked perplexed. "I'll tell my husband," she said at last.

Yankelé had an anxious moment in the passage.

"The Rabbi wishes to know what you want," she said when she returned.

"I want to get married," said Yankelé with an inspiration of veracity.

"But my husband doesn't marry people."

"Vy not?"

"He only brings consolation into households," she explained ingenuously.

"Vell, I won't get married midout him," Yankelé murmured lugubriously.

The little woman went back in bewilderment to her bosom's lord. Forthwith out came Rabbi Remorse Red-herring, curiosity and cupidity in his eyes. He wore the skull-cap of sanctity, but looked the gourmand in spite of it.

"Good Sabbath, sir! What is this about your getting married?"

"It's a long story," said Yankelé, "and as your good vife told me your dinner is just ready, I mustn't keep you now."

"No, there are still a few minutes before dinner. What is it?"

Yankelé shook his head. "I couldn't tink of keeping you in dis draughty passage."

"I don't mind. I don't feel any draught."

"Dat's just vere de danger lays. You don't notice, and one day you find yourself laid up mid rheumatism, and you vill have Remorse," said Yankelé with a twinkle. "Your life is precious – if *you* die, who vill console de community?"

It was an ambiguous remark, but the Rabbi understood it in its most flattering sense, and his little eyes beamed. "I would ask you inside," he said, "but I have a visitor."

"No matter," said Yankelé, "vat I have to say to you, Rabbi, is not private. A stranger may hear it."

Still undecided, the Rabbi muttered, "You want me to marry you?"

"I have come to get married," replied Yankelé.

"But I have never been called upon to marry people."

"It's never too late to mend, dey say."

"Strange – strange," murmured the Rabbi reflectively.

"Vat is strange?"

"That you should come to me just to-day. But why did you not go to Rabbi Sandman?"

"Rabbi Sandman!" replied Yankelé with contempt. "Vere would be de good of going to him?"

"But why not?"

"Every *Schnorrer* goes to him," said Yankelé frankly.

"Hum!" mused the Rabbi. "Perhaps there *is* an opening for a more select marrier. Come in, then, I can give you five minutes if you really don't mind talking before a stranger."

He threw open the door, and led the way into the sitting-room.

Yankelé followed, exultant; the outworks were already carried, and his heart beat high with hope. But at his first glance within, he reeled and almost fell.

Standing with his back to the fire and dominating the room was Manasseh Bueno Barzillai Azevedo da Costa!

"Ah, Yankelé, good Sabbath!" said da Costa affably.

"G-g-ood Sabbath!" stammered Yankelé.

"Why, you know each other!" cried the Rabbi.

"Oh, yes," said Manasseh, "an acquaintance of yours, too, apparently."

"No, he is just come to see me about something," replied the Rabbi.

"I thought you did not know the Rabbi, Mr. da Costa?" Yankelé could not help saying.

"I didn't. I only had the pleasure of making his acquaintance half an hour ago. I met him in the street as he was coming home from morning service, and he was kind enough to invite me to dinner."

Yankelé gasped; despite his secret amusement at Manasseh's airs, there were moments when the easy magnificence of the man overwhelmed him, extorted his reluctant admiration. How in Heaven's name had the Spaniard conquered at a blow!

Looking down at the table, he now observed that it was already laid for dinner – and for three! He should have been that third. Was it fair of Manasseh to handicap him thus? Naturally, there would be infinitely less chance of a fourth being invited than a third – to say nothing of the dearth of provisions. "But, surely, you don't intend to stay to dinner!" he complained in dismay.

"I have given my word," said Manasseh, "and I shouldn't care to disappoint the Rabbi."

"Oh, it's no disappointment, no disappointment," remarked Rabbi Remorse Red-herring cordially, "I could just as well come round and see you after dinner."

"After dinner I never see people," said Manasseh majestically; "I sleep."

The Rabbi dared not make further protest: he turned to Yankelé and asked, "Well, now, what's this about your marriage?"

"I can't tell you before Mr. da Costa," replied Yankelé, to gain time.

"Why not? You said anybody might hear."

"Noting of the sort. I said a stranger might hear. But Mr. da Costa isn't a stranger. He knows too much about de matter."

"What shall we do, then?" murmured the Rabbi.

"I can wait till after dinner," said Yankelé, with good-natured carelessness. "I don't sleep –"

Before the Rabbi could reply, the wife brought in a baked dish, and set it on the table. Her husband glowered at her, but she, regular as clockwork, and as unthinking, produced the black bottle of *schnapps*. It was her husband's business to get rid of Yankelé; her business was to bring on the dinner. If she had delayed, he would have raged equally. She was not only wife, but maid-of-all-work.

