

Chapter XLII

‘Wenn es eine Stutenleiter von Leiden giebt, so hat Israel die hoechste Staffel erstiegen; wen die Dauer der Schmerzen und die Geduld, mit welcher sie ertragen werden, adeln, so nehmen es die Juden mit den Hochgeborenen aller Laender auf; wenn eine Literatur reich genannt wird, die wenige klassische Trauerspiele besitzt, welcher Platz gebuehrt dann einer Tragodie die anderthalb Jahrtausende wahr, gedichtet und dargestellt von den Helden selber?’ - ZUNZ: *Die Synagogale Poesie des Mittelalters*.

‘If there are ranks in suffering, Israel takes precedence of all the nations - if the duration of sorrows and the patience with which they are borne ennobles, the Jews are among the aristocracy of every land - if a literature is called rich in the possession of a few classic tragedies, what shall we say to a National Tragedy lasting for fifteen hundred years, in which the poets and the actors were also the heroes?’

Deronda had lately been reading that passage of Zunz, and it occurred to him by way of contrast when he was going to the Cohens, who certainly bore no obvious stamp of distinction in sorrow or in any other form of aristocracy. Ezra Cohen was not clad in the sublime pathos of the martyr, and his taste for money-getting seemed to be favored with that success which has been the most exasperating difference in the greed of Jews during all the ages of their dispersion. This Jeshurun of a pawnbroker was not a symbol of the great Jewish tragedy; and yet was there not something typical in the fact that a life like Mordecai's - a frail incorporation of the national consciousness, breathing with difficult breath - was nested in the self-gratulating ignorant prosperity of the Cohens?

Glistening was the gladness in their faces when Deronda reappeared among them. Cohen himself took occasion to intimate that although the diamond ring, let alone a little longer, would have bred more money, he did not mind *that* - not a sixpence - when compared with the pleasure of the women and children in seeing a young gentleman whose first visit had been so agreeable that they had ‘done nothing but talk of it ever since.’ Young Mrs. Cohen was very sorry that baby was asleep, and then very glad that Adelaide was not yet gone to bed, entreating Deronda not to stay in the shop, but to go forthwith into the parlor to see ‘mother and the children.’ He willingly accepted the invitation, having provided himself with portable presents; a set of paper figures for Adelaide, and an ivory cup and ball for Jacob.

The grandmother had a pack of cards before her and was making ‘plates’ with the children. A plate had just been thrown down and kept itself whole.

'Stop!' said Jacob, running to Deronda as he entered. 'Don't tread on my plate. Stop and see me throw it up again.'

Deronda complied, exchanging a smile of understanding with the grandmother, and the plate bore several tossings before it came to pieces; then the visitor was allowed to come forward and seat himself. He observed that the door from which Mordecai had issued on the former visit was now closed, but he wished to show his interest in the Cohens before disclosing a yet stronger interest in their singular inmate.

It was not until he had Adelaide on his knee, and was setting up the paper figures in their dance on the table, while Jacob was already practicing with the cup and ball, that Deronda said -

'Is Mordecai in just now?'

'Where is he, Addy?' said Cohen, who had seized an interval of business to come and look on. 'In the workroom there,' said his wife, nodding toward the closed door.

'The fact is, sir,' said Cohen, 'we don't know what's come to him this last day or two. He's always what I may call a little touched, you know' - here Cohen pointed to his own forehead - 'not quite so rational in all things, like you and me; but he's mostly wonderful regular and industrious so far as a poor creature can be, and takes as much delight in the boy as anybody could. But this last day or two he's been moving about like a sleep-walker, or else sitting as still as a wax figure.'

'It's the disease, poor dear creature,' said the grandmother, tenderly. 'I doubt whether he can stand long against it.'

'No; I think its only something he's got in his head.' said Mrs. Cohen the younger. 'He's been turning over writing continually, and when I speak to him it takes him ever so long to hear and answer.'

'You may think us a little weak ourselves,' said Cohen, apologetically. 'But my wife and mother wouldn't part with him if he was a still worse encumbrance. It isn't that we don't know the long and short of matters, but it's our principle. There's fools do business at a loss and don't know it. I'm not one of 'em.'

'Oh, Mordecai carries a blessing inside him,' said the grandmother.

'He's got something the matter inside him,' said Jacob, coming up to correct this erratum of his grandmother's. 'He said he couldn't talk to me, and he wouldn't have a bit o' bun.'

'So far from wondering at your feeling for him,' said Deronda, 'I already feel something of the same sort myself. I have lately talked to him at Ram's book-shop - in fact, I promised to call for him here, that we might go out together.'

'That's it, then!' said Cohen, slapping his knee. 'He's been expecting you, and it's taken hold of him. I suppose he talks about his learning to you. It's uncommonly kind of *you*, sir; for I don't suppose there's much to be got out of it, else it wouldn't have left him where he is. But there's the shop.' Cohen hurried out, and Jacob, who had been listening inconveniently near to Deronda's elbow, said to him with obliging familiarity, 'I'll call Mordecai for you, if you like.'

'No, Jacob,' said his mother; 'open the door for the gentleman, and let him go in himself Hush! don't make a noise.'

