

LESSING'S

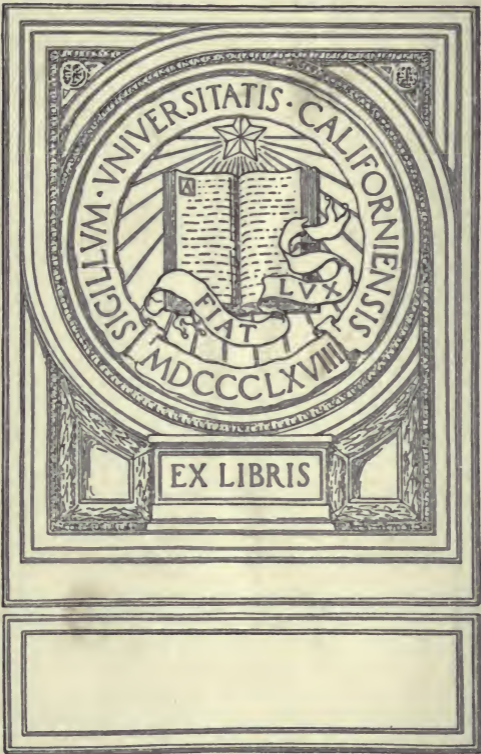
NATHAN THE WISE

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| | Schiller's Maria Stuart. |
| | Schiller's William Tell. |

Others will be added at short intervals.

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LESSING'S
NATHAN THE WISE

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INTRODUCTION.

IN the following pages will be found a translation from the German of Gotthold Ephraim Lessing of "Nathan the Wise," one of the author's most widely known dramatic compositions. The story is an entertaining one and holds the reader's interest to the close, although the ending is somewhat disappointing.

Nathan, a wealthy Jew, returning home from a business trip, finds that his adopted daughter, Recha, has been rescued from death by a young Knight Templar, who had been captured by the Sultan Saladin, and whose life had been spared by reason of a strong resemblance to a deceased brother of the Sultan. In the brief meeting between the two young people each had fallen in love with the other. The Templar, knowing that Recha is the daughter of a Jew, with that common prejudice for the race, studiously avoids her, and refuses to yield to the entreaties of her companion, Daja, to come and receive thanks for his heroic services. Nathan, however, lies in wait for the young man in a palm grove near his house, and, though the Templar is at first obdurate and even

insulting, Nathan so impresses him with his wisdom and his worth, that he at last yields, and consents to meet again the young lady he has saved from death. They are about to go to Recha when Nathan is summoned to appear before the Sultan. Saladin is sorely in need of money, and has craftily planned to make Nathan his treasurer, knowing his great wealth, and thinking in this way to supply himself with money sufficient for his needs. He first asks Nathan to explain to him why he has chosen the Jewish faith in preference to others, hoping thus to place him at a disadvantage. Nathan answers by telling the Sultan the story of "The Three Rings," which so impresses him with the Jew's own goodness and wisdom, that he bids him depart in peace. Nathan, however, craves of the Sultan as a boon that he be allowed to loan the Sultan all the money he desires, and in this way secures his gratitude and friendship.

In the meantime the Templar has visited Recha, and this visit has tended greatly to strengthen the love of the two young people. He meets Nathan returning from the Sultan, and begs him to give his consent to their marriage. Nathan neither refuses, nor consents, which greatly angers the young man, and on being informed a few moments later by Daja that Recha is not Nathan's daughter but a Christian maiden born and baptized, whom he has brought up in the Jewish faith, he seeks the convent, and inquires of the Patriarch there what it

is possible to do under such circumstances. The Patriarch informs him that it is the law that any Jew who shall seduce to apostacy a Christian shall die by fire, and demands to know the name of him who has been guilty of such dire iniquity. The Templar, however, refuses to betray Nathan, and leaves the convent to seek Saladin. The latter receives him affectionately and promises him his assistance. In the meantime Nathan has learned from a friar that Recha is the daughter of a certain man who styled himself Oluf of Filneck. Nathan, Recha and the Templar meet at the palace of the Sultan, and in his presence the Templar again asks for the hand of his loved one. Nathan for answer declares that the Templar has misrepresented himself, and that he is the son of Oluf of Filneck. This the Templar admits, whereupon Nathan informs him that Recha is the daughter of Oluf and the Templar's sister. Exclaiming that Nathan has given infinitely more than he has taken away, the Templar embraces his sister, and both seem supremely happy. The final dénouement is, however, yet to come. The breviary which the Friar gave to Nathan and from which the latter learned the parentage of Recha is handed to Saladin, who at once recognizes the handwriting of Oluf of Filneck as the same as that of his long deceased brother Assad, whereupon he embraces both Recha and the Templar, as the children of his brother, and his own nephew and niece.

The story is developed in a manner interesting and entertaining, and the reader cannot fail to be impressed with the author's charm of diction. The characters are all finely drawn, with the possible exception of the Templar, who seems to possess many characteristics inconsistent with his heroic rescue of Recha, and his noble refusal to repay with betrayal his debt of gratitude to Saladin. The weak part of the play, from a dramatic standpoint, is the complaisant manner in which the Templar and Recha receive the information that they are brother and sister. When this fact is disclosed the reader remembering the burning sighs of Recha and the impatient outbursts of her lover, is quite prepared for tragic action on the part of one or both, instead of which he is treated to a "and-they-all-lived-happy-ever-afterward" termination of the play.

The force of the criticism is, however, somewhat diminished when the purpose of the composition is borne in mind. Lessing's strong contention was that the stage might prove as useful a disseminator of good doctrine as the pulpit, and, in this play, he strove to preach the universal brotherhood of mankind. His whole purpose in this composition was "a stricture on class prejudices, and an enunciation of the innate truth that underlies all forms of creeds." It is not therefore a matter of great surprise that in some of its dramatic elements the play seems to be wanting.

NATHAN THE WISE.

A DRAMATIC POEM IN FIVE ACTS.

(Translated by R. Dillon Boylan.)

The well-known Goetze Controversy is to be thanked for the appearance of this, the longest, and in many respects the most important, of Lessing's dramatic works. It was written in 1778-9, in reply to some of the theological censures of the Hamburg pastor. In 1783, it was first acted at Berlin, but it met with little success there or elsewhere, until in 1801, when it was introduced on the Weimar stage, by Schiller and Goethe.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

SULTAN SALADIN.

SITTAH, *his Sister.*

NATHAN, *a rich Jew of Jerusalem.*

RECHA, *his adopted Daughter.*

DAJA, *a Christian woman living in the Jew's house as
RECHA's companion.*

A young KNIGHT TEMPLAR.

A DERVISE.

The PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM.

A FRIAR.

An EMIR *and several of* SALADIN'S MAMELUKES.

The scene is in Jerusalem.

NATHAN THE WISE.

“Introite, nam et heic Dii sunt.”

Apud GELLIUM.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*A Hall in Nathan's House.*

NATHAN, *returning from a journey*; DAJA, *meeting him.*

DAJA.

'Tis he! 'Tis Nathan! endless thanks to Heaven
That you at last are happily returned.

NATHAN.

Yes, Daja! thanks to Heaven! But why *at last*?
Was it my purpose—was it in my power
To come back sooner? Babylon from here,
As I was forced to take my devious way,
Is a long journey of two hundred leagues;
And gathering in one's debts is not—at best,
A task that expedites a traveller's steps.

DAJA.

O Nathan! what a dire calamity
Had, in your absence, nigh befallen us!
Your house——

NATHAN.

Took fire. I have already heard.
God grant I may have learnt the whole that chanced!

DAJA.

Chance saved it, or it had been burnt to ashes.

NATHAN.

Then, Daja! we had built another house,
And a far better——

DAJA.

True—ay, true! but Recha
Was on the point of perishing amid
The flames——

NATHAN.

Of perishing? Who saidst thou? Recha?
I had not heard of that. I should not then
Have needed any house. What! on the point
Of perishing? Nay, nay; perchance she's dead—
Is burnt alive. Speak, speak the dreadful truth.
Kill me, but do not agonize me thus.
Tell me at once she's dead.

DAJA.

And if she were
Could you expect to hear it from these lips?

NATHAN.

Why then alarm me? Recha! O my Recha!

DAJA.

Your Recha? Yours?

NATHAN.

And can it ever be
That I shall cease to call this child my own?

DAJA.

Is all you have yours by an equal title?

NATHAN.

Nought by a better. What I else enjoy
Are Fortune's gifts, or Nature's. This alone—
This treasure do I owe to virtue.

DAJA.

Nathan!
How dearly must I pay for all your goodness!
If goodness practised for an end like yours
Deserves the name.

NATHAN.

An end like mine! What mean you?

DAJA.

My conscience——

NATHAN.

Daja, let me tell you first——

DAJA.

I say my conscience——

NATHAN.

Oh, the gorgeous robe

That I have bought for you in Babylon!

Costly it is and rare. For Recha's self

I have not bought a richer.

DAJA.

What of that?

My conscience can be silent now no more.

NATHAN.

I long to witness your delight, to see

The bracelets, earrings, and the golden chain

Which I selected at Damascus for you.

DAJA.

'Tis always so, you surfeit me with gifts.

NATHAN.

Accept them freely, as they are bestowed,

And silence!

DAJA.

Silence! Yes. But who can doubt

That you are generosity itself?

And yet——

NATHAN.

I'm but a Jew! Daja, confess

That I have guessed your thought.

DAJA.

You know my thoughts

Far better.

NATHAN.

Well, be silent!

DAJA.

I am dumb.

And henceforth all the evil that may spring
From this, which I cannot avert, nor change,
Fall on your head.

NATHAN.

Let it all fall on me!

But where is Recha? What detains her thus?
Are you deceiving me? Can she have heard
That I am here?

DAJA.

Yourself must answer that.

Terror still palpitates through every nerve,
And fancy mingles fire with all her thoughts.
In sleep her soul's awake; but when awake,
Is wrapt in slumber. Less than mortal now,
And now far more than angel, she appears.

NATHAN.

Poor child! how frail a thing is human nature!

DAJA.

She lay this morning with her eyelids closed—
One would have thought her dead—when suddenly
She started from her couch, and cried, “Hark, hark!
Here come my father's camels, and I hear
His own sweet voice again” With that, her eyes
Once more she opened, and her arms' support
Withdrawn, her head droop'd softly on her pillow.
Quickly I hastened forth, and now behold,
I find you here. But marvel not at this.
Has not her every thought been long engrossed
With dreams of you and him?

NATHAN.

Of him! What him?

DAJA.

Of him who from the flames preserved her life.

NATHAN.

And who was he? Where is he? Name the man
Who saved my Recha?

DAJA.

A young Templar he!
Brought hither captive lately, and restored
To freedom by the Sultan.

NATHAN.

How? A Templar?
A captive, too, and pardoned by the Sultan?
Could not my Recha's life have been preserved
By some less wondrous miracle? O God!

DAJA.

But for this stranger's help, who risked afresh
The life so unexpectedly restored,
Recha had surely perished.

NATHAN.

Where is he?
Where is this noble youth? Where is he, Daja?
Oh, lead me to his feet! But you already
Have surely lavished on him all the wealth
That I had left behind; have given him all—
And promised more, much more.

DAJA.

How could we, Nathan?

NATHAN.

Why not?

DAJA.

He came we know not whence, he went
We know not whither. To the house a stranger,
And guided by his ear alone, he rushed
With fearless daring through the smoke and flame,

His mantle spread before him, till he reached
 The spot whence issued piercing screams for help.
 We thought him lost ; when, bursting through the fire,
 He stood before us, bearing in his arms
 Her almost lifeless form. Unmoved and cold,
 Deaf to our cries of thanks, he left his prize,
 Passed through the wondering crowd, and disappeared.

NATHAN.

But not forever, Daja, I would hope.

DAJA.

For some days after, 'neath yon spreading palms,
 Which wave above our blest Redeemer's grave,
 We saw him pacing thoughtful to and fro.
 With transport I approached to speak my thanks.
 I pleaded, begged, entreated that for once,
 Once only, he would see the grateful maid,
 Who longed to shed at her preserver's feet
 Her tears of gratitude.

NATHAN.

Well ?

DAJA.

All in vain !

Deaf to my warmest prayers, he poured on me
 Such bitter taunts——

NATHAN.

That you withdrew dismayed ?

DAJA.

Far otherwise. I sought to meet him daily,
 And daily heard his harsh insulting words.
 Much have I borne, and would have borne still more
 But lately he has ceased his lonely walk
 Beneath the spreading palms that shade the grave
 Of Him who rose from death ; and no man knows
 Where he may now be found. You seem surprised.

NATHAN.

I was considering how such a scene
Must work upon a mind like Recha's. Scorned
By one whom she can never cease to prize ;
Repelled by one who still attracts her to him.
Her head and heart at strife ! And long, full long
The contest may endure, without the power
To say if anger or regret shall triumph.
Should neither prove the victor, Fancy then
May mingle in the fray, and turn her brain.
Then Passion will assume fair Reason's garb,
And Reason act like Passion. Fatal change !
Such, doubtless, if I know my Recha well,
Must be her fate ; her mind is now unhinged.

DAJA.

But her illusions are so sweet and holy.

NATHAN.

But yet she raves !

DAJA.

The thought she clings to most,
Is that the Templar was no earthly form,
But her blest guardian angel, such as she
From childhood fancied hovering o'er her path ;
Who from his veiling cloud, amid the fire
Rushed to her aid in her preserver's form.
You smile incredulous. Who knows the truth ?
Permit her to indulge the fond deceit,
Which Christian, Jew, and Mussulman alike
Agree to own. The illusion is so sweet !

NATHAN.

I love it too. But go, good Daja ! go,
See what she does—if I can speak with her.
This guardian angel, wilful and untamed,
I'll then seek out—and if he still is pleased
To sojourn here a while with us—or still
Is pleased to play the knight so boorishly,
I'll doubtless find him out and bring him here.

DAJA.

You are too daring, Nathan.

NATHAN.

Trust me, Daja!

If fond delusion yield to sweeter truth—
For human beings ever to their kind
Are dearer after all than angels are—
You will not censure me, when you perceive
Our lov'd enthusiast's mind again restored.

DAJA.

You are so good, and so discerning, Nathan!
But see, behold! Yes, here she comes herself.

SCENE II.

RECHA, NATHAN, and DAJA.

RECHA.

And is it you! your very self, my father?
I thought you had but sent your voice before you,
Where are you lingering still? What mountains,
streams,
Or deserts now divide us? Here we are
Once more together, face to face, and yet
You do not hasten to embrace your Recha!
Poor Recha! she was almost burnt alive!
Yet she escaped—But do not, do not shudder.
It were a dreadful death to die by fire!

NATHAN.

My child! my darling child!

RECHA.

Your journey lay
Across the Tigris, Jordan, and Euphrates,
And many other rivers. Till that fire
I trembled for your safety, but since then
Methinks it were a blessed, happy thing
To die by water. But you are not drowned,

Nor am I burnt alive. We will rejoice,
And thank our God, who bore you on the wings
Of unseen angels o'er the treacherous streams,
And bade my angel bear me visibly
On his white pinion through the raging flames.

NATHAN (*aside*).

On his white pinion! Ha! I see; she means
The broad white fluttering mantle of the Templar.

RECHA.

Yes, visibly he bore me through the flames,
O'ershadowed by his wings. Thus, face to face,
I have beheld an angel—my own angel.

NATHAN.

Recha were worthy of so blest a sight.
And would not see in him a fairer form
Then he would see in her.

RECHA (*smiling*).

Whom would you flatter—
The angel, dearest father, or yourself?

NATHAN.

And yet methinks, dear Recha, if a man—
Just such as a man as Nature daily fashions—
Had rendered you this service, he had been
A very angel to you.

RECHA.

But he was
No angel of that stamp, but true and real.
And have I not full often heard you say
'Tis possible that angels may exist?
And how God still works miracles for those
Who love Him? And I love Him dearly, father.

NATHAN.

And He loves you; and 'tis for such as you
That He from all eternity has wrought
Such ceaseless wonders daily.

RECHA.

How I love
To hear you thus discourse!

NATHAN.

Well, though it sound
A thing but natural and commonplace
That you should by a Templar have been saved,
Is it the less a miracle for that?
The greatest of all miracles seems this:
That real wonders, genuine miracles,
Can seem and grow so commonplace to us.
Without this universal miracle,
Those others would scarce strike a thinking man
Awaking wonder but in children's minds,
Who love to stare at strange, unusual things,
And hunt for novelty.

DAJA.

Why will you thus
With airy subtleties perplex her mind,
Already overheated?

NATHAN.

Silence, Daja!
And was it then no miracle that Recha
Should be indebted for her life to one
Whom no small miracle preserved himself?
Who ever heard before, that Saladin
Pardoned a Templar? that a Templar asked it—
Hoped it—or for his ransom offered more
Than his own sword-belt, or at most his dagger?

RECHA.

That argues for me, father! All this proves
That my preserver was no Templar knight,
But only seemed so. If no captive Templar
Has e'er come hither but to meet his death,
And through Jerus'lem cannot wander free,
How could I find one, in the night, to save me?

NATHAN.

Ingenious, truly! Daja, you must speak.
Doubtless, you know still more about this knight;
For 'twas from you I learnt he was a prisoner.

DAJA.

'Tis but report indeed, but it is said
That Saladin gave freedom to the knight,
Moved by the likeness which his features bore
To a lost brother whom he dearly loved,
Though since his disappearance twenty years
Have now elapsed. He fell I know not where.
And e'en his very name's a mystery.
But the whole tale sounds so incredible,
It may be mere invention, pure romance.

NATHAN.

And why incredible? Would you reject
This story, Daja, as so oft is done,
To fix on something more incredible,
And credit that? Why should not Saladin,
To whom his race are all so dear, have loved
In early youth a brother now no more?
Since when have features ceased to be alike?
Is an impression lost because 'tis old?
Will the same cause not work a like effect?
What, then, is so incredible? My Daja,
This can to you be no great miracle;
Or does a wonder only claim belief
When it proceeds from you?

DAJA.

You mock me, Nathan!

NATHAN.

the very tone you use yourself.
dear Recha, your escape from death
no less a miracle
who turns the proud resolves of kings
ery, or guides them to their end
reads.

RECHA.

O father, father!

My error is not wilful, if I err.

NATHAN.

No, I have ever found you glad to learn.
 See, then, a forehead vaulted thus or thus,
 A nose of such a shape, and brows that shade
 The eye with straighter or with sharper curve,
 A spot, a mole, a wrinkle, or a line—
 A nothing—in an European's face,
 And you are saved in Asia from the flames!
 Is that no wonder, wonder-seeking folk?
 What need to summon angels to your aid?

DAJA.

But, Nathan, where's the harm,—if I may speak—
 In thinking one was rescued by an angel
 Rather than by a man? Are we not brought
 Thus nearer to the first mysterious cause
 Of our life's preservation?

NATHAN.

Pride, rank pride!

The iron pot would with a silver tongs
 Be lifted from the furnace, to believe
 Itself a silver vase! Well! where's the harm?
 And "where's the good?" I well may ask in turn.
 Your phrase, "It brings you nearer to the first
 Mysterious cause!" is nonsense—if 'tis not
 Rank blasphemy:—it works a certain harm.
 Attend to me. To him who saved your life,
 Whether he be an angel or a man,
 You both—and you especially—should pay
 Substantial services in just return.
 Is not this true? Now, what great services
 Have you the power to render to an angel!
 To sing his praise—to pour forth sighs and pra
 Dissolve in transports of devotion—
 Fast on his vigil, and distribute

Mere nothings ! for 'tis clear your neighbor gains
Far more than he by all this piety.
Not by your abstinence will he grow fat,
Nor by your alms will he be rendered rich ;
Nor by your transports is his glory raised,
Nor by your faith in him his power increased.
Say, is not all this true ? But to a man——

DAJA.

No doubt a man had furnished us with more
Occasions to be useful to himself ;
God knows how willingly we had seized them !
But he who saved her life demanded nought ;
He needed nothing—in himself complete
And self-sufficient—as the angels are ;

RECHA.

And when at iast he vanished——

NATHAN.

How was that ?
Did he then vanish ? 'Neath yon spreading palms
Has he not since been seen ? Or have you sought
Elsewhere to find him ?

DAJA.

No, in truth we've not.

NATHAN.

Not sought him, Daja ? Cold enthusiasts !
See now the harm : suppose your angel stretched
Upon a bed of sickness !

DAJA.

Sickness, what !

RECHA.

A chill creeps over me. I shudder, Daja !
My forehead, which till now was warm, becomes
As cold as very ice ; come, feel it, Daja.

NATHAN.

He is a Frank, unused to this hot clime,
Young and unpractised in his order's rules,
In fastings and in watchings quite untrained.

RECHA.

Sick ! sick !

DAJA.

Your father means 'twere possible.

NATHAN.

Friendless and penniless, he may be lying
Without the means to purchase aid.

RECHA.

Alas !

NATHAN.

Without advice, or hope, or sympathy,
May lie a prey to agony and death.

RECHA.

Where, where ?

NATHAN.

And yet for one he never knew—
Enough for him it was a human being—
He plunged amid the flames and—

DAJA.

Spare her, Nathan !

NATHAN.

He sought no more to know the being whom
He rescued thus—he shunned her very thanks—

RECHA.