Seeing the advanced state of the preparations, Manasseh da Costa took his seat at the table; obeying her husband's significant glance, Mrs. Red-herring took up her position at the foot. The Rabbi himself sat down at the head, behind the dish. He always served, being the only person he could rely upon to gauge his capacities. Yankelé was left standing. The odour of the meat and potatoes impregnated the atmosphere with wistful poetry.

Suddenly the Rabbi looked up and perceived Yankelé. "Will you do as we do?" he said in seductive accents.

The *Schnorrer's* heart gave one wild, mad throb of joy. He laid his hand on the only other chair.

"I don't mind if I do," he said, with responsive amiability.

"Then go home and have *your* dinner," said the Rabbi.

Yankelé's wild heart-beat was exchanged for a stagnation as of death. A shiver ran down his spine. He darted an agonised appealing glance at Manasseh, who sniggered inscrutably.

"Oh, I don't tink I ought to go away and leave you midout a tird man for grace," he said, in tones of prophetic rebuke. "Since I *be* here, it would be a sin not to stay."

The Rabbi, having a certain connection with religion, was cornered; he was not able to repudiate such an opportunity of that more pious form of grace which needs the presence of three males.

"Oh, I should be very glad for you to stay," said the Rabbi, "but, unfortunately, we have only three meat-plates."

"Oh, de dish vill do for me."

"Very well, then!" said the Rabbi.

And Yankelé, with the old mad heart-beat, took the fourth chair, darting a triumphant glance at the still sniggering Manasseh.

The hostess rose, misunderstanding her husband's optical signals, and fished out a knife and fork from the recesses of a chiffonier. The host first heaped his own plate high with artistically coloured potatoes and stiff meat – less from discourtesy than from life-long habit – then divided the remainder in unequal portions between Manasseh and the little woman, in rough correspondence with their sizes. Finally, he handed Yankelé the empty dish.

"You see there is nothing left," he said simply. "We didn't even expect one visitor."

"First come, first served," observed Manasseh, with his sphinx-like expression, as he fell-to.

Yankelé sat frozen, staring blankly at the dish, his brain as empty. He had lost.

Such a dinner was a hollow mockery – like the dish. He could not expect Manasseh to accept it, quibbled he ever so cunningly. He sat for a minute or two as in a dream, the music of knife and fork ringing mockingly in his ears, his hungry palate moistened by the delicious savour. Then he shook off his stupor, and all his being was desperately astrain, questing for an idea. Manasseh discoursed with his host on neo-Hebrew literature.

"We thought of starting a journal at Grodno," said the Rabbi, "only the funds –"

"Be you den a native of Grodno?" interrupted Yankelé.

"Yes, I was born there," mumbled the Rabbi, "but I left there twenty years ago." His mouth was full, and he did not cease to ply the cutlery.

"Ah!" said Yankelé enthusiastically, "den you must be de famous preacher everybody speaks of. I do not remember you myself, for I vas a boy, but dey say ve haven't got no such preachers nowaday."

"In Grodno my husband kept a brandy shop," put in the hostess.

There was a bad quarter of a minute of silence. To Yankelé's relief, the Rabbi ended it by observing, "Yes, but doubtless the gentleman (you will excuse me calling you that, sir, I don't know your real name) alluded to my fame as a boy-Maggid. At the age of five I preached to audiences of

many hundreds, and my manipulation of texts, my demonstrations that they did not mean what they said, drew tears even from octogenarians familiar with the Torah from their earliest infancy. It was said there never was such a wonder-child since Ben Sira."

"But why did you give it up?" enquired Manasseh.

"It gave me up," said the Rabbi, putting down his knife and fork to expound an ancient grievance. "A boy-Maggid cannot last more than a few years. Up to nine I was still a draw, but every year the wonder grew less, and, when I was thirteen, my Bar-Mitzvah (confirmation) sermon occasioned no more sensation than those of the many other lads whose sermons I had written for them. I struggled along as boyishly as I could for some time after that, but it was in a losing cause. My age won on me daily. As it is said, 'I have been young, and now I am old.' In vain I composed the most eloquent addresses to be heard in Grodno. In vain I gave a course on the emotions, with explanations and instances from daily life – the fickle public preferred younger attractions. So at last I gave it up and sold *vodki*."

"Vat a pity! Vat a pity!" ejaculated Yankelé, "after vinning fame in de Torah!"