Skillful Jacob seemed to enter into the play, and turned the handle of the door as noiselessly as possible, while Deronda went behind him and stood on the threshold. The small room was lit only by a dying fire and one candle with a shade over it. On the board fixed under the window, various objects of jewelry were scattered: some books were heaped in the corner beyond them. Mordecai was seated on a high chair at the board with his back to the door, his hands resting on each other and on the board, a watch propped on a stand before him. He was in a state of expectation as sickening as that of a prisoner listening for the delayed deliverance - when he heard Deronda's voice saying, 'I am come for you. Are you ready?'

Immediately he turned without speaking, seized his furred cap which lay near, and moved to join Deronda. It was but a moment before they were both in the sitting-room, and Jacob, noticing the change in his friend's air and expression, seized him by the arm and said, 'See my cup and ball!' sending the ball up close to Mordecai's face, as something likely to cheer a convalescent. It was a sign of the relieved tension in Mordecai's mind that he could smile and say, 'Fine, fine!'

'You have forgotten your greatcoat and comforter,' said young Mrs. Cohen, and he went back into the work-room and got them.

'He's come to life again, do you see?' said Cohen, who had re-entered - speaking in an undertone. 'I told you so: I'm mostly right.' Then in his usual voice, 'Well, sir, we mustn't detain you now, I suppose; but I hope this isn't the last time we shall see you.'

'Shall you come again?' said Jacob, advancing. 'See, I can catch the ball; I'll bet I catch it without stopping, if you come again.'

'He has clever hands,' said Deronda, looking at the grandmother. 'Which side of the family does he get them from?'

But the grandmother only nodded towards her son, who said promptly, 'My side. My wife's family are not in that line. But bless your soul! ours is a sort of cleverness as good as gutta percha; you can twist it which way you like. There's nothing some old gentlemen won't do if you set 'em to it.' Here Cohen winked down at Jacob's back, but it was doubtful whether this judicious allusiveness answered its purpose, for its subject gave a nasal whinnying laugh and stamped about singing, 'Old gentlemen, old gentlemen,' in chiming cadence.

Deronda thought, 'I shall never know anything decisive about these people until I ask Cohen pointblank whether he lost a sister named Mirah when she was six years old.' The decisive moment did not yet seem easy for him to face. Still his first sense of repulsion at the commonness of these people was beginning to be tempered with kindlier feeling. However unrefined their airs and speech might be, he was forced to admit some moral refinement in their treatment of the consumptive workman, whose mental distinction impressed them chiefly as a harmless, silent raving.

'The Cohens seem to have an affection for you,' said Deronda, as soon as he and Mordecai were off the doorstep.

'And I for them,' was the immediate answer. 'They have the heart of the Israelite within them, though they are as the horse and the mule, without understanding beyond the narrow path they tread.'

'I have caused you some uneasiness, I fear,' said Deronda, 'by my slowness in fulfilling my promise. I wished to come yesterday, but I found it impossible.'

'Yes - yes, I trusted you. But it is true I have been uneasy, for the spirit of my youth has been stirred within me, and this body is not strong enough to bear the beating of its wings. I am as a man bound and imprisoned through long years: behold him brought to speech of his fellow and his limbs set free: he weeps, he totters, the joy within him threatens to break and overthrow the tabernacle of flesh.'

'You must not speak too much in this evening air,' said Deronda, feeling Mordecai's words of reliance like so many cords binding him painfully. 'Cover your mouth with the woolen scarf. We are going to the *Hand and Banner*, I suppose, and shall be in private there?'

'No, that is my trouble that you did not come yesterday. For this is the evening of the club I spoke of, and we might not have any minutes

alone until late, when all the rest are gone. Perhaps we had better seek another place. But I am used to that only. In new places the outer world presses on me and narrows the inward vision. And the people there are familiar with my face.'

'I don't mind the club if I am allowed to go in,' said Deronda. 'It is enough that you like this place best. If we have not enough time I will come again. What sort of club is it?'

'It is called 'The Philosophers.' They are few - like the cedars of Lebanon - poor men given to thought. But none so poor as I am: and sometimes visitors of higher worldly rank have been brought. We are allowed to introduce a friend, who is interested in our topics. Each orders beer or some other kind of drink, in payment for the room. Most of them smoke. I have gone when I could, for there are other men of my race who come, and sometimes I have broken silence. I have pleased myself with a faint likeness between these poor philosophers and the Masters who handed down the thought of our race - the great Transmitters, who labored with their hands for scant bread, but preserved and enlarged for us the heritage of memory, and saved the soul of Israel alive as a seed among the tombs. The heart pleases itself with faint resemblances.' 'I shall be very glad to go and sit among them, if that will suit you. It is a sort of meeting I should like to join in,' said Deronda, not without relief in the prospect of an interval before he went through the strain of his next private conversation with Mordecai.

In three minutes they had opened the glazed door with the red curtain, and were in the little parlor, hardly much more than fifteen feet square, where the gaslight shone through a slight haze of smoke on what to Deronda was a new and striking scene. Half-a-dozen men of various ages, from between twenty and thirty to fifty, all shabbily dressed, most of them with clay pipes in their mouths, were listening with a look of concentrated intelligence to a man in a pepper-and-salt dress, with blonde hair, short nose, broad forehead and general breadth, who, holding his pipe slightly uplifted in the left hand, and beating his knee with the right, was just finishing a quotation from Shelley (the comparison of the avalanche in his 'Prometheus Unbound')

'As thought by thought is piled, till some great truth Is loosened, and the nations echo round.'

