

Opposite it Sherman penciled: —  
 'History does furnish examples. Columbus was one. Scott another. Columbus was carried back a prisoner; and Scott was subjected in Mexico to a trial by three officers junior to him, and one of them a doctor, Surgeon-Gen. Lawson.'

And below, under date of April 28, 1874, Bowman wrote: —

'But Sherman fared better than Columbus or Scott at last. He, in his own spirit, worried; but when his Country tried him before the Jury of the Country, he was accorded the highest honors.'

## MALINKE'S ATONEMENT

BY MARY ANTIN

### I

It was not the fault of Breine Henne, the egg-woman, if her only daughter, Malinke, had to assume the burdens of housekeeping before she cast her milk teeth. Breine Henne made a fraction of a living for herself and her two children by a small trade in poultry; whence her nickname. As her business obliged her to stand all day in the market-place, it naturally fell to Malinke to cook and sweep and wash. The law of circumstance was potent in Polotzk, next to the law of the Czar.

Late one afternoon Malinke was kneeling on a chair by the window, watching for her mother's return. It had rained all day, a cold autumn drizzle, and she knew trade was dull in such weather; her mother ought to be coming home. Presently she saw the familiar figure, and ran out into the entry to open the door.

Breine Henne came up the yard with a flat, heavy tread. The water churned in her broken shoes. Her limp skirt was a fringe of rags at the bottom, dripping with the mud of the market-

place. Her frayed jacket, whose original color the owner herself could scarcely recall, looked black on the shoulders from the rain it had soaked up, and the woolly shawl tied about her head was hoary with moisture. She walked with her red hands clasped on her stomach, a covered basket hanging on one arm.

Malinke hopped on the threshold, impatient for her mother's society. The child was much alone.

'Let me brush off the mud for you with the besom,' she offered, as her mother stamped her feet in the entry. 'I have scrubbed the floor and sanded it all afresh, and you must n't bring in any mud, mama.'

'Good health to you, my little housewife!' the mother said, giving the child a wet caress. 'And where did you get the sand? The box was empty yesterday.'

'Oh, I ran errands for old Rachel, and she gave me a basin of sand. Is n't it bright, mama? But you are so wet! Did you sell the hen? What have you in the basket?'

Malinke paused in her chatter to lift

the cover from the basket. She saw a ball of gray feathers, slightly speckled with white. A little sigh of disappointment escaped her, but she said nothing. Lifting the hen, she cut the rag that bound its feet and set it down on the floor. The bird shook out its feathers, stretched its wings, and pattered over to the corner behind the oven, to drink from the broken earthenware dish which Malinke hastened to fill with fresh water.

Breine Henne peeled off her wet garments and spread them around the hot oven, watching the child meanwhile with a smile half sad, half happy. How many times she had promised Malinke a treat — an apple or a pear — in case she disposed of the hen that did n't lay; and always she had disappointed her — until now. Her smile turned wholly happy as she thought of the treat in store for Malinke and Yösele.

'Feed her well, little daughter,' she said. 'Give her all the oats you have, and the others will get the scrapings Rachel gives you after supper.'

'All the oats? Why all the oats for her alone?' Malinke looked for an explanation.

'Yes, stuff her all she'll hold. She's to be killed in the morning.'

'You're joking, mama. You did n't sell her, so who's going to kill her?'

'The butcher, of course,' laughed Breine Henne, as she tied a cotton head-kerchief under her chin, preparatory to sitting down to roast her bare feet. 'Who else kills chickens? The butcher, of course.'

Malinke's eyes grew large with conjecture, but she could not frame a guess.

'The butcher shall kill the hen, Malinke,' Breine Henne repeated impressively, '*and you shall eat it!*'

The child changed color from surprise. Her mother was not jesting — she would not tease her so. There was to be a chicken cooked for her and

Yösele and Mother. She was speechless for a quarter of a minute, then she broke into a laugh of pure happiness, and clapped her hands as if she were a real little girl of nine, instead of a responsible housekeeper and an understudy to her mother in bearing the troubles of their difficult existence.

'Oh, mama, it will be so good! For Sabbath, you mean, don't you? Won't Yösele be surprised! Let me tell him, mama, do. I'll run to meet him when I hear the boys coming home from *heder* [Hebrew school]. Oh, how good it will taste!'

Intoxicated with unlooked-for happiness, she caught one foot in her hand and danced around on the other till she lost her balance. Her eye fell on the devoted hen, who, unconscious of her impending doom, was polishing her yellow bill on a leg of the wooden bench against the wall. Malinke caught her up in her arms.

'Oh, you dear old hen! You poor old hen! You would n't lay, you would n't get fat, nobody wanted you, and now *I'm* going to eat you!'

She thrust her fingers knowingly through the soft feathers to the warm skin. The exuberance faded from her face. She turned to her mother with a wry little smile.

'She's *not* very fat, is she, mama? Do you think there will be *any* yellow rings on the soup? I saw the chicken soup the women from the sick-visiting society brought old Rachel when she was sick, and it was all yellow on top — *fat!* — and smelt so good!'

'If we live, we'll see,' was Breine Henne's philosophic reply. 'There will be the bones to lick, anyway. And now reach down under the bed and pull me out the sack of potatoes, and I'll peel some while you make the samovar. Yösele comes home all dried up — nothing hot to eat all day, poor boy.'

One potato apiece was as much as Breine Henne could allow for supper, but her tongue being nimbler than her fingers, she had time, while preparing those few potatoes, to rehearse a good deal of domestic history.

'I don't know what people will say of such extravagance,' she remarked to the pot in her lap. 'Breine Henne the egg-woman, the destitute widow, to eat chicken, and not even a holiday for an excuse! It was Rebecca the apple-woman put it into my head, and I can't see but what she is right. "How much longer will you lug around that hen?" she laughed at me. "I have seen you six market days with the same lean hen," she said. "I know her by her single eye, and every housewife in Polotz knows her by this time. Naked bones, that's what she is. You'll never sell her. Take my advice, Breine Henne, go home and have her killed for Sabbath. You'll save all she'll ever bring you if you use her economically. You can stand another year in the rain and rot in your shoes, the hen will never be any plumper. Nobody wants to put a lean chip in the soup."'

Malinke had been watching the much-criticized fowl peck at its food, rejoicing, with anticipatory relish, at every kernel that swelled its crop. Her pleasure was marred by her mother's quotation of the apple-woman's disparaging opinion.

'Is she as bad as that, mama?' she asked. 'Won't there be any fat at all?'

'If there won't, there won't,' replied the mother unemotionally. 'I can't make the creature over now. Is it my fault that she always was lean, and would not lay? I stuffed her enough, I'm sure; more than the others. It was fated that we should eat her, else why was n't she plump, so that I could sell her? Already last Atonement Day I had it in mind to kill the hen as a sacrifice, but I reconsidered, and decided

it would be too great an extravagance. It is no trifle for a destitute widow to offer up a hen. So I offered a groschen, and you a groschen, and Yösele, being a scholar, and soon to be confirmed, offered a little dwarf rooster, the one the stray cat — a curse on her! — nearly chewed up when he was a chick. He was n't fit for anything else, the crippled rooster, and God would accept him, I knew. Everything is acceptable to the Almighty that is offered Him by the poor man's self-denial.'

Malinke showed interest in her mother's discourse.

'Then why did n't you sacrifice the hen?' she asked.

'I've told you why, you little fool. It would have been too much.'

'Too much for God?'