Oh, spare her !

NATHAN.

Did not wish to see her more,
Unless to save her for the second time—
Enough for him that she was human !

DAJA.

Hold !

NATHAN.

He may have nothing to console him dying,
Save the remembrance of his deed.

DAJA.

You kill her

NATHAN.

And you kill him, or might have done at least.
'Tis med'cine that I give, not poison, Recha!
But be of better cheer: he lives—perhaps
He is not ill.

RECHA.

Indeed? not dead—not ill?

NATHAN.

Assuredly not dead—for God rewards
Good deeds done here below—rewards them here.
Then go, but ne'er forget how easier far
Devout enthusiasm is, than good deeds.
How soon our indolence contents itself
With pious raptures, ignorant, perhaps,
Of their ulterior end, that we may be
Exempted from the toil of doing good.

RECHA.

O father! leave your child no more alone.—
But may he not have only gone a journey?

NATHAN.

Perhaps. But who is yonder Mussulman,
Numbering with curious eye my laden camels?
Say, do you know him?

DAJA.

Surely your own Dervise.

NATHAN.

Who?

DAJA.

Your Dervise—your old chess companion.

NATHAN.

Al-Hafi do you mean? What!—that Al-Hafi?

DAJA.

No other; now the Sultan's treasurer.

NATHAN.

What, old Al-Hafi? Do you dream again?
And yet 'tis he himself—he's coming hither.
Quick, in with you! What am I now to hear?

SCENE III.

NATHAN *and the* DERVISE.

DERVISE.

Ay, lift your eyes and wonder.

NATHAN.

Is it you?

A Dervise so magnificent!

DERVISE.

Why not?

Can you make nothing of a Dervise, Nathan?

NATHAN.

Ay, surely, but I've still been wont to think
A Dervise—I would say a thorough Dervise—
Will ne'er let anything be made of him.

DERVISE.

Well, by the Prophet! though it may be true
That I'm no thorough Dervise, yet one must—

NATHAN.

Must, Hafi! You a Dervise! No man *must*—
And least of all a Dervise.

DERVISE.

Nay, he must,
When he is much implored and deems it right.

NATHAN.

Well spoken, Hafi! Let us now embrace.
You're still, I trust, my friend.

DERVISE.

Why not ask first
What has been made of me?

NATHAN.

I take my chance,
In spite of all that has been made of you.

DERVISE.

May I not be a servant of the state
Whose friendship is no longer good for you?

NATHAN.

If you but still possess your Dervise heart
I'll run the risk of that. The stately robe
Is but your cloak.

DERVISE.

And yet it claims some honor.
But, tell me truly, at a court of yours
What had been Hafi's rank?

NATHAN.

A Dervise only—
Or, if aught else—perhaps my cook.

DERVISE.

Why yes!
That I might thus unlearn my native trade,
Your cook! why not your butler? But the Sultan—
He knows me better—I'm his treasurer.

NATHAN.

What, you?—his treasurer?

DERVISE.

Mistake me not,
I only bear his lesser purse ; his father
Still manages the greater, and I am
The treasurer of his house.

NATHAN.

His house is large !

DERVISE.

Far larger than you think—all needy men
Are of his house.

NATHAN.

Yet Saladin is such

A foe to beggars !

DERVISE.

That he'd root them out,
Though he turned beggar in the enterprise.

NATHAN.

Bravo ! I meant as much.

DERVISE.

He's one already.
His treasury at sunset every day
Is worse than empty ; and although the tide
Flowed high at morn, 'tis ebb before the noon.

NATHAN.

Because it flows through channels such as we
Can neither stop nor fill.

DERVISE.

You hit the truth.

NATHAN.

I know it well.

DERVISE.

Ah ! 'tis an evil case
When kings are vultures amid carcasses,
But ten times worse when they're the carcasses
Amid the vultures.

NATHAN.

Dervise, 'tis not so.

DERVISE.

Is that your thought? But, come, what will you give
If I resign my office in your favor?

NATHAN.

What are your profits?

DERVISE.

Mine? not much; but you
Would soon grow rich; for when, as oft occurs,
The Sultan's treasury is at an ebb,
You might unlock your sluices, pour in gold,
And take in form of interest what you please.

NATHAN.

And interest on the interest of the interest.

DERVISE.

Of course.

NATHAN.

Until my capital becomes
All interest.

DERVISE.

Well! is not the offer tempting?
Farewell forever to our friendship then,
For I had counted on you.

NATHAN.

How so, Hafi?

DERVISE.

I thought you would have helped me to discharge
My task with credit; that I should have found
Your treasury ready. Ah! you shake your head.

NATHAN.

Let us explain. We must distinguish here.

To you, Dervise Al-Hafi, all I have
Is welcome ; but to you, the Defterdar
Of Saladin—to that Al-Hafi, who——

DERVISE.

I guessed as much. You ever are as good
As you are wise and prudent. Only wait.
The two Al-Hafis you distinguish thus
Will soon be parted. See, this robe of honor,
Which Saladin bestowed, before 'tis worn
To rags, and suited to a Dervise back,
Will in Jerusalem hang from a nail ;
Whilst I, upon the Ganges, scorching strand,
Barefoot amid my teachers will be found.

NATHAN.

That's like yourself !

DERVISE.

Or playing chess with them.

NATHAN.

Your greatest bliss !

DERVISE.

What do you think seduced me ?

Hopes of escaping future penury,
The pride of acting the rich man to beggars,
Would this have metamorphosed all at once
The richest beggar to a poor rich man ?

NATHAN.

No.

DERVISE.

But I yielded to a sillier whim.
For the first time I felt myself allured
By Saladin's kind-hearted, flattering words.

NATHAN.

And what were they ?

DERVISE.

He said a beggar's wants
Are known but to the poor alone ; that they

Alone can tell how want should be relieved.
 "Thy predecessor was too cold," he said,
 "Too harsh, and when he gave, 'twas with a frown.
 He searched each case too strictly, not content
 To find out want, he would explore the cause,
 And thus he measured out his niggard alms.
 Not so wilt thou bestow, and Saladin
 Will not appear so harshly kind in thee.
 Thou are not like that choked-up conduit-pipe,
 Whence in unequal streams the water flows,
 Which it receives in pure and copious stores.
 Al-Hafi thinks, Al-Hafi feels like me."
 The fowler whistled, and at last the quail
 Ran to his net. Cheated, and by a cheat?

NATHAN.

Hush, Dervise, hush!

DERVISE.

What! is it not a cheat
 To grind mankind by hundred thousands thus!
 Oppress them, plunder, butcher, and torment,
 And singly play the philanthropic part?
 Not cheating, to pretend to imitate
 That heavenly bounty, which in even course
 Descends alike on desert and on plain,
 On good and bad, in sunshine and in shower,
 And not possess the never empty hand
 Of the Most High! Not cheating—

NATHAN.

Dervise, cease!

DERVISE.

Nay, let me speak of cheating of my own,
 How now? Were it not cheating to seek out
 The bright side of impostures such as these,
 That under color of this brighter side
 I might take part in them? What say you now?

NATHAN.

Fly to your desert quickly. Amongst men
 I fear you'll soon unlearn to be a man.

DERVISE.

I fear so too. Farewell!

NATHAN.

What, so abrupt?

Stay, stay, Al-Hafi! Has the desert wings?
It will not fly away. Here, stay, Al-Hafi!
He's gone; he's gone. I would that I had asked
About that Templar; he must know the man.

SCENE IV.

DAJA (*rushing in*), NATHAN.

DAJA.

O Nathan, Nathan!

NATHAN.

Well! what now?

DAJA.

He's there.

He shows himself once more.

NATHAN.

Who, Daja—who?

DAJA.

He—he!

NATHAN.

Where cannot *he* be found? But *he*
You mean, is, I suppose, the only *He*.
That should not be, were he an angel's self.

DAJA.

Beneath the palms he wanders up and down,
And gathers dates.

NATHAN.

And eats them, I suppose,
Just as a Templar would.

DAJA.

You mock me, sir!

Her eager eye espied him long ago,
When scarcely seen amid the distant trees.
She watches him intently, and implores
That you will go to him without delay.
Then go, and from the window she will mark
Which way his paces tend. Go, go; make haste!

NATHAN.

What! thus, as I alighted from my camel?
Would that be seemly? But do you accost him;
Tell him of my return. I do not doubt
You'll find the honest man forbore our house
Because the host was absent. He'll accept
A father's invitation. Say I ask him,
I heartily request him.

DAJA.

All in vain!

In short, he will not visit any Jew.

NATHAN.

Then use your best endeavors to detain him,
Or, with unerring eye, observe his steps,
And mark him well. Go, I shall not be long.

(NATHAN enters the house. DAJA retires.)

SCENE V.

A Place of Palms. The **TEMPLAR**, *walking to and fro;*
a **FRIAR**, *following him at some distance, as if de-*
sirous of addressing him.

TEMPLAR.

It cannot be for pastime that this man
Follows me thus. See how he eyes my hands!
Good brother—or, perhaps I should say, father!

FRIAR.

No, brother ; a lay brother, at your service.

TEMPLAR.

Well, brother, then, if I had anything—
But truly I have nothing—

FRIAR.

Thanks the same !
God will reward your purpose thousandfold.
The will and not the deed perfects the giver.
Nor was I sent to follow you for alms.

TEMPLAR.

Sent ?

FRIAR.

From the convent.

TEMPLAR.

Where I even now
Was hoping to partake a pilgrim's fare.

FRIAR.

'Tis meal-time now, the tables all are full ;
But if it please you, we will turn together.

TEMPLAR.

No matter, though I have not tasted meat
For many days ; these dates, you see, are ripe.

FRIAR.

Be sparing of that fruit, sir, for too much
Is hurtful, sours the blood, and makes one sad.

TEMPLAR.

And what if sadness suits me ? Though, methinks,
'Twas not to give this warning that you came.

FRIAR.

Oh, no ! my mission was to question you—
To feel your pulse a little.

TEMPLAR.

And you tell
This tale yourself?

FRIAR.

Why not?

TEMPLAR.

An artful soul! (*aside*).
And has the convent many more like you?

FRIAR.

I know not. Mere obedience is my duty.

TEMPLAR.

And you obey without much questioning.

FRIAR.

Could it be rightly termed obedience else?

TEMPLAR.

The simple mind is ever in the right.—(*aside*).
But will you not inform me who it is
That wishes to know more of me? Not you,
I dare be sworn.

FRIAR.

Would such a wish become
Or profit me?

TEMPLAR.

Whom would it then become
Or profit to be thus inquisitive?

FRIAR.

Perhaps the Patriarch—'twas he that sent.

TEMPLAR.

The Patriarch? and does he know my badge
So ill?—The red cross on the snow-white robe.

FRIAR.

Why? I know that.

TEMPLAR.

Well, brother, hear me out.
I am a Templar—and a prisoner now.
Made captive with some others at Tebnin,
Whose fortress we had almost ta'en by storm
Just as the truce expired. Our hopes had been
To threaten Sidon next. Of twenty knights
Made prisoners there together, I alone
Was pardoned by command of Saladin.
The Patriarch now knows what he requires,
And more than he requires.

FRIAR.

And yet no more
Than he had learned already. He would ask
Why you, of all the captives doomed to die,
Alone were spared?

TEMPLAR.

Can I myself tell that?
Already with bare neck I had knelt down
Upon my mantle, to await the stroke,
When Saladin with steadfast eye surveys me.
Nearer he draws—he makes a sign—they raise me—
I am unbound—I would express my thanks—
I mark the tear-drop glisten in his eye—
We both stand mute—he turns and leaves the spot—
I stay. And now, how all this hangs together,
The Patriarch must explain.

FRIAR.

The Patriarch thinks
That Heaven preserved you for some mighty deed.

TEMPLAR.

Some mighty deed? To rescue from the flames
A Jewish maid! To lead to Sinai's mount
Bands of inquiring pilgrims—and the like!

FRIAR.

The time may come for more important tasks:

Perhaps the Patriarch has already planned
Some mighty business for you.

TEMPLAR.

Think you so?

Has he already given you a hint?

FRIAR.

Yes—but my task is first to sift a little,
To see if you are one to undertake——

TEMPLAR.

Well—sift away? (We'll see how this man sifts).

FRIAR.

The better course will be to name at once
What is the Patriarch's desire.

TEMPLAR.

It is——?

FRIAR.

To make you bearer of a letter.

TEMPLAR.

Me?

I am no carrier. Is that the office
More meritorious than to save from death
A Jewish maid?

FRIAR.

So, truly, it would seem,
The Patriarch says that this little note
Involves the general weal of Christendom,
And that to bear it to its destined hand,
Safely, will merit a peculiar crown
From Heaven—and of that crown, the Patriarch
Says none can worthier be than you.

TEMPLAR.

Than I!

FRIAR.

You have your liberty—can look around;

You understand how cities may be stormed,
 And how defended, says the Patriarch;
 You know the strength and weakness of the towers,
 And of the inner rampart lately reared
 By Saladin, and you could point out all
 To the Lord's champions fully.

TEMPLAR.

May I know
 Exactly the contents of this same letter?

FRIAR.

Of that I am not quite informed myself.
 'Tis to King Philip, and our Patriarch—
 I often wonder how that holy man,
 Whose every thought would seem absorbed by Heaven,
 Can stoop to earthly things, and how his mind
 Can be so deeply skilled in human lore—

TEMPLAR.

Well, then, your Patriarch—

FRIAR.

Exactly knows
 From secret sources, how, and with what force,
 And in what quarter, should the war break out,
 The foe and Saladin will take the field.

TEMPLAR.

Knows he so much?

FRIAR.

Ay, truly! and he longs
 To send the urgent tidings to King Philip,
 That he may better calculate if now
 The danger be so great, as to demand
 At every hazard that he should renew
 The truce so boldly broken by the Templars.

TEMPLAR.

The noble Patriarch! He seeks in me
 No common herald, but the meanest spy.

Therefore, good brother, tell your Patriarch,
That I am not—as far as you can sift—
The man to suit his ends. I hold myself
A captive still. I know a Templar's duty:
Ready to die, not live to play the spy.

FRIAR.

I thought as much. Nor can I censure you
For your resolve. The best has still to come.
Our Patriarch has learnt the very fort,
Its name, its strength, its site on Lebanon,
Wherein those countless treasures are concealed,
Wherewith the Sultan's prudent father pays
His troops, and all the heavy costs of war.
He knows that Saladin, from time to time,
Visits this fortress, by some secret way,
With but a few attendants.

TEMPLAR.

Well! what then?

FRIAR.

'Twould be an easy task, methinks, to seize
The Sultan thus defenceless—and to end him.
You shudder, knight! Two monks who fear the Lord
Are ready now to undertake the task,
And wait a leader.

TEMPLAR.

And the Patriarch
Has pitched on me to do this noble deed?

FRIAR.

He thinks King Philip might from Ptolemais
Give aid in the design.

TEMPLAR.

Has pitched on me!
On me!—Say, brother, have you never heard
The boundless debt I owe to Saladin?

FRIAR.

Truly I have.

TEMPLAR.

And yet——

FRIAR.

The Patriarch
Says that is very well ; but yet your order,
And vows to God——

TEMPLAR.

Change nothing ; they command
No villainy.

FRIAR.

No. But the Patriarch
Says what seems villainy to human eyes,
May not appear so in the sight of God.

TEMPLAR.

Brother, I owe my life to Saladin,
And his shall my hand take ?

FRIAR.

Oh, no !—But yet
The Patriarch maintains that Saladin,
Who is the common foe of Christendom,
Can never have a claim to be your friend.

TEMPLAR.

My friend ? forsooth ! because I will not be
A thankless wretch to him !

FRIAR.

'Tis so !—But yet
The Patriarch thinks gratitude is not
Before the eyes of God or man, a debt,
Unless, for our own sakes, some benefit
Has been conferred ; and, says the Patriarch,
It is affirmed the Sultan spared your life
Merely because your voice, your look, your air,
Awoke a recollection of his brother——

TEMPLAR.

He knows all this, and yet ?——Ah, were it true !

And, Saladin, could Nature form in me
 A single feature in thy brother's likeness,
 With nothing in my soul to answer it?
 Or what does correspond, shall I belie
 To please a Patriarch? No, surely Nature
 Could never lie so basely Nor, kind God,
 Couldst thou so contradict Thyself! Go, brother,
 And do not rouse my anger.

FRIAR.

I withdraw

More gladly than I came. And, pardon me:
 A monk's first duty, sir, is to obey.

SCENE VI.—*The TEMPLAR and DAJA.*

(She has been watching him from afar and now approaches.)

DAJA.

Methinks the monk left him in no good mood,
 But, spite of that, I must my errand risk.

TEMPLAR.

This hits exactly. As the proverb goes,
 Women and monks are ever Satan's tools,
 And I to-day am subject to them both.

DAJA.

Whom do I see? Thank God, our noble knight.
 Where have you been so long? Not ill, I hope?

TEMPLAR.

No.

DAJA.

In good health?

TEMPLAR.

Yes.

DAJA.

We have all been grieved
Lest something should have ailed you. Have you been
Upon a journey?

TEMPLAR.

Fairly guessed.

DAJA.

Since when
Have you returned to us?

TEMPLAR.

Since yesterday.

DAJA.

Our Recha's father, too, is just returned,
And now may Recha hope at last.

TEMPLAR.

For what?

DAJA.

For what she has so often asked in vain.
Her father pressingly invites you too.
He lately has arrived from Babylon
With twenty camels, bearing precious stones,
And stuffs and fragrant spices, which he sought
In India, Persia, Syria, and China.

TEMPLAR.

I am no merchant.

DAJA.

He is much esteemed
By all his nation—honored as a prince—
And yet to hear how he is named by all
Nathan *the Wise*, and not the *Rich*, seems strange.
It often makes me wonder.

TEMPLAR.

But to them
It may be, *wise* and *rich*—both mean the same.

DAJA.

It seems to me he should be called *the Good*,
So rich a store of goodness dwells in him.
Since he has learned the weighty debt he owes
For service done to Recha there is nought
He would withhold from you.

TEMPLAR.

Well ?

DAJA.

Try him, sir !

TEMPLAR.

What then ? A moment passes soon away.

DAJA.

I had not dwelt with him so many years
Were he less kind. I know a Christian's worth,
And it was never o'er my cradle sung
That I to Palestine should wend my way,
Following a husband's steps, to educate
A Jewish maid. My husband was a page,
A noble page, in Emperor Frederick's court——

TEMPLAR.

By birth a Swiss, who earned the sorry fame
Of drowning in one river with his lord.
Woman ! how often have you told this tale ?
When will you cease to persecute me thus ?

DAJA.

To persecute you !

TEMPLAR.

Ay, to persecute !

Now mark me. I will never see you more,
Hear you, nor be reminded of a deed
Performed at random. When I think of it,
I wonder somewhat, though I ne'er repent.
But hear me still. Should such a fatal chance
Again occur, you have yourself to blame
If I proceed more calmly, question first.
And let what's burning, burn.

DAJA.

Great God forbid !

TEMPLAR.

And now I have a favor to implore.
 Know me henceforth no more. Grant me this grace,
 And save me from her father ; for with me
 A Jew's a Jew ; a Swabian blunt am I.
 The image of the maid is now erased
 Out of my soul—if it was ever there.

DAJA.

But yours remains with her.

TEMPLAR.

Well, and what then ?

DAJA.

Who knows ? Men are not always what they seem.

TEMPLAR.

They're seldom better. (*Going.*)

DAJA.

Stay a little while.

What need of haste ?

TEMPLAR.

Woman ! forbear to make
 These palm-trees odious : I have loved their shade.

DAJA.

Then go, thou German bear ! Yet I must follow him.
 (*She follows him at a distance.*)

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*The Sultan's Palace.*SALADIN and SITTAH (*playing at chess*).

SITTAH.

Where are your thoughts? How ill you play, dear brother!

SALADIN.

Not well in truth—and yet I thought—

SITTAH.

Oh, yes!
You're playing well for me; take back that move.

SALADIN.

Why?

SITTAH.

Don't you see you leave your knight exposed?

SALADIN.

Ay, true!—then so.

SITTAH.

And now I take your pawn.

SALADIN.

That's true again, dear Sittah! Well, then, check!

SITTAH.

That will not help you—I protect my king,
And all is safe again.

SALADIN.

Well, out of this
Dilemma 'tis not easy to escape.
I cannot save the knight.

SITTAH.

I pass him by ;

I will not take him.

SALADIN.

Well, I owe you nothing ;
The place you gain is better than the piece.

SITTAH.

Perhaps.

SALADIN.

But reckon not without your host ;
You did not see that move.

SITTAH.

Not I, indeed ;
I did not think you weary of your queen.

SALADIN.

My queen !

SITTAH.

Well, well ! I see that I to-day
Shall win my thousand dinars and no more.

SALADIN.

Why so ?

SITTAH.

Why so ? Because designedly
You lose the game ! You vex me, Saladin !
I find no pleasure in a game like this.
And even when I lose, I come off well ;
For, to console me for the games you win,
You force me to accept a double stake.

SALADIN.

In that case, then, it may be by design
That you have sometimes lost. Is that the truth ?

SITTAH.

At least your generosity's to blame
That I improve so little in my play.

SALADIN.

But we forget the game ; come, finish it.

SITTAH.

