

## Chapter LXIII

'Moses, trotz seiner Bafeindung der Kunst, dennoch selber ein grosser Kuenstler war und den wahren Kuenstlergeist besass. Nur war dieser Kuenstlergeist bei ihm, wie bei seinen aegyptischen Landsleuten, nurauf das Colossale und Unverwustliche gerichtet. Aber nicht wie die Aegypter formirte er seine Kunstwerke aus Backstem und Granit, sondern er baute Menchen-pyramiden, er meisselte Menschen Obeliskten, ernahm einen armen Hirtenstamm und Schuf daraus ein Volk, das ebenfalls den Jahrshundertten, trotzen sollte \* \* \* er Schuf Israel.' - HEINE: *Gestandnisse*.

Imagine the difference in Deronda's state of mind when he left England and when he returned to it. He had set out for Genoa in total uncertainty how far the actual bent of his wishes and affections would be encouraged - how far the claims revealed to him might draw him into new paths, far away from the tracks his thoughts had lately been pursuing with a consent of desire which uncertainty made dangerous. He came back with something like a discovered charter warranting the inherited right that his ambition had begun to yearn for: he came back with what was better than freedom - with a duteous bond which his experience had been preparing him to accept gladly, even if it had been attended with no promise of satisfying a secret passionate longing never yet allowed to grow into a hope. But now he dared avow to himself the hidden selection of his love. Since the hour when he left the house at Chelsea in full-hearted silence under the effect of Mirah's farewell look and words - their exquisite appealingness stirring in him that deep-laid care for womanhood which had begun when his own lip was like a girl's - her hold on his feeling had helped him to be blameless in word and deed under the difficult circumstances we know of. There seemed no likelihood that he could ever woo this creature who had become dear to him amidst associations that forbade wooing; yet she had taken her place in his soul as a beloved type - reducing the power of other fascination and making a difference in it that became deficiency. The influence had been continually strengthened. It had lain in the course of poor Gwendolen's lot that her dependence on Deronda tended to rouse in him the enthusiasm of self-martyring pity rather than of personal love, and his less constrained tenderness flowed with the fuller stream toward an indwelling image in all things unlike Gwendolen. Still more, his relation to Mordecai had brought with it a new nearness to Mirah which was not the less agitating because there was no apparent change in his position toward her; and she had inevitably been bound up in all the thoughts that made him shrink from an issue disappointing to her brother. This process had not gone on unconsciously in Deronda: he was conscious of it as we are of some covetousness that it would be better to nullify by encouraging other thoughts than to give it the insistency of confession even to ourselves:

but the jealous fire had leaped out at Hans's pretensions, and when his mother accused him of being in love with a Jewess any evasion suddenly seemed an infidelity. His mother had compelled him to a decisive acknowledgment of his love, as Joseph Kalonymos had compelled him to a definite expression of his resolve. This new state of decision wrought on Deronda with a force which surprised even himself. There was a release of all the energy which had long been spent in self-checking and suppression because of doubtful conditions; and he was ready to laugh at his own impetuosity when, as he neared England on his way from Mainz, he felt the remaining distance more and more of an obstruction. It was as if he had found an added soul in finding his ancestry - his judgment no longer wandering in the mazes of impartial sympathy, but choosing, with that partiality which is man's best strength, the closer fellowship that makes sympathy practical - exchanging that bird's eye reasonableness which soars to avoid preference and loses all sense of quality for the generous reasonableness of drawing shoulder to shoulder with men of like inheritance. He wanted now to be again with Mordecai, to pour forth instead of restraining his feeling, to admit agreement and maintain dissent, and all the while to find Mirah's presence without the embarrassment of obviously seeking it, to see her in the light of a new possibility, to interpret her looks and words from a new starting-point. He was not greatly alarmed about the effect of Hans's attentions, but he had a presentiment that her feeling toward himself had from the first lain in a channel from which it was not likely to be diverted into love. To astonish a woman by turning into her lover when she has been thinking of you merely as a Lord Chancellor is what a man naturally shrinks from: he is anxious to create an easier transition.