'Silence, you imp! Don't let loose your tongue. I thought I could not afford the hen then. Extravagance is a sin. The Almighty knows how I have to struggle to keep body and soul together. I am behind with the rent, behind with the tuition. Reb' Zalmen Boruch sent me word last week that if I don't pay him at least half of what I owe he can't let Yösele come any more. I don't blame the *rebbe* [Hebrew teacher]; he is a poor man himself. If I have to take Yösele out of school, the Most High will know it was not because I did not value sacred learning.'

Malinke saw that her mother was getting ready to cry, and tried to divert her thoughts.

'I can peel as close as that, mama,' she said, fingering the little heap of potato parings in her mother's lap. 'I make it so thin you can see the light through if you hold it up.'

She cocked her head as she applied the test to a curl of the peel.

Breine Henne brightened at once.

'Sound be your little head!' she blessed as she emptied her lap before rising. 'I know you are a good house-

wife. Now you watch me to-morrow when I cut up the hen, and you'll learn how to make the most of a fowl. There will be the soup for Sabbath, and the meat, and the bits will last a few days. And then the feathers — a handful; but I won't have as much as a little pillow to give you, Malinke, when you make a match, unless I fill it by handfuls.'

Malinke laughed. 'I don't want to make a match, and I don't want any feathers. I just want to eat chicken every Sabbath!'

When Yösele came home, the story of his good luck met him on the threshold, and nothing was talked of during the supper but the next day's feast.

'Oh, mama, will you give me the neck?' begged Malinke. 'I once ate a chicken's neck, at Aunt Leah's, and it had so many little bones, you could suck and suck and never know when you were done. Will you give me the neck?'

Jumping up from her stool in her excitement, the little girl bumped her mother's elbow, causing her to spill the boiling water she was at that moment drawing from the samovar.

'See what you are doing, you little fool!' scolded Breine Henne. 'Do you want to scald me? Don't jump in the air like that. I'll give you what I'll give you, and an end of it. In the meantime you have potatoes and herring; eat and be thankful. Ever see such a wild goat? Have the neck and the tail too, only quiet down.'

Yösele put in a brotherly joke.

'Why don't you bid for the whole chicken at once, and be done with it? I don't expect anything but a couple of drumsticks, the feet, and maybe the breast and the liver.'

But this rehearsal of the chicken's anatomy betrayed him into a slip from his dignity. 'The liver, mama,' he begged eagerly, 'will you give me the liver? I think you ought to give me

the liver, because there's only one, and I'm an only son, you know. Will you give me the liv —'

'But I'm an only daughter, you know!' cried Malinke, once more jumping up in her place. 'Mama, you give me the liver!'

Breine Henne emptied her saucer at a gulp, and set it down on the bare table. 'Children, children,' she cried, spreading out her hands in appeal, 'will you get quiet to-night? You, Yösele, ought to be ashamed to be so greedy — a great boy of twelve! And, anyway, a scholar ought to be sated with Torah [sacred learning], and ask for nothing more. You, Malinke, are out of your head to-night. An only daughter, indeed! What are daughters worth? They're only good to sit in the house, a burden on their parents' neck, until they're married off. A son, at least, prays for the souls of his parents when they're dead; it's a deed of piety to raise sons.'

'That's just what I think, mama,' Yösele caught at her words. 'And so you'll give me the liver?'

Breine Henne shook her head angrily by way of answer. She had begun the long grace after meals, and she would not speak till after the amen.

Yösele, reproved, began to pray in a loud voice, swaying back and forth, and from time to time closing his eyes tight, as if the better to concentrate on the holy words. Malinke also began to mumble the prayer, sitting on the edge of her stool and surreptitiously brushing the few crumbs from the table with one bare hand, catching them in the other.

Before Yösele was half through, Malinke ended with an explosive 'amen,' causing her brother to open his eyes at her in an incredulous stare, while his lips mechanically progressed with the prayer.

'Mama, she skips!' the male of the

house broke out, as soon as he could speak. 'She slurs the words, and she skips. I don't think she knows the prayer at all.'

'I don't — I do,' his sister defended herself. 'I know it all, but I can say it fast, can't I? When we have only half a herring and three potatoes, and say the whole prayer, what'll we say when we have a chicken? I'll pray slowly to-morrow, you'll see.'

Yösele stared, amazed at his sister's audacity. Breine Henne gave her a couple of cuffs with the flat of her hand, and would have given more if Malinke had not skipped out of arm's reach.

'Hold your tongue, you bastard!' she cried, using a not uncommon epithet of reproach. 'Ever hear such a mouth? Where does the imp get such words? What! will you measure the prayer according to your meal? You should thank God for every crumb that you put into your mouth. There are plenty in Polotzk who don't have any potatoes, nor any herring either. Already nine years old, and she has n't learned respect for the Almighty! One might think she was n't raised among Jews. Never let me hear you talk like that again, Malinke; do you hear?'

The culprit received this tirade at a safe distance, with an expression of forbearance rather than contrition. She traced patterns in the sand with one foot, where she stood, at the same time chewing on the end of a very thin pig-tail, until her mother stopped for breath.

'But, mama,' argued the bold child, unabashed, 'I don't grudge the prayer, — I'll say it twice, if you want me to, — but it seems foolish to thank God just the same for a little as for much. I think He won't believe that we mean it. You don't do that way to anybody else — to people. When Aunt Leah brought fruit and wine for Yösele, when he had the fever, you thanked

her and blessed her, and prayed for her in the synagogue; but when a neighbor lends you a spoonful of salt you don't say so much about it. Don't you think God knows the difference, too?'

Breine Henne had opened her mouth several times during Malinke's discourse, not to speak, but to catch her breath. Her pale eyes stared at the child as if they saw a strange monster. She made an ineffectual clutch at Malinke, and finally collapsed on her stool, crying from helplessness.

'Hear her — hear her!' she wailed, a corner of her kerchief at her eyes. 'What kind of a renegade have I brought into the world? Let somebody talk to her who knows how. I can't argue with her any more. I'm a poor, struggling widow — a friendless female — I'm obliged to spend my days in the street, in the market-place. How do I know what the girl does here all day — where she gets such talk? No child in Polotzk ever had such audacity. Such a mouth! And to think how I wept when her twin sister died! A fine life I would have of it if I had two like her! The Supreme One will punish us all for her sinful mouth.'

After one or two unsuccessful efforts to soothe her mother, Malinke went about her usual evening duties with a composure that bespoke a conscience at rest. Her critical young soul by no means yielded in the argument that so outraged her mother's piety; but she knew when it was useless to speak. Having washed the few dishes from the recent meal, she quickly made her toilet for the night, by slipping off her coarse flannel dress and removing the clumsy boots from her bare feet, and tumbled into the only bed in the room, burying herself up to the nose in the miscellaneous collection of rags that composed the bed covering.

Yösele, rather ostentatiously reading his bed-time prayers, watched her

prompt proceedings out of a corner of his eye, wondering, in a parenthesis of his evening devotions, why Malinke was such a queer little girl. He knew no one who asked such strange questions as Malinke, and no one who could satisfy her. His own teacher, a pious scholar, caught in the toils of one of her impudent inquisitions, was obliged to silence her by the only argument that ever made Malinke hang her head in submission.

'You are only a girl,' the rebbe had reminded her. 'Girls don't need to know things out of books.'

