

either to bury or nurse him, for I believed he must be sick or dead, as he did not return to me."

Bertram offered in his heart a prayer of gratitude to God. With feelings of sympathy, he then turned his eyes on the quivering features of the stranger. "Listen to me," said he, gently. "As you entered, I had just prayed to God, in the suffering and sadness of my heart, to show me some way and means of escape from the labyrinth in which Count Brenda has placed us. It would seem as if He has had compassion on us all, for at the very moment he sends you, the affianced bride of the count, and through you alone can we be saved. We must be open and candid toward each other. Therefore, listen to me. I love Gotzkowsky's daughter—I love her without hope, for she loves another."

"And this other?" asked she breathlessly.

"She loves Count Feodor von Brenda, and is about to escape with him."

"Escape!" cried the lady, and her voice sounded threatening and angry, and her eyes flashed. "Oh!" said she, gnashing her teeth, "I will prevent this, even if I kill this girl!"

Bertram shook his head sadly. "Let us rather try to kill this love in her heart. Let us contrive some means of bringing your lover back to you."

"Are there any such means?" asked she, anxiously.

Bertram did not answer immediately. His brow was clouded with deep thought, and a heavy sigh escaped him. He then asked quickly, "Will you follow me and enter into my plot?"

"I will," she said firmly.

"Above all things, then, let us be cautious. Count Feodor must have no suspicion that you are here, for your presence would drive him to some desperate re-

solve, and I fear Elise loves him sufficiently not to draw back from any thing."

"You are very cruel," murmured the lady. "You know not what torture you are preparing for me."

"If I did not know it, I would not undertake the enterprise that is to serve us both. I have told you that I love Elise, but I have not told you how deep and sacred this love is. I would cheerfully venture my life for her, but now I dare to interfere with her love, and earn her hatred."

"You have, then, already made your plan?"

"I have made my plan, and if you will allow me to escort you to your hotel, I will disclose it to you, so that we may arrange the particulars together."

"Come, then," said she, grasping his hand warmly, "and may God assist us, and restore to you your bride, and to me my lover!"

CHAPTER XI.

THE JEW EPHRAIM.

MUCH sorrow and tribulation were suffered during this time by the inhabitants of Berlin. But the saddest lot of all fell to the Jews, who were threatened with the greatest danger. In Berlin, as everywhere else, they only led a tolerated, reviled, and derided existence. They possessed no rights, only duties; no honor, only insults; no dignities, but humiliation and disgrace. Now they were called on to give up the last and only thing which shed some gleam of brightness on their poor, down-trodden existence—their gold and their treasures.

The Russian commander had imposed upon the Jewish community in Berlin a special tax; and as they hesitated about paying it, and declared themselves incapable of raising such a large sum, General von Tottleben had the three elders of the Jews arrested and strictly guarded in the Vincenti House in Brueder Street.

But who could despise or blame the poor Jews for not wishing to give up their gold? Gold was to them a condition of existence, their future, their happiness, their family. Gold enabled some of them to raise themselves from the dust and degradation to which the cruel severity of *Christian charity* had condemned them, and to indulge in human aspirations, human happiness, and human feelings. Only those among them who possessed wealth were tolerated, and dared hope by strenuous industry, ceaseless activity, and fortunate speculation, to amass sufficient fortune to found a family or beget children. The happiness of domestic life was only allowed to them on condition of their being rich.

Frederick the Great had learned with indignation that the Jewish families in Berlin far exceeded the number of one hundred and fifty-two allowed by law, and that there were fifty-one too many. Consequently a stringent decree was issued that they should no longer be counted by families, but by heads, and that when the poll exceeded the permitted number, the poorest and lowest of them should be shipped off.* Gold was therefore to the rich Jew a certificate of naturalization, while the poorer ones had no certainty of a home. They could at any moment be turned off, driven out of Berlin, if a richer one should by his wealth and trading acquire the right to take to himself a wife, and by her have a child. But even he, the rich one, could only have one child;

* Büsching's Travels, 1780.

only one child was allowed to him by law. For one child only could he obtain legal protection, and only in exceptional cases, as when their factories and firms succeeded remarkably well, did the king, in the fulness of his grace, allow a second child to inherit its guardianship.*

Of what avail, then, was it to the poor Jews to have toiled and worked so hard, driven by the necessity of paying the hateful *Jewish poll-tax*, and thereby procuring for themselves a temporary toleration? At any moment they could be driven off in case the rich Ephraim or the rich David Itzig, in the arrogance of their wealth, should venture to give to the world more than one child, and purchase for the sum of three thousand dollars another certificate of protection for the second! Of what avail was their wealth even to the rich Jews Ephraim and Itzig? They were nevertheless under the ban of their proscribed race. No privileges, no offices existed for them. They could only build factories or carry on commerce. All other paths of life, even agriculture and horticulture, were forbidden to them. And now they were called on to give up to the Russians their very life, the nerve of their existence, the heart which carried blood and warmth to their entire organization—their money.