What wonder that Deronda saw no other course than to go straight from the London railway station to the lodgings in that small square in Brompton? Every argument was in favor of his losing no time. He had promised to run down the next day to see Lady Mallinger at the Abbey, and it was already sunset. He wished to deposit the precious chest with Mordecai, who would study its contents, both in his absence and in company with him; and that he should pay this visit without pause would gratify Mordecai's heart. Hence, and for other reasons, it gratified Deronda's heart. The strongest tendencies of his nature were rushing in one current - the fervent affectionateness which made him delight in meeting the wish of beings near to him, and the imaginative need of some far-reaching relation to make the horizon of his immediate, daily acts. It has to be admitted that in this classical, romantic, world-historic position of his, bringing as it were from its hiding-place his hereditary armor, he wore - but so, one must suppose, did the most ancient heroes, whether Semitic or Japhetic - the summer costume of his contemporaries. He did not reflect that the drab tints were becoming to him, for he rarely went to the expense of

such thinking; but his own depth of coloring, which made the becomingness, got an added radiance in the eyes, a fleeting and returning glow in the skin, as he entered the house wondering what exactly he should find. He made his entrance as noiseless as possible.

It was the evening of that same afternoon on which Mirah had had the interview with her father. Mordecai, penetrated by her grief, and also the sad memories which the incident had awakened, had not resumed his task of sifting papers: some of them had fallen scattered on the floor in the first moments of anxiety, and neither he nor Mirah had thought of laying them in order again. They had sat perfectly still together, not knowing how long; while the clock ticked on the mantelpiece, and the light was fading, Mirah, unable to think of the food that she ought to have been taking, had not moved since she had thrown off her dust-cloak and sat down beside Mordecai with her hand in his, while he had laid his head backward, with closed eyes and difficult breathing, looking, Mirah thought, as he would look when the soul within him could no longer live in its straitened home. The thought that his death might be near was continually visiting her when she saw his face in this way, without its vivid animation; and now, to the rest of her grief, was added the regret that she had been unable to control the violent outburst which had shaken him. She sat watching him - her oval cheeks pallid, her eyes with the sorrowful brilliancy left by young tears, her curls in as much disorder as a just-awakened child's - watching that emaciated face, where it might have been imagined that a veil had been drawn never to be lifted, as if it were her dead joy which had left her strong enough to live on in sorrow. And life at that moment stretched before Mirah with more than a repetition of former sadness. The shadow of the father was there, and more than that, a double bereavement - of one living as well as one dead.

But now the door was opened, and while none entered, a well-known voice said: 'Daniel Deronda - may he come in?'

'Come! come!' said Mordecai, immediately rising with an irradiated face and opened eyes - apparently as little surprised as if he had seen Deronda in the morning, and expected this evening visit; while Mirah started up blushing with confused, half-alarmed expectation.

Yet when Deronda entered, the sight of him was like the clearness after rain: no clouds to come could hinder the cherishing beam of that moment. As he held out his right hand to Mirah, who was close to her brother's left, he laid his other hand on Mordecai's right shoulder, and stood so a moment, holding them both at once, uttering no word, but reading their faces, till he said anxiously to Mirah, 'Has anything happened? - any trouble?'

'Talk not of trouble now,' said Mordecai, saving her from the need to answer. 'There is joy in your face - let the joy be ours.'

Mirah thought, 'It is for something he cannot tell us.' But they all sat down, Deronda drawing a chair close in front of Mordecai.

'That is true,' he said, emphatically. 'I have a joy which will remain to us even in the worst trouble. I did not tell you the reason of my journey abroad, Mordecai, because - never mind - I went to learn my parentage. And you were right. I am a Jew.'

The two men clasped hands with a movement that seemed part of the flash from Mordecai's eyes, and passed through Mirah like an electric shock. But Deronda went on without pause, speaking from Mordecai's mind as much as from his own -

'We have the same people. Our souls have the same vocation. We shall not be separated by life or by death.'