The entrance of the new-comers broke the fixity of attention, and called for re-arrangement of seats in the too narrow semicircle round the fire- place and the table holding the glasses, spare pipes and tobacco. This was the soberest of clubs; but sobriety is no reason why smoking and 'talking something' should be less imperiously needed as

a means of getting a decent status in company and debate. Mordecai was received with welcoming voices which had a slight cadence of compassion in them, but naturally all glances passed immediately to his companion.

'I have brought a friend who is interested in our subjects,' said Mordecai. 'He has traveled and studied much.'

'Is the gentlemen anonymous? Is he a Great 'Unknown?'" said the broad-chested quoter of Shelley, with a humorous air.

'My name is Daniel Deronda. I am unknown, but not in any sense great.' The smile breaking over the stranger's grave face as he said this was so agreeable that there was a general indistinct murmur, equivalent to a 'Hear, hear,' and the broad man said -

'You recommend the name, sir, and are welcome. Here, Mordecai, come to this corner against me,' he added, evidently wishing to give the coziest place to the one who most needed it.

Deronda was well satisfied to get a seat on the opposite side, where his general survey of the party easily included Mordecai, who remained an eminently striking object in this group of sharply-characterized figures, more than one of whom, even to Daniel's little exercised discrimination, seemed probably of Jewish descent.

In fact pure English blood (if leech or lancet can furnish us with the precise product) did not declare itself predominantly in the party at present assembled. Miller, the broad man, an exceptional second-hand bookseller who knew the insides of books, had at least grandparents who called themselves German, and possibly far-away ancestors who denied themselves to be Jews; Buchan, the saddler, was Scotch; Pash, the watchmaker, was a small, dark, vivacious, triple-baked Jew; Gideon, the optical instrument maker, was a Jew of the red-haired, generous-featured type easily passing for Englishmen of unusually cordial manners; and Croop, the dark-eyed shoemaker, was probably more Celtic than he knew. Only three would have been discernable everywhere as Englishman: the wood-inlayer Goodwin, well-built, open-faced, pleasant-voiced; the florid laboratory assistant Marrables; and Lily, the pale, neat-faced copying-clerk, whose light-brown hair was set up in a small parallelogram above his well-filled forehead, and whose shirt, taken with an otherwise seedy costume, had a freshness that might be called insular, and perhaps even something narrower.

Certainly a company select of the select among poor men, being drawn together by a taste not prevalent even among the privileged heirs of learning and its institutions; and not likely to amuse any gentleman in

search of crime or low comedy as the ground of interest in people whose weekly income is only divisible into shillings. Deronda, even if he had not been more than usually inclined to gravity under the influence of what was pending between him and Mordecai, would not have set himself to find food for laughter in the various shades of departure from the tone of polished society sure to be observable in the air and talk of these men who had probably snatched knowledge as most of us snatch indulgences, making the utmost of scant opportunity. He looked around him with the quiet air of respect habitual to him among equals, ordered whisky and water, and offered the contents of his cigar-case, which, characteristically enough, he always carried and hardly ever used for his own behoof, having reasons for not smoking himself, but liking to indulge others. Perhaps it was his weakness to be afraid of seeming straight-laced, and turning himself into a sort of diagram instead of a growth which can exercise the guiding attraction of fellowship. That he made a decidedly winning impression on the company was proved by their showing themselves no less at ease than before, and desirous of quickly resuming their interrupted talk.

'This is what I call one of our touch-and-go nights, sir,' said Miller, who was implicitly accepted as a sort of moderator - on addressing Deronda by way of explanation, and nodding toward each person whose name he mentioned. 'Sometimes we stick pretty close to the point. But tonight our friend Pash, there, brought up the law of progress; and we got on statistics; then Lily, there, saying we knew well enough before counting that in the same state of society the same sort of things would happen, and it was no more wonder that quantities should remain the same, than that qualities should remain the same, for in relation to society numbers are qualities - the number of drunkards is a quality in society - the numbers are an index to the qualities, and give us no instruction, only setting us to consider the causes of difference between different social states - Lily saying this, we went off on the causes of social change, and when you came in I was going upon the power of ideas, which I hold to be the main transforming cause.'

'I don't hold with you there, Miller,' said Goodwin, the inlayer, more concerned to carry on the subject than to wait for a word from the new guest. 'For either you mean so many sorts of things by ideas that I get no knowledge by what you say, any more than if you said light was a cause; or else you mean a particular sort of ideas, and then I go against your meaning as too narrow. For, look at it in one way, all actions men put a bit of thought into are ideas - say, sowing seed, or making a canoe, or baking clay; and such ideas as these work themselves into life and go on growing with it, but they can't go apart from the material that set them to work and makes a medium for them. It's the nature of wood and stone yielding to the knife that

raises the idea of shaping them, and with plenty of wood and stone the shaping will go on. I look at it, that such ideas as are mixed straight away with all the other elements of life are powerful along with 'em. The slower the mixing, the less power they have. And as to the causes of social change, I look at it in this way - ideas are a sort of parliament, but there's a commonwealth outside and a good deal of the commonwealth is working at change without knowing what the parliament is doing.'

'But if you take ready mixing as your test of power,' said Pash, 'some of the least practical ideas beat everything. They spread without being understood, and enter into the language without being thought of.'

'They may act by changing the distribution of gases,' said Marrables; 'instruments are getting so fine now, men may come to register the spread of a theory by observed changes in the atmosphere and corresponding changes in the nerves.'

'Yes,' said Pash, his dark face lighting up rather impishly, 'there is the idea of nationalities; I dare say the wild asses are snuffing it, and getting more gregarious.'