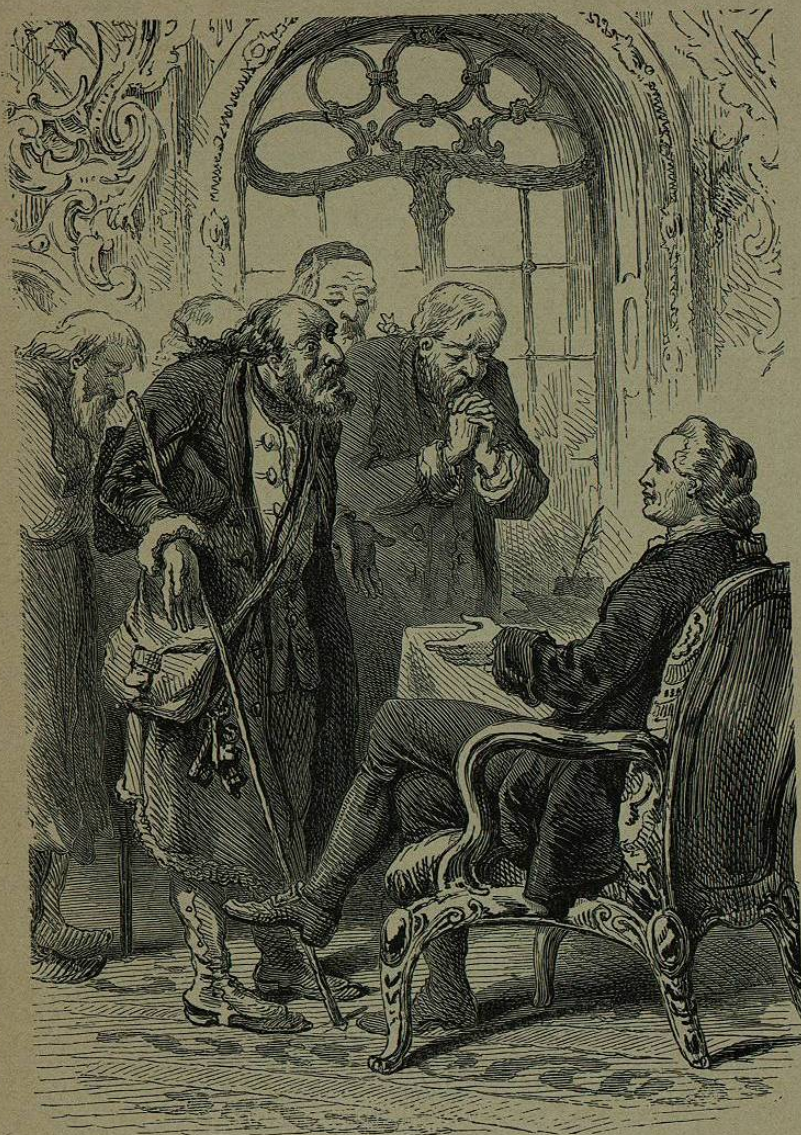
Ephraim and Itzig were rich and powerful in Berlin; they could build houses, found factories, and even determine the value of money, for the mint was in their hands. They had farmed it from the king, and paid him an enormous rent for the same, which had increased each year, and in 1760 amounted to seven millions. But, thanks to this farming, the value of money had increased exorbitantly. Twenty dollars were paid for a

* "Annals of the Jews in the Prussian States," Berlin.—UNGER.

Frederick d'or, and five-and-thirty for the mark of fine silver. Owing to the labors of these Jewish lessees, there were many millions of light money, many millions of bad eight-groschen pieces, which, to this day, are known by the name of *Ephraimites*, and whose repudiation at a later period ruined many thousands of honest, worthy tradesmen, while Ephraim and Itzig became wealthy and powerful thereby. Yet it was now this same money which brought misfortune to them, and was the cause of their suffering and mortal anxiety; for General Tottleben had threatened that if the Jews could not pay the tax imposed on them, he would take the mint farmers with him as hostages, and destroy their factories. Besides this, he had, as we said before, arrested their elders and sworn to send them to Siberia, if the Jews did not pay.

The payment was to be made in three days. But the three days had elapsed, and they had not been able to raise the money which was demanded of them. In this dire extremity, the two mint-contractors remembered the man whom they had hitherto most cordially hated, and whose ruin was the cherished wish of their life. They now recollected that John Gotzkowsky was the only man who, in the generosity and kindness of his heart, was capable of forgetting their former insults and injuries, and of remembering only their need and misery. They determined, therefore, to apply to him, and request his intercession and assistance, but they did this with a bitter sigh, for they felt the hatred and grudge which they nursed in their hearts toward him become only more intense and stronger.