Well, 'tis my move ; now, check to king and queen !

SALADIN.

Indeed ! I did not see the double check.
I lose my queen.

SITTAH.

Let's see ! Can it be helped ?

SALADIN.

No, take the queen—I have no luck with her.

SITTAH.

Only with her ?

SALADIN.

Remove her from the board.
I shall not miss her. Now I am right again.

SITTAH.

I know from lessons which yourself have taught
How courteously we should behave to queens.
(Offering to restore the piece.)

SALADIN.

Take her or not, I shall not move her more.

SITTAH.

Why need I take her ? Check, and check !

SALADIN.

Go on.

SITTAH.

Check, check, and check again !

SALADIN.

'Tis checkmate now.

SITTAH.

Hold!—no, not yet. You may advance the knight,
And ward the danger. But 'twill be the same.

SALADIN.

You are the winner, and Al-Hafi pays.
Let him be called, Sittah! You were not wrong.
My thoughts were wandering—were not in the game,
But who gives us so oft these shapeless bits
Of wood? which speak of naught—suggest no thought.
Was it with Iman that I've played—Well, well,
Ill-luck is ever wont to seek excuse.
Not the unmeaning squares or shapeless men
Have made me heedless; your dexterity,
Your calm, sharp eye, dear Sittah!—

SITTAH.

What of that?

Is that to blunt the sting of your defeat?
Enough—your thoughts were wandering more than
mine.

SALADIN.

Than yours? What subject could engage your thoughts?

SITTAH.

Far different cares than those which trouble you.
But, Saladin, say, when shall we again
Resume this pleasant pastime?

SALADIN.

Dearest Sittah,

This interruption will but whet our zeal.
Your thoughts are on the war: well, let it come—
'Twas not my arm that first unsheathed the sword;
I would have willingly prolonged the truce,
And willingly have knit a tender bond,
For Sittah's sake, with Richard's noble brother.

SITTAH.

How pleased you are, can you but praise your Richard.

SALADIN.

If Richard's sister had but been bestowed
Upon our brother Melek, what a house
Had then been ours ! the best, the happiest
The earth could boast. You know I am not slow
To praise myself : I'm worthy of my friends.
What men these unions would have given us !

SITTAH.

Did I not smile at once at your fine dreams ?
You do not, will not, know the Christian race.
It is their pride not to be men, but Christians.
The virtue which their founder felt and taught,
The charity He mingled with their creed,
Is valued, not because it is humane,
And good, and lovely, but for this alone,
That it was Christ who taught it, Christ who did it.
'Tis well for them He was so good a man,
Well that they take His goodness all on trust,
And in His virtues put their faith. His virtues !
'Tis not His virtues, but His name alone
They wish to thrust upon us—His mere name,
Which they desire should overspread the world,
Should swallow up the name of all good men,
And put the rest to shame. 'Tis for His name
Alone they care.

SALADIN.

Else, Sittah, as you say,
They would not have required that you and Melek
Should be called Christians, ere they suffered you
To feel for Christians the pure flame of love.

SITTAH.

As if from Christians, and from them alone,
That love can be expected, which the hand
Of our Creator gives to man and wife.

SALADIN.

Christians believe such vain absurdities,
That this may be among them. And yet, Sittah,
The Templars, not the Christians, are in this

To blame. 'Tis they alone who thwart my plans ;
 'Tis they who still hold Acca, pledged to us
 By treaty as the dower of Richard's sister.
 And, to maintain their order's interests,
 They use this cant—the nonsense of the monk.
 Scarce would they wait until the truce expired
 To fall upon us. But, go on, good sirs !
 Would that all else may thrive as well as this !

SITTAH.

Why, what else troubles you ? What other care
 Have you to struggle with ?

SALADIN.

That constant grief—
 I've been to Lebanon, and seen our father,
 He's full of care.

SITTAH.

Alas !

SALADIN.

He must give way.
 Straited on every side, no aid, no help,
 Nothing comes in.

SITTAH.

What ails him, Saladin ?

SALADIN.

The only thing that I am loth to name,
 Which, when I have it, so superfluous seems,
 And, when I have it not, so necessary.
 Where is Al-Hafi ? Have they gone for him ?
 Will no one go ? Oh, fatal, cursed money !
 Welcome, Al-Hafi ! You are come at last.

SCENE II.

The DERVISE AL-HAFI, SALADIN, and SITTAH.

AL-HAFI.

The gold from Egypt, I suppose, is come.
 Say, is it much ?

SALADIN.

What! have you heard of it?

AL-HAFI.

Not I. I thought I should receive it here.

SALADIN (*pacing thoughtfully to and fro*).

Sittah has won a thousand dinars, pay them.

AL-HAFI.

Pay without getting. That is worse than nothing!
And still to Sittah—once again for chess!
But let us see the board; how stands the game?

SITTAH.

You grudge me my good fortune?

AL-HAFI (*examining the board*).

Grudge you? When—

You know too well—

SITTAH (*making signs to him*).

Oh, hush! Al-Hafi, hush!

AL-HAFI (*still examining the board*).

Don't grudge it to yourself.

SITTAH.

Al-Hafi, hush!

AL-HAFI.

And were the white men yours?

You gave the check?

SITTAH.

'Tis well he does not hear.

AL-HAFI.

The move is his.

SITTAH (*approaching nearer*).

Then promise me that I shall have the money.

AL-HAFI (*still intent upon the board*).

You shall receive it as you've always done.

SITTAH.

How ! are you mad ?

AL-HAFI.

The game's not over yet.
You have not lost it, Saladin.

SALADIN (*paying no attention*).

Oh, yes ;

Pay down the money.

AL-HAFI.

Pay ! here stands the queen.

SALADIN (*still heedless*).

She's of no use ; she's lost.

SITTAH.

Do say that I

May send and fetch the gold.

AL-HAFI (*still studying the game*).

Oh, yes ! of course.

But though the queen be lost, you are not mate.

SALADIN (*dashing down the board*).

I say I am. I will be mate.

AL-HAFI.

If so,

Small pains, small gains, says I. So got, so spent.

SALADIN.

What is he muttering there ?

SITTAH (*to SALADIN, making a sign meanwhile to AL-*
HAFI).

You know him well.

He likes entreaties—loves to be implored.

Who knows if he be not a little jealous ?

SALADIN.

Well, not of thee—not of my sister, surely.

What do I hear ? Al-Hafi, are you jealous ?

AL-HAFI.

Perhaps I am. I wish I had her head,
Or that I were as good as she.

SITTAH.

My brother,
He always pays me fairly, and to-day
He'll do the same. Let him alone. Now go!
Al-Hafi! go! I'll have the money—

AL-HAFI.

No, not I.
I'll act this farce no more. He must know soon.

SALADIN.

Who? what?

SITTAH.

Al-Hafi! say, is this your promise?
Is't thus you keep your word?

AL-HAFI.

Could I foresee
That it would come to this?

SALADIN.

Well, tell me all.

SITTAH.

Al-Hafi! I implore you, be discreet.

SALADIN.

'Tis very strange; and what can Sittah have
So earnestly to sue for, from a stranger—
A Dervise—rather than from me, her brother?
Al-Hafi, I command you. Dervise, speak.

SITTAH.

Let not a trifle touch my brother nearer
Than is becoming, for you know that I
Have often won as much from you at chess.
But as I stand in little need of gold,
I've left the money in Al-Hafi's chest,

Which is not over full ; but never fear,
It is not my intention to bestow
My wealth on either of you.

AL-HAFI.

Were this all !

SITTAH.

Some more such trifles are perhaps unclaimed :
My own allowance, which you set apart
Has lain some months untouched.

AL-HAFI.

Nor is this all.

SALADIN.

Then tell the whole.

AL-HAFI.

Whilst we've been waiting for
The gold from Egypt, she——

SITTAH.

Nay, hear him not.

AL-HAFI.

Not only has had nothing,——

SALADIN.

Dearest sister !—

But also has been lending it to you ?

AL-HAFI.

Ay ! at her sole expense maintained your state.

SALADIN (*embracing her*).

So like my sister !

SITTAH.

Who but you, my brother,
Could make me rich enough to have the power ?

AL-HAFI.

And soon he'll make her once again as poor
As he is now.

SALADIN.

I poor ! her brother poor !
When had I more—when had I less than now ?
A cloak, a horse, a sabre, and my God !
What need I else ? and these ne'er can I lack.
And yet, Al-Hafi, I could scold you now.

SITTAH.

Nay, brother, do not scold. I would that I
Could thus also relieve our father's cares !

SALADIN.

Ah, now my joy has vanished all at once.
We can want nothing ; but he's destitute.
And whilst he wants, we all are poor indeed.
What shall I do ? From Egypt we can hope
For nothing—though God only knows the cause.
'Tis general peace around, and as for me,
I could live sparingly, reduce, retrench,
If none else suffered ; but 'twould not avail.
A cloak, a horse, a sword I ne'er can want.
As to my God, He is not to be bought.
He asks but little, only asks my heart.
I had relied, Al-Hafi, on your chest,
Upon the surplus there.

AL-HAFI.

A surplus there !
Say, should I not have been impaled or hanged,
If I had been detected hoarding up
A surplus ? Deficits I might have ventured.

SALADIN.

Well, but what next ? Could you have found out none
To borrow from, but Sittah ?

SITTAH.

And would I
Have borne it, had another been preferred ?
I claim that privilege. I am not yet
Quite beggared.

SALADIN.

No, not quite. Dear Sittah, this
Alone was wanting. But, Al-Hafi, go,
Inquire about, take where and what you can ;
Borrow on promise, contract, anyhow ;
But, mark me, not from those I have enriched.
'Twould seem as if I wished to have it back.
Go to the covetous. They gladliest lend.
They know how well their money thrives with me.

AL-HAFI.

I know of none.

SITTAH.

I recollect just now,
I heard, Al-Hafi, of your friend's return.

AL-HAFI (*starting*).

Friend ! friend of mine ! and who can that be, pray ?

SITTAH.

Your boasted Jew.

AL-HAFI.

A Jew ! and praised by me !

SITTAH.

On whom his God—I think I recollect
The very words you used, as touching him—
On whom his God, of all the choicest goods
Of earth, in full abundance, has bestowed
The greatest and the least.

AL-HAFI.

What could I mean

When I said so ?

SITTAH.

The least of good things—wealth.
The greatest—wisdom !

AL-HAFI.

How ! and of a Jew

Did I say that ?

SITTAH.

Ay, that you did—of Nathan.

AL-HAFI.

Oh, true! of Nathan—yes! He did not now
Occur to me. But he's returned at last,
Then do not doubt that he's well off. He's called
The Wise, the Rich, by all the Jewish folk.

SITTAH.

Now more than ever is he named the Rich.
The town resounds with news of costly stuffs
And priceless treasures he has brought with him.

AL-HAFI.

Is he the Rich once more? Then, do not fear,
He'll be the Wise again.

SITTAH.

What think you? Will
You visit him, Al-Hafi?

AL-HAFI.

What, to borrow?
You know him, surely! Think you he will lend?
His very wisdom lies in this—that he
Will lend to no one.

SITTAH.

Formerly you gave
A picture very different of him.

AL-HAFI.

In case of need he'll lend you merchandise;
But money—money—never! He's a Jew,
Who has not many equals 'mongst his tribe.
He's wise, knows how to live, can play at chess,
Excels in evil, too, as well as good.
Rely not on him. To the poor, indeed,
He vies with Saladin himself in gifts;
And if not quite so much, he gives as freely,
To Jew, and Christian, and Mahometan—
To all alike.

SITTAH.

And such a man as this—

SALADIN.

How comes it, then, I never heard of him ?

SITTAH.

Can he refuse to lend to Saladin,
Who wants for others—never for himself.

AL-HAFI.

Ay, there peeps out the Jew—the vulgar Jew :
Believe me, he is jealous, envious
Of generosity. It seems as though
To earn God's favor were his special mission.
And that he may possess wherewith to give,
He never lends. The law he serves, commands
That he show mercy, but not complaisance.
Thus him has mercy made the rudest churl
In all the world. 'Tis true I have not been
This long time past on friendly terms with him ;
But do not think that I would do him wrong,
He's good in all things else, but not in that ;
Therefore I'll go and knock at other doors.
I recollect this instant an old Moor,
Who's rich and covetous : I'll go to him. (*Exit.*)

SITTAH.

Why in such haste, Al-Hafi ?

SALADIN.

Let him go.

SCENE III.

SITTAH, SALADIN.

SITTAH.

He speeds away, as though he would escape.
Why so ? Is he indeed himself deceived,
Or would he now mislead me ?

SALADIN.

Can I guess?

I scarcely know the man of whom you speak,
And, for the first time, hear to-day of him.

SITTAH.

Can it be possible you know him not
Who, it is said, has visited the tombs
Of Solomon and David; knows the spell
To ope their marble lids, and thence obtain
The boundless stores that claim no lesser source.

SALADIN.

Were this man's wealth by miracle procured,
'Tis not at Solomon's or David's tomb
That it is found. Mere mortal fools lie there.

SITTAH.

Or knaves!—But still his source of opulence
Is more productive, more exhaustless than
A cave of Mammon.

SALADIN.

For he trades, I'm told.

SITTAH.

His caravans through every desert toil,
His laden camels throng the public roads,
His ships in every harbor furl their sails.
Al-Hafi long ago has told me this,
Adding, with pride, how Nathan gives away,
What he esteems it noble to have earned
By patient industry, for others' wants;
How free from bias is his lofty soul,
His heart to every virtue how unlocked,
To every lovely feeling how allied!

SALADIN.

And yet Al-Hafi spoke with coldness of him.

SITTAH.

Not coldness, but unwillingness, as if
He deemed it dangerous to praise too much,

Yet knew not how to blame without a cause.
 Or can it be, in truth, that e'en the best
 Amongst a tribe can never quite escape
 The foibles of their race, and that, in fact,
 Al-Hafi has in this to blush for Nathan?
 But come what may, let him be Jew or not,
 If he be rich, that is enough for me.

SALADIN.

You would not, sister, take his wealth by force?

SITTAH.

By force? What mean you? Fire and sword? Oh, no!
 What force is necessary with the weak
 But their own weakness? Come awhile with me,
 Into my harem. I have bought a songstress
 You have not heard—she came but yesterday.
 Meanwhile I'll think upon a subtle plan
 For this same Nathan. Follow, Saladin!

SCENE IV.

*The Place of Palms, near NATHAN'S house, from which
 RECHA and NATHAN are coming; DAJA, meeting
 them.*

RECHA.

Dear father! you have been so slow, that you
 Will scarceiy meet him now.

NATHAN.

Well, well, my child;
 If not beneath the palms, be sure that we
 Shall meet him somewhere else. Be satisfied.
 Is not that Daja whom I see approaching?

RECHA.

She certainly has lost him.

NATHAN.

Wherefore so?

RECHA.

Her pace were quicker else.

NATHAN.

She has not seen us.

RECHA.

There, now she spies us.

NATHAN.

And her speed redoubles.

Recha, be calm !

RECHA.

What ! would you have your **child**

Be cold and unconcerned about his fate
To whom her life is due?—a life to her
But dear because she owed it first to you.

NATHAN.

I would not wish you other than you are,
E'en if I knew that in your secret soul
Another and a different feeling throbs.

RECHA.

What means my father ?

NATHAN.

Do you ask of me—
So tremblingly of me ? What passes now
Within your soul is innocence and nature.
Nay, fear not, for it gives me no alarm.
But promise, if the heart shall ever speak
A plainer language, you will not conceal
One single of your wishes from my love.

RECHA.

Oh, the bare thought that I should ever wish
To hide them from my father, makes me shudder.

NATHAN.

Recha, enough of this. Now, what says Daja ?

DAJA.

He's still beneath the palms, and presently
He'll reach yon wall. See ! here he comes at last.

RECHA.

He seems irresolute which way to turn,
To left or right !

DAJA.

His custom is to seek
The convent walls, so he will pass this way.
What will you wager ? Yes, he comes to us.

RECHA.

Right ! Did you speak to him ? How did he look ?

DAJA.

As usual.

NATHAN.

Do not let him see you here.
Stand farther back, or to the house retire.

RECHA.

Just one look more. Ah ! the trees hide him now.

DAJA.

Come, come away ! Recha, your father's right.
Should he observe us he'll retire at once.

RECHA.

Alas ! the trees——

NATHAN.

Now he emerges from them.
He can't but see you. Hence ! I beg of you.

DAJA.

Come, Recha, come ! I know a window whence
We may observe him better.

RECHA.

Come, then, come.

(They both retire.)

SCENE V.

NATHAN (*who is presently joined by the* TEMPLAR).

NATHAN.

I almost shrink from meeting this strange fellow—
Recoil from his rough virtue! That one man
Should ever make another feel confused!
But see, he comes! he seems a noble youth;
Looks like a man. I like his daring eye,
His honest gait. Although the shell is bitter,
The kernel may not be so. I have seen
One like him somewhere. Pardon, noble Frank——

TEMPLAR.

What would you?

NATHAN.

Pardon me——

TEMPLAR.

What would you, Jew?

NATHAN.

The privilege of speaking to you.

TEMPLAR.

Well!

How can I help it? Quick, then—what's your wish?

NATHAN.

Patience! nor pass with such contempt and pride
One who must be your debtor evermore.

TEMPLAR.

How so? I almost guess. No; are you then——

NATHAN.

My name is Nathan, father to the maid
Your generous courage rescued from the flames.
I come to——

TEMPLAR.

If you come to render thanks,
Spare them. I have already been compelled
To bear too many thanks for this small act.
Besides, you owe me nothing. Could I know
The maiden was your daughter? I was bound—
It is a Templar's duty—to assist
All who need succor; and my life just then
Was a mere burden. It was a relief
To risk it for another, even though
The task were to preserve a Jewess' life.

NATHAN.

Great—great, yet horrible—I understand
The turn. The modest greatness will assume
The hideous mask to ward off gratitude.
But though he may disdain our proffer'd thanks,
Is there no other tribute we can pay?
Sir Knight! if you were not a stranger here,
And not a pris'ner, I were not so bold.
But, come, what service can I render you?

TEMPLAR.

You!—nothing.

NATHAN.

I am rich.

TEMPLAR.

The richer Jew
Was ne'er in my esteem the better Jew.

NATHAN.

Is that a reason why you should not use
The better part of him—his wealth?

TEMPLAR.

Well, well,

I'll not refuse it wholly, for the sake
Of my poor mantle: when it is well worn,
And spite of darning will not hold together,
I'll come and borrow cloth or gold of you,

To make a new one. Nay, Sir, do not start ;
The danger is not pressing—'tis not yet
Quite worthless ; it is sound, and strong, and good.
Save in one corner, where an ugly spot
Is singed, and that is from a burn it got
When I bore off your daughter from the fire.

NATHAN (*taking hold of the mantle*).

'Tis strange, indeed, that such a spot as this
Should bear far better witness to the man
Than his own lips. This spot ! Oh, I could kiss it.
Your pardon, Sir, in truth, I meant it not !

TEMPLAR.

What ?

NATHAN.

'Twas a tear that fell.

TEMPLAR.

Well, 'tis no matter.

'Tis not the first. (This Jew doth puzzle me.)

NATHAN.

Would you but send this mantle to my daughter !

TEMPLAR.

Why ?

NATHAN.

That she, too, may press it to her lips ;
For at her benefactor's feet to fall
She now may hope in vain.

TEMPLAR.

But, Jew, your name ?

'Tis Nathan, is it not ? You choose your words
With skill—I am confused. I did not think—

NATHAN.

Feign, Templar, and dissemble as you may,
I see the truth. I see your generous heart,
Too honest and too good to be polite.

A grateful girl, all feeling, and her maid
 Swift to obey—a father far from home,
 You valued her fair fame, and would not see her.
 You scorned to tempt lest you should victor prove.
 For this too I must tender you my thanks.

TEMPLAR.

You know at least how Templars *ought* to feel.

NATHAN.

Why Templars only? and why *ought* to feel?
 Is it because your rules and vows enjoin
 These duties to *your order*? Sir, I know
 How good men all should feel, and know as well
 That every country can produce good men.

TEMPLAR.

You'll make distinctions?

NATHAN.

Yes, in color, form,
 And dress, perhaps.

TEMPLAR.

Ay, and in number too—
 Here more—there less.

NATHAN.

The difference is not much.
 Great men, like trees, have ever need of room;
 Too many set together only serve
 To crush each other's boughs. The middling sort,
 Like us, are found in numbers, they abound;
 Only let not one scar and bruise the other,
 Let not the gnarl be angry with the stump,
 Let not the upper branch alone pretend
 Not to have started from the common earth.

TEMPLAR.

Well said. And yet what nation was the first
 To scatter discord 'mongst their fellow-men?

To claim the title of "the chosen people?"
 How now if I were not to hate them, but
 To scorn this upstart nation, for their pride?
 That pride which it bequeathed to Mussulman
 And Christian, as if God were theirs alone.
 You start to hear a Christian and a Templar
 Talk thus. But when and where has all this rage,
 This pious rage, to win the better God,
 And force this better God on all the world,
 Shown itself more, or in a blacker form,
 Than here, and now? Who here, who now retains
 The blinding scales upon his eyes—and yet
 Let him be blind who will!—forget my words,
 And leave me (*is going*).

NATHAN.