'You don't share that idea?' said Deronda, finding a piquant incongruity between Pash's sarcasm and the strong stamp of race on his features.

'Say, rather, he does not share that spirit,' said Mordecai, who had turned a melancholy glance on Pash. 'Unless nationality is a feeling, what force can it have as an idea?'

'Granted, Mordecai,' said Pash, quite good-humoredly. 'And as the feeling of nationality is dying, I take the idea to be no better than a ghost, already walking to announce the death.'

'A sentiment may seem to be dying and yet revive into strong life,' said Deronda. 'Nations have revived. We may live to see a great outburst of force in the Arabs, who are being inspired with a new zeal.'

'Amen, amen,' said Mordecai, looking at Deronda with a delight which was the beginning of recovered energy: his attitude was more upright, his face was less worn.

'That may hold with backward nations,' said Pash, 'but with us in Europe the sentiment of nationality is destined to die out. It will last a little longer in the quarters where oppression lasts, but nowhere else. The whole current of progress is setting against it.'

'Ay,' said Buchan, in a rapid thin Scotch tone which was like the letting in of a little cool air on the conversation, 'ye've done well to bring us round to the point. Ye're all agreed that societies change - not always and everywhere - but on the whole and in the long run. Now, with all deference, I would beg t' observe that we have got to examine the nature of changes before we have a warrant to call them progress, which word is supposed to include a bettering, though I apprehend it to be ill-chosen for that purpose, since mere motion onward may carry us to a bog or a precipice. And the questions I would put are three: Is all change in the direction of progress? if not, how shall we discern which change is progress and which not? and thirdly, how far and in what way can we act upon the course of change so as to promote it where it is beneficial, and divert it where it is injurious?'

But Buchan's attempt to impose his method on the talk was a failure. Lily immediately said -

'Change and progress are merged in the idea of development. The laws of development are being discovered, and changes taking place according to them are necessarily progressive; that is to say, if we have any notion of progress or improvement opposed to them, the notion is a mistake.'

'I really can't see how you arrive at that sort of certitude about changes by calling them development,' said Deronda. 'There will still remain the degrees of inevitableness in relation to our own will and acts, and the degrees of wisdom in hastening or retarding; there will still remain the danger of mistaking a tendency which should be resisted for an inevitable law that we must adjust ourselves to, - which seems to me as bad a superstition or false god as any that has been set up without the ceremonies of philosophising.'

'That is a truth,' said Mordecai. 'Woe to the men who see no place for resistance in this generation! I believe in a growth, a passage, and a new unfolding of life whereof the seed is more perfect, more charged with the elements that are pregnant with diviner form. The life of a people grows, it is knit together and yet expanded, in joy and sorrow, in thought and action; it absorbs the thought of other nations into its own forms, and gives back the thought as new wealth to the world; it is a power and an organ in the great body of the nations. But there may come a check, an arrest; memories may be stifled, and love may be faint for the lack of them; or memories may shrink into withered relics - the soul of a people, whereby they know themselves to be one, may seem to be dying for want of common action. But who shall say, 'The fountain of their life is dried up, they shall forever cease to be a nation?' Who shall say it? Not he who feels the life of his people stirring within his own. Shall he say, 'That way events are wending, I will not resist?' His very soul is resistance, and is as a seed of fire that

may enkindle the souls of multitudes, and make a new pathway for events.'

'I don't deny patriotism,' said Gideon, 'but we all know you have a particular meaning, Mordecai. You know Mordecai's way of thinking, I suppose.' Here Gideon had turned to Deronda, who sat next to him, but without waiting for an answer he went on. 'I'm a rational Jew myself. I stand by my people as a sort of family relations, and I am for keeping up our worship in a rational way. I don't approve of our people getting baptised, because I don't believe in a Jew's conversion to the Gentile part of Christianity. And now we have political equality, there's no excuse for a pretense of that sort. But I am for getting rid of all of our superstitions and exclusiveness. There's no reason now why we shouldn't melt gradually into the populations we live among. That's the order of the day in point of progress. I would as soon my children married Christians as Jews. And I'm for the old maxim, 'A man's country is where he's well off.'"

'That country's not so easy to find, Gideon,' said the rapid Pash, with a shrug and grimace. 'You get ten shillings a-week more than I do, and have only half the number of children. If somebody will introduce a brisk trade in watches among the 'Jerusalem wares,' I'll go - eh, Mordecai, what do you say?'

Deronda, all ear for these hints of Mordecai's opinion, was inwardly wondering at his persistence in coming to this club. For an enthusiastic spirit to meet continually the fixed indifference of men familiar with the object of his enthusiasm is the acceptance of a slow martyrdom, beside which the fate of a missionary tomahawked without any considerate rejection of his doctrines seems hardly worthy of compassion. But Mordecai gave no sign of shrinking: this was a moment of spiritual fullness, and he cared more for the utterance of his faith than for its immediate reception. With a fervor which had no temper in it, but seemed rather the rush of feeling in the opportunity of speech, he answered Pash: -

'What I say is, let every man keep far away from the brotherhood and inheritance he despises. Thousands on thousands of our race have mixed with the Gentiles as Celt with Saxon, and they may inherit the blessing that belongs to the Gentile. You cannot follow them. You are one of the multitudes over this globe who must walk among the nations and be known as Jews, and with words on their lips which mean, 'I wish I had not been born a Jew, I disown any bond with the long travail of my race, I will outdo the Gentile in mocking at our separateness,' they all the while feel breathing on them the breath of contempt because they are Jews, and they will breathe it back poisonously. Can a fresh-made garment of citizenship weave itself straightway into the flesh and change the slow deposit of eighteen

centuries? What is the citizenship of him who walks among a people he has no hardy kindred and fellowship with, and has lost the sense of brotherhood with his own race? It is a charter of selfish ambition and rivalry in low greed. He is an alien of spirit, whatever he may be in form; he sucks the blood of mankind, he is not a man, sharing in no loves, sharing in no subjection of the soul, he mocks it all. Is it not truth I speak, Pash?’