"But what is a man to do? He is not always a boy," replied the Rabbi. "Yes, I kept a brandy shop. That's what I call Degradation. But there is always balm in Gilead. I lost so much money over it that I had to emigrate to England, where, finding nothing else to do, I became a preacher again." He poured himself out a glass of *schnapps*, ignoring the water.

"I heard nothing of de *vodki* shop," said Yankelé; "it vas swallowed up in your earlier fame."

The Rabbi drained the glass of *schnapps*, smacked his lips, and resumed his knife and fork. Manasseh reached for the unoffered bottle, and helped himself liberally. The Rabbi unostentatiously withdrew it beyond his easy reach, looking at Yankelé the while.

"How long have you been in England?" he asked the Pole.

"Not long," said Yankelé.

"Ha! Does Gabriel the cantor still suffer from neuralgia?"

Yankelé looked sad. "No – he is dead," he said.

"Dear me! Well, he was tottering when I knew him. His blowing of the ram's horn got wheezier every year. And how is his young brother, Samuel?"

"He is dead!" said Yankelé.

"What, he too! Tut, tut! He was so robust. Has Mendelssohn, the stonemason, got many more girls?"

"He is dead!" said Yankelé.

"Nonsense!" gasped the Rabbi, dropping his knife and fork. "Why, I heard from him only a few months ago."

"He is dead!" said Yankelé.

"Good gracious me! Mendelssohn dead!" After a moment of emotion he resumed his meal. "But his sons and daughters are all doing well, I hope. The eldest, Solomon, was a most pious youth, and his third girl, Neshamah, promised to be a rare beauty."

"They are dead!" said Yankelé.

This time the Rabbi turned pale as a corpse himself. He laid down his knife and fork automatically.

"D – dead," he breathed in an awestruck whisper. "All?"

"Everyone. De same cholera took all de family."

The Rabbi covered his face with his hands. "Then poor Solomon's wife is a widow. I hope he left her enough to live upon."

"No, but it doesn't matter," said Yankelé.

"It matters a great deal," cried the Rabbi.

"She is dead," said Yankelé.

"Rebecca Schwartz dead!" screamed the Rabbi, for he had once loved the maiden himself, and, not having married her, had still a tenderness for her.

"Rebecca Schwartz," repeated Yankel  inexorably.

"Was it the cholera?" faltered the Rabbi.

"No, she vas heart-broke."

Rabbi Remorse Red-herring silently pushed his plate away, and leaned his elbows upon the table and his face upon his palms, and his chin upon the bottle of *schnapps* in mournful meditation.

"You are not eating, Rabbi," said Yankel  insinuatingly.

"I have lost my appetite," said the Rabbi.

"Vat a pity to let food get cold and spoil! You'd better eat it."

The Rabbi shook his head querulously.

"Den I vill eat it," cried Yankel  indignantly. "Good hot food like dat!"

"As you like," said the Rabbi wearily. And Yankel  began to eat at lightning speed, pausing only to wink at the inscrutable Manasseh; and to cast yearning glances at the inaccessible *schnapps* that supported the Rabbi's chin.

Presently the Rabbi looked up: "You're quite sure all these people are dead?" he asked with a dawning suspicion.

"May my blood be poured out like this *schnapps*," protested Yankel , dislodging the bottle, and vehemently pouring the spirit into a tumbler, "if dey be not."

The Rabbi relapsed into his moody attitude, and retained it till his wife brought in a big willow-pattern china dish of stewed prunes and pippins. She produced four plates for these, and so Yankel  finished his meal in the unquestionable status of a first-class guest. The Rabbi was by this time sufficiently recovered to toy with two platefuls in a melancholy silence which he did not break till his mouth opened involuntarily to intone the grace.

When grace was over he turned to Manasseh and said, "And what was this way you were suggesting to me of getting a profitable Sephardic connection?"

"I did, indeed, wonder why you did not extend your practice as consolation preacher among the Spanish Jews," replied Manasseh gravely. "But after what we have just heard of the death-rate of Jews in Grodno, I should seriously advise you to go back there."

"No, they cannot forget that I was once a boy," replied the Rabbi with equal gravity. "I prefer the Spanish Jews. They are all well-to-do. They may not die so often as the Russians, but they die better, so to speak. You will give me introductions, you will speak of me to your illustrious friends, I understand."

"You understand!" repeated Manasseh in dignified astonishment. "You do not understand. I shall do no such thing."

"But you yourself suggested it!" cried the Rabbi excitedly.