Malinke was asleep by the time Yösele had finished his devotions; she was snoring gently before he had composed himself to sleep on the narrow wooden bench by the oven. The latter process required some time and thought, as Yösele, in spite of years of experience, had not evolved a satisfactory way of arranging his bedding, which consisted of a tattered quilt, a couple of burlap sacks, and his own jacket.

'If I lie on the sacks and cover myself with the quilt, I am warm, but my sides get sore,' he complained to his mother. 'If I lie on the quilt and cover myself with the sacks, it's soft, but my feet freeze. If I put my jacket on my feet, I have nothing for a pillow.'

The vexing problem was solved this evening in one of the few ways possible, and presently Malinke's solo became a duet, Yösele snoring an octave or two deeper than his sister.

## II

Breine Henne sat up some time longer over a bit of hopeless mending. 'Patch upon patch,' she muttered to herself, 'like a head of cabbage.'

She was about to blow out the lamp, preparatory to going to bed, when Malinke, with a long-drawn sigh, turned

over in her sleep. Breine Henne went over and looked at her. The child was a small hump under the bed-clothes. Her thin little face was turned to the wall, and her colorless pigtail, tied with a scarlet rag, straggled forlornly on the pillow.

'Seems like a baby, when she lies there like that,' mused Breine Henne, stooping over the bed, her hands busy with the knotted fastenings of her undergarments. 'No bigger than a baby, and speaks up like a man. And such queer ideas! God knows where she gets them.'

She blew out the lamp and lay down beside Malinke. 'May God refrain from punishing her for her talk!' she prayed as she fell asleep.

The next day was Friday — a short work-day, as the Sabbath began with the early sunset. It was the day appointed for the great feast, the children reminded each other on waking.

'Be sure you go to the butcher early, Malinke,' Breine Henne called over her shoulder, as she was leaving for the day. 'I'll be home at twelve to dress the chicken. That will give it plenty of time to cook.'

Malinke, always a diligent little housewife, needed no prompting on this day. Returning from the butcher's, she passed a morning of volcanic activity. She had scrubbed and scoured only the day before, but in honor of the coming feast she scrubbed anew, first carefully brushing the sand from the floor into a basin, to be used over again. She repolished the almost spotless samovar with sand and cranberry juice, — she had to beg the cranberries from a neighbor, — and her small collection of cutlery came in for its share of rubbing. The little window-panes were so pieced that it was risky to touch them, but this was a supreme occasion, worthy of supreme daring. And looking through her clear window-



panes, Malinke perceived that the street was very muddy. The street was no business of hers, because she was not a house-owner; but she cleaned the street for a generous distance to right and left of the house, exerting herself with besom and shovel till her little back ached. If she could have reached the sky to tear the clouds asunder, she would have set the sun to shine into her shining room. Nothing was too good for the occasion.

From time to time, as she busied herself in the room or outside, Malinke ran to peep at the slaughtered hen, which lay awaiting further operations. If something should happen to the chicken now — a cat or a dog! Malinke wished her fowl were safely in the pot, but she did not yet know how to dress a chicken. She had picked the feathers clean; that was as far as she could go. And what if her mother should be late, and the chicken not have time to cook! The anxious little housekeeper was making up her mind to ask a neighbor to prepare the fowl, when Breine Henne, breathless with haste, came into the room.

It was a tense little face, with two great eyes — two hungry eyes — that bent over the wretched carcass, as her mother slit and cut and tore, laying bare the creature's anatomy. The mother, herself not a little excited, kept up a running commentary on the subject of chickens, with special reference to the one in hand; but Malinke uttered no word. She was in an ecstasy of expectation beyond speech.

'Not so bad, after all,' Breine Henne commented, cheerfully making the most of the lean carcass. 'Upon my word, she's not as bad as I thought. I'm glad I did n't sell her. We'll have a nice soup, and chicken meat for two or three days. I've seen plumper chickens, but still this one —'

She broke off abruptly, a look of keen

trouble in her face. Her bloodstained fingers trembled as she tore at the intestines. They had felt a lump where there should be none.

'Lord of All!' she breathed, 'what is this?'

Malinke watched her with a face gone pale. Her hands clasped tightly over her thumping heart, she waited for her mother's explanation.

'Look, look!' Breine Henne cried, 'a wire — a bit of crooked wire, right in the intestine! Oi, woe is me! the chicken is *tref*!' <sup>1</sup>

Malinke felt a sickening sinking of the heart. For a quarter of a minute she remained standing as if petrified, then she threw herself on the bench and cried aloud.

Breine Henne took no notice of her at first. She sat staring at the dismembered chicken, wringing her hands and bemoaning herself. Presently she became aware of Malinke, now sobbing with her face in her arms.

'Don't cry — don't cry, Malinke,' she soothed. 'Maybe it is n't *tref*, after all. Take your shawl and run to the *rav*.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps he will decide that the chicken is *kosher*.'

The little girl jumped up, a flame of hope in her tear-stained face.

'Oh, do you think so, mama? Do you really think it may be kosher? Oi, dear little mama! Where's my shawl? How shall I carry it? What shall I tell the *rav*? I'll run — I'll run.'

Breine Henne wrapped the chicken in a cloth. 'Don't lose anything,' she cautioned, 'and don't be gone long. This is where I found the wire; see? Show him. Now run, and God grant that the *rav* finds it kosher.'

It was some distance to the *rav*'s, but Malinke ran all the way. Arrived

<sup>1</sup> *Tref*, unclean, in conformity with Jewish dietary laws, as distinguished from *kosher*, clean.

<sup>2</sup> *Rav*, the religious head of a Jewish community.

at her destination, she burst into the house and thrust her bundle under the nose of the astonished servant.

'A shala' [question], she panted. 'My mother sent me to ask a shala. Is Reb' Nossen at home?'

'Mercy on us!' protested the servant, an elderly person who was not used to being hurried, 'one would think the town were on fire, to see the child. And if it is a shala, what then? Must you rush in on people and take their breath away? It's nothing new, a shala. Reb' Nossen settles a dozen every day. Sit down there on the bench, and I'll go and see if he is not busy. There's a novelty for you — a shala!'

Malinke thought the woman was gone an age, but at last she saw her returning through the long living-room, where the table was already set for Sabbath.

'Come, he will see you at once. See that you do not touch the clean table cloth as you pass. You are — I guess you have n't got your Sabbath dress on yet.'

Malinke did not notice the look of disapproval which her conductor cast over her ragged person. She saw only an open door at the end of the room, and went in, always holding out her bundle before her.

Reb' Nossen was busy arranging a pyramid of books on a table. He greeted the child over his shoulder.

'Well, little girl, what is your question?'

Malinke, in all her eagerness, remembered that she was in a great presence. She had never been in the rav's house before. A sudden shyness replaced her usual assurance.

'Well,' repeated the rav, still without turning, 'you came to ask a shala. What is it?'

Malinke advanced a step. 'The chicken,' she whispered. 'My mother found a wire.'

'So? Let's see it. Put it down here, by the window. This is the wire, is it? And how was it found? Show me exactly where it lay. H'm — h'm.'

The rav poked the dismembered organs with a long forefinger, and carefully examined the spot where the bit of wire had been embedded. He peered long at the wire itself, with knitted brows and set mouth. Then, after wiping his fingers on a red bandana, he picked out a book from the pile he had been arranging, and began to turn its yellow leaves, humming a bit of Sabbath melody under his breath.

Malinke followed his movements with eyes of feverish expectancy. The rav's word was law in such a matter. Would he say tref or kosher?