‘Not exactly, Mordecai,’ said Pash, ‘if you mean that I think the worse of myself for being a Jew. What I thank our fathers for is that there are fewer blockheads among us than among other races. But perhaps you are right in thinking the Christians don't like me so well for it.’

‘Catholics and Protestants have not liked each other much better,’ said the genial Gideon. ‘We must wait patiently for prejudices to die out. Many of our people are on a footing with the best, and there's been a good filtering of our blood into high families. I am for making our expectations rational.’ ‘And so am I!’ said Mordecai, quickly, leaning forward with the eagerness of one who pleads in some decisive crisis, his long, thin hands clasped together on his lap. ‘I, too, claim to be a rational Jew. But what is it to be rational - what is it to feel the light of the divine reason growing stronger within and without? It is to see more and more of the hidden bonds that bind and consecrate change as a dependent growth - yea, consecrate it with kinship: the past becomes my parent and the future stretches toward me the appealing arms of children. Is it rational to drain away the sap of special kindred that makes the families of men rich in interchanged wealth, and various as the forests are various with the glory of the cedar and the palm? When it is rational to say, ‘I know not my father or my mother, let my children be aliens to me, that no prayer of mine may touch them,’ then it will be rational for the Jew to say, ‘I will seek to know no difference between me and the Gentile, I will not cherish the prophetic consciousness of our nationality - let the Hebrew cease to be, and let all his memorials be antiquarian trifles, dead as the wall- paintings of a conjectured race. Yet let his child learn by rote the speech of the Greek, where he abjures his fellow-citizens by the bravery of those who fought foremost at Marathon - let him learn to say that was noble in the Greek, that is the spirit of an immortal nation! But the Jew has no memories that bind him to action; let him laugh that his nation is degraded from a nation; let him hold the monuments of his law which carried within its frame the breath of social justice, of charity, and of household sanctities - let him hold the energy of the prophets, the patient care of the Masters, the fortitude of martyred generations, as mere stuff for a professorship. The business of the Jew in all things is to be even as the rich Gentile.’

Mordecai threw himself back in his chair, and there was a moment's silence. Not one member of the club shared his point of view or his

emotion; but his whole personality and speech had on them the effect of a dramatic representation which had some pathos in it, though no practical consequences; and usually he was at once indulged and contradicted. Deronda's mind went back upon what must have been the tragic pressure of outward conditions hindering this man, whose force he felt to be telling on himself, from making any world for his thought in the minds of others - like a poet among people of a strange speech, who may have a poetry of their own, but have no ear for his cadence, no answering thrill to his discovery of the latent virtues in his mother tongue.

The cool Buchan was the first to speak, and hint the loss of time. 'I submit,' said he, 'that ye're traveling away from the questions I put concerning progress.'

'Say they're levanting, Buchan,' said Miller, who liked his joke, and would not have objected to be called Voltairian. 'Never mind. Let us have a Jewish night; we've not had one for a long while. Let us take the discussion on Jewish ground. I suppose we've no prejudice here; we're all philosophers; and we like our friends Mordecai, Pash, and Gideon, as well as if they were no more kin to Abraham than the rest of us. We're all related through Adam, until further showing to the contrary, and if you look into history we've all got some discreditable forefathers. So I mean no offence when I say I don't think any great things of the part the Jewish people have played in the world. What then? I think they were iniquitously dealt by in past times. And I suppose we don't want any men to be maltreated, white, black, brown, or yellow - I know I've just given my half-crown to the contrary. And that reminds me, I've a curious old German book - I can't read it myself, but a friend of mine was reading out of it to me the other day - about the prejudices against the Jews, and the stories used to be told against 'em, and what do you think one was? Why, that they're punished with a bad odor in their bodies; and *that*, says the author, date 1715 (I've just been pricing and marking the book this very morning) - that is true, for the ancients spoke of it. But then, he says, the other things are fables, such as that the odor goes away all at once when they're baptized, and that every one of the ten tribes, mind you, all the ten being concerned in the crucifixion, has got a particular punishment over and above the smell: - Asher, I remember, has the right arm a handbreadth shorter than the left, and Naphthali has pig's ears and a smell of live pork. What do you think of that? There's been a good deal of fun made of rabbinical fables, but in point of fables my opinion is, that all over the world it's six of one and half-a-dozen of the other. However, as I said before, I hold with the philosophers of the last century that the Jews have played no great part as a people, though Pash will have it they're clever enough to beat all the rest of the world. But if so, I ask, why haven't they done it?'

‘For the same reason that the cleverest men in the country don't get themselves or their ideas into Parliament,’ said the ready Pash; ‘because the blockheads are too many for 'em.’