Mordecai's answer was uttered in Hebrew, and in no more than a loud whisper. It was in the liturgical words which express the religious bond: 'Our God and the God of our fathers.'

The weight of feeling pressed too strongly on that ready-winged speech which usually moved in quick adaptation to every stirring of his fervor.

Mirah fell on her knees by her brother's side, and looked at his now illuminated face, which had just before been so deathly. The action was an inevitable outlet of the violent reversal from despondency to a gladness which came over her as solemnly as if she had been beholding a religious rite. For the moment she thought of the effect on her own life only through the effect on her brother.

'And it is not only that I am a Jew,' Deronda went on, enjoying one of those rare moments when our yearnings and our acts can be completely one, and the real we behold is our ideal good; 'but I come of a strain that has ardently maintained the fellowship of our race - a line of Spanish Jews that has borne many students and men of practical power. And I possess what will give us a sort of communion with them. My grandfather, Daniel Charisi, preserved manuscripts, family records stretching far back, in the hope that they would pass into the hands of his grandson. And now his hope is fulfilled, in spite of attempts to thwart it by hiding my parentage from me. I possess the chest containing them, with his own papers, and it is down below in this house. I mean to leave it with you, Mordecai, that you may help me to study the manuscripts. Some of them I can read easily enough - those in Spanish and Italian. Others are in Hebrew, and, I think,

Arabic; but there seem to be Latin translations. I was only able to look at them cursorily while I stayed at Mainz. We will study them together.'

Deronda ended with that bright smile which, beaming out from the habitual gravity of his face, seemed a revelation (the reverse of the continual smile that discredits all expression). But when this happy glance passed from Mordecai to rest on Mirah, it acted like a little too much sunshine, and made her change her attitude. She had knelt under an impulse with which any personal embarrassment was incongruous, and especially any thoughts about how Mrs. Grandcourt might stand to this new aspect of things - thoughts which made her color under Deronda's glance, and rise to take her seat again in her usual posture of crossed hands and feet, with the effort to look as quiet as possible. Deronda, equally sensitive, imagined that the feeling of which he was conscious, had entered too much into his eyes, and had been repugnant to her. He was ready enough to believe that any unexpected manifestation might spoil her feeling toward him - and then his precious relation to brother and sister would be marred. If Mirah could have no love for him, any advances of love on his part would make her wretched in that continual contact with him which would remain inevitable.

While such feelings were pulsating quickly in Deronda and Mirah, Mordecai, seeing nothing in his friend's presence and words but a blessed fulfillment, was already speaking with his old sense of enlargement in utterance -

'Daniel, from the first, I have said to you, we know not all the pathways. Has there not been a meeting among them, as of the operations in one soul, where an idea being born and breathing draws the elements toward it, and is fed and glows? For all things are bound together in that Omnipresence which is the place and habitation of the world, and events are of a glass wherethrough our eyes see some of the pathways. And if it seems that the erring and unloving wills of men have helped to prepare you, as Moses was prepared, to serve your people the better, that depends on another order than the law which must guide our footsteps. For the evil will of man makes not a people's good except by stirring the righteous will of man; and beneath all the clouds with which our thought encompasses the Eternal, this is clear - that a people can be blessed only by having counsellors and a multitude whose will moves in obedience to the laws of justice and love. For see, now, it was your loving will that made a chief pathway, and resisted the effect of evil; for, by performing the duties of brotherhood to my sister, and seeking out her brother in the flesh, your soul has been prepared to receive with gladness this message of the Eternal, 'behold the multitude of your brethren.'

'It is quite true that you and Mirah have been my teachers,' said Deronda. 'If this revelation had been made to me before I knew you both, I think my mind would have rebelled against it. Perhaps I should have felt then - 'If I could have chosen, I would not have been a Jew.' What I feel now is - that my whole being is a consent to the fact. But it has been the gradual accord between your mind and mine which has brought about that full consent.'