Reb' Nossen turned the leaves and hummed to himself. His silvery earlocks mingled with his beard, which swept the table. A silk skull-cap sat high on his broad brow. Face and hands were shining with health and cleanliness. The rav had just returned from the *mikveh*.<sup>1</sup> The peace of approaching Sabbath was in his soul.

Malinke did not take her hungry eyes from Reb' Nossen's face. Apparently the question was not a simple one, to be resolved at a glance. The rav ceased his humming. He pushed away his book and took another. He returned to the chicken, lying in the light of the window. Once he asked Malinke to show him again how the wire was found, and she answered that, and other questions, in a voice trembling with apprehension.

If Reb' Nossen had noticed the child's distress, and asked her questions about herself and her mother, he might have come to a conclusion promptly. Besides the nature of the foreign body, the position in which it was found, and the condition of the carcass, the rav had a right to take into consideration

<sup>1</sup> The ritual bath.



the circumstances of the owner of the animal. For the sacred office of the rav endows him with considerable latitude in the interpretation of the Law. If the question is one on which authorities differ, or even if the rav to whom it is submitted disagrees with recorded opinions, the owner of the property in question is entitled to the benefit of the doubt, especially if he be a poor man. The Jewish Law was not framed to oppress God's chosen people. It was meant to keep them clean, by guarding them against every disease of mind and body. In the mouths of wise and liberal scholars, it can be interpreted in two words: Be pure.

Reb' Nossen peered very closely at his book, following the lines across the page with his finger. He was a trifle short-sighted. Perhaps that was why he did not notice that Malinke's shawl was in rags, that her shoes gaped, and that she looked at him with frightened, hungry eyes.

'Little girl,' he said, after an interval in which the child suffered agonies of doubt, 'little girl, tell your mother the chicken is unclean.'

Malinke felt again that horrid sinking of the heart. Mechanically she tied up her bundle, and went out. She did not hear the rav call 'Good Sabbath' after her.

Her feet carried her homewards. She did not think of the way. The bitterness of her disappointment made her blind and deaf. But suddenly, as she turned a corner, she was brought back to life by a strong smell of cooking coming from an open kitchen door. Involuntarily she drew a deep breath. Fish, chicken, and fresh bread. Malinke gave a gulp and stuffed the corner of her shawl into her mouth. She would not be seen crying on the street.

Her knees trembled as she walked on. She had eaten black bread and tea for breakfast, and bread with salt for

dinner. She was tired from exertion, and shaken by emotion. The miserable bundle in her hand became a grievous burden. And what were they going to have for supper?

Oh, if only Reb' Nossen had found the chicken clean! Why was it unclean? All sorts of things were found inside chickens, and yet they were pronounced clean. Yösele once told her about a chicken that his schoolmate's mother cooked for a holiday. An ear-ring had been found in the gizzard, and the rav had pronounced the meat kosher. Why was not her chicken kosher? How did the rav know?

Malinke's thoughts climbed from the plaintive to the curious, from the curious to the rebellious, from the rebellious to the defiant. What was written in the books the rav consulted? She was only a girl — she would never know. Reb' Nossen said tref. How did he know? Suppose he had said kosher, then her mother would cook the chicken, they would all enjoy it, and no harm come to anybody.

Malinke stopped short in her walk, struck by an idea, a great and fearful idea. Nobody knew of the rav's decision but herself. *Suppose she should tell her mother it was kosher?* Her face flamed; the blood thumped in her ears. Stooping down, she undid the bundle in her lap. The chicken looked exactly as it had done when first opened by her mother. Why, why was it unclean? The rav's word made it so. Oh, it was cruel! She was so hungry — half the time she was hungry. She never had good things to eat. Why should the rav rob her of the chicken? It was just like any other chicken. He should not rob her! He might have said kosher, and he did not. Suppose she told her mother it was kosher?

She began to run, frightened at her own thoughts. It was a heinous sin she contemplated. The rav was the voice

of God. He had declared the chicken unfit for a Jewish table, and she proposed to eat of it, and impose it upon her mother and brother.

'But what if the rav were mistaken?' the rebel in her cried. Malinke, who went much from house to house doing errands, and heard much talk, and asked questions freely, knew that it was not impossible for a rav to make a mistake. Only the year before, Polotzk was torn into two factions, the one adhering to Reb' Nossen, the other to Reb' Isaac, when the two dignitaries disagreed in the settlement of a shala. Malinke did not know just what the point in dispute was, — something about a burial, — nor whose opinion prevailed in the end. But one thing was clear from the dispute: a rav may make a mistake. And if Reb' Nossen were wrong in her case, was it just that she and Yösele and her mother should suffer for his error?

'No, no, no!' she cried in her heart. 'I won't tell — I won't. If it's unclean, God will punish me, and then I shall know.'

She kept on running, but she was no longer frightened. Arrived at her own doorstep, she paused once more. Clasp- ing her bundle tightly to her breast, she closed her eyes and prayed.

'Good God, if the chicken is tref, punish me, and nobody else. Amen.'

Breine Henne opened the door the moment she heard Malinke in the entry.

'Well, well?' she questioned eagerly. 'What does the rav say?'

Malinke answered firmly, 'Kosher.'

Her mother was too excited to notice how pale the child was.

### III

It was a happy family that sat down to supper when Yösele returned from evening prayer in the synagogue.

Breine Henne had replaced the cot-

ton kerchief by her wig, which she wore only on holy days and ceremonious occasions. Yösele's patched trousers were mercifully invisible under the table, and from his thighs to his neck he was conscious of his Sabbath jacket. It had belonged to his father, may he rest in peace! but Yösele was a big boy for his age, and the jacket fitted not so badly, if he puffed himself out a little in front, and sat firmly on the tails of the coat behind, and turned up the cuffs of the sleeves.

Malinke was even more splendid than Yösele. She wore a blue woolen dress, trimmed with rows of gold braid on the skirt and a double row of gilt buttons on the waist. The dress was frayed and stained and choky, — Malinke was obliged to leave the waist and the neck-buttons unfastened, — but the gold trimmings redeemed every fault. She had earned the dress by hulling quarts and quarts of strawberries for a neighbor, whose little girl's cast-off clothes fitted her well enough.

Dear to Malinke's heart was the dress, and dearer still the boots on her feet. Yes, a pair of Sabbath boots had Malinke, and such boots! They were whole, they were new, they were shiny. They had patent-leather tips, and patent-leather tops closing with three buttons on each side, and all the buttons were on. All the poor little girls in the neighborhood envied her those boots. They squeaked delightfully. They were the pride and joy of her heart.

How came Malinke by such superior footgear? 'God is good,' she somewhat tactlessly remarked, when Aunt Leah presented her with the boots, which had belonged to Cousin Fredke, who died of cholera. Aunt Leah never gave away anything till it was shabby enough for a beggar, but because poor Fredke had been fond of Malinke — 'God is good,' said the beneficiary of Aunt Leah's sorrow.

Arrayed in all her finery, Malinke sat down to the unwonted feast with a face of glowing happiness. There was no shadow in her heart. The anguish of the afternoon was washed away in a flood of peace. Having struggled so bitterly and come to a great resolution, she was abiding by it with all the courage of her fiery young soul. By her prayer on the doorstep she had bravely assumed all the responsibility for her conduct. If she had sinned, the punishment was to fall on her alone: no innocent person should suffer. She did not doubt for a moment that God had heard and would heed her petition. And until God gave her a sign of His displeasure, she would not call herself a sinner, but would enjoy herself to the utmost.