‘That is a vain question,’ said Mordecai, ‘whether our people would beat the rest of the world. Each nation has its own work, and is a member of the world, enriched by the work of each. But it is true, as Jehuda-ha-Levi first said, that Israel is the heart of mankind, if we mean by heart the core of affection which binds a race and its families in dutiful love, and the reverence for the human body which lifts the needs of our animal life into religion, and the tenderness which is merciful to the poor and weak and to the dumb creature that wears the yoke for us.’

‘They're not behind any nation in arrogance,’ said Lily; ‘and if they have got in the rear, it has not been because they were over-modest.’

‘Oh, every nation brags in its turn,’ said Miller.

‘Yes,’ said Pash, ‘and some of them in the Hebrew text.’

‘Well, whatever the Jews contributed at one time, they are a stand-still people,’ said Lily. ‘They are the type of obstinate adherence to the superannuated. They may show good abilities when they take up liberal ideas, but as a race they have no development in them.’

‘That is false!’ said Mordecai, leaning forward again with his former eagerness. ‘Let their history be known and examined; let the seed be sifted, let its beginning be traced to the weed of the wilderness - the more glorious will be the energy that transformed it. Where else is there a nation of whom it may be as truly said that their religion and law and moral life mingled as the stream of blood in the heart and made one growth - where else a people who kept and enlarged their spiritual store at the very time when they are hated with a hatred as fierce as the forest fires that chase the wild beast from his covert? There is a fable of the Roman, that swimming to save his life he held the roll of his writings between his teeth and saved them from the waters. But how much more than that is true of our race? They struggled to keep their place among the nations like heroes - yea, when the hand was hacked off, they clung with their teeth; but when the plow and the harrow had passed over the last visible signs of their national covenant, and the fruitfulness of their land was stifled with the blood of the sowers and planters, they said, 'The spirit is alive, let us make it a lasting habitation - lasting because movable - so that it may be carried from generation to generation, and our sons unborn may be rich in the things that have been, and possess a hope built on an unchangeable foundation.' They said it and they wrought it, though often breathing with scant life, as in a coffin, or as lying

wounded amid a heap of slain. Hooted and scared like the unknown dog, the Hebrew made himself envied for his wealth and wisdom, and was bled of them to fill the bath of Gentile luxury; he absorbed knowledge, he diffused it; his dispersed race was a new Phoenicia working the mines of Greece and carrying their products to the world. The native spirit of our tradition was not to stand still, but to use records as a seed and draw out the compressed virtues of law and prophecy; and while the Gentile, who had said, 'What is yours is ours, and no longer yours,' was reading the letter of our law as a dark inscription, or was turning its parchments into shoe-soles for an army rabid with lust and cruelty, our Masters were still enlarging and illuminating with fresh-fed interpretation. But the dispersion was wide, the yoke of oppression was a spiked torture as well as a load; the exile was forced afar among brutish people, where the consciousness of his race was no clearer to him than the light of the sun to our fathers in the Roman persecution, who had their hiding-place in a cave, and knew not that it was day save by the dimmer burning of their candles. What wonder that multitudes of our people are ignorant, narrow, superstitious? What wonder?'

Here Mordecai, whose seat was next the fireplace, rose and leaned his arm on the little shelf; his excitement had risen, though his voice, which had begun with unusual strength, was getting hoarser.

'What wonder? The night is unto them, that they have no vision; in their darkness they are unable to divine; the sun is gone down over the prophets, and the day is dark above them; their observances are as nameless relics. But which among the chief of the Gentile nations has not an ignorant multitude? They scorn our people's ignorant observance; but the most accursed ignorance is that which has no observance - sunk to the cunning greed of the fox, to which all law is no more than a trap or the cry of the worrying hound. There is a degradation deep down below the memory that has withered into superstition. In the multitudes of the ignorant on three continents who observe our rites and make the confession of the divine Unity, the soul of Judaism is not dead. Revive the organic centre: let the unity of Israel which has made the growth and form of its religion be an outward reality. Looking toward a land and a polity, our dispersed people in all the ends of the earth may share the dignity of a national life which has a voice among the peoples of the East and the West - which will plant the wisdom and skill of our race so that it may be, as of old, a medium of transmission and understanding. Let that come to pass, and the living warmth will spread to the weak extremities of Israel, and superstition will vanish, not in the lawlessness of the renegade, but in the illumination of great facts which widen feeling, and make all knowledge alive as the young offspring of beloved memories.'

Mordecai's voice had sunk, but with the hectic brilliancy of his gaze it was not the less impressive. His extraordinary excitement was certainly due to Deronda's presence: it was to Deronda that he was speaking, and the moment had a testamentary solemnity for him which rallied all his powers. Yet the presence of those other familiar men promoted expression, for they embodied the indifference which gave a resistant energy to his speech. Not that he looked at Deronda: he seemed to see nothing immediately around him, and if any one had grasped him he would probably not have known it. Again the former words came back to Deronda's mind, - 'You must hope my hopes - see the vision I point to - behold a glory where I behold it.' They came now with gathered pathos. Before him stood, as a living, suffering reality, what hitherto he had only seen as an effort of imagination, which, in its comparative faintness, yet carried a suspicion, of being exaggerated: a man steeped in poverty and obscurity, weakened by disease, consciously within the shadow of advancing death, but living an intense life in an invisible past and future, careless of his personal lot, except for its possible making some obstruction to a conceived good which he would never share except as a brief inward vision - a day afar off, whose sun would never warm him, but into which he threw his soul's desire, with a passion often wanting to the personal motives of healthy youth. It was something more than a grandiose transfiguration of the parental love that toils, renounces, endures, resists the suicidal promptings of despair - all because of the little ones, whose future becomes present to the yearning gaze of anxiety.