Templar! you but little know
 How closer henceforth I shall cling to you.
 We must, we must be friends. Despise my people—
 We did not choose a nation for ourselves.
 Are we our nation's? What then is a nation?
 Were Jews or Christians such, ere they were men?
 Ah! would that I had found in you one man
 To whom it were enough to be a man.

TEMPLAR.

Thou hast so, Nathan! Yes, by Heaven, thou hast.
 Thy hand. I blush to have mistaken thee.

NATHAN.

Now I feel proud. 'Tis only common souls
 In whom we seldom err.

TEMPLAR.

Uncommon ones
 We do not oft forget! Nathan, we must,
 We must be friends.

NATHAN.

We are so. And my Recha
 Will now rejoice. How bright the prospect grows
 That dawns upon me! If you did but know her.

TEMPLAR.

I grow impatient, Nathan. But who now
Comes from your house? Methinks it is your Daja.

NATHAN.

Yes, and her look how full of care ! God grant—

TEMPLAR.

That nothing may have chanced to our Recha !

SCENE VI.

DAJA (*rushing in*).

DAJA.

Nathan, dear Nathan !

NATHAN.

Well.

DAJA.

Forgive me, Knight,
That I must interrupt you.

NATHAN.

What has happened ?

DAJA.

The Sultan sends for you—commands you straight
To speak with him. Protect us, Heaven ! the Sultan !

NATHAN.

The Sultan sends for me ! He would inspect
The goods—the precious wares that I have brought
From Persia. Say there's nothing yet unpacked.

DAJA.

No, no ; 'tis not to look at anything ;
He wants to speak to you in person, Nathan,
And orders you to come at once.

NATHAN.

I go.

Daja, return.

DAJA.

Knight, take it not amiss.

We were alarmed for what the Sultan might
Require of Nathan.

NATHAN.

That I soon shall know. (*Exit Daja.*)

SCENE VII.

NATHAN, *the* TEMPLAR.

Are you then not acquainted with him yet ?

NATHAN.

Who, Saladin ? Not yet. I've neither shunned
Nor sought to see him. And the public voice
Proclaims his fame so loud, that I could wish
Rather to take its language upon trust,
Than sift the truth. And yet if it be true
That he has spared your life—

TEMPLAR.

Yes, so it is.

The life I live, he gave.

NATHAN.

Then he bestows

A double, treble life on me. And thus
He flings a bond around me, which secures
My duty to his service ; and henceforth
I burn to know his wishes. Now, for all
I am prepared ; and further, will confess
'Tis for your sake alone that I am thus.

TEMPLAR.

Often I've sought to meet him, but as yet
Have found no means to render him my thanks.

The impress which his mind received of me
 Was transient, and ere now has disappeared.
 Who knows if he may still remember me?
 And yet once more at least he must recall
 Me to his thoughts—to fix my future lot!
 'Tis not enough that by his gracious will
 I still have of life; I've yet to learn
 According to whose will I have to live.

NATHAN.

Therefore 'twere well I did not tarry now.
 Perchance some happy word may give excuse
 To speak of you. Now, pardon me, farewell!
 I must away. When shall we meet again?

TEMPLAR.

Whenever 'tis permitted.

NATHAN.

When you will.

TEMPLAR.

To-day, then.

NATHAN.

And your name?

TEMPLAR.

My name was—is—

Conrad of Stauffen.

NATHAN.

Conrad of Stauffen! Stauffen!

TEMPLAR.

What is there in my name to wonder at?

NATHAN.

There are more races of that name, no doubt.

TEMPLAR.

Yes, many of the name were here—rot here,
 My uncle even—I should say my father.
 But wherefore is your eye so fixed on me?

NATHAN.

I know not ; but I love to look on you.

TEMPLAR.

Therefore I take my leave. The searching eye
Will oft discover more than it desires.
I fear it, Nathan ; so, farewell. Let time,
Not curious prying, make us better known. *(Exit.)*

NATHAN *(looking after him with astonishment)*.

“The searching eye will oft discover more
Than it desires.” As if he read my soul !
That, too, may chance to be. ’Tis not alone .
His walk, his stature, but his very voice !
Leonard so bore himself—was even wont
To carry thus his sword upon his arm,
And thus to shade his eyebrow with his hand,
As if to hide the fire that fill’d his look.
So deeply graven images may seem
At times to lie asleep within the soul,
When all at once a single word—a tone—
Calls them to life again. Of Stauffen—right—
Filnek and Stauffen—I will soon know more.
But first to Saladin. Ha ! Daja here—
And on the watch ! Come nearer, Daja, come.

SCENE VIII.

DAJA, NATHAN.

NATHAN.

Well, both of you have something more at heart
Than to know what the Sultan wants with me.

DAJA.

And you can hardly blame her for it, sir.
You were beginning to converse with him
More trustingly yourself, when suddenly
The Sultan’s message drove us from the window.

NATHAN.

Go tell her, Daja, she may soon expect
A visit from the Templar.

DAJA.

What! indeed!

NATHAN.

I think I may rely upon you, Daja.
Be on your guard, I beg, you'll not repent it.
Your conscience shall at length be satisfied,
But do not mar my plans. Inquire, explain,
But with reserve, with fitting modesty.

DAJA.

No need for such advice. I go, I go.
And you must follow; for, see, Hafi comes—
The Sultan sends a second messenger.

SCENE IX.

NATHAN, AL-HAFI.

AL-HAFI.

Ha! are you there? I have been seeking you.

NATHAN.

Why in such haste? What can he want with me?

AL-HAFI.

Who?

NATHAN.

Saladin. But I am coming quickly.

AL-HAFI.

To whom? To Saladin?

NATHAN.

Has he not sent you?

AL-HAFI.

Me? no—but has he sent already?

NATHAN.

Yes.

AL-HAFI.

Then it is so.

NATHAN.

What's so ?

AL-HAFI.

That—— I'm not guilty,
God knows, I'm not to blame ; 'tis not my fault.
I've done my best—belied, and slandered you—
To save you from it.

NATHAN.

Save me ? and from what ?

Be plain.

AL-HAFI.

From being made his Defterdar.
I pity you—I cannot stay to see it.
I fly this hour—you know the road I take.
Speak, then, if I can serve you ; but your wants
Must suit a wretch that's wholly destitute.
Quick, what's your pleasure ?

NATHAN.

Recollect yourself—
Your words are mystery. I know of nothing.
What do you mean ?

AL-HAFI.

You'll take your money-bags ?

NATHAN.

My money-bags !

AL-HAFI.

Ay, bring your treasures forth—
The treasures you must shower on Saladin.

NATHAN.

And is that all ?

AL-HAFI.

Ah! shall I witness it,
How, day by day, he'll scoop and pare you down,
Till nothing but a hollow, empty shell,
A husk as light as film, is left behind.
Nathan, you've yet to learn how spendthrift waste
From prudent bounty's never empty stores
Borrows and borrows, till there's not a crumb
Left to keep rats from starving. Do not think
That he who wants your gold will heed advice.
When has the Sultan listened to advice?
Hear what befel me with him.

NATHAN.

Well—go on.

AL-HAFI.

He played just now at chess with Sittah. She
Is a keen player. I drew near and watched.
The game which Saladin supposed was lost,
Stood yet upon the board. He had given in,
I marked, and cried, "The game's not lost at all."

NATHAN.

Oh! what a grand discovery for you.

AL-HAFI.

He needed only to remove his king
Behind the castle—and the check was saved.
Could I but show you—

NATHAN.

I believe it all!

AL-HAFI.

Then with the castle free, he must have won.
I saw it, and I called him to the board.
What do you think he did?

NATHAN.

He doubted you.

AL-HAFI.

Not only that—he would not hear a word—
And with contempt he overthrew the board.

NATHAN.

Indeed!

AL-HAFI.

He said he chose it—would be mate.
Is that to play the game?

NATHAN.

Most surely not.

'Twas rather playing with the game.

AL-HAFI.

And yet

The stakes were high.

NATHAN

A trifle to the Sultan!

Money is nought to him. It is not that
Which galls, but not to hear Al-Hafi out—
Not to admire his comprehensive glance,
His eagle eye—'tis that demands revenge.
Say, am I right?

AL-HAFI.

I only tell this tale

That you may know how much his head is worth.
But I am weary of him. All the day
I am running round to every wretched Moor
To borrow money for him—I who ne'er
Ask for myself, am now obliged to sue
For others—and, according to my creed,
To borrow is to beg, as, when you lend
Your money upon usury, you steal.
Among my Ghebers on the Ganges' shores
I shall need neither; there I shall not be
The tool or pimp of any; there alone
Upon the Ganges honest men are found.
You, Nathan, you alone of all I see
Are worthy on the Ganges' banks to live.

Then come with me ; leave him the wretched gold
That he would strip you of—'tis all he wants.
Little by little he will ruin you ;
'Tis better to be quit of all at once ;
Come, then, and I'll provide you with a staff.

NATHAN.

Nay, that resource will still remain for us
As a last refuge. But I'll think of it.

AL-HAFI.

Nay, ponder not upon a thing like this.

NATHAN.

Then stay till I have seen the Sultan. Stay
Till I have bid farewell.

AL-HAFI.

The man who stays
To hunt for motives, to search reasons out,
Who cannot boldly and at once resolve
To live a free man's life, must be the slave
Of others till his death. But as you please.
Farewell ! my path is here, and yours is there !

NATHAN.

But stay, Al-Hafi ! till you have arranged
The state accounts.

AL-HAFI.

Pah ! Nathan, there's no need ;
The balance in the chest is quickly told,
And my account, Sittah, or you, will vouch.
Farewell ! (*Exit.*)

NATHAN (*looking after him*).

Yes, I will vouch it, honest, wild—
How shall I call him ? Ah ! the real beggar
Is, after all, the only real king. (*Exit at opposite side.*)

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*A room in NATHAN'S house.*

RECHA, DAJA,

RECHA.

Well, Daja, did my father really say
“That I might instantly expect him here?”
That surely meant that he would come at once,
And yet how many minutes have rolled by!
But I'll not dwell upon the moments gone,
I'll only live in those that are to come,
That one which brings him here must come in time.

DAJA.

But for the Sultan's ill-timed messenger:
Nathan had brought him hither.

RECHA.

When he comes—
Oh! when this dearest of my inmost hopes
Shall be fulfilled—what then—what then?

DAJA.

What then?
Why then I trust the wish most dear to me
Will also be fulfilled.

RECHA.

And in its place
What wish shall take possession of my breast?
Which now forgets to heave, unless it pant
With some fond wish? Will nothing come? I shudder!

DAJA.

My wish shall then supplant the one fulfilled,
My wish to see you borne to Europe's shores
By hands well worthy of you.

RECHA.

You do err.

The very thought which makes you form this wish
 Forbids it to be mine. Your native land
 Attracts you, and has mine no charm for me?
 Shall a remembrance of your cherished home,
 Your absent kindred and your dearest friends,
 Which years and distance have not yet effaced,
 Rule in your soul with softer, mightier sway
 Than what I know, and hear, and feel of mine.

DAJA.

'Tis vain to struggle, for the ways of Heaven
 Are still the ways of Heaven. And who can say
 If he who saved your life may not be doomed,
 Through his God's arm, for whom he nobly fights,
 To lead you to that people—to that land
 To which you should belong by right of birth?

RECHA.

What are you saying, Daja? dearest Daja!
 Indeed you have some strange and curious thoughts.
 "His God!" whose God? To whom can God belong,
 And how can God belong to any man,
 Or need a human arm to fight his battles?
 And who, among the scattered clods of earth
 Can say for which of them himself was born,
 Unless for that on which he was produced?
 If Nathan heard thee! How has Nathan sinned,
 That Daja seeks to paint my happiness
 So far removed from his? What has he done,
 That thus amongst the seeds of reason, which
 He sowed unmixed and pure within my soul,
 The hand of Daja must for ever seek
 To plant the weeds, or flowers of her own land?
 He has no wish to see upon this soil
 Such rank luxuriant blossoms. I myself
 Must own I faint beneath the sour-sick odor;
 Your head is stronger and is used to it.
 I find no fault with those of stronger nerves

Who can support it—mine, alas ! give way.
Your angel too, how near befool'd was I
Through him ; I blush whene'er I see my father.

DAJA.

As if, dear Recha, you alone were wise.
Folly ! If I might speak—

RECHA.

And may you not ?
Have I not listened gladly to your tales
About the valiant heroes of your faith ?
Have I not freely on their deeds bestowed
My admiration—to their sufferings given
The tribute of my tears ? Their faith, 'tis true,
Has never seemed to me their noblest boast,
But, therefore, Daja, I have only learnt
To find more consolation in the thought
That our devotion to the God of all
Depends not on our notions of that God.
My father has so often taught me this—
You have so often to this point agreed,
How can it be that you wish now alone
To undermine what you have built together ?
But this is no discourse with which to wait
The friend whom we expect—and yet for me
'Tis of some moment whether he— But hark !
Hark ! Some one comes this way.—If it were he !

SCENE II.

THE TEMPLAR, DAJA, RECHA.

(A servant ushers in the TEMPLAR.)

This way, Sir Knight !—

(RECHA starts, composes herself, and is about to fall at
his feet.)

'Tis he ! my rescuer. Ah !

TEMPLAR.

'Twas only to avoid this scene that I
So long postponed my visit.

RECHA.

At the feet

Of this proud man, I will thank God alone,
 And not the man. He does not want my thanks—
 As little as the bucket does which proved
 Itself so useful at the fire, and let
 Itself be filled and emptied; so this man,
 He too was thrust by chance amid the flames;
 I dropped by chance into his open arms,
 By chance remained there, like a fluttering spark
 Upon his mantle—till—I know not what
 Expelled us from the flames. What room is here
 For thanks?—In Europe wine excites the men
 To greater deeds—The Templar knows his duty,
 Performs his task, as well-trained spaniels do,
 Who fetch alike from water and from flames.

TEMPLAR (*who has been surveying her with surprise and
 uneasiness.*)

O Daja, Daja! if in hasty hours
 Of care and grief, this unchecked tongue of mine
 Betrayed me into rudeness, why convey
 To her each idle word that leaves my lips?
 This is indeed too galling a revenge!
 Yet, if henceforth, you will interpret better—

DAJA.

I question if these little stings. Sir Knight,
 Were so shot forth as to have done you wrong.

RECHA.

How! you had cares, and were more covetous
 Of them than of your life.

TEMPLAR.

Thou best of beings,

How is my soul with eye and ear at strife?
 No, 'twas not she I rescued from the fire,
 For who could know her and forbear the deed?
 In truth, disguised by terror—
 (*He gazes on her as if entranced.*)

RECHA.

But to me
You still appear the same as then you seemed.
(*A pause, till she resumes in order to interrupt his
reverie.*)

Tell me, Sir Knight, where have you been so long?
And—I might almost ask—where are you now?

TEMPLAR.

I am where I, perhaps, ought not to be.

RECHA.

And been, perhaps, where you should not have been.
That is not well.

TEMPLAR.

I have been up the mountain—
What is the name?—ay! Sinai!

RECHA.

I am glad;
For, doubtless, you can tell me if 'tis true—

TEMPLAR.

If what is true? If holy people show
The spot where Moses stood before his God?

RECHA.

Oh no; not that. Wherever Moses stood
It was before his God. I know enough
About such things already. Is it true—
I wish to learn from you who have been there—
If it is not by far less difficult
To climb than to descend the holy mount?
For with all other mountains that I know,
'Tis quite the contrary. You turn away!
Why do you turn, Sir Knight? Nay, look at me.

TEMPLAR.

I wish to hear you rather.

RECHA.

I perceive,
Because you do not wish that I should see
You smile at my simplicity. You smile
That I have not some more important thing
To ask about the holy hill of hills.
Is it so?

TEMPLAR.

Must I meet those eyes again?
And now you cast them down, and check your smile.
How can I in those changeful features read
What I so plainly hear—the truth your words
So audibly declare, and yet would hide?
How truly did your father say to me,
“If you but knew her!”

RECHA.

Who said that to you?

TEMPLAR.

Your father, and of you he spoke the word.

DAJA.

Have I not said it to you many times?

TEMPLAR.

Where is your father now? with Saladin?

RECHA.

Doubtless he is.

TEMPLAR.

Still there! Oh, I forget.
He cannot still be there. He waits for me,
As he appointed, near the cloister gate.
Forgive me, I must go in quest of him.

DAJA.

I will do that. Wait here, I'll bring him straight.

TEMPLAR.

O no, O no! He is expecting me.

Besides, you cannot tell what may have chanced.
 'Tis not unlikely he may be engaged
 With Saladin—you do not know the Sultan—
 In some unpleasant—— Danger may ensue
 If I delay.

RECHA.

Danger ! for whom ? for what ?

TEMPLAR.

Danger for me—for you—for him ! unless
 I go at once.

(*Exit.*)

SCENE III.

RECHA, DAJA.

RECHA.

What is the matter, Daja ?
 So quick ! what ails him—makes him fly from hence ?

DAJA.

Let him alone. I think it no bad sign.

RECHA.

Sign ! and of what ?

DAJA.

That something vexes him.
 It boils, but it must not boil over. Go,
 'Tis your turn now.

RECHA.

My turn. You have become
 Incomprehensible to me—like him.

DAJA.

Now you may pay him back with interest
 All the unrest he once occasioned you.
 But be not too vindictive—too severe.

RECHA.

Well, Daja, you must know your meaning best.

DAJA.

And are you then already calm once more ?

RECHA.

In truth I am.

DAJA.

Confess at least, dear Recha,
That all this restlessness has brought you pleasure,
And that you have to thank his want of ease
For all the ease that you yourself enjoy.

RECHA.

I know not that, but I must still confess
That to myself it seems a mystery
How in this bosom, such a pleasing calm
Can suddenly succeed so rude a storm.
His countenance, his speech, his manner have——

DAJA.

By this time satisfied you.

RECHA.

No, not that.

DAJA.

Well, satisfied your more impatient want.

RECHA.

Well, well, if you must have it so.

DAJA.

Not I !

RECHA.

To me he must be ever dear. To me
He must remain more dear than life, **although**
My pulse no longer flutters at his name.
My heart no longer, when I think of him,
Beats with a fuller throb. What have I said ?
Come, Daja, to the window once again
Which overlooks the palms.

DAJA.

I see 'tis not
Yet satisfied, that more impatient want.

RECHA.

Now, I shall see the palm-trees once again ;
Not him alone amidst them.

DAJA.

Such a fit
Of coldness speaks of fevers yet to come.

RECHA.

Nay, I'm not cold, in truth I do not see
Less gladly that which I do calmly see.

SCENE IV.

(The Hall of Audience in SALADIN'S Palace.)

SALADIN, SITTAH.

SALADIN (*giving directions*).

Bring the Jew here, as soon as he arrives.
He seems in no great haste.

SITTAH.

Nay, Saladin,
Perhaps he was not found at home.

SALADIN.

Ah, sister !

SITTAH.

You look as if some contest were at hand.

SALADIN.

Ay ! and with weapons I'm not used to wield.
Must I then play the hypocrite—and frame
Precautions—lay a snare ? Where learnt I that ?
And for what end ? To seek for money—money !
For money from a Jew ? And to such arts

Must Saladin descend, that he may win
The most contemptible of paltry things?

SITTAH.

But paltry things, despised too much, are sure
To find some method of revenge.

SALADIN.

'Tis true!

What, if this Jew should prove an upright man,
Such as the Dervise painted him?

SITTAH.

Why, then,

Your difficulty ceases; for a snare
Implies an avaricious, cheating Jew,
And not an upright man. Then he is ours
Without a snare. 'Twill give us joy to hear
How such a man will speak—with what stern strength
He'll tear the net, or with what cunning skill
Untangle all its meshes, one by one.

SALADIN.

True, Sittah! 'twill afford me rare delight.

SITTAH.

What, then, need trouble you? For if he be,
Like all his nation, a mere cozening Jew,
You need not blush, if you appear to him
No better than he deems all other men.
But if to him you wear a different look,
You'll be a fool—his dupe!

SALADIN.

So I must, then,

Do ill, lest bad men should think ill of me.

SITTAH.

Yes, brother, if you call it doing ill
To put a thing to its intended use.

SALADIN.

Well, there is nothing woman's wit invents
It cannot palliate—

SITTAH.

How, palliate?

SALADIN.

Sittah, I fear such fine-wrought filagree
Will break in my rude hand. It is for those
Who frame such plots to bring them into play.
The execution needs the inventor's skill.
But let it pass.—I'll dance as best I can—
Yet sooner would I do it ill than well.

SITTAH.

Oh, brother, have more courage in yourself!
Have but the will, I'll answer for the rest.
How strange that men like you are ever prone
To think it is their swords alone that raise them.
When with the fox the noble lion hunts,
'Tis of the fellowship he feels ashamed,
But of the cunning, never.

SALADIN.

Well, 'tis strange
That women so delight to bring mankind
Down to their level. But, dear Sittah, go;
I think I know my lesson.

SITTAH.

Must I go?

SALADIN.

You did not mean to stay?

SITTAH.

No, not with you,
But in this neighb'ring chamber.

SALADIN.

What! to listen?

Not so, my sister, if I shall succeed.

Away! the curtain rustles—he is come.

Beware of lingering! I'll be on the watch.