At the moment Deronda was speaking, that first evening in the bookshop was vividly in his remembrance, with all the struggling aloofness he had then felt from Mordecai's prophetic confidence. It was his nature to delight in satisfying to the utmost the eagerly-expectant soul, which seemed to be looking out from the face before him, like the long-enduring watcher who at last sees the mountain signal-flame; and he went on with fuller fervor -

'It is through your inspiration that I have discerned what may be my life's task. It is you who have given shape to what, I believe, was an inherited yearning - the effect of brooding, passionate thoughts in many ancestors - thoughts that seem to have been intensely present in my grandfather. Suppose the stolen offspring of some mountain tribe brought up in a city of the plain, or one with an inherited genius for painting, and born blind - the ancestral life would lie within them as a dim longing for unknown objects and sensations, and the spell-bound habit of their inherited frames would be like a cunningly-wrought musical instrument, never played on, but quivering throughout in uneasy mysterious meanings of its intricate structure that, under the right touch, gives music. Something like that, I think, has been my experience. Since I began to read and know, I have always longed for some ideal task, in which I might feel myself the heart and brain of a multitude - some social captainship, which would come to me as a duty, and not be striven for as a personal prize. You have raised the image of such a task for me - to bind our race together in spite of heresy. You have said to me - 'Our religion united us before it divided us - it made us a people before it made Rabbanites and Karaites.' I mean to try what can be done with that union - I mean to work in your spirit. Failure will not be ignoble, but it would be ignoble for me not to try.'

'Even as my brother that fed at the breasts of my mother,' said Mordecai, falling back in his chair with a look of exultant repose, as after some finished labor.

To estimate the effect of this ardent outpouring from Deronda we must remember his former reserve, his careful avoidance of premature assent or delusive encouragement, which gave to this decided pledge of himself a sacramental solemnity, both for his own mind and Mordecai's. On Mirah the effect was equally strong, though with a

difference: she felt a surprise which had no place in her brother's mind, at Deronda's suddenly revealed sense of nearness to them: there seemed to be a breaking of day around her which might show her other facts unlike her forebodings in the darkness. But after a moment's silence Mordecai spoke again -

‘It has begun already - the marriage of our souls. It waits but the passing away of this body, and then they who are betrothed shall unite in a stricter bond, and what is mine shall be thine. Call nothing mine that I have written, Daniel; for though our masters delivered rightly that everything should be quoted in the name of him that said it - and their rule is good - yet it does not exclude the willing marriage which melts soul into soul, and makes thought fuller as the clear waters are made fuller, where the fullness is inseparable and the clearness is inseparable. For I have judged what I have written, and I desire the body that I gave my thought to pass away as this fleshly body will pass; but let the thought be born again from our fuller soul which shall be called yours.’

‘You must not ask me to promise that,’ said Deronda, smiling. ‘I must be convinced first of special reasons for it in the writings themselves. And I am too backward a pupil yet. That blent\* transmission must go on without any choice of ours; but what we can't hinder must not make our rule for what we ought to choose. I think our duty is faithful tradition where we can attain it. And so you would insist for any one but yourself. Don't ask me to deny my spiritual parentage, when I am finding the clue of my life in the recognition of natural parentage.’ ‘I will ask for no promise till you see the reason,’ said Mordecai. ‘You have said the truth: I would obey the Master's rule for another. But for years my hope, nay, my confidence, has been, not that the imperfect image of my thought, which is an ill-shaped work of the youthful carver who has seen a heavenly pattern, and trembles in imitating the vision - not that this should live, but that my vision and passion should enter into yours - yea, into yours; for he whom I longed for afar, was he not you whom I discerned as mine when you came near? Nevertheless, you shall judge. For my soul is satisfied.’ Mordecai paused, and then began in a changed tone, reverting to previous suggestions from Deronda's disclosure: ‘What moved your parents - - ?’ but he immediately checked himself, and added, ‘Nay, I ask not that you should tell me aught concerning others, unless it is your pleasure.’

‘Some time - gradually - you will know all,’ said Deronda. ‘But now tell me more about yourselves, and how the time has passed since I went away. I am sure there has been some trouble. Mirah has been in distress about something.’