All joys come to an end, but the joy of sucking chicken-bones bade fair to outlast all others. The Sabbath candles, stuck in a basin of sand, for want of candlesticks, had burned down to half their length before Breine Henne could induce the children to give up the clean-picked bones to which they clung.

'M—m,' protested Yösele, 'there's more on it'; and 'M—m,' pleaded Malinke, 'it still tastes of chicken.'

The mother got up and brought the soup to the table, and set it steaming under their noses. Then, and not till then, did they consent to part with the bones.

'Oh!' triumphed Malinke, gloating over her plate, 'there is a fat-spot in mine!'

'Take care,' warned Breine Henne, 'it's very hot. Blow on it, children.'

The soup was pronounced delicious with every mouthful. Malinke dipped up very scant spoonfuls, to make it last. Yösele, finishing before her, made a dive at her plate to help himself.

'She had more than I,' he grumbled, when his mother ordered him to let

his sister's plate alone. And Malinke, not feeling safe enough even under her mother's protection, began to gulp her soup hastily, lest her brother rob her of any.

She had almost finished, when she gave a short cough, accompanied by a convulsive jerk of the head. She grew red in the face; her eyes started out; her tongue protruded. She was choking.

Breine Henne and Yösele jumped up in a fright, and began to thump and shake her.

'A bone!' wailed Breine Henne. 'Oi, weh! She'll choke to death. Take a drink of water — there, try to drink. Woe is me, she's choking!'

Breine Henne set Malinke's plate on her head, while she and Yösele pounded her on the back and chest simultaneously. It was the best remedy they knew, and it failed to dislodge the bone. The mother next inserted her forefinger into the girl's throat as far as it would go, but without result. The child struggled convulsively. The sweat was on her blackening face, the tears in her eyes.

Yösele began to bawl with fright. His mother was out of her wits.

'Oi, weh! Woe is me! I always knew no good would come of that hen. Malinke! Malinke! little daughter! Take a drink of water. God Almighty, have pity on us! Run, Yösele, call the neighbors. Oh, Malinke, Malinke!'

Yösele ran out, calling, 'Help! Help!'

Jacob the tailor, who occupied the rear of the house, answered the call, and his frightened family flocked after him to the scene of distress.

Jacob stopped in front of Malinke, helpless and aghast. Not so Peshe Frede, his wife. Without a word she grasped the strangling child by the ankles, and turning her upside down, swung her back and forth with all her might.

Presently Malinke gave a gasp, followed by a wailing 'Oh — h!' Peshe Frede put her back in her chair, and everybody crowded around.

Slowly the red left Malinke's face. It faded and faded, till she was ashy white. She looked around the circle of faces, with a growing horror in her eyes. She tried to speak, but failed.

'There, there,' her mother crooned, 'sit still. You'll be better in a minute.'

She began to fondle the child, wiping her moist face with a corner of her own apron. Malinke avoided her touch with a strange gesture, always staring with eyes of horror.

'God has punished me,' she breathed in a strangled whisper. 'I have sinned, and God has punished me.'

'What is she saying?' they all asked one another. 'Better put her to bed, Breine Henne. She will be all right when she has rested.'

But Malinke pushed her mother away. Springing up, she threw out her hands in a gesture of despair, crying aloud, 'God has punished me! God has punished me!'

The others drew away from her in amazement. 'What do you mean? What does she mean?' they questioned.

Again Breine Henne tried to soothe the child, and again Malinke avoided her.

'Don't touch me!' she cried. 'I am a great sinner. God has punished me.'

Then she told them. Standing in the middle of the room, with wild eyes, panting and sobbing, she told them the whole story of the rav's decision and her false report. She did not excuse herself, although she tried to explain to them the thoughts and feelings that led up to her wicked resolution; but she saw that they did not understand.

'Do with me what you will,' she cried. 'I have sinned. God has punished me.' With a sob that shook her

whole frame, she threw herself prone on the floor in abject surrender.

No language but the Yiddish can reproduce the exclamations of horror, anger, reproach, that broke from the lips of the bystanders. Breine Henne sank upon a chair and threw out her arms across the table, moaning as one mortally hurt. Yösele shrank into a corner, his jaw hanging, his eyes roving around the room as if seeking support. The assembled neighbors turned horrified faces on one another, gasping and ejaculating. Jacob's two little girls clung to each other, backing away toward the door, as if they feared contamination. And the culprit shook the floor with her sobs.

'Oi!' moaned the unhappy mother, when she could speak. 'Dark is my world; my eyes may not look upon the light of day. God in heaven, why didst Thou punish me with such a child? A monster — a renegade! Why dost Thou leave her in the world, such a wicked spirit? Woe is me, woe is me! dark is my world.'

Peshe Frede, herself weeping from pious sorrow, tried to soothe her neighbor.

'What good will it do to cry? Calm yourself, Breine Henne. The Almighty knows it is not your fault. The girl is possessed by an evil spirit. I always warned you that she would grow up a renegade. A trifle is it, to impose *trefah* upon a clean house? Such treachery! An honest Gentile would not do such a thing. Mark my word, this will not be the end of her wickedness. She would poison all Polotzk if her evil heart told her to. But what is the use of crying? Calm yourself, Breine Henne. What is done, is done.'

After a while, Breine Henne lifted her heavy head. Her eyes fell on the dishes standing on the table. She broke into fresh weeping.

'Tref — tref — everything tref! All

the dishes defiled. Woe is me, she has ruined me!

'Don't lose your head, Breine Henne,' Jacob spoke up. 'Defiled vessels can be purified. The crockery must be scalded, the knives must be stuck into the cracks of the floor for half an hour, the—the—the rest of the things must be taken to the rav to pass upon.'

The tailor was not much of a scholar, but so far as he had ventured to advise, he was correct. Every housewife knew as much. A gleam of comfort came to Breine Henne's heart as Jacob spoke, but the mention of the rav brought her shame back to her. She wept and prayed and wrung her hands. Peshe Frede at last gave up the attempt to comfort her, and retired, followed by her family.

'The whole town will ring with this,' the poor egg-woman wailed. 'Peshe Frede will have it all over town tomorrow. They will call us *trefah fressers* [eaters of unclean food]. Everybody will point a finger at us. Where shall I bury myself? Good God, just God, I beg Thee open a grave for me, and let me sink in and hide my disgrace.'

Far into the night Breine Henne wept, exhausting the vocabulary of lamentation. The candles burned out, the oil in the lamp was low, and still she rocked herself in her grief. Yösele had long since curled up on his bench, too stupefied by misery to bother with the bed-clothes. Finally she dragged herself over to the bed and fell asleep, exhausted. At Malinke she did not look.

Malinke had not moved since she had thrown herself on the floor. She heard the hubbub excited by her confession, as one hears the rustle of summer leaves on the brink of a cataract. The greater tumult was in her own heart. Her own conscience hurled the bitterest reproaches at her. She knew, better than all her censors, how often

she had questioned the written Word of God, defied the authority of her elders, and set up her own unhallowed standards. Nobody knew but she of the foreign petitions she injected into her daily prayers. For weeks past she had prayed, morning and night, that her hair might grow long, so that her playmates could not twit her about her pig-tail. Now, in her hour of repentance, she realized how irreverent were her prayers. She had mocked at Yösele's rebbe, a pious and learned man, because he could not answer her impertinent questions about the Creation. Finally, she had disregarded the express commands of the rav himself, and betrayed her own mother and brother, for the sake of a chicken-bone and a plate of watery soup. Her most pitiless judge could not have drawn up a more bitter indictment than Malinke's conscience presented to her.