"I? Nothing of the kind. I had heard of you and your ministrations to mourners, and meeting you in the street this afternoon for the first time, it struck me to enquire why you did not carry your consolations into the bosom of my community where so much more money is to be made. I said I wondered you had not done so from the first. And you – invited me to dinner. I still wonder. That is all, my good man." He rose to go.

The haughty rebuke silenced the Rabbi, though his heart was hot with a vague sense of injury.

"Do you come my way, Yankel ?" said Manasseh carelessly.

The Rabbi turned hastily to his second guest.

"When do you want me to marry you?" he asked.

"You have married me," replied Yankel .

"I?" gasped the Rabbi. It was the last straw.

"Yes," reiterated Yankel . "Hasn't he, Mr. da Costa?"

His heart went pit-a-pat as he put the question.

"Certainly," said Manasseh without hesitation.

Yankelé's face was made glorious summer. Only two of the quartette knew the secret of his radiance.

"There, Rabbi," he cried exultantly. "Good Sabbath!"

"Good Sabbath!" added Manasseh.

"Good Sabbath," dazedly murmured the Rabbi.

"Good Sabbath," added his wife.

"Congratulate me!" cried Yankelé when they got outside.

"On what?" asked Manasseh.

"On being your future son-in-law, of course."

"Oh, on *that*? Certainly, I congratulate you most heartily." The two *Schnorrers* shook hands. "I thought you were asking for compliments on your manœuvring."

"Vy, doesn't it deserve dem?"

"No," said Manasseh magisterially.

"No?" queried Yankelé, his heart sinking again. "Vy not?"

"Why did you kill so many people?"

"Somebody must die dat I may live."

"You said that before," said Manasseh severely. "A good *Schnorrer* would not have slaughtered so many for his dinner. It is a waste of good material. And then you told lies!"

"How do you know they are not dead?" pleaded Yankelé.

The King shook his head reprovingly. "A first-class *Schnorrer* never lies," he laid it down.

"I might have made truth go as far as a lie – if you hadn't come to dinner yourself."

"What is that you say? Why, I came to encourage you by showing you how easy your task was."

"On de contrary, you made it much harder for me. Dere vas no dinner left."

"But against that you must reckon that since the Rabbi had already invited one person, he couldn't be so hard to tackle as I had fancied."

"Oh, but you must not judge from yourself," protested Yankelé. "You be not a *Schnorrer*– you be a miracle."

"But I should like a miracle for my son-in-law also," grumbled the King.

"And if you had to *schnorr* a son-in-law, you would get a miracle," said Yankelé soothingly. "As he has to *schnorr* you, *he* gets the miracle."

"True," observed Manasseh musingly, "and I think you might therefore be very well content without the dowry."

"So I might," admitted Yankelé, "only *you* would not be content to break your promise. I suppose I shall have some of de dowry on de marriage morning."

"On that morning you shall get my daughter – without fail. Surely that will be enough for one day!"

"Vell, ven do I get de money your daughter gets from de Synagogue?"

"When she gets it from the Synagogue, of course."

"How much vill it be?"

"It may be a hundred and fifty pounds," said Manasseh pompously.

Yankelé's eyes sparkled.

"And it may be less," added Manasseh as an after-thought.

"How much less?" enquired Yankelé anxiously.

"A hundred and fifty pounds," repeated Manasseh pompously.

"D'you mean to say I may get noting?"

"Certainly, if she gets nothing. What I promised you was the money she gets from the Synagogue. Should she be fortunate enough in the *sorteo*– "

"De *sorteo*! Vat is dat?"

"The dowry I told you of. It is accorded by lot. My daughter has as good a chance as any other maiden. By winning her you stand to win a hundred and fifty pounds. It is a handsome amount. There are not many fathers who would do as much for their daughters," concluded Manasseh with conscious magnanimity.

"But about de Jerusalem estate!" said Yankelé, shifting his standpoint. "I don't vant to go and live dere. De Messiah is not yet come."

"No, you will hardly be able to live on it," admitted Manasseh.

"You do not object to my selling it, den?"

"Oh, no! If you are so sordid, if you have no true Jewish sentiment!"

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

Текст предоставлен ООО «ЛитРес».

Прочитайте эту книгу целиком, [купив полную легальную версию](#) на ЛитРес.

Безопасно оплатить книгу можно банковской картой Visa, MasterCard, Maestro, со счета мобильного телефона, с платежного терминала, в салоне МТС или Связной, через PayPal, WebMoney, Яндекс.Деньги, QIWI Кошелек, бонусными картами или другим удобным Вам способом.