All eyes were fixed on Mordecai as he sat down again, and none with unkindness; but it happened that the one who felt the most kindly was the most prompted to speak in opposition. This was the genial and rational Gideon, who also was not without a sense that he was addressing the guest of the evening. He said -

'You have your own way of looking at things, Mordecai, and as you say, your own way seems to you rational. I know you don't hold with the restoration of Judea by miracle, and so on; but you are as well aware as I am that the subject has been mixed with a heap of nonsense both by Jews and Christians. And as to the connection of our race with Palestine, it has been perverted by superstition till it's as demoralizing as the old poor-law. The raff and scum go there to be maintained like able-bodied paupers, and to be taken special care of by the angel Gabriel when they die. It's no use fighting against facts. We must look where they point; that's what I call rationality. The most learned and liberal men among us who are attached to our religion are for clearing our liturgy of all such notions as a literal fulfillment of the prophecies about restoration, and so on. Prune it of a few useless rites and literal interpretations of that sort, and our religion is the simplest of all religions, and makes no barrier, but a union, between us and the rest of the world.'

'As plain as a pike-staff,' said Pash, with an ironical laugh. 'You pluck it up by the roots, strip off the leaves and bark, shave off the knots, and smooth it at top and bottom; put it where you will, it will do no harm, it will never sprout. You may make a handle of it, or you may throw it on the bonfire of scoured rubbish. I don't see why our rubbish is to be held sacred any more than the rubbish of Brahmanism or Buddhism.'

'No,' said Mordecai, 'no, Pash, because you have lost the heart of the Jew. Community was felt before it was called good. I praise no superstition, I praise the living fountains of enlarging belief. What is growth, completion, development? You began with that question, I apply it to the history of our people. I say that the effect of our separateness will not be completed and have its highest transformation unless our race takes on again the character of a nationality. That is the fulfillment of the religious trust that moulded them into a people, whose life has made half the inspiration of the world. What is it to me that the ten tribes are lost untraceably, or that multitudes of the children of Judah have mixed themselves with the Gentile populations as a river with rivers? Behold our people still! Their skirts spread afar; they are torn and soiled and trodden on; but there is a jeweled breastplate. Let the wealthy men, the monarchs of commerce, the learned in all knowledge, the skilful in all arts, the speakers, the political counselors, who carry in their veins the Hebrew blood which has maintained its vigor in all climates, and the pliancy of the Hebrew genius for which difficulty means new device - let them say, 'we will lift up a standard, we will unite in a labor hard but glorious like that of Moses and Ezra, a labor which shall be a worthy fruit of the long anguish whereby our fathers maintained their separateness, refusing the ease of falsehood.' They have wealth enough to redeem the soil from debauched and paupered conquerors; they have the skill of the statesman to devise, the tongue of the orator to persuade. And is there no prophet or poet among us to make the ears of Christian Europe tingle with shame at the hideous obloquy of Christian strife which the Turk gazes at as at the fighting of beasts to which he has lent an arena? There is store of wisdom among us to found a new Jewish polity, grand, simple, just, like the old - a republic where there is equality of protection, an equality which shone like a star on the forehead of our ancient community, and gave it more than the brightness of Western freedom amid the despotisms of the East. Then our race shall have an organic centre, a heart and brain to watch and guide and execute; the outraged Jew shall have a defense in the court of nations, as the outraged Englishman of America. And the world will gain as Israel gains. For there will be a community in the van of the East which carries the culture and the sympathies of every great nation in its bosom: there will be a land set for a halting-place of enmities, a neutral ground for the East as Belgium is for the West. Difficulties? I know there are difficulties. But let the spirit of

sublime achievement move in the great among our people, and the work will begin.'

'Ay, we may safely admit that, Mordecai,' said Pash. 'When there are great men on 'Change, and high-flying professors converted to your doctrine, difficulties will vanish like smoke.'

Deronda, inclined by nature to take the side of those on whom the arrows of scorn were falling, could not help replying to Pash's outfling, and said -

'If we look back to the history of efforts which have made great changes, it is astonishing how many of them seemed hopeless to those who looked on in the beginning.

'Take what we have all heard and seen something of - the effort after the unity of Italy, which we are sure soon to see accomplished to the very last boundary. Look into Mazzini's account of his first yearning, when he was a boy, after a restored greatness and a new freedom to Italy, and of his first efforts as a young man to rouse the same feelings in other young men, and get them to work toward a united nationality. Almost everything seemed against him; his countrymen were ignorant or indifferent, governments hostile, Europe incredulous. Of course the scorners often seemed wise. Yet you see the prophecy lay with him. As long as there is a remnant of national consciousness, I suppose nobody will deny that there may be a new stirring of memories and hopes which may inspire arduous action.'