(While SITTAH retires through one door, NATHAN enters at another, and SALADIN seats himself.)

SCENE V.

SALADIN, NATHAN.

SALADIN.

Draw nearer, Jew—yet nearer—close to me!
Lay fear aside.

NATHAN.

Fear, Sultan, 's for your foes.

SALADIN.

Your name is Nathan?

NATHAN.

Yes.

SALADIN.

Nathan the Wise.

NATHAN.

No.

SALADIN.

But, at least the people call you so.

NATHAN.

That may be true. The people!

SALADIN.

Do not think

I treat the people's voice contemptuously.

I have been wishing long to know the man

Whom it has called the Wise.

NATHAN.

What, if it named
Him so in scorn? If wise means prudent only—
And prudent, one who knows his interest well?

SALADIN.

Who knows his real interest, you mean.

NATHAN.

Then, Sultan, selfish men were the most prudent,
And wise, and prudent, then, would mean the same.

SALADIN.

You're proving what your speeches contradict.
You know the real interest of man :
The people know them not—have never sought
To know them. That alone can make man wise.

NATHAN.

Which every man conceives himself to be.

SALADIN.

A truce to modesty! To meet it ever,
When we are seeking truth is wearisome (*springs up*).
So, let us to the point. Be candid, Jew,
Be frank and honest.

NATHAN.

I will serve you, prince,
And prove that I am worthy of your favor.

SALADIN.

How will you serve me?

NATHAN.

You shall have the best
Of all I have, and at the cheapest rate.

SALADIN.

What mean you? Not your wares?—My sister, then,
Shall make the bargain with you. (That's for the lis-
tener!)

I am not versed in mercantile affairs,
And with a merchant's craft I've nought to do.

NATHAN.

Doubtless you would inquire if I have marked
Upon my route the movements of the foe?
Whether he's stirring? If I may presume——

SALADIN.

Neither was that my object. On that point
I know enough. But hear me.

NATHAN.

I obey.

SALADIN.

It is another, a far different thing
On which I seek for wisdom; and since you
Are called the Wise, tell me which faith or law
You deem the best.

NATHAN.

Sultan, I am a Jew.

SALADIN.

And I a Mussulman. The Christian stands
Between us. Here are three religions, then,
And of these three one only can be true.
A man like you remains not where his birth
By accident has cast him; or if so.
Conviction, choice, or ground of preference,
Supports him. Let me, Nathan, hear from you,
In confidence, the reasons of your choice,
Which I have lacked the leisure to examine.
It may be, Nathan, that I am the first
Sultan who has indulged this strange caprice,
Which need not, therefore, make a Sultan blush.
Am I the first? Nay, speak; or if you seek
A brief delay to shape your scattered thoughts,
I yield it freely. (Has she overheard?)
She will inform me if I've acted right.)
Reflect then, Nathan, I shall soon return.

(*Exit.*)

SCENE VI.

NATHAN (*alone*).

Strange ! how is this ? What can the Sultan want ?
I came prepared for cash—he asks for truth !
Truth ! as if truth were cash ! A coin disused—
Valued by weight ! If so, 'twere well, indeed !
But coin quite new, not coin but for the die,
To be flung down and on the counter told—
It is not that. Like gold tied up in bags,
Will truth lie hoarded in the wise man's head,
To be produced at need ? Now, in this case,
Which of us plays the Jew ? He asks for truth.
Is truth what he requires ? his aim, his end ?
Or does he use it as a subtle snare ?
That were too petty for his noble mind.
Yet what is e'er too petty for the great ?
Did he not rush at once into the house,
Whilst, as a friend, he would have paused or knocked ?
I must beware. Yet to repel him now
And act the stubborn Jew, is not the thing ;
And wholly to fling off the Jew, still less.
For if no Jew, he might with justice ask,
Why not a Mussulman ?—That thought may serve.—
Others than children may be quieted
With tales well told. But see, he comes—he comes.

SCENE VII.

SALADIN, NATHAN.

SALADIN.

(*Aside*) (The coast is clear)—I am not come too soon ?
Have you reflected on this matter, Nathan ?
Speak ! no one hears.

NATHAN.

Would all the world might hear !

SALADIN.

And are you of your cause so confident ?

'Tis wise, indeed, of you to hide no truth,
For truth to hazard all, even life and goods.

NATHAN.

Ay, when necessity and profit bid.

SALADIN.

I hope that henceforth I shall rightly bear
One of my names, "Reformer of the world
And of the law!"

NATHAN.

A noble title, truly ;
But, Sultan, ere I quite explain myself,
Permit me to relate a tale.

SALADIN.

Why not ?

I ever was a friend of tales well told.

NATHAN.

Well told ! Ah, Sultan ! that's another thing.

SALADIN.

What ! still so proudly modest ? But begin.

NATHAN.

In days of yore, there dwelt in Eastern lands
A man, who from a valued hand received
A ring of priceless worth. An opal stone
Shot from within an ever-changing hue,
And held its virtue in its form concealed,
To render him of God and man beloved,
Who wore it in this fixed unchanging faith.
No wonder that its Eastern owner ne'er
Withdrew it from his finger, and resolved
That to his house the ring should be secured.
Therefore he thus bequeathed it : first to him
Who was the most beloved of his sons,
Ordaining then that he should leave the ring
To the most dear among his children ; then,

That without heeding birth, the fav'rite son,
In virtue of the ring alone, should still
Be lord of all the house. You hear me, Sultan?

SALADIN.

I understand. Proceed.

NATHAN.

From son to son,
The ring at length descended to a sire
Who had three sons, alike obedient to him,
And whom he loved with just and equal love.
The first, the second, and the third, in turn,
According as they each apart received
The overflowings of his heart, appeared
Most worthy as his heir, to take the ring,
Which, with good-natured weakness, he in turn
Had promised privately to each; and thus
Things lasted for a while. But death approached,
The father now embarrassed, could not bear
To disappoint two sons, who trusted him.
What's to be done? In secret he commands
The jeweller to come, that from the form
Of the true ring, he may bespeak two more.
Nor cost, nor pains are to be spared, to make
The rings alike—quite like the true one. This
The artist managed. When the rings were brought
The father's eye could not distinguish which
Had been the model. Overjoyed, he calls
His sons, takes leave of each apart—bestows
His blessing and his ring on each—and dies.
You hear me?

SALADIN (*who has turned away in perplexity*).

Ay! I hear. Conclude the tale.

NATHAN.

'Tis ended, Sultan! All that follows next
May well be guessed. Scarce is the father dead,
When with his ring, each separate son appears,
And claims to be the lord of all the house.

Question arises, tumult and debate—
 But all in vain—the true ring could no more
 Be then distinguished than—(after a pause, in which
he awaits the Sultan's reply) the true faith now.

SALADIN.

Is that your answer to my question ?

NATHAN.

No !

But it may serve as my apology.
 I cannot venture to decide between
 Rings which the father had expressly made,
 To baffle those who would distinguish them.

SALADIN.

Rings, Nathan ! Come, a truce to this ! The creeds
 Which I have named have broad, distinctive marks,
 Differing in raiment, food, and drink !

NATHAN.

'Tis true !

But then they differ not in their foundation.
 Are not all built on history alike,
 Traditional or written ? History
 Must be received on trust. Is it not so ?
 In whom are we most likely to put trust ?
 In our own people ? in those very men
 Whose blood we are ? who, from our earliest youth
 Have proved their love for us, have ne'er deceived,
 Except in cases where 'twere better so ?
 Why should I credit my forefathers less
 Than you do yours ? or can I ask of you
 To charge your ancestors with falsehood, that
 The praise of truth may be bestowed on mine ?
 And so of Christians.

SALADIN.

By our Prophet's faith,
 The man is right. I have no more to say.

NATHAN.

Now let us to our rings once more return.
We said the sons complained ; each to the judge
Swore from his father's hand immediately
To have received the ring—as was the case—
In virtue of a promise, that he should
One day enjoy the ring's prerogative.
In this they spoke the truth. Then each maintained
It was not possible that to himself
His father had been false. Each could not think
His father guilty of an act so base.
Rather than that, reluctant as he was
To judge his brethren, he must yet declare
Some treach'rous act of falsehood had been done.

SALADIN.

Well ! and the judge ? I'm curious now to hear
What you will make him say. Go on, go on !

NATHAN.

The judge said : If the father is not brought
Before my seat, I cannot judge the case.
Am I to judge enigmas ? Do you think
That the true ring will here unseal his lips ?
But, hold ! You tell me that the real ring
Enjoys the secret power to make the man
Who wears it, both by God and man, beloved.
Let that decide. Who of the three is loved
Best by his brethren ? Is there no reply ?
What ! do these love-exciting rings alone
Act inwardly ? Have they no outward charm ?
Does each one love himself alone ? You're all
Deceived deceivers. All your rings are false.
The real ring, perchance, has disappeared ;
And so your father, to supply the loss,
Has caused three rings to fill the place of one.

SALADIN.

O, charming, charming !

NATHAN.

And,—the judge continued:—

If you insist on judgment, and refuse
 My counsel, be it so. I recommend
 That you consider how the matter stands.
 Each from his father has received a ring :
 Let each then think the real ring his own.
 Your father, possibly, desired to free
 His power from one ring's tyrannous control.
 He loved you all with an impartial love,
 And equally, and had no inward wish
 To prove the measure of his love for one
 By pressing heavily upon the rest.
 Therefore, let each one imitate this love ;
 So, free from prejudice. let each one aim
 To emulate his brethren in the strife
 To prove the virtues of his several ring,
 By offices of kindness and of love,
 And trust in God. And if, in years to come,
 The virtues of the ring shall reappear
 Amongst your children's children, then, once more
 Come to this judgment-seat. A greater far
 Than I shall sit upon it, and decide.
 So spake the modest judge.

SALADIN.

Oh God, O God !

NATHAN.

And if now, Saladin, you think you're he——

SALADIN.

(Approaches NATHAN, and takes his hand, which he retains to the end of the scene.)

This promised judge—I?—Dust ! I?—Nought ! oh God !

NATHAN.

What is the matter, Sultan ?

SALADIN.

Dearest Nathan !

That judge's thousand years are not yet past ;

His judgment-seat is not for me. But go,
And still remain my friend. /

NATHAN.

Has Saladin

Aught else to say ?

SALADIN.

No.

NATHAN.

Nothing ?

SALADIN.

Truly nothing.

But why this eagerness ?

NATHAN.

I could have wished

An opportunity to ask a boon.

SALADIN.

Wait not for opportunity. Speak now.

NATHAN.

I have been trav'ling, and am just returned
From a long journey, from collecting debts.
Hard cash is troublesome these perilous times,
I know not where I may bestow it safely.
These coming wars need money ; and, perchance,
You can employ it for me, Saladin ?

SALADIN (*fixing his eyes upon NATHAN*).

I ask not, Nathan, have you seen Al-Hafi ?
Nor if some shrewd suspicion of your own
Moves you to make this offer.

NATHAN.

What suspicion ?

SALADIN.

I do not ask—forgive me,—it is just,
For what avails concealment ? I confess
I was about—

NATHAN.

To ask this very thing?

SALADIN.

Yes!

NATHAN.

Then our objects are at once fulfilled,
And if I cannot send you all my store,
The Templar is to blame for that. You know
The man. I owe a heavy debt to him.

SALADIN.

The Templar! Surely, Nathan, with your gold
You do not aid my direst foes?

NATHAN.

I speak
Of him whose life was spared by Saladin.

SALADIN.

Of what do you remind me? I had quite
Forgot the youth. Where is he? Know you him?

NATHAN.

Have you not heard, then, how your clemency
Through him has flowed to me? How, at the risk
Of the existence which your mercy gave,
He saved my daughter from the raging flames?

SALADIN.

Ha! did he so? He looked like one that would!
My brother, too—his image—would have done it.
Is he still here? Bring him to me at once.
I have so often spoken to my sister
Of this same brother, whom she never knew,
That I must let her see his counterfeit.
Go, fetch him. How a single noble deed,
Though but the offspring of the merest whim,
Gives birth to other blessings! Bring him to me.

NATHAN (*loosing SALADIN'S hand*).

I'll go—the other matter then is settled. (*Exit.*)

SALADIN.

I wish I had but let my sister listen.
I'll go at once to her and tell it all.

(Exit on the opposite side.)

SCENE VIII.

*The Place of Palms in the neighborhood of the Convent,
where the TEMPLAR awaits NATHAN.*

TEMPLAR *(walking to and fro, in conflict with himself)*.

The panting victim here may rest awhile.
So far 'tis well. I dare not ask myself
What change has sprung within me, nor inquire
What yet may happen. Flight has proved in vain,
And, come what may, I could no more than flee,
The stroke was far too sudden to escape,
Long—much—I strove to keep aloof, in vain.
But once to see her, e'en against my will,
To see her, and to frame a firm resolve
Never to lose her. What, then, is resolve?
Resolve is purpose—action, while—in truth—
I was but passive. But to see her once,
And feel that I was woven into her being,
Was then and still remains the self-same thing.
To live apart from her—oh, bitter thought!—
Were death; and after death—where'er we were—
'Twould there be death too. Say, then, is this love?
And doth the Templar love? A Christian loves
A Jewish maiden! Well, and what of that?
This is the holy land; holy to me,
And dear, because I have of late renounced
Full many a prejudice. What says my vow?
As Templar I am dead. I cease to live
In the same hour that made me prisoner
To Saladin. The head he gave me back,
Was it the old one? No. I'm newly framed,
I know no fragment of the ancient forms
That bound me once. My brain is clearer now,
More fit for my paternal home above.

Now I can think as once my father thought,
 If tales of him are not untruly told—
 Tales that were ne'er so credible as now,
 When I am stumbling where my father fell.
 Fell! yet 'twere better far to fall with men
 Than stand with boys. His conduct guarantees
 His approbation. And what need I more
 Than Nathan's approbation? Of his praise
 I cannot doubt. Oh, what a Jew is he!
 And yet he would appear the simple Jew.
 But, see, he comes—he comes in haste—delight
 Beams from his eye. But who leaves Saladin
 With other looks? Ho! Nathan!

SCENE IX.

NATHAN, *the* TEMPLAR.

NATHAN.

Are you there?

TEMPLAR.

Your visit to the Sultan has been long.

NATHAN.

Not over long. My audience was delayed.
 But, Conrad, this man well supports his fame—
 His fame is but his shadow. But I must
 Without delay inform you that he would—

TEMPLAR.

Say on.

NATHAN.

Would speak with you. So, come with me at once.
 I have some brief commands to give at home,
 Then to the Sultan.

TEMPLAR.

Nathan, I will ne'er
 Enter your door again—

NATHAN.

Then you've been there
Already—spoken with her. Tell me all.
How did you like my Recha?

TEMPLAR.

Words would fail
To tell how much. I dare not trust myself
Alone with her again, unless you say
That I may gaze upon her form for ever.

NATHAN.

What can this mean?

TEMPLAR (*after a short pause embracing him suddenly*).
My father!

NATHAN.

How, young man?

TEMPLAR (*withdrawing himself as suddenly*).
Call me your son! I do implore you, Nathan.

NATHAN.

Dear youth!

TEMPLAR.

And not your son! I pray you, Nathan,
Conjure you, by the strongest ties of Nature,
Let it content you now to be a man:
Repel me not.

NATHAN.

My dearest friend!

TEMPLAR.

Say son!

Why not your son? What, if in Recha's heart
Mere gratitude had paved the way for love,
And if we both but waited your assent
To crown our union! You are silent, sir!

NATHAN.

I am astonished at your words, young Knight.

TEMPLAR.

Astonished! Do I then astonish you
With your own thoughts, although you know them not
When uttered by my lips. Astonished, Nathan?

NATHAN.

Would that I knew what Stauffen was your father!

TEMPLAR.

What say you, Nathan? At a time like this,
Can you indulge such empty, curious thoughts?

NATHAN.

I knew a Stauffen once whose name was Conrad.

TEMPLAR.

What, if my father bore that very name?

NATHAN.

And did he so?

TEMPLAR.

I bear my father's name,
I am called Conrad.

NATHAN.

So! And yet the man
I knew was not your father, for, like you,
He was a Templar, and was never married.

TEMPLAR.

And what of that?

NATHAN.

How?

TEMPLAR.

He might still have been
My father.

NATHAN.

Nay, you jest.

TEMPLAR.

You're far too good.

What matters it? Does bastard wound your ear?
The race, good sir, is not to be despised.
But spare my pedigree, and I'll spare yours.
Great God! forbid my words should ever cast
The smallest doubt on your ancestral tree.
You can attest it backwards, leaf by leaf,
To Abraham. And from that point—I know it well,
Myself—can even swear to it.

NATHAN.

Your words are bitter. Do I merit this?
What have I e'er refused you? I have but
Forborne assent at the first word you spoke.
No more!

TEMPLAR.

Oh! true, no more. Forgive me, Nathan.

NATHAN.

Well, come with me, come.

TEMPLAR.

Whither? to your house?
That will I not—it burns. I'll wait you here.
Farewell. If I'm to see her once again,
I then shall see her often; and if not,
I have already seen her too—too much.

SCENE X.

The TEMPLAR, DAJA.

TEMPLAR.

Too much, indeed! Strange that the human brain
So infinite of comprehension, should
At times with a mere trifle be engrossed,
Suddenly filled, and all at once quite full,
No matter what it teems with. But the soul

Soon calms again, and the fermenting stuff
 Makes itself room, restoring life and order.
 And is this, then, the first time that I love?
 And was the glow to which I gave that name
 Not love at all? And is this love alone
 Which now with burning flame consumes my heart?

DAJA (*who has crept up to his side*).

Sir Knight! Sir Knight!

TEMPLAR.

Who calls? What, Daja, you!

DAJA.

Yes, I am here; I managed to slip by him.
 But he can see us where we stand. Come nearer,
 And place yourself with me behind this tree.

TEMPLAR.

Why so mysterious? What's the secret, Daja?

DAJA.

Yes, 'tis a secret which has brought me hither—
 A twofold secret. Part is known to me,
 The other part to you. Come, let us change:
 First tell me yours, and then I'll tell you mine.

TEMPLAR.

Yes, willingly, when I have ascertained
 What you call mine. But yours will throw a light
 Upon the whole. Begin, then.

DAJA.

That's not fair;
 You must begin, Sir Knight, and I will follow.
 For be assured my secret 's nothing worth,
 Unless I hear yours first. Then lose no time,
 For if I guess it, you've not trusted me;
 My secret, then, will be my own, and yours

Worth nothing. But do you suppose, Sir Knight,
That you can hide such secrets from a woman?

TEMPLAR.

Secrets we often are unconscious of.

DAJA.

Perhaps. But I must prove myself your friend
And tell you all. Confess how happened it
That you so suddenly took leave of us,
And that with Nathan you will not return?
Has Recha, then, made no impression on you,
Or made too deep a one, perchance? Oh yes!
Too deep—too deep! You are a hapless bird
Whose fluttering wing the fatal twig has lamed,
Confess it, plainly, with a word, you love—
Love her to madness, and I'll tell you then—

TEMPLAR.

To madness? Ah! you understand it well.

DAJA.

Well, grant the love, the madness I'll resign.

TEMPLAR.

Because, of course, there is no doubt of it.
A. Templar love a Jewess!—

DAJA.

Why, it seems
Absurd. But often there's more fitness in
Some things than we can readily discern;
And 'twould not be the first time that our Lord
Had drawn us to Him by a secret path
Which we had ne'er discovered of ourselves.

TEMPLAR.

Solemnly spoken! (and if for our Lord
I substituted Providence, 'twere true).
You make me curious, far beyond my wont.

DAJA.

This is the land of miracles!

TEMPLAR.

Ay, true,

Of miracles ! Can it be otherwise,
When all the world flocks hither ? Dearest Daja,
You have your wish ; so take it as confessed
That I do love her, nor can comprehend
How I can live without her.

DAJA.

Can this be ?

Then swear, Sir Knight, to make her yours—to save
Her here on earth—to save her there for ever.

TEMPLAR.

How can I this ? How can I swear to do
What stands not in my power.

DAJA.

'Tis in your power !

One single word brings it within your power.

TEMPLAR.

But will her father smile upon my suit ?

DAJA.

Her father, truly ! He shall be compelled.

TEMPLAR.

Compell'd ! What, has he fallen among thieves ?
Compell'd !

DAJA.

Then hear me. Nathan will consent :
He must consent.

TEMPLAR.

Consent ! and must ! Oh, Daja !
I have already tried to touch that chord ;
It vibrates not responsive.

DAJA.

What ! reject you ?

TEMPLAR.

He answered me in such discordant tone
That I was hurt.

DAJA.

What say you? Did you breathe
The shadow of a wish to marry Recha.
And did not Nathan leap for joy? Did he
Draw coldly back—raise obstacles?

TEMPLAR.

He did.

DAJA.

Then I'll deliberate no moment more.

TEMPLAR (*after a pause*).

And yet you are deliberating still.

DAJA.

Nathan in all things has been ever good.
I owe him much. Did he refuse to listen?
God knows it grieves me to constrain him thus.

TEMPLAR.

I pray you, Daja, now to terminate
This dire uncertainty. But if you doubt
Whether the thing you would impart to me
Be right or wrong, worthy of shame or honor,
Then tell it not, and henceforth I'll forget
You have a secret it were well to hide.