He looked at Mirah, but she immediately turned to her brother, appealing to him to give the difficult answer. She hoped he would not think it necessary to tell Deronda the facts about her father on such an evening as this. Just when Deronda had brought himself so near, and identified himself with her brother, it was cutting to her that he should hear of this disgrace clinging about them, which seemed to have become partly his. To relieve herself she rose to take up her hat and cloak, thinking she would go to her own room: perhaps they would speak more easily when she had left them. But meanwhile Mordecai said -

‘To day there has been a grief. A duty which seemed to have gone far into the distance, has come back and turned its face upon us, and raised no gladness - has raised a dread that we must submit to. But for the moment we are delivered from any visible yoke. Let us defer speaking of it as if this evening which is deepening about us were the beginning of the festival in which we must offer the first fruits of our joy, and mingle no mourning with them.’

Deronda divined the hinted grief, and left it in silence, rising as he saw Mirah rise, and saying to her, ‘Are you going? I must leave almost immediately - when I and Mrs. Adam have mounted the precious chest, and I have delivered the key to Mordecai - no, Ezra, - may I call him Ezra now? I have learned to think of him as Ezra since I have heard you call him so.’

‘Please call him Ezra,’ said Mirah, faintly, feeling a new timidity under Deronda's glance and near presence. Was there really something different about him, or was the difference only in her feeling? The strangely various emotions of the last few hours had exhausted her; she was faint with fatigue and want of food. Deronda, observing her pallor and tremulousness, longed to show more feeling, but dared not. She put out her hand with an effort to smile, and then he opened the door for her. That was all.

A man of refined pride shrinks from making a lover's approaches to a woman whose wealth or rank might make them appear presumptuous or low-motived; but Deronda was finding a more delicate difficulty in a position which, superficially taken, was the reverse of that - though to an ardent reverential love, the loved woman has always a kind of wealth and rank which makes a man keenly susceptible about the aspect of his addresses. Deronda's difficulty was what any generous man might have felt in some degree; but it affected him peculiarly through his imaginative sympathy with a mind in which gratitude was strong. Mirah, he knew, felt herself bound to him by deep obligations, which to her sensibilities might give every wish of his the aspect of a claim; and an inability to fulfill it would cause her a pain continually revived by their inevitable communion in care of Ezra. Here were fears



not of pride only, but of extreme tenderness. Altogether, to have the character of a benefactor seemed to Deronda's anxiety an insurmountable obstacle to confessing himself a lover, unless in some inconceivable way it could be revealed to him that Mirah's heart had accepted him beforehand. And the agitation on his own account, too, was not small.

Even a man who has practised himself in love-making till his own glibness has rendered him sceptical, may at last be overtaken by the lover's awe - may tremble, stammer, and show other signs of recovered sensibility no more in the range of his acquired talents than pins and needles after numbness: how much more may that energetic timidity possess a man whose inward history has cherished his susceptibilities instead of dulling them, and has kept all the language of passion fresh and rooted as the lovely leafage about the hill-side spring!

As for Mirah her dear head lay on its pillow that night with its former suspicions thrown out of shape but still present, like an ugly story which had been discredited but not therefore dissipated. All that she was certain of about Deronda seemed to prove that he had no such fetters upon him as she had been allowing herself to believe in. His whole manner as well as his words implied that there were no hidden bonds remaining to have any effect in determining his future. But notwithstanding this plainly reasonable inference, uneasiness still clung about Mirah's heart. Deronda was not to blame, but he had an importance for Mrs. Grandcourt which must give her some hold on him. And the thought of any close confidence between them stirred the little biting snake that had long lain curled and harmless in Mirah's gentle bosom.

But did she this evening feel as completely as before that her jealousy was no less remote from any possibility for herself personally than if her human soul had been lodged in the body of a fawn that Deronda had saved from the archers? Hardly. Something indefinable had happened and made a difference. The soft warm rain of blossoms which had fallen just where she was - did it really come because she was there? What spirit was there among the boughs?