'Amen,' said Mordecai, to whom Deronda's words were a cordial. 'What is needed is the leaven - what is needed is the seed of fire. The heritage of Israel is beating in the pulses of millions; it lives in their veins as a power without understanding, like the morning exultation of herds; it is the inborn half of memory, moving as in a dream among writings on the walls, which it sees dimly but cannot divide into speech. Let the torch of visible community be lit! Let the reason of Israel disclose itself in a great outward deed, and let there be another great migration, another choosing of Israel to be a nationality whose members may still stretch to the ends of the earth, even as the sons of England and Germany, whom enterprise carries afar, but who still have a national hearth and a tribunal of national opinion. Will any say 'It cannot be'? Baruch Spinoza had not a faithful Jewish heart, though he had sucked the life of his intellect at the breasts of Jewish tradition. He laid bare his father's nakedness and said, 'They who scorn him have the higher wisdom.' Yet Baruch Spinoza confessed, he saw not why Israel should not again be a chosen nation. Who says that the history and literature of our race are dead? Are they not as living as the history and literature of Greece and Rome, which have inspired revolutions, enkindled the thought of Europe, and made the

unrighteous powers tremble? These were an inheritance dug from the tomb. Ours is an inheritance that has never ceased to quiver in millions of human frames.'

Mordecai had stretched his arms upward, and his long thin hands quivered in the air for a moment after he had ceased to speak. Gideon was certainly a little moved, for though there was no long pause before he made a remark in objection, his tone was more mild and deprecatory than before; Pash, meanwhile, pressing his lips together, rubbing his black head with both his hands and wrinkling his brow horizontally, with the expression of one who differs from every speaker, but does not think it worth while to say so. There is a sort of human paste that when it comes near the fire of enthusiasm is only baked into harder shape.

'It may seem well enough on one side to make so much of our memories and inheritance as you do, Mordecai,' said Gideon; 'but there's another side. It isn't all gratitude and harmless glory. Our people have inherited a good deal of hatred. There's a pretty lot of curses still flying about, and stiff settled rancor inherited from the times of persecution. How will you justify keeping one sort of memory and throwing away the other? There are ugly debts standing on both sides.'

'I justify the choice as all other choice is justified,' said Mordecai. 'I cherish nothing for the Jewish nation, I seek nothing for them, but the good which promises good to all the nations. The spirit of our religious life, which is one with our national life, is not hatred of aught but wrong. The Master has said, an offence against man is worse than an offence against God. But what wonder if there is hatred in the breasts of Jews, who are children of the ignorant and oppressed - what wonder, since there is hatred in the breasts of Christians? Our national life was a growing light. Let the central fire be kindled again, and the light will reach afar. The degraded and scorned of our race will learn to think of their sacred land, not as a place for saintly beggary to await death in loathsome idleness, but as a republic where the Jewish spirit manifests itself in a new order founded on the old, purified and enriched by the experience our greatest sons have gathered from the life of the ages. How long is it? - only two centuries since a vessel carried over the ocean the beginning of the great North American nation. The people grew like meeting waters - they were various in habit and sect - there came a time, a century ago, when they needed a polity, and there were heroes of peace among them. What had they to form a polity with but memories of Europe, corrected by the vision of a better? Let our wise and wealthy show themselves heroes. They have the memories of the East and West, and they have the full vision of a better. A new Persia with a purified religion magnified itself in art and wisdom. So will a new Judaea,

poised between East and West - a covenant of reconciliation. Will any say, the prophetic vision of your race has been hopelessly mixed with folly and bigotry: the angel of progress has no message for Judaism - it is a half-buried city for the paid workers to lay open - the waters are rushing by it as a forsaken field? I say that the strongest principle of growth lies in human choice. The sons of Judah have to choose that God may again choose them. The Messianic time is the time when Israel shall will the planting of the national ensign. The Nile overflowed and rushed onward: the Egyptian could not choose the overflow, but he chose to work and make channels for the fructifying waters, and Egypt became the land of corn. Shall man, whose soul is set in the royalty of discernment and resolve, deny his rank and say, I am an onlooker, ask no choice or purpose of me? That is the blasphemy of this time. The divine principle of our race is action, choice, resolved memory. Let us contradict the blasphemy, and help to will our own better future and the better future of the world - not renounce our higher gift and say, 'Let us be as if we were not among the populations;' but choose our full heritage, claim the brotherhood of our nation, and carry into it a new brotherhood with the nations of the Gentiles. The vision is there; it will be fulfilled.'

With the last sentence, which was no more than a loud whisper, Mordecai let his chin sink on his breast and his eyelids fall. No one spoke. It was not the first time that he had insisted on the same ideas, but he was seen to-night in a new phase. The quiet tenacity of his ordinary self differed as much from his present exaltation of mood as a man in private talk, giving reasons for a revolution of which no sign is discernable, differs from one who feels himself an agent in a revolution begun. The dawn of fulfillment brought to his hope by Deronda's presence had wrought Mordecai's conception into a state of impassioned conviction, and he had found strength in his excitement to pour forth the unlocked floods of emotive argument, with a sense of haste as at a crisis which must be seized. But now there had come with the quiescence of fatigue a sort of thankful wonder that he had spoken - a contemplation of his life as a journey which had come at last to this bourne. After a great excitement, the ebbing strength of impulse is apt to leave us in this aloofness from our active self. And in the moments after Mordecai had sunk his head, his mind was wandering along the paths of his youth, and all the hopes which had ended in bringing him hither.

Every one felt that the talk was ended, and the tone of phlegmatic discussion made unseasonable by Mordecai's high-pitched solemnity. It was as if they had come together to hear the blowing of the *shophar*, and had nothing to do now but to disperse. The movement was unusually general, and in less than ten minutes the room was empty of all except Mordecai and Deronda. 'Good-nights' had been given to Mordecai, but it was evident he had not heard them, for he remained

rapt and motionless. Deronda would not disturb this needful rest, but waited for a spontaneous movement.