DAJA.

Your words but spur me on to tell you all.
Then learn that Recha is no Jewess—that
She is a Christian maid.

TEMPLAR (*coldly*).

I wish you joy!

At last the tedious labor's at an end.
The birth-pangs have not hurt you. Still go on
With undiminished zeal, and people heaven
When you are fit no more to people earth.

DAJA.

How, Knight! and does the news I bring deserve
Such bitter taunts? Does it confer no joy
On you to hear that Recha is a Christian,
On you, her lover, and a Christian knight?

TEMPLAR.

And more especially since Recha is
A Christian of your making?

DAJA.

Think you so?
Then I would fain see him that may convert her.
It is her fate long since to have been that
Which she can now no more become.

TEMPLAR.

Explain,
Or leave me.

DAJA.

Well! she is a Christian maid,
Of Christian parents born—and is baptized.

TEMPLAR (*hastily*).

And Nathan!

DAJA.

Not her father.

TEMPLAR.

Nathan not
Her father? Are you sure of that?

DAJA.

I am;
The truth has cost me tears of blood. He's not.

TEMPLAR.

But as his daughter he has brought her up,
Brought up the Christian maiden as a Jewess?

DAJA.

Just so.

TEMPLAR.

And knows she aught about her birth?
Has she not learnt from him that she was born
A Christian and no Jewess?

DAJA.

Never yet.

TEMPLAR.

And he not only let the child grow up
In this mistaken notion, but he leaves
The woman in it.

DAJA.

Ay, alas!

TEMPLAR.

Oh, Nathan!
How can the wise, good Nathan lend himself
To stifle Nature's voice—to misdirect
The yearnings of a heart in such a way
Which, to itself abandoned, would have formed
Another bias, Daja? Ay, in truth,
The secret is of moment, and may have
Important issues. But I feel perplexed:
I know not how I ought to act. But go,
Let me have breathing time. He may approach,
He may surprise us suddenly. Farewell!

DAJA.

I tremble with affright.

TEMPLAR.

And I can scarce
Express my thoughts. But go; and should you chance
To meet him, say he'll find me at the Sultan's.

DAJA.

Let him not see that you have any thing
Against him. That 'twere well to keep reserved,
To give the proper turn to things at last.

It may remove your scruples, touching Recha.
But if you take her back to Europe, Knight,
You will not leave me here?

TEMPLAR.

We'll see, now go!

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*The Cloisters and the Convent.*

The FRIAR, and presently afterwards the TEMPLAR.

FRIAR.

Ay, ay! he must be right, the Patriarch!
And yet, of all his business, no great part
Has prospered in my hands. But why should he
Entrust such tasks to me? I have no wish
To play the knave, to wheedle and persuade,
To worm out secrets, and to thrust my hand
Into my neighbor's business. Not for this
Did I renounce the world, that I might be
Entangled with its cares for other men.

TEMPLAR (*entering abruptly*).

Good brother, are you here? I've sought you long.

FRIAR.

Me, sir?

TEMPLAR.

What, don't you recollect me, then?

FRIAR.

Ay! but, Sir Knight, I never thought to see
Your face again—and so I hoped in God.
God knows how much I hated the proposal
Which I was bound to make you, and He knows
How little I desired you should assent,
How in my inmost soul I was rejoiced

When you refused, without a moment's thought,
To do what had been shameful in a Knight.
But have you thought the matter o'er again?

TEMPLAR.

You seem to know what object brings me here.

FRIAR.

Have you, Sir Knight, reflected by this time,
That our good Patriarch is not much deceived
In thinking gold and glory may be won
By his commission? that a foe's a foe,
Were he our guardian angel seven times o'er?
Have you 'gainst flesh and blood weighed all these
things,
And are you come to strike a bargain now?

TEMPLAR.

My dear good man, be patient; not for this
Am I come hither; not for aught like this
Do I desire to see the Patriarch.
On every point my thoughts remain unchanged;
Nor would I for the wealth of all this world
Forfeit that good opinion, which I won
From such an upright, honest man as you.
I merely come to ask the Patriarch
For counsel.

FRIAR (*looking round timidly*).

Counsel from the Patriarch!

What, you! a knight to ask a priest's advice!

TEMPLAR.

Mine is a priestly business.

FRIAR.

Yet the priests
Would scorn a knight's advice, were their affairs
Ever so knightly.

TEMPLAR.

Therefore they're allowed
To err sometimes, a privilege which I,

For one, don't greatly envy them ; and yet,
 If I were acting only for myself,
 And were not bound to others, I should care
 But little for advice. But in some things
 'Twere better to go wrong by others' guidance
 Than, by our own, go right. And I observe,
 By this time, that religion 's naught but party,
 And he who in his own belief is most
 Impartial, does but hold the standard up
 Of his own creed, howe'er unconsciously.
 Yet since 'tis so, it must be right.

FRIAR.

I'm silent.

In truth, I don't quite comprehend.

TEMPLAR.

And yet—

(Let me consider first what 'tis I want—
 Decision or advice from sage or simple?)
 Thanks, brother ; yes, I thank you for your hint.
 What is a patriarch ? Be thou for once
 My patriarch ; for 'tis the Christian rather
 Whom in the patriarch I would consult,
 Than in the Christian the mere patriarch.

FRIAR.

Hold, hold, Sir Knight ! no more of this, I find
 That you mistake me. He who hath learnt much
 Must needs have many cares. I know but one—
 But hark, behold ! here comes the very man !
 'Tis he, so stay ; he has perceived us both.

SCENE II.

*The PATRIARCH, after marching up one of the aisles
 with great pomp, approaches.*

TEMPLAR.

I'd rather shun him—he is not my man—
 A round, red smiling prelate ! And what state !

FRIAR.

But you should see him at a festival,
Now he but comes from visiting the sick.

TEMPLAR.

Great Saladin will then have cause to blush.

PATRIARCH (*coming forward, makes signs to the FRIAR*).
Was that the Templar? What's his business here?

FRIAR.

I know not.

PATRIARCH (*advancing, whilst the FRIAR and his train retire*).

Well, Sir Knight, I'm truly glad
To meet so brave a youth. So very young,
Something may come of him, if Heaven assist.

TEMPLAR.

Not more than has already come of him,
But rather less, my reverend father.

PATRIARCH.

Well,
It is my prayer that so devout a Knight
May for the cause of Christendom and God
Be long preserved; nor can it fail to be,
If valor will give ear to aged words.
Then say, how can I serve you, Sir?

TEMPLAR.

With that
In which my youth's deficient—sound advice.

PATRIARCH.

Most gladly, if you'll follow my advice.

TEMPLAR.

Not blindly, though.

PATRIARCH.

Whose words are those? Indeed,
 None should neglect to use the intellect
 Bestowed by God, when it is suitable.
 But is it always suitable? O no!
 If God, through one of the celestial choir—
 That is, through one of the blest ministers
 Of His most sacred word—should condescend
 To show some way by which the Church's weal,
 Or else the general good of Christendom,
 Might be secured, what man would venture then
 To weigh the laws of intellect against
 His will, who fashioned intellect itself?
 Or measure the unchanged decrees of Heaven
 By empty rules that suit this petty world?
 But of all this enough. Now tell me, Knight,
 Wherefore you seek our counsel?

TEMPLAR.

Reverend father!

Suppose a Jew possessed an only child—
 A girl—whom he with fond parental care
 Trained to each virtue, treasured as his soul,
 Whilst she, with love as ardent as his own,
 Repaid his love,—suppose it rumored then
 That she was not the daughter of this Jew,
 But a poor orphan, purchased in her youth,
 Or stolen, or found—or anything, but still
 Of Christian birth, and in her youth baptized,
 And that the Jew had reared her in his faith,
 Allowed her to be thought a Jewish maid,
 And firmly to believe herself his child,—
 Say, reverend father, what should then be done?

PATRIARCH.

I shudder at the thought! But, worthy Sir,
 Say, is this fact, or mere hypothesis?
 That is, if your own head has framed the case,
 Or has it happened—does it still exist?

TEMPLAR.

That's unimportant, and could not assist
Your reverence to pronounce upon the point.

PATRIARCH.

What! unimportant! See, Sir Knight, how apt
Proud reason is to err in sacred things.
'Tis of deep import; though, 'tis true, the case
May be the offspring of your sportive wit,
When we should straight dismiss it from our thoughts
And I should then refer you to the stage
Where *pros* and *cons* like these are oft discussed
With loud applause. But if the object be,
By something better than a sleight of hand,
To sound my judgment, if the thing be fact,
And may have happened in our diocese,
Here in our dear Jerusalem itself,
Why then—

TEMPLAR.

What then?

PATRIARCH.

Then were it well, Sir Knight,
To execute at once upon the Jew
The penalty provided for the case,
By Papal and Imperial laws, against
So foul a crime, such dire iniquity.

TEMPLAR.

Indeed!

PATRIARCH.

The laws I mention have decreed
That if a Jew shall to apostasy
Seduce a Christian, he shall die by fire.

TEMPLAR.

Indeed!

PATRIARCH.

How much more when a Jew by force
Tears from baptismal bonds a Christian child?

For all that's done to children is by force,
Save what the Church shall order and perform.

TEMPLAR.

What if the child were steeped in misery,
And must have died, but for this bounteous Jew?

PATRIARCH.

It matters not : the Jew should still be burnt.
'Twere better to expire in misery,
Than live to suffer never-ending pains.
The Jew moreover should not have forestalled
The hand of God, whom had He willed to save,
Could save without him.

TEMPLAR.

Make him happy too,
In spite of him.

PATRIARCH.

It matters not, the Jew
Must still be burnt.

TEMPLAR.

That grieves me very much,
And all the more, as people say that he
Has reared the child not in his own belief,
So much as in no faith at all, and taught
Her neither more nor less of God than is
By reason asked.

PATRIARCH.

It matters not, the Jew
Must still be burnt—and for this very cause
Would merit threefold death. To rear a child
Without a faith ! Not even teach a child
The greatest of all duties—to believe !
'Tis heinous, and I'm rapt in wonder, Knight,
That you yourself—

TEMPLAR.

Oh, reverend Sir, the rest
In the confessional, if God allow. *(Is going.)*

Patriarch.

What, going! and not await my questioning!
Not name to me this infidel, this Jew!
Not find him out for me at once! But, hold!
A thought occurs. I'll to the Sultan straight.
According to the treaty we have sworn
With Saladin, he must protect our creed
With all the privileges, all the rights
That appertain to our most holy faith.
Thank God! we have retained the deed itself,
With seal and signature affixed, and we
Can readily convince him, make him feel
How full of peril for the state it is
Not to believe. All civil bonds are rent
Asunder, torn to pieces, Knight, when men
Have no belief. Away, away for ever
With such impiety!

Templar.

I much deplore
That I want time to relish this discourse,
This holy sermon. Saladin awaits
My coming.

Patriarch.

Ah, indeed!

Templar.

And I'll prepare
The Sultan for your presence, reverend Sir,
If you desire.

Patriarch.

Why, yes! for I have heard
You have found favor in the Sultan's sight.
I beg to be remembered with respect.
Zeal in the cause of God impels me on,
And all excesses are performed for Him.
Weigh that in kindness, then, most noble Sir!
But, tell me, was your case about the Jew
A problem merely?

Templar.

Problem!

(He retires.)

PATRIARCH.

(Of the facts,
I must have fuller knowledge. I must be
Better informed ; 'twill be another job
For brother Bonafides.) Son, come hither !
(*Speaks with the FRIAR as he retires.*)

SCENE III.

SALADIN'S *Palace.*

(*Slaves are employed in bringing bags of gold, and piling them on the floor.*)

SALADIN, SITTAH.

SALADIN.

In truth, this weary business ne'er will end ;
Say, is it nearly done ?

A SLAVE.

One half is done.

SALADIN.

Then take the rest to Sittah ? Where's Al-Hafi ?
He must take charge of what is here. But, hold,
Were it not best to send it to my father ?
Here 'twill be quickly spent. I feel, in truth,
That I am growing miserly. At last
He must be skilful who gets much from me,
And till from Egypt further treasure comes,
Our poverty must be content to struggle.
Yet, at the Holy Sepulchre, the cost
Of all the Christian pilgrims must be paid ;
They must, at least, not go with empty hands.

SITTAH.

Why, what is this ? wherefore this gold to me ?

SALADIN.

Recoup yourself with it, if aught is left,
Keep it in store.

SITTAH.

Are Nathan and the Knight
Not yet arrived?

SALADIN.

The former everywhere
Is seeking him.

SITTAH.

Behold what I have found
In turning o'er my ornaments and jewels (*showing a
small portrait*).

SALADIN.

Ha! what is here! a portrait! yes, my brother!
'Tis he—'tis he! *Was he—was he, alas!*
Oh dear, brave youth! so early lost to me!
With thee at hand what had I not achieved!
Give me the portrait, Sittah. I recall
This picture well. He gave it to his Lilla—
Your elder sister—when one summer morn
He tore himself away reluctantly.
She would not yield, but clasped him in her arms.
'Twas the last morning that he e'er rode forth,
And I, alas! I let him ride alone.
Poor Lilla died of grief, and ne'er forgave
My error that I let him ride alone.
He ne'er returned.

SITTAH.

Poor brother!

SALADIN.

Say no more.

A few short years, and we shall ne'er return.
And then who knows? But 'tis not death alone
That blights the hopes and promises of youth,
They have far other foes, and oftentimes
The strongest, like the weakest, is o'ercome.
But be that as it may, I must compare
This portrait with the Templar, that I may
Observe how much my fancy cheated me.

SITTAH.

'Twas for that purpose that I brought it here.
But give it, and I'll tell thee if 'tis like:
We women are best judges of such things.

SALADIN (*to the doorkeeper who enters*).

Who's there? the Templar? Bid him come at once.

SITTAH.

Not to disturb you, or perplex him with
My curious questions, I'll retire awhile. (*Throws her-
self upon the sofa, and lets her veil fall.*)

SALADIN.

That's well. (And now his voice—will that be like?
For Assad's voice still slumbers in my soul!)

SCENE IV.

The TEMPLAR and SALADIN.

TEMPLAR.

I am your prisoner, Sultan.

SALADIN.

You my prisoner!
Shall I refuse him liberty, whose life
I freely spared?

TEMPLAR.

It is my duty, Sire,
To hear, and not anticipate, your will.
Yet it but ill becomes my character
And station, Sultan, to be thus profuse
Of gratitude because you've spared my life—
A life which henceforth is at your command.

SALADIN.

Only forbear to use it to my hurt.
Not that I grudge my mortal enemy
Another pair of hands; but such a heart

As yours I do not yield him willingly.
 You valiant youth! I have not gauged you ill:
 In soul and body, you are truly Assad.
 I fain would learn where you have been so long
 Concealed. In what dim cavern you have slept?
 What spirit, in some region of the blest,
 Has kept this beauteous flower so fresh in bloom?
 Methinks I could remind you of our sports
 In days gone by; and I could chide you, too,
 For having kept one secret from my ear,
 For having dared one gallant deed alone.
 I'm happy that so much of this deceit
 At least is true, that in my sear of life
 An Assad blooms for me once more. And you,
 You too are happy, Knight!

TEMPLAR.

Whate'er you will—
 Whatever be your thought—lies as a wish
 Within mine inmost soul.

SALADIN.

We'll prove you, then;
 Will you abide with me?—cling to my side,
 Whether as Christian or as Mussulman,
 In turban or white mantle? Choose your garb—
 Choose for yourself. I never have desired
 That the same bark should grow on every tree.

TEMPLAR.

Else, Saladin, you never had become
 The hero that you are—who'd rather be
 The gardener of the Lord.

SALADIN.

If thus you think
 Of Saladin, we're half agreed, already—

TEMPLAR.

Nay, quite!

SALADIN (*offering his hand*).

One word!

TEMPLAR (*taking it*).

One man! and with this hand
Take more than you can e'er take back again.
Henceforth I'm wholly yours.

SALADIN.

This is too much—
For one day 'tis too much! Came he not with you?

TEMPLAR.

Who?

SALADIN.

Who? Nathan.

TEMPLAR.

No; I came alone.

SALADIN.

Oh, what a deed was thine! what happiness
That such a deed should serve so good a man!

TEMPLAR.

'Twas nothing.

SALADIN.

Why so cold, O valiant youth!
When God makes man His minister of good,
He need not be so cold, nor modestly
Wish to appear so cold.

TEMPLAR.

But in the world
All things have many sides, and who is he
Can comprehend how they may fit each other?

SALADIN.

Cling ever to what's noble, and praise God!
He knows how all things fit. But if you are
So scrupulous, young man, I must beware.
I too have many sides, and some of them
May seem to you not always made to fit.

TEMPLAR.

That grieves me ; for suspicion, at the least,
Is not a sin of mine.

SALADIN.

Then, tell me, whom
Do you suspect? Not Nathan, surely? **What!**
Nathan suspected, and by you? Explain—
Afford me this first proof of confidence.

TEMPLAR.

I've nothing against Nathan. I am vexed,
But with myself alone.

SALADIN.

Why so?

TEMPLAR.

For dreaming
That any Jew can think himself no Jew.
I dreamt this waking.

SALADIN.

Tell me all your dream.

TEMPLAR.

You know that Nathan has a daughter, Sultan !
And what I did for her, I did—because
I did it. Far too proud to reap the thanks
I had not sown, from day to day I shunned
The maiden's sight. Her father was afar.
He comes, he hears, he seeks me, give me thanks ;
Wishes that she might please me, and he talks
Of dawning prospects. Well, I hear it all,
I listen to him, go and see the maid—
O! such a maiden, Sultan. But, I blush.

SALADIN.

Why blush? Blush that a Jewish maid should win
Your admiration? 'Tis a venial fault.

TEMPLAR.

But oh ! that, through her father's sweet discourse,

To this impression my o'er-hasty heart
Such weak resistance offered! Fool, I leaped
A second time into the flame, and then
I wooed, and was denied.

SALADIN.

Denied?—denied?

TEMPLAR.

The prudent father does not plainly say
No, to my suit—but he must first inquire—
He must reflect. Well, be it so. Had I
Not done the same? I looked about, inquired—
Reflected—ere I plunged into the flames
Where she was shrieking. Oh, by Heaven! it is
A splendid thing to be so circumspect!

SALADIN.

Nay, but you must concede somewhat to age.
His doubts will pass away, nor will he wish
You to become a Jew.

TEMPLAR.

Who knows?

SALADIN.

Who knows!

One who knows Nathan better than yourself.

TEMPLAR.

And yet the superstitions we have learned
From education, do not lose their power
When we have found them out; nor are all free
Whose judgment mocks the galling chains they wear.

SALADIN.

'Tis wisely said; but Nathan, surely Nathan—

TEMPLAR.

That superstition is the worst of all
Which thinks itself the easiest to be borne—

SALADIN.

'Tis possible. But Nathan—

TEMPLAR.

And to trust

To it alone a blind humanity
Till it is used to truth's more brilliant light.
To it alone—

SALADIN.

Well, well ! But Nathan's fate
Is not to be so weak—

TEMPLAR.

I thought so once,
But what if this bright pattern to mankind
Were such a thorough Jew that he seeks out
For Christian children to bring up as Jews ?
How then ?

SALADIN.

Who speaks so of him ?

TEMPLAR.

E'en the maid

For whom I'm so distressed, with hopes of whom
He seemed so glad to recompense the deed
He would not suffer me to do for naught.
This maid is not his daughter ; no, she is
A kidnapped Christian child.

SALADIN.

Whom Nathan now

Refuses you !

TEMPLAR (*earnestly*).

Refuse or not refuse,
He is found out—the prating hypocrite
Is now found out ; but on this Jewish wolf,
For all his philosophical sheep's garb,
Dogs I can loosen who will tear his hide.

SALADIN (*earnestly*).

Peace, Christian !

TEMPLAR.

What ! peace, Christian ? Wherefore so ?
Shall Jew and Mussulman be free to boast
Their creeds, and shall the Christian be ashamed
To own his faith ?

SALADIN (*more earnestly*).

Peace, Christian !

TEMPLAR (*calmly*).

Yes, I feel
What weight of blame lies in your calm reproof—
In that one word pronounced by Saladin.
Oh ! that I knew what Assad would have done
Had he but fill'd my place !

SALADIN.

He had not done
Much better ; nay, perhaps, had been more warm.
Where did you learn to bribe me with a word ?
And yet, in truth, if all has happened so
As you narrate, it is not much like Nathan.
But Nathan is my friend, and of my friends
One must not quarrel with the other. So
Take counsel, act with prudence. Do not loose
On him the fanatics among your race.
Keep silence. All the clergy of your sect
Would call to me for vengeance upon him
With far more show of right than I could wish.
Let not revenge impel you to become
A Christian to the Jew or Mussulman.

TEMPLAR.

Thanks to the Patriarch's bloodthirsty rage,
Your counsel almost comes too late ; and I
Had nearly proved his cruel instrument.

SALADIN.

How so ? and did you see the Patriarch
Before you came to me ?

TEMPLAR.

Yes, in the storm
Of passion—in the whirl of doubt—— Forgive me
I fear you will no longer find in me
One feature of your Assad.

SALADIN.