"Who would have thought it?" said Ephraim, as, by the side of Itzig, and accompanied by some of the most wealthy Jewish merchants, he took the road to



THE RICH JEWS APPEAL TO GOTZKOWSKY.

Gotzkowsky's dwelling—"who would have thought it? The powerful Russian General von Tottleben is the friend of Gotzkowsky, and the greatest men among our people are now obliged to go to Gotzkowsky's house to implore his influence and protection."

"Yes," sighed the rich merchant David, "we are obliged to apply to him to befriend us, and yet what is he compared to you? You are much richer than he is."

"Silence, unfortunate man!" cried Ephraim with a shudder, as he looked shyly around. "I am poor, and for that reason can pay nothing. I am poor, as all of us wretched Jews are. Have we not to contribute the greater portion of the war-tax? Are not all our means exhausted? Is that not enough?"

"Too much!" groaned Itzig, who till now had walked in melancholy contemplation at Ephraim's other side. "It is too much. Are we then treated like human beings? Have we any rights? Only when we have to pay, do they remember that we have the right of giving up our hard-earned property. If the Jew has no money, is he not at least a man, say I?"

"Pshaw! a man!" cried Ephraim. "Whoever is without money is no man, be he Jew or Christian. If Gotzkowsky had no money, he would be no better than we are. Why does the Russian general have any thing to do with him? Because he is rich. Why do the counts and lords pay court to him? For the same reason. Why do they call his daughter an angel, and swear she is the handsomest woman in Berlin? Because her father is the richest Christian merchant in the town. The whole world knows and admires him. And why? Because he is rich."

"No one is rich," said Itzig, shaking his head. "He who has not every thing is not rich. There is no such

thing as riches, for he who has much has to give much."

"God knows we will have to give much!" whimpered Ephraim, and all his companions joined in with groans and sighs as a chorus to his speech. "They mean to take every thing from us that we own, and Itzig is right; if the Jew has not money, he is nobody. Have we not suffered as much as others? Have we not protected our people, and fed and housed our poor? No one talks about these things, but the whole town talks about Gotzkowsky. They praise him, they exalt him; they cry out his name everywhere, so that one's heart actually burns for vexation. And yet at the highest calculation he is not worth more than a million."

"He is worth more than ourselves; he is worth much more, for he has the favor of the Russian general. For this reason we must bow down before him, and flatter him, and assure him of our eternal gratitude, for it is a question not of life, but what is more precious than life—money."

With deep-drawn sighs they whined out, "Yes, we must bow to him, and flatter him, and yet we are richer than he is."

As long as they were on the street they maintained an air of pride and vexation; but as soon as they entered Gotzkowsky's house and stood in his presence, they were all gentleness, humility, and friendliness. With tears they implored Gotzkowsky to have pity, and to beg General Tottleben to have compassion on them. They vowed eternal gratitude to him, and swore with solemn oaths that if he succeeded in relieving the Jews from the special impost, they would love him forever, and be everlastingly thankful to him.

Gotzkowsky smiled in pity. "That means that you

would feel yourselves under obligations to me, and, if ever you got me in your power, you would take the opportunity to ruin me. But that is of no consequence to me. This impost is a crying injustice, and therefore will I plead for you, for it never shall be said that Gotzkowsky suffered an injustice to be done when he could prevent it. Go home in peace, for, if I can, I will help you."

"How arrogant this man is!" said Itzig, when they had left the house. "One would suppose that he had all virtue and honor on lease, just as we have the mint."

"And if he has," said Ephraim with a laugh, "if he has the monopoly of virtue and honor, it is only to trade on. No doubt his speculation will turn out just as profitably as ours with the mint. No doubt he will coin it into light eight-groschen pieces, cheat the people with them, and make more than his expenses, as we have done."

"But woe be unto him," growled Itzig, "if any light coin of his virtue come into my hands! I will throw them back into his face till blood flows, and I will never forgive him that this day we have had to stand before him begging and pleading. If he ever comes to grief, I will remember it. If the Jew has no money, he is nobody. Well, we will see what Gotzkowsky is worth without money. Let me tell you we will all of us live to see that day. He has too much stupid generosity, which some day or other will run away with his purse, and then there will be a grand blow-up, honor and virtue and all, sky high. Then there will be no more talk about the great Gotzkowsky and his virtue and all that. Oh! I do so rejoice over that time a-coming. But in the mean time I am so very glad that Gotzkowsky can be of some service to us!"