Now that she had had a sign from God, her remorse was bottomless. With all her soul she repented. She knew she would never be wicked any more, but she longed for a means of immediate atonement for the past. She threw her soul at the feet of God in utter humility at last, and she prayed Him to trample upon her and leave the mark of His chastisement on her.

#### IV

Worn out by her agonized thoughts, Malinke finally fell asleep. When she awoke, stiff with cold and sore from lying on the bare boards, the windows were opaque with dawn. She sat up, amazed to find herself on the floor. She made out her mother's figure lying on the edge of the bed. There was a curious atmosphere of disorder about the room.

Breine Henne moved on the bed with a groan. In a flash Malinke remembered everything. Her torment-



ing thoughts of the evening rushed back into her brain. The sense of guilt once more overwhelmed her. It seemed to her that she was not herself, but somebody else,—a monstrous, unclean creature, from whom the real Malinke shrank in horror. She longed to cry out, to struggle, to shake off the hideous thing that grappled her, but she was afraid to wake the sleepers. She must get out of the house, or she would stifle.

Slowly creeping across the floor, inch by inch, she reached the door. Noiselessly she lifted the latch and stole out. The chill of the autumn morning struck to her very bones. She wished she had taken a shawl, but she dared not go back.

Like a ghost she wandered away through the empty streets. She had never been abroad at such an hour in the autumn; she thought it was her sins that had turned the world so gray and unfamiliar. The watchmen had gone home with the first glimmer of day. In all the sleeping city, she alone was awake. It was a symbol of her isolation from the world of righteous men.

Her dress reminded her that it was Sabbath. The people would sleep late, but presently they would awake. The men would go to the synagogue, and so would some of the women. The children would put on their best clothes, and call to one another from the doorways, and go visiting until dinner-time. Where should she go then, she that was neither man nor woman nor honest child?

Crying softly, she wandered blindly on. At the bottom of a steep street, the river gleamed pale in the ghostly light. Malinke descended to the edge, and being unable to go farther, looked about her for the first time.

On the bank above her a low gray building was just visible between the

palings of a sagging fence. Beyond the fence she could make out a gray ribbon trembling down a shallow gash in the bank. That was where the spring flowed out which was reputed among the Gentiles to cure blindness. The building behind the fence was the Old Synagogue. By these landmarks, Malinke identified the spot. It was where the Jewish women came on New Year's Day for the ceremony of shaking their sins into the river, that they might start the new year with clean hearts.

A sudden thought came to Malinke. A flash of hope lighted up the gloom of her troubled soul. Why could not she, like the pious women of Polotzk, shake her sins into the river and begin a holy life? Was repentance only for New Year? Did God grant pardons only on the Day of Atonement? She did not realize that she was once more committing the sin of religious innovation—once more reasoning outside the book. Swept away by a genuine longing to make her peace with God, she cast about for means to carry out the symbolic rites of the season of atonement, fervently praying that the Almighty should see and understand.

Contrition, prayer, fasting, and sacrifice. She could not think of any other processes that went to the solemn drama of annual repentance. Contrition? Her soul prostrated itself in deepest humility. And prayer? She prayed with all her being that God should have mercy on her and forgive her sins. Her every breath should be a prayer. Fasting also she could fulfill. She would fast as long as her body would hold out. A whole day—two days she would fast. Sacrifice was left. What could she sacrifice? What had she that would be acceptable to God?

Malinke's heart sank as she failed to find a solution to this problem. Was she to give up the hope of God's for-



givenness because she had nothing to sacrifice? No, no! she must think of something.

Her pockets were empty, because it was Sabbath. She looked down on herself, and so got her inspiration. She would sacrifice her Sabbath clothes — the dress with the gold trimmings, *and the boots!*

Joy unspeakable lighted Malinke's pinched face. With feverish fingers she unfastened and tore off her dress, half laughing, half crying with excitement. Then, sitting down on the wet bank, she unlaced her boots and started to roll them up in her dress.

What pretty boots they were! The patent-leather trimmings were as shiny as water. They were almost new: the varnish was not all worn off from the instep. She had worn them very little, of course: only on Sabbaths and holy days. It was the only pair of boots she could remember that had come to her new. She always had other people's cast-off boots. If they were too big, she stuffed them with rags; if too small, she slit them in the tight spots. Her Sabbath boots, now, fitted her as if made to her measure.

Malinke could not forbear trying them on once more, for the last time. It was light enough now for her to make out the stitching on the patent-leather tops. It was a pretty pattern, all scrolls. She wondered if Fredke had loved those boots as much as she did.

With a deep, deep sigh, Malinke pulled off the beautiful boots again, and resolutely rolled them up in the blue dress. The sacrifice was ready.

But now a new difficulty assailed her. In what manner was the sacrifice to be performed? On Atonement Day, when money was offered, it was put into the poor-box; if a fowl, it was cooked and eaten at the close of the fast. What was she to do with her clothes? And the formula — she could not remember the

formula by which the sacrifice was offered, because it was used only once a year. She also suspected that it would not fit the novel sacrifice she proposed to offer.

After some hard thinking she threw up her head with a gesture of finality, and turned an appealing face to heaven.

'Good God,' she prayed, her teeth chattering with cold, 'I have nothing to sacrifice except this. I don't know how to do it. I'll just tie a stone to it and throw it into the river. I beg Thee to pardon me if I do wrong, and accept my sacrifice like a real one. I would pray from the prayer-book, but it's at home, and there is nothing in it about atonement in the middle of the year. Forgive me for everything. Amen.'

## V

Malinke never knew how she got home that day, nor how the time passed. Her faith in the validity of her atonement had lifted her into a state of exaltation past all physical sensation. She heard herself, in a voice not her own, communicate the great news to her mother: that she had atoned, by prayer and sacrifice, and all was well. Her mother seemed unaccountably affected by the news. Malinke dimly perceived that her mother's fresh tears were not the tears of joy; but she was too far removed from the world to be troubled, or even puzzled. She was fasting, in accordance with her resolution. She felt as buoyant as a chip floating on the bosom of the river.

It was well along in the afternoon when Malinke awoke from her trance. She was lying on the bed, staring wide-eyed at the wall, when she became aware of some unusual commotion in the room. Presently her mother's voice penetrated her dazed consciousness.

'Do you hear, Malinke? Get up and

go to the rav. He has sent for you. Do you hear?’

Breine Henne's voice, though on the verge of tears, expressed a sort of awe-struck elation. Genuinely grieved by the sinful conduct of her untractable child, the poor mother yet felt a tinge of bitter pride in the enormity of Malinke's crime, that attracted the notice of the rav himself.

‘Get up, Malinke,’ she urged in a deep voice. ‘Reb’ Nossen wants to speak to you. His messenger is waiting.’

The mention of the rav's name brought Malinke to her senses. She jumped up and looked about for the messenger. He was a sickly-faced youth, a poor student in the seminary, who lived on the charity of the community. As she looked into his dull, unspeculative eyes it came over Malinke that in the sight of the world she was still a sinner, a law-breaker at large, no matter how sure she was in her heart of God's forgiveness. She would have to answer to her neighbors for her backsliding. The rav's summons was only the beginning. With quick imagination she visualized the mocking children that would follow her in the street, the mothers who would scowl her out of all companionship with their good little daughters; and she heard the taunts and jibes of inventive enemies. The expiation of her sin would be the long punishment at the hands of her neighbors. It was well for Malinke that she had so promptly made her peace with God. She had courage now to face the disapproving world.