Yes, that fear
Is like him. But, methinks, I know full well
The weaknesses from which our virtues spring:
Attend to these—the former cannot hurt.
But go, seek Nathan, as he sought for you,
And bring him hither. Be but reconciled.
Are you in earnest, Knight, about this maid?
Be calm—she shall be yours. Nathan shall feel
That without swine's-flesh he has dared to rear
A Christian child. Now, Templar, leave me. Go!
(*Exit the* TEMPLAR. *SITTAH leaves the sofa.*)

SCENE V.

SALADIN *and* SITTAH.

SITTAH.

'Tis strange, indeed.

SALADIN.

What say you now, my Sittah?
Was not our Assad once a handsome youth?

SITTAH.

If this were like him, and 'twere not the knight
Who had his portrait taken. But, dear brother,
How could you ever so forget yourself
As not to make inquiry for his parents?

SALADIN.

And more especially about his mother?
That was your meaning—eh?

SITTAH.

You are too quick.

SALADIN.

But nothing is more possible ; for he,
My brother Assad, was so favored by
The Christian ladies—handsome Christian ladies—
That a report once spread—— But 'tis not right
We should refer to that. We'll be content
That he is here again, with all his faults,
The faults and wildness of his gentle heart—
That he is here again. Oh, Nathan must
Give him the maid. What think you?

SITTAH.

What, to him?

SALADIN.

Ay! for what claim has Nathan to the girl
If he is not her father? He, who saved
Her life, may properly assume the rights
Of him who gave existence to the maid.

SITTAH.

Then might not Saladin lay claim to her,
Withdrawing her from the unrightful owner?

SALADIN.

There is no need of that.

SITTAH.

No actual need,

But female curiosity suggests
That counsel to me. There are certain men
Of whom I feel impatient till I know
What maidens they can love.

SALADIN.

Well send for her.

SITTAH.

Brother, may I do that?

SALADIN.

But hurt not Nathan.

He must not think that we, by violence,
Would separate them.

SITTAH.

Fear it not.

SALADIN.

Farewell!

I must find out where this Al-Hafi is.

SCENE VI.

The hall in NATHAN'S house, looking towards the palm-trees, as in the first Act. Part of the merchandise and treasures unpacked and displayed.

NATHAN and DAJA.

DAJA.

O, how magnificent are all these things!
How rich! they're such as none but you could give.
Where was this silver stuff with sprigs of gold
Woven? What might it cost? 'Tis what I call
A wedding garment. Is there any queen
Could wish aught richer?

NATHAN.

Why a wedding robe?

DAJA.

In buying it, you never thought of that.
But, Nathan, it must be so—it must, indeed—
'Twas made for that. See, here, the pure white ground,
Emblem of innocence; that branching gold,
Covering the virgin white on every side,
Emblem of wealth. Say, is it not divine?

NATHAN.

Why all this ingenuity of speech?
Over whose wedding dress would you display
This learning? Have you found a lover, Daja?

DAJA.

What, I?

NATHAN.

Who, then ?

DAJA.

I, gracious Heaven ?

NATHAN.

Who, then ?

Whose wedding garment would you speak of, Daja ?
All this is yours, 'tis meant for no one else.

DAJA.

What, mine ! for me ! I thought it was for Recha.

NATHAN.

No, what I bought for her is elsewhere packed ;
'Tis in another bale. But, come, away
With all this rubbish.

DAJA.

Nathan, tempt me not,
For were these things the very costliest
In all the world, I'll touch not one of them
Till you have sworn to seize a happy chance
Which Heaven ne'er offers twice.

NATHAN.

What happy chance ?

What must I seize ?

DAJA.

Nathan, feign not such ignorance.
But, in one word—the Templar loves your Recha—
Give her to him, and then your sin, which I
Can hide no longer, will for ever cease.
The maid will then once more resume her place
Amongst the Christians, will again become
What she was born to, and what once she was ;
And you, whom we can never thank enough
For all your goodness, will not then have heaped
More burning coals of fire upon your head.

NATHAN.

Still harping on the same old string again,
New tuned, but neither to accord nor hold.

DAJA.

How so ?

NATHAN.

The Templar pleases me ; 'tis true
I'd rather he, than any one, had Recha,
But patience.

DAJA.

Patience ! and, say, is not that
The string you always harp on ?

NATHAN.

Still, have patience
But for a few days longer. Ha ! who comes ?
A friar ! Go ask him what his errand is.

DAJA (*going*).

What can he want ?

NATHAN.

Give—give before he begs.
(Oh, that I knew how I could sound the Knight
Without betraying what my motive is !
For should I tell it, and my thoughts prove false,
I shall have staked the father's rights in vain.)
What is the matter ?

DAJA.

He would speak with you.

NATHAN.

Let him approach. Leave us together, Daja.

SCENE VII.

NATHAN *and the* FRIAR.

NATHAN.

(*Aside.* Gladly I would continue Recha's father !

And can I not be so, though I may cease
 To bear the name? To her—at least to her—
 I should be father still, if she but knew
 How willingly I bore that title once.)
 What can I do to serve you, pious brother?

FRIAR.

Not much; and yet it gives me pleasure, Nathan,
 To see at least that you are still so well.

NATHAN.

You know me, then, it seems?

FRIAR.

Who knows you not?
 You have impressed your name on many a hand—
 It has been stamped on mine these many years.

NATHAN (*feeling for his purse*).

Come, brother, come; here's to refresh it.

FRIAR.

Thanks

That would be robbing poorer men. I will
 Take nothing; but I beg of you, permit
 That I refresh your memory with my name;
 For I can boast of having formerly
 Placed something in your hand you should not scorn.

NATHAN.

Excuse me—I'm ashamed—what was it? Say,
 And then take for atonement sevenfold
 The value of the thing.

FRIAR.

Well, first of all,
 Hear how this very day has brought to mind
 The pledge I gave you.

NATHAN.

What! a pledge to me?

FRIAR.

Not long ago I led a hermit's life
On Quarantana, near to Jericho.
Some Arab thieves came and attacked my cell ;
They robbed my oratory, forcing me
To follow them. But fortune favored me.
I fled, came hither to the Patriarch,
And sought from him another calm retreat,
Where I might serve my God in solitude
Till death should bless me.

NATHAN.

Ah ! I am on thorns.
Be quick ! What pledge did you entrust to me ?

FRIAR.

Yes, Nathan, presently. The Patriarch
Has promised I shall have a hermitage
On Tabor, when 'tis vacant ; and meanwhile
Employs me in this convent as a brother,
And here I am at present. But I pine
For Tabor fifty times a day ; for here
He makes me toil at work which I detest.

NATHAN.

Be speedy, I beseech you.

FRIAR.

Well, it chanced
Some one has whispered in his ear to-day
That a Jew lives hard by, who educates
A Christian as his daughter.

NATHAN.

How ?

FRIAR.

Nay, hear.

He has commissioned me, if possible,
To find this Jew out for him ; and he raves

Loudly and bitterly against the crime,
 Which he pronounces as the actual sin
 Against the Holy Ghost—that is, the sin
 The greatest, which a sinner can commit.
 But luckily we can't exactly tell
 Its nature. But my conscience all at once
 Was roused, and it occurred to me that I
 Had once, perhaps, been guilty of this sin.
 Do you remember, eighteen years ago,
 When a knight's squire committed to your hands
 A female infant but a few weeks old?

NATHAN.

What say you? Well, in fact there was—

FRIAR.

Ay, look—
 Look well at me—for I'm that squire: 'twas I.

NATHAN.

What! you?

FRIAR.

And he from whom I brought the child
 Was, if I recollect the matter right,
 A Lord of Filneck—Wolf von Filneck.

NATHAN.

Right.

FRIAR.

Because the mother died not long before;
 And he, the father, was obliged to fly
 To Gaza suddenly. The helpless child
 Could not accompany him, and therefore he
 Committed it to you: that was my task.
 I found you out at Daran.

NATHAN.

Right, quite right.

FRIAR.

It were no wonder had my memory
 Deceived me. I have served so many lords.

The one who fled was not my master long,
He fell at Askalon. His heart was kind.

NATHAN.

Yes, yes, and I have much to thank him for.
Not once, but many times he saved my life.

FRIAR.

O, glorious! then the greater joy for you
To educate his daughter.

NATHAN.

You say well.

FRIAR.

Where is she now? She is not dead, I hope.
Let me not hear, I pray, that she is dead.
If no one else have found the secret out,
All is yet safe.

NATHAN.

Indeed!

FRIAR.

Oh, Nathan, trust me.

This is my way of thinking: if the good
That I propose to do is intertwined
With mischief, then I let the good alone;
For we know well enough what mischief is,
But not what is the best. 'Twas natural,
If you intended to bring up the child
With care, that you should rear it as your own.
And to have done this lovingly and well,
And be thus recompensed, is piteous.
It were perhaps more prudent, if the child
Had been brought up by some good Christian's hand
In her own faith. But then you had not loved
Your dear friend's orphan child; and children need
Love—were it but the affection of a brute—
More at that age, than Christianity:
There's always time enough for that: and if

The maiden had grown up before your eyes,
 Healthy and pious, she had then remained
 The same as ever in her Maker's eyes.
 For is not Christianity all built
 Upon the Jewish creed? Oh oft, too oft,
 It vexes me and costs me bitter tears,
 To think that Christians will so constantly
 Forget that Christ our Saviour was a Jew.

NATHAN.

Good brother, you shall be my advocate,
 When hate and bigotry shall frown on me,
 All for a deed—which you alone shall hear—
 But take it with you to the tomb. As yet
 E'en vanity has never tempted me
 To breathe it to a soul; to you alone
 It shall be told; for simple piety
 Like yours can truly feel what man can do
 Who places his full confidence in God.

FRIAR.

You're moved, and your eyes run o'er with tears.

NATHAN.

At Daran 'twas you met me with the child.
 You had not heard that, a few days before,
 The Christians murdered every Jew in Gath—
 Woman and child. Amongst them was my wife—
 Along with her, my seven hopeful sons.
 All had sought shelter 'neath my brother's roof,
 And there were burnt alive.

FRIAR.

Just God!

NATHAN.

You came.

Three nights in dust and ashes I had lain
 Before my God and wept; and I at times
 Arraigned my Maker, raged, and cursed myself
 And the whole world together, and I swore
 Eternal hate to Christianity.

FRIAR.

Who can condemn you? I believe it well.

NATHAN.

But by degrees returning reason came,
And spoke with gentle accent: "God is just!
And this was His decree. Now exercise
The lesson thou so long hast understood,
And which is surely not more difficult
To exercise than well to understand."
I rose and cried to God, "I will, I will!
Do Thou but aid my purpose." And, behold,
Just at that moment you dismounted. You
Gave me the child enfolded in your robe.
The words we spoke occur not to me now.
This much I recollect: I took the child;
I bore it to my bed; I kissed its cheek;
I flung myself upon my knees, and sobbed,
"My God, Thou hast restored me one of seven!"

FRIAR.

Nathan, you are a Christian. Yes, I swear
You are a Christian—better never lived.

NATHAN.

Indeed! the very thing that makes me seem
Christian to you, makes you a Jew to me.
But let us not distress each other thus,
'Tis time to act, and though a sevenfold love
Had bound me to this strange, this lovely maid,
Though the mere thought distracts me, that in her
I lose my seven dear sons a second time,
If Providence require her at my hands
I'm ready to obey.

FRIAR.

'Tis well! And thus
I thought to counsel you; but there's no need:
Your own good genius has forestalled my words.

NATHAN.

The first chance claimant must not tear her hence.

FRIAR.

Most surely not.

NATHAN.

And he who has no claim
Stronger than mine—at least he ought to have
Those prior claims which—

FRIAR.

Certainly.

NATHAN.

Those claims
Which are derived from nature and from blood.

FRIAR.

In my opinion, yes.

NATHAN.

Then name the man
As brother, or as uncle, bound to her,
I'll not withhold her from him; she was made
To be the ornament of any house,
The pride of any faith. I hope you know
More of your master and his creed than I.

FRIAR.

On that point, Nathan, I'm but ill informed,
I have already told you that I spent
Only some moments with him.

NATHAN.

Can you tell
The mother's name, at least? She was, I think,
A Stauffen?

FRIAR.

Possibly; nay, more—you're right.

NATHAN.

Conrad of Stauffen was her brother's name.
He was a Templar.

FRIAR.

Yes, I think he was:

But hold, I have a book that was my lord's.
I drew it from his bosom when he lay
Dead, and we buried him at Askalon.

NATHAN.

Well!

FRIAR.

There are prayers in it; 'tis what we call
A breviary. This, thought I, yet may serve
Some Christian man—not me, forsooth—for I
Can't read a word.

NATHAN.

No matter—to the point.

FRIAR.

The pages of this book are written all
In his own hand, and, as I'm told, contain
All that's important touching him and her.

NATHAN.

Go, run and fetch the book: 'tis fortunate!
I'll pay you for it with its weight in gold.
And with a thousand thanks besides. Go! run!

FRIAR.

I go—but what he wrote is Arabic.

(Exit.)

NATHAN.

No matter, fetch it. What, if from this book
I can find means to keep this precious girl,
And win, to boot, a son-in-law like him!
I hardly hope—fate must decide. But who
Has told the Patriarch this? I must not fail
To ascertain. It surely was not Daja?

SCENE VIII.

DAJA and NATHAN.

DAJA *(rushing in in agitation)*.

Only think, Nathan!

NATHAN.
What?

DAJA.
Well—only think:
The child was frightened when the message came!

NATHAN.
From whom? The Patriarch?

DAJA.
The Sultan's sister,
The Princess Sittah—

NATHAN.
Not the Patriarch?

DAJA.
No, Sittah. Can't you hear? The Princess sends,
And wishes Recha to be brought to her.

NATHAN.
Wishes for Recha! Sittah wishes thus?
'Tis Sittah, then—and not the Patriarch?

DAJA.
Why do you speak of him?

NATHAN.
Have you not heard
Some tidings of him lately? Have you seen
Nothing of him, and whispered nothing to him?

DAJA.
How could I so?

NATHAN.
Where are the messengers?

DAJA.
They stand without.

NATHAN.

I'll speak to them myself—
'Tis prudent ; I shall see if nothing lurks
Behind this message, from the Patriarch. (Exit.)

DAJA.

Well, I have other fears. The only child,
As they suppose, of such a wealthy Jew,
Would for a Mussulman be no bad thing.
I'll wager that the Templar loses her,
Unless I risk a second step, and state
Plainly to Recha who she is. So, courage !
And to do this I must at once employ
The first brief moments when we are alone.
Chance serves : she waits for me, and on the way
An earnest hint will never prove amiss.
So now or never. All will soon be well.
(Follows Nathan.)

ACT V.

SCENE I.—*The room in SALADIN'S Palace. The treasure
still piled up.*

(SALADIN, and several Mamelukes.)

SALADIN (*as he enters*).

There lies the gold—and no one yet has seen
The Dervise. He will probably be found
Over the chess-board. Play can often make
A man forget himself. Then why not me ?
But patience. What's the matter ?

1ST MAMELUKE.

Oh, good news !
Joy, Sultan ! joy. The Cairo caravan

Is safe arrived, and from the Nile it brings
The seven years' tribute.

SALADIN.

Bravo, Ibrahim !
You always were a welcome messenger,
And now at length—accept my heartfelt thanks
For the good tidings.

1ST MAMELUKE (*waiting*).

(Let me have them, then !)

SALADIN.

What are you waiting for? Go.

1ST MAMELUKE.

Nothing more

For my good news?

SALADIN.

What further?

1ST MAMELUKE.

Messengers

Of good are paid. Am I to be the first
Whom Saladin has learnt to pay with words?
The first to whom he proves ungenerous?

SALADIN.

Go, take a purse.

1ST MAMELUKE.

No, no—not now. Not if
You'd give them all to me.

SALADIN.

All? Hold, young man !
Come hither. Take these purses—take these two.
What, going? And shall I be conquered thus
In generosity? for surely 'tis
More difficult for this man to refuse
Than for the Sultan to bestow. Then, here,

Here, Ibrahim! Shall I be tempted, just
Before my death, to be a different man?
Shall Saladin not die like Saladin?
Then wherefore has he lived like Saladin?

(Enter a second Mameluke.)

2ND MAMELUKE.

Hail, Sultan!

SALADIN.

If you come and bring the news—

2ND MAMELUKE.

That the Egyptian convoy is arrived.

SALADIN.

I know it.

2ND MAMELUKE.

Then I come too late.

SALADIN.

Too late?

Wherefore too late? There, for your tidings take
A purse or two.

2ND MAMELUKE.

Say three.

SALADIN.

You reckon well;

But take them.

2ND MAMELUKE.

A third messenger will come
Ere long, if he be able.

SALADIN.

Wherefore so?

2ND MAMELUKE.

He may perhaps, ere this, have brok'n his neck.
We three, when we had heard of the approach

Of the rich caravan, mounted our steeds,
 And galloped hitherward. The foremost fell,
 Then I was first, and I continued so
 Into the town ; but that sly fellow there,
 Who knew the streets——

SALADIN.

But where is he who fell?

Go seek him out.

2ND MAMELUKE.

That I will quickly do,
 And if he lives, one half of this is his. (*Exit.*)

SALADIN.

Oh, what a noble fellow ! who can boast
 Such Mamelukes as these ? And may I not,
 Without conceit, imagine that my life
 Has helped to make them so ? Avaunt the thought !
 That I should ever teach them otherwise.

3RD MAMELUKE.

Sultan !

SALADIN.

Are you the man who fell ?

3RD MAMELUKE.

No, Sire.

I have to tell you that the Emir Mansor,
 Who led the caravan, is just arrived.

SALADIN.

Then bring him quickly.—There he is already.

SCENE II.

The Emir MANSOR and SALADIN.

SALADIN.

Emir, you're welcome ! What has happened to you,
 Mansor ? we have expected you for long.

MANSOR.

This letter will explain how, in Thebais,
Some discontents required the sabred hand
Of Abulkassen. But, since then, our march
Has been pressed forward.

SALADIN.

I believe it all.

But take, good Mansor—take, without delay,
Another escort if you will proceed,
And take the treasure on to Lebanon :
The greater part is destined for my father.

MANSOR.

Most willingly.

SALADIN.

And let your escort be
A strong and trusty one, for Lebanon
Is far from quiet, and the Templars there
Are on the stir again ; be cautious, then.
Come, I must see your troop, and order all.
(*To a slave.*) Say I shall presently return to Sittah.

SCENE III.

(*The palm-trees before NATHAN'S house.*)

The TEMPLAR, *walking up and down.*

TEMPLAR.

Into this house I never enter more :
He'll come to me at last. Yet, formerly,
They used to watch for me with longing eyes ;
And now——The time may come he'll send to beg,
Most civilly, that I will get me hence,
And not pace up and down before his door !
No matter : though I feel a little hurt.
I know not what has thus embittered me :
He answered yes, and has refused me naught,

So far, and Saladin has pledged himself
To bring him round. Say, does the Christian live
Deeper in me than the Jew lurks in him?
Ah! who can truly estimate himself?
How comes it else that I should grudge him so
The trifling booty, which he took such pains
To rob the Christians of? No trifling theft!
No less than such a creature! And to whom
Does she belong? Oh, surely not to him,
The thoughtless slave, who floated the mere block
On to life's barren strand, then disappeared.
Rather to him, the artist, whose fine soul
Has from the block moulded this godlike form,
And graved it there. And yet in spite of him,
The Christian, who begot this beauteous maid,
Recha's true father must be still the Jew.
Were I to fancy her a Christian now,
Bereft of all the Jew has given to her—
Which only such a Jew could have bestowed—
Speak out, my heart—where would have been **her**
charm?

It had been nothing—little; then her smile
Had been a pretty twisting of the mouth
And that which caused it were unworthy deemed
Of the enchantment blooming on her lips.
No: not her very smile! I've seen sweet smiles
Squandered on pride, on foppery, on lies,
On flatterers, on wicked wooers spent:
And did they charm me then? Did they awake
The wish to flutter out existence in
Their sunshine? And I'm angry now with him
Who gave this higher value to the maid?
And wherefore so? Do I deserve the taunt
With which I was dismissed by Saladin?
'Twas bad enough he should think thus of me.
How wicked, how contemptible, alas!
I must have seemed to him! And for a girl!
Conrad, this will not do. Avaunt such thoughts!
And what if Daja has been chattering
Of things not easy to be proved? But see,
He comes, engaged in converse; and with whom?

With him, the Friar. Then he knows all: perhaps
 He has betrayed him to the Patriarch.
 O Conrad! what vile mischief hast thou done!
 O! that one spark of love, that wayward passion,
 Should so inflame the brain! But, quick! resolve;
 What's to be done? Stay, step aside awhile;
 Perhaps the Friar will leave him. Let us see.

SCENE IV.

NATHAN *and the* FRIAR.NATHAN (*approaching him*).

Good brother, once more, thanks.

FRIAR.

The same to you.

NATHAN.

Why thanks from you? Because I'm wayward, and
 Would force upon you what you cannot use?

FRIAR.

The book you have did not belong to me.
 It is the maid's, is all her property,
 Her only patrimony—save yourself.
 God grant you ne'er have reason to repent
 Of what you've done for her!

NATHAN.

Impossible!

That cannot be. Fear not.

FRIAR.

Alas! alas!

These Patriarchs and Templars—

NATHAN.