She suffered her mother to wrap a shawl about her head and shoulders, but of the messenger she took no notice. Did she not know the way? She kept several yards in front of her guide, and presented herself at Reb' Nossen's gate with brave promptness.

The elderly servant ushered her into the rav's presence without a word.

Even the customary ‘Good Sabbath’ stuck in her throat at sight of the juvenile sinner. The woman knew Malinke's story by this time, as did every person of sound hearing and fair understanding in Polotzk. For Peshe Frede, the tailor's wife, had been to the synagogue, and started the story on a town-wide career by a score of sure, unobstructed channels. Before the Gentile chore-women had unsealed the Jewish ovens, to draw out the Sabbath pots, there was not a bit of stale gossip current in Polotzk. Malinke and her misconduct furnished the fresh topic for every domestic circle.

Reb' Nossen had heard the story from his good wife, who had it from her good neighbor, who overheard the women exclaim over it in the rear rows of the women's gallery in the synagogue after service. The rav was one of the most liberal that Polotzk had ever had. Hearing the story of Malinke, he was a little shocked, and more than a little interested. He had taken but scant notice of Malinke the day before, when she came with the chicken. Now he wanted to see what manner of child was this who could plot and deceive, and invite the wrath of God, and make public confession of her sins, all in one short Sabbath eve.

Malinke's heart beat quite evenly as the great man bent his short-sighted gaze on her. Her own look was clear and direct. She wished for nothing so much as that the rav should see to the very bottom of her soul. The peace that filled her heart — the gift of a forgiving God — would be the answer to his bitterest reproaches. And as Reb' Nossen continued to study her face, without speaking, Malinke's mind was flooded with a sudden intuition of the nature of the judge before whom she stood. She had tested his wisdom — God Himself had confirmed his judgment: how could he fail in understand-

ing and mercy? She was eager to speak, to tell everything, but restrained her tongue out of respect.

At last the rav began to question her. Very earnestly he listened to her artless account of her family, and the history of the luckless fowl up to the time of Breine Henne's great resolution concerning it. He made her repeat certain details, and led her to quote freely from her mother's comments on their daily life. From time to time his fine head moved in a barely perceptible nod of comprehension, but he said nothing, except to direct the child's narrative, until she came to the account of her temptation and its tragic consequences.

Here, to Malinke's amazement, he took up the story himself.

'You were very hungry, little girl,' he said, in as simple words as she herself would have used. 'It seemed to you a cruel decision. You thought perhaps I had made a mistake, after all.'

Malinke gasped. Such perfect comprehension she had never expected from anybody below God.

'Is that so, little girl?'

'Oh, yes, yes!' she affirmed eagerly. 'I thought there might be a mistake. But I know now it was true — the chicken was unclean. That's why it choked me.' A touch of confusion made her speech waver. She did not know just how to express her newer faith in the rav's wisdom. 'But I know, Reb' Nossen, that it was true. You could n't make a mistake.'

Reb' Nossen put up his white hand to silence her.

'Hush, my child; do not speak so. There was a great mistake — a great mistake. No man has a right to give judgment who does not know his people. A wise teacher is like a physician, who has one medicine for the strong, and another for the weak. The Law must be read with one eye on the scroll,

and the other on the world, lest the Torah become a writ of bondage, and the pent people rebel. The rabbi alone cannot keep the Torah holy. The people must be with him, and he with them.'

Reb' Nossen spoke as if to himself. Malinke gazed at him in wonder, not half comprehending his meaning. After some moments of silence, the rav came out of his reverie. The child had been respectfully standing all this time, but now he bade her be seated. He set a chair for her himself, in the light of the window, near his own. He had been blind long enough with respect to this poor, uninstructed child. He, too, wanted to atone.

He brought Malinke back to her story.

'And so you ate of the forbidden meat, and thought you had a sign from God when you choked.' There was not a trace of reproof in his voice.

'Yes, and then I was so sorry, and in the morning I prayed, and I had nothing to sacrifice except my things.'

She was not surprised at his knowing more of her story than she had told him. The rav seemed to read her thoughts of yesterday.

'And those were your Sabbath clothes?'

For answer Malinke looked down on her very shabby dress. Anybody might know *that* was not her Sabbath dress.

'You had a pair of good boots, eh?'

'Oh, they were beautiful!' Malinke grew loquacious again. 'They were the best I ever had. They were almost new. Aunt Leah would n't have given them to me, but Fredke died, and the other girls could n't wear them, because Fredke was the smallest. They were trimmed with patent leather, and they fitted me —'

She broke off, unable to express the perfection of the relation between the now historic boots and her abused

little feet. Unconsciously she looked down upon the ruinous boots that replaced them.

The rav's eyes followed hers.

'Do you regret the pretty boots, Malinke?'

The child jumped up in her excitable manner, her eyes full of protest.

'Oh, no, *no!*' she cried earnestly. 'I'm glad they're at the bottom of the river. I shall never have such beautiful boots again as long as I live, but I'm *glad*, because it was my sacrifice, and God will forgive me. Reb' Nossen,' she repeated, vehemently, 'I'm *glad!*'

The rav put up his hand to hide his eyes from the little penitent. Short-sighted as he was, he had a sudden vision of spiritual vistas. After a moment, he raised his head and drew Malinke to him. Stroking her thin hair, he regarded her with grave, sad eyes. He reproached himself inwardly for his blindness on the occasion of their first interview. The signs of privation and suffering were plain in the little girl's pinched face, in the sharp angles of her figure, visible under her scanty apparel. And suddenly, across his vaguer speculations, shot a clear idea of the child's immediate want. If the chicken was rejected as unclean, what did those poor people have for dinner?

'Malinke,' questioned Reb' Nossen, looking hard at the child, 'what did you eat to-day?'

She returned his look with a smile of triumph.

'Nothing,' she replied, with the least touch of pride in her voice. 'I'm fasting, you know, for atonement.'

'Fasting!' exclaimed the rav, in a tone of reproach, and rising as he spoke. 'Why, you're too young to fast, my child, and too weak. Besides, it is wrong to fast on Sabbath. Your head is full of strange ideas. There are a great many things to explain to you — a great many. But there will be

time enough for that when you have had something to eat.'

Pushing her gently back into her chair, he went to the door and called aloud, 'Deborah! Tamareh!' Once aroused, the rav was practical enough.

'You shall eat,' he said again to Malinke, going back to her chair and looking down upon her. 'Why, you are as thin as a skeleton. What business has such a child with fasting? You shall eat, and then we can talk. There are a great many things we can learn together, my child, but the body comes before the mind.'

Malinke's eyes, that had met his so bravely at the beginning of the interview, when she expected accusation and reproof, now wavered and fell, as the old man's sympathy focused in his gaze. And then, to her own amazement, a great sob broke from her, followed by a flood of tears.

The rav strode over to the door once more, the tails of his long frock coat flying back from his white-stockinged legs. He called impatiently, 'Deborah! Tamareh!'

In answer to his summons came neither his wife nor the servant, but a strange, disheveled figure, with pale eyes in a tear-blotted face. It was Breine Henne, the egg-woman, impelled by a dozen contradictory impulses to be present at what she imagined to be her child's bitter trial. At sight of Reb' Nossen's stern face, and Malinke sobbing in her chair, all her motives resolved themselves into an overpowering instinct to defend her little girl, against the rav himself, against all the world, if need be.

'Reb' Nossen, Reb' Nossen,' she began to plead, 'listen to me, I beg you. Don't be too hard on the child. She is so young, and so ignorant. She has no father, and I am a poor, ignorant woman, and all day long she is among strangers, because there is nobody at

home to take care of her. It was a great temptation — she was so hungry, poor child. She had hardly tasted meat for weeks. We cook nothing but grits when times are so bad. She was out of her head with disappointment. May you never know what it is to be hungry for a decent meal. And it was all my fault, anyway. I should have killed the chicken last Atonement Day, and then this dreadful thing would n't have happened. And oh, Reb' Nossen! as I am a Jewish woman, I believe the child is out of her head this day. She stole out of the house at daybreak, will you believe me? on purpose to throw her best clothes into the river, because she imagined that would be a sacrifice in atonement for her sins! You know, Reb' Nossen, that no sane child would do such a thing. It was her only decent dress, and the boots were the best she ever had in her life. If you had seen her when she came back, blue with cold, and saying such wild things — Oh, Reb' Nossen, don't, don't be hard on my poor child!

The rav waited patiently for Breine Henne to stop.

'Calm yourself, my good woman,' he said, as soon as he could speak. 'Take a seat — here — and try to be calm. I did not mean to be harsh with the child. I do not blame her for anything. On the contrary — Ah, Tamareh! yes, I called. Bring this child something to eat. She has not eaten to-day, Tamareh. Bring it in here, and be quick.'

While the famished child was eating, the rav drew from the mother many details bearing on Malinke's character and education, which Breine Henne adorned with numerous comments and apologies. She was very much puzzled at the rav's benign attitude toward the child, — the very opposite of what Malinke had earned, — but she would have thought it disrespectful to ques-

tion him. No doubt he knew what he was about, and if she did not understand, — why, she was only a poor, ignorant female. So she babbled on in a happy excitement, her eyes resting now and then on Malinke, feasting there in the house of the rav, and at his own invitation.

There was little more than crumbs left on Malinke's tray when she leaned back, with a smile of utter contentment on her face, and remarked to the friendly air, 'I really can't eat any more.'

The rav turned and looked at the tray.

'That's good — that's good,' he said. 'Now come over here. I've been talking with your mother, and I find your education has been a little defective. I have caused you — I might have saved you much trouble. I should like to make amends.' He embraced them both in his look. 'I shall be very glad to provide for your tuition in the future, if you will let me choose the teacher — and if you care for lessons, Malinke.'

The child drew in her breath.

Breine Henne broke out in a flood of thanks and blessings, which the good man did not hear. He was waiting for Malinke to speak. At last she opened her lips.

'Shall I begin to-morrow?' she asked.

The rav smiled, pleased with her directness.

'To-morrow,' he said. 'It is well to hasten to a good thing. And shall I name your teacher?'

Malinke ventured on a petition.

'I hope it will be a rebbe, not a *rebbe* [female teacher],' she said. 'The rebbetzins don't know so much.'

Breine Henne broke out in reproof.

'Hush, you bold child! There you go again, talking as a child should n't. That's her great fault, believe me, Reb' Nossen — that tongue of hers. You

ought to be more respectful, and grateful, and, whatever you do, keep your tongue quiet.'

The rav uttered no direct reproof.

'If the rebbe knows more than the rebbetzin, it is because he has spent more time in study, my dear. Perhaps a rebbe would be best for you. Well, now, I cannot afford to pay much; I am not known for my riches. I must choose some one who will not ask too much tuition. What would you say to taking a few lessons with me? I have never taught girls, but I can try.'

It was Breine Henne who gasped now, and Malinke who babbled excitedly.

'Oh, will you teach me everything?' she cried, 'the same as a boy — the same as Yösele? I'd like to read *everything*. Yösele says a girl can't understand, but I don't think that's true, do you? Do you mean you'll teach me the *Humesh*, and *Gemara*, and everything?'

The rav smiled again.

'Not all at once, my child, not all at once. We must make a beginning first. You come to-morrow before sunset prayer, and then we'll see. The Torah is inexhaustible. There are a great many things to learn — about conduct, and sacrifice, and many other things. I pray that I have the wisdom to teach you.'

For the second time that day, Ma-

linke walked home without touching the earth. But if she did not know the way she took, a third of Polotzk did. That much of the population followed her to her door, as a volunteer escort of honor.

For in the quiet of the Sabbath afternoon, the movements of the rav's messenger had been observed, and a knot of the most irrepressible gossips in Polotzk lay in wait for Malinke and her mother at Reb' Nossen's gate. Breine Henne, bursting with pride, was glad to fall upon the bosom of the first gossip with an apron who presented herself; and so the story of the great interview was out.

Before the first corner was turned, the original knot of gossips had become the indistinguishable nucleus of a rapidly growing procession, at the head of which a fairly straight version of Malinke's story was told, and at the tail of which it was rumored that Reb' Nossen was going to adopt Breine Henne's girl, and make a great scholar of her.

But Malinke heard nothing of what the people said. In the midst of the throng she was communing with herself about the mystery of divine justice. She who had sinned the most was the most blessed of all little girls in Polotzk. The Lord had accepted her atonement. In compensation for her blindness, that had led her into error, God had sent her a teacher.



# THE HANDICAPPED

BY ONE OF THEM

It would not perhaps be thought, ordinarily, that the man whom physical disabilities have made so helpless that he is unable to move around among his fellows, can bear his lot more happily, even though he suffer pain, and face life with a more cheerful and contented spirit, than can the man whose deformities are merely enough to mark him out from the rest of his fellows without preventing him from entering with them into most of their common affairs and experiences. But the fact is that the former's very helplessness makes him content to rest and not to strive. I know a young man so helplessly deformed that he has to be carried about, who is happy in reading a little, playing chess, taking a course or two in college, and all with the sunniest good-will in the world, and a happiness that seems strange and unaccountable to my restlessness. He does not cry for the moon.

When one, however, is in full possession of his faculties, and can move about freely, bearing simply a crooked back and an unsightly face, he is perforce drawn into all the currents of life. Particularly if he has his own way in the world to make, his road is apt to be hard and rugged, and he will penetrate to an unusual depth in his interpretation both of the world's attitude toward such misfortunes, and of the attitude toward the world which such misfortunes tend to cultivate in men like him. For he has all the battles of a stronger man to fight, and he is at a double disadvantage in fighting them.

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He has constantly with him the sense of being obliged to make extra efforts to overcome the bad impression of his physical defects, and he is haunted with a constant feeling of weakness and low vitality which makes effort more difficult and renders him easily faint-hearted and discouraged by failure. He is never confident of himself, because he has grown up in an atmosphere where nobody has been very confident of him; and yet his environment and circumstances call out all sorts of ambitions and energies in him which, from the nature of his case, are bound to be immediately thwarted. This attitude is likely to keep him at a generally low level of accomplishment unless he have an unusually strong will, and a strong will is perhaps the last thing to develop under such circumstances.

That vague sense of physical uncomfortableness which is with him nearly every minute of his waking day serves, too, to make steady application for hours to any particular kind of work much more irksome than it is even to the lazy man. No one but the deformed man can realize just what the mere fact of sitting a foot lower than the normal means in discomfort and annoyance. For one cannot carry one's special chair everywhere, to theatre and library and train and school-room. This sounds trivial, I know, but I mention it because it furnishes a real, even though usually dim, 'background of consciousness' which one has to reckon with during all one's solid work or en-