Cannot work

Such evil as to force me to repent.

But are you sure it is a Templar who
Urges the Patriarch?

FRIAR.

It is none else ;
A Templar talked with him just now, and all
I hear confirms the rumor.

NATHAN.

But there is
Only one Templar in Jerusalem,
And him I know. He is a friend of mine,
A noble, open-hearted youth.

FRIAR.

The same.
But what one is at heart, and what one must
Appear in active life, are not the same.

NATHAN.

Alas! 'tis true. And so let every one
Act as he will, and do his best, or worst.
With your book, brother, I defy them all!
I'm going straightway with it to the Sultan.

FRIAR.

Then God be with you! Here I take my leave.

NATHAN.

What! without seeing her? But come again,
Come soon—come often, If the Patriarch
To-day learns nothing. Well! no matter now!
Tell him the whole to-day, or when you will.

FRIAR.

Not I. Farewell!

(Exit.)

NATHAN.

Do not forget us, brother!
O God! I could sink down upon my knees,
Here on this spot! Behold, the knotted skein
Which has so often troubled me, at last

Untangles of itself. I feel at ease,
Since henceforth nothing in this world remains
That I need hide. Henceforth, I am as free
Before mankind, as in the sight of God.
Who only does not need to judge us men
By deeds, which oftentimes are not our own.

SCENE V.

NATHAN *and the* TEMPLAR.*(The latter advancing towards him from the side.)*

TEMPLAR.

Hold, Nathan, hold ! Take me along with you.

NATHAN.

Who calls ? You, Templar ! Where can you have been
That you could not be met with at the Sultan's ?

TEMPLAR.

We missed each other ; do not be displeased.

NATHAN.

Not I, but Saladin.

TEMPLAR.

You had just gone.

NATHAN.

Oh, then, you spoke with him. I'm satisfied.

TEMPLAR.

Yes ; but he wants to talk with us together.

NATHAN.

So much the better. Come with me ; I go
Direct to him.

TEMPLAR.

Say, Nathan, may I ask
Who left you even now ?

NATHAN.

What! don't you know?

TEMPLAR.

Was it that worthy fellow, the good friar,
Whom the old Patriarch employs at will
To work his ends?

NATHAN.

The same—the very same.

TEMPLAR.

'Tis a prime hit to make simplicity
The workman of deceit.

NATHAN.

Yes, if he use
The fool, and not the pious man.

TEMPLAR.

This last
The Patriarch ne'er trusts.

NATHAN.

Depend on this,
That man will not assist the Patriarch
To a wicked end.

TEMPLAR.

Well, so I think myself.
But has he told you aught of me?

NATHAN.

Of you?
He scarcely knows your name.

TEMPLAR.

That's like enough.

NATHAN.

He spoke to me about a Templar, who——

TEMPLAR.

Who what?

NATHAN.

But then he never mentioned you.

TEMPLAR.

Who knows? Come tell me, Nathan, all he said.

NATHAN.

Who has accused me to the Patriarch?

TEMPLAR.

Accused you! With his leave, that is untrue. No! Hear me, Nathan! I am not the man E'er to deny my actions. What I've done I've done—and there's an end. Nor am I one Who would maintain that all I've done is right. But should one fault condemn me? Am I not Resolved on better deeds for time to come? And who is ignorant how much the man Who wills it may improve? Then hear me, Nathan: I am the Templar talked of by the Friar, Who has accused—you know what maddened me, What set my blood on fire within my veins— Fool that I was! I had almost resolved To fling myself both soul and body, straight Into your arms. But how was I received? How did you meet me, Nathan? Cold—or worse. Lukewarm—far worse than cold. With cautious words, Well weighed and measured, Nathan, you took care To put me off, and with calm questions, asked About my parentage, and God knows what, You sought to meet my suit. I cannot now Dwell on it and be patient. Hear me further. While in this ferment, Daja suddenly Drew near to me and whispered in my ear A secret which cleared up the mystery.

NATHAN.

What was it?

TEMPLAR.

Hear me to the end. I thought The treasure you had from the Christians stolen,

You would not promptly to a Christian yield ;
And so the project struck me, with good speed,
To bring you to extremities.

NATHAN.

Good speed ?
Good, good ? pray where's the good !

TEMPLAR.

But hear me out.
I own my error ; you are free from guilt ;
That prating Daja knows not what she says.
She's hostile to you, and she seeks to twine
A dangerous snare around you. Be it so.
I'm but a crazed enthusiast, doubly mad,
Aiming at far too much, or much too little.
That may be also true. Forgive me, Nathan.

NATHAN.

If you conceive thus of me——

TEMPLAR.

Well, in short.
I saw the Patriarch—but named you not.
'Twas false to say so, for I only told
The case in general terms, to sound his mind.
And that I also might have left undone,
For knew I not the Patriarch to be
An arrant, subtle knave ? And might I not
As well have told you all the case at first ?
Or was it right in me to risk the loss
Of such a father to the hapless maid ?
But what has happened now ? The Patriarch,
Ever consistent in his villainy,
Has all at once restored me to myself.
For hear me, Nathan, hear me ! Were he now
To learn your name, what more could then occur ?
He cannot seize the maid, if she belong
To some one else, and not to you alone.
'Tis from your house alone she can be dragged
Into a convent : grant her, then, I pray,

Grant her to me! Then come the Patriarch!
He'll hardly dare to take my wife from me.
Oh! give her to me. Be she yours or not—
Your daughter—Christian—Jewess—'tis all one—
Or be she nothing—I will ne'er inquire,
Or in my lifetime ask you what she is,
'Tis all alike to me.

NATHAN.

Do you then think
That to conceal the truth I am compelled?

TEMPLAR.

No matter.

NATHAN.

I have ne'er denied the truth
To you, or any one whom it concerned
To know the fact, that she's of Christian birth,
And that the maid is my adopted child.
Why I have not informed her of the truth,
I need explain to none but to herself.

TEMPLAR.

Nathan; no need of that, it were not well
That she should see you in a different light;
Then spare her the discovery. As yet
She's yours alone—no other's—to bestow.
Then grant her to me, Nathan, I implore—
Grant her to me: I only, I alone,
Can rescue her a second time—and will.

NATHAN.

Yes, you could once have saved her, but alas!
'Tis now too late.

TEMPLAR.

Too late! ah! say not so.

NATHAN.

Thanks to the Patriarch.

TEMPLAR.

Why, thanks to him?
Why should we thank the Patriarch! For what?

NATHAN.

That now we know her relatives, and know
Into whose hands Recha may be restored.

TEMPLAR.

Let him give thanks who shall have better cause
To thank him.

NATHAN.

But you must receive her now
From other hands than mine.

TEMPLAR.

Alas, poor maid!
O hapless Recha! what has chanced to thee,
That what to other orphans had appeared
A real blessing, is to thee a curse!
But, Nathan, where are these new relatives?

NATHAN.

Where are they?

TEMPLAR.

Ay, both where and who are they?

NATHAN.

Her brother is discovered, and to him
You must address yourself.

TEMPLAR.

Her brother! Ha!
And what is he—a soldier or a priest?
Tell me at once what I've to hope from him.

NATHAN.

I hear he's neither—or he's both. As yet
I do not know him thoroughly.

TEMPLAR.

What more?

NATHAN.

He is a gallant fellow, and with him
Recha may be content.

TEMPLAR.

But he's a Christian.

At times I know not what to make of you.
Take it not ill, good Nathan, that I ask,
Must she not henceforth play the Christian,
Associate with Christians, and at last
Become the character she long has played?
Will not the tares at length grow up and choke
The pure wheat you have sown? And does not **that**
Affect you? Yet you say she'll be content
When with her brother.

NATHAN.

As I think and hope.

For should she e'er have need of anything,
Has she not you and me?

TEMPLAR.

What can she need
When with her brother. Gladly he'll provide
His dear new sister with a thousand robes,
With dainties, and with toys and finery.
And what could any sister wish for more—
Unless, perhaps, a husband? And him too,
Him too the brother, in due time, will find;
And the more Christian he, the better!—**Nathan,**
How sad to think the angel you have formed,
Should now be marred by others!

NATHAN.

Be assured

He'll always prove deserving of our love.

TEMPLAR.

Nay speak not so; of my love, speak not so,

For it can brook no loss, however small,
Not e'en a name. But, hold! Has she as yet
Any suspicion of these late events?

NATHAN.

'Tis possible, and yet I know not how.

TEMPLAR.

It matters not; she must, in either case,
First learn from me what fate is threat'ning her.
My purpose not to speak with her again,
And ne'er to see her more, till I should call
Your Recha mine, is gone. I take my leave.

NATHAN.

Nay, whither would you go?

TEMPLAR.

At once to her,
To learn if she be bold enough at heart,
To fix upon the only course that now
Is worthy of her.

NATHAN.

Name it.

TEMPLAR.

It is this:
That henceforth she should never care to know
Aught of her brother or of you.

NATHAN.

What more?

TEMPLAR.

To follow me—even if it were her fate
To wed a Mussulman.

NATHAN.

Stay, Templar, stay!
You will not find her. She's with Sittah now,
The Sultan's sister.

TEMPLAR.

Wherefore, and since when?

NATHAN.

If you desire to see her brother, come,
Follow me straight.

TEMPLAR.

Her brother, say you? Whose?
Recha's, or Sittah's?

NATHAN.

Both—ay, both, perhaps.
But come this way, I pray you. Come with me.
(NATHAN *leads the* TEMPLAR *away.*)

SCENE VI.—SITTAH'S *harem.*

SITTAH *and* RECHA *engaged in conversation.*

SITTAH.

How I am pleased with you, sweet girl. But, come,
Shake off these fears, and be no more alarmed,
Be happy, cheerful. Let me hear you talk.

RECHA.

Princess!

SITTAH.

Nay, child, not princess! Call me friend,
Or Sittah—or your sister—or dear mother,
For I might well be so to you—so good,
So prudent, and so young! How much you know,
How much you must have read!

RECHA.

Read, Sittah! now
You're mocking me, for I can scarcely read.

SITTAH.

Scarce read, you young deceiver!

RECHA.

Yes, perhaps
My father's hand ; I thought you spoke of books.

SITTAH.

And so I did—of books.

RECHA.

They puzzle me

To read.

SITTAH.

Indeed !

RECHA.

I speak, in veriest truth.
My father hates book-learning, which he says,
Makes an impression only on the brain
With lifeless letters.

SITTAH.

Well, he's right in that.

And so the greater part of what you know—

RECHA.

I've learnt from his own mouth, and I can tell
The when, the where, and why he taught it me.

SITTAH.

So it clings closer, and the soul drinks in
The full instruction.

RECHA.

Yes, and Sittah, too,

Has not read much.

SITTAH.

How so ? I am not vain
Of having read, and yet why say you so ?
Speak boldly. Tell the reason.

RECHA.

She's so plain—
So free from artifice—so like herself.

SITTAH.

Well !

RECHA.

And my father says 'tis rarely books
Work that effect.

SITTAH.

Oh, what a man he is,

Dear Recha!

RECHA.

Is he not?

SITTAH.

He never fails

To hit the mark.

RECHA.

Yes, yes; and yet this father—

SITTAH.

What ails you, love?

RECHA.

This father—

SITTAH.

Oh my God!

You're weeping.

RECHA.

And this father—it must forth—

My heart wants room, wants room—

(Throws herself in tears at SITTAH'S feet.)

SITTAH.

What ails you, Recha?

RECHA.

Yes, I must lose this father!

SITTAH.

Lose him—never!

Why so? Be calm. Courage! it must not be.

RECHA.

Your offer to be friend and sister to me
Will now not be in vain.

SITTAH.

Yes, I am both.
Arise, arise, or I must call for help.

RECHA.

O pardon! I forget, through agony,
With whom I speak. Tears, sobbing and despair
Are naught with Sittah. Reason, calm and cool,
Is over her alone omnipotent.
No other argument avails with her.

SITTAH.

Well, then?

RECHA.

My friend and sister, suffer not
Another father to be forced on me.

SITTAH.

Another father to be forced on you!
Who can do that, or wish to do it, love?

RECHA.

Who but my good, my evil genius, Daja?
She can both wish it and perform the deed.
You do not know this good, this evil Daja.
May God forgive her, and reward her, too,
For she has done me good and evil, both.

SITTAH.

Evil? Then she has little goodness left.

RECHA.

Oh, she has much.

SITTAH.

Who is she?

RECHA.

Who? a Christian,
Who cared for me in childhood's early years.
You cannot know how little she allowed
That I should miss a mother's tender cares—

May God reward her for it!—but she has
Worried and tortured me.

SITTAH.

Wherefore, and how?

RECHA.

Poor woman, she's a Christian, and from love
Has tortured me : a warm enthusiast,
Who thinks she only knows the real road
That leads to God.

SITTAH.

I understand you now.

RECHA.

And one of those who feel in duty bound
To point it out to every one who strays
From the plain path, to lead, to drag them in.
And who can censure them? for if the road
They travel is the only one that's safe,
They cannot, without pain, behold their friends
Pursue a path that leads to endless woe,
Else, at the self-same time, 'twere possible
To love and hate another. Nor does this
Alone compel me to complain aloud.
Her groans, her prayers, her warnings, and her threats
I could have borne much longer willingly.
They always called up good and wholesome thoughts.
Who is not flattered to be held so dear,
And precious by another, that the thought
Of parting pierces him with lasting pain?

SITTAH.

This is most true.

RECHA.

And yet this goes too far,
And I have nothing to oppose to it—
Patience, reflection, nothing.

SITTAH.

How? to what?

RECHA.

To what she has disclosed to me.

SITTAH.

Say, when?

RECHA.

'Tis scarce an instant. Coming hither
 We passed a Christian temple on our way;
 She all at once stood still, seemed inly moved,
 Raised her moist eyes to heaven, then looked on me.
 "Come," she exclaimed at length, "come straight on
 here,
 Through this old fane." She leads, I follow her.
 My eyes with horror overrun the dim
 And tottering ruin: all at once she stops
 By a low ruined altar's sunken steps.
 O, how I felt, when there, with streaming eyes
 And wringing hands, down at my feet she fell!

SITTAH.

Good child!

RECHA.

And, by the Holy Virgin, who had heard
 So many suppliant's prayers, and had performed
 Full many a wonder there, she begged, implored
 With looks of heart-felt sympathy and love,
 That I would now take pity on myself,
 And pardon her for daring to unfold
 The nature of the Church's claims on me.

SITTAH.

I guessed as much.

RECHA.

I'm born of Christian blood,
 Have been baptized, and am not Nathan's child!
 Nathan is not my father! God, O God!
 He's not my father, Sittah! Now, behold,
 I'm once more prostrate at your feet.

SITTAH.

Arise!

Recha, arise! behold, my brother comes.

SCENE VII.

SALADIN, SITTAH, *and* RECHA.

SALADIN.

What is the matter, Sittah?

SITTAH.

She has swooned.

SALADIN.

Who is she?

SITTAH.

Don't you know?

SALADIN.

'Tis Nathan's child.

What ails her?

SITTAH.

Look up, Recha! 'tis the Sultan.

RECHA (*crawling to Saladin's feet*).

No, I'll not rise—not rise, nor even look
Upon the Sultan's countenance, nor wonder
At the bright lustre of unchanging truth
And goodness on his brow and in his eye,
Before——

SITTAH.

Rise, rise!

RECHA.

Before he promises——

SALADIN.

Come, come! I promise, whatsoe'er your prayer.

RECHA.

'Tis only this—to leave my father to me,
And me to him. As yet I cannot tell
Who seeks to be my father: who it is

Can harbor such a wish I'll ne'er inquire.
Does blood alone make fathers—blood alone?

SITTAH.

Who can have been so cruel as to raise
This dire suspicion in my Recha's breast?
Say, is it proved? beyond all doubt made clear?

RECHA.

'Tis proved, for Daja had it from my nurse,
Whose dying lips entrusted it to her.

SALADIN.

Dying! she raved. And even were it true,
A father is not made by blood alone;
Scarcely the father of a savage beast—
Blood only gives the right to earn the name.
Then fear no more, but hear me. If there be
Two fathers who contend for thee, leave both,
And claim a third! O! take me for your father!

SITTAH.

Oh, do so, Recha, do so!

SALADIN.

I will be
A good, kind father to you. But, in truth
A better thought occurs. Why should you need
Two fathers? They are mortal, and must die.
'Twere better, Recha, to look out betimes
For one to start with you on equal terms,
And stake his life for thine. You understand?

SITTAH.

You make her blush!

SALADIN.

Why that was half my scheme.
Blushing becomes plain features, and will make
A beauteous cheek more beauteous. My commands
Are giv'n to bring your father, Nathan, here.

Another comes as well. You'll guess his name?
Hither they come! Will you allow it, Sittah?

SITTAH.

Brother!

SALADIN.

And when he comes, maid, you must blush
To crimson.

RECHA.

Sittah! wherefore should I blush?

SALADIN.

You young dissembler, you will else grow pale!
But as thou wilt and canst. (*A female slave enters,
and approaches SITTAH.*) What, here so soon?

SITTAH.

Well, let them enter. Brother, here they are!

SCENE VIII.

NATHAN, *the* TEMPLAR, *and the others.*

SALADIN.

Welcome, my dear good friends! Nathan, to you
I must first mention, you may send and fetch
Your moneys when you will.

NATHAN.

Sultan—

SALADIN.

And now

I'm at your service.

NATHAN.

Sultan—

SALADIN.

For my gold
Is now arrived; the caravan is safe:
These many years I have not been so rich.

Now, tell me what you wish for, to achieve
Some splendid speculation? You in trade,
Like us, have never too much ready cash.

NATHAN.

Why speak about this trifle first? I see
An eye in tears (*going towards RECHA*). My Recha,
you have wept.

What have you lost? Are you not still my child?

RECHA.

My father!

NATHAN.

That's enough! We're understood
By one another! But look up—be calm,
Be cheerful! If your heart is still your own,
And if no threatened loss disturb your breast,
Your father is not lost to you!

RECHA.

None, none!

TEMPLAR.

None! Then I'm much deceived. What we don't fear
To lose, we ne'er have loved, and ne'er have wished
To be possessed of. But 'tis well, 'tis well!
Nathan, this changes all! At your command,
We come here, Sultan. You have been misled
By me, and I will trouble you no more!

SALADIN.

Rash, headlong youth! Must every temper yield
To yours!—and must we all thus guess your mind?

TEMPLAR.

But, Sultan, you have heard and seen it all.

SALADIN.

Well, truly, it was awkward to be thus
Uncertain of your cause!

TEMPLAR.

I know my fate.

SALADIN.

Whoe'er presumes upon a service done,
 Cancels the benefit. What you have saved
 Is, therefore, not your own. Or else the thief,
 Urged by mere avarice through flaming halls,
 Were like yourself a hero. (*Advancing towards RECHA
 to lead her to the TEMPLAR.*) Come, sweet maid!
 Be not reserved towards him. Had he been so,
 Were he less warm, less proud, he had held back,
 And had not saved you. Weigh the former deed
 Against the latter, and you'll make him blush!
 Do what he should have done! confess your love!
 Make him your offer! and if he refuse,
 Or e'er forget how infinitely more
 You do for him than he has done for you—
 For what, in fact, have been his services,
 Save soiling his complexion? a mere sport—
 Else has he nothing of my Assad in him,
 But only wears his mask. Come, lovely maid.

SITTAH.

Go, dearest, go! this step is not enough
 For gratitude; it is too little.

NATHAN.

Hold!

Hold, Saladin! hold, Sittah!

SALADIN.

What would you?

NATHAN.

It is the duty of another now
 To speak.

SALADIN.

Who questions that? Beyond all doubt
 A foster-father has a right to vote
 First, if you will. You see I know the whole.

NATHAN.

Not quite. I speak not, Sultan, of myself.
There is another and a different man
Whom I must first confer with, Saladin.

SALADIN.

And who is he?

NATHAN.

Her brother.

SALADIN.

Recha's brother?

NATHAN.

E'en so.

RECHA.

My brother! Have I then a brother?

TEMPLAR (*starting from his silent and sullen inattention*).

Where is this brother? Not yet here! 'Twas here
I was to meet him.

NATHAN.

Patience yet awhile.

TEMPLAR (*bitterly*).

He has imposed a father on the girl;
He'll find a brother for her now!

SALADIN.

Indeed,
That much was wanting. But this mean rebuke,
Christian, had ne'er escaped my Assad's lips.

NATHAN.

Forgive him: I forgive him readily.
Who knows what in his youth and in his place
We might ourselves have thought? (*Approaching him
in a very friendly manner.*) Suspicion, knight,
Follows upon reserve. Had you at first
Vouchsafed to me your real name——

TEMPLAR.

How ! what !

You are no Stauffen.

NATHAN.

TEMPLAR.

Tell me who I am.

NATHAN.

Conrad of Stauffen, not.

TEMPLAR.

Then what's my name ?

Leo of Filneck.

NATHAN.

TEMPLAR.

How ?

NATHAN.

You start !

TEMPLAR.

With reason.

But who says this ?

NATHAN.

I, who can tell you more.

Meanwhile, observe, I tax you not with falsehood.

TEMPLAR.

Indeed !

NATHAN.

It may be both names fit you well.

TEMPLAR.

I think so. (*Aside*) God inspired him with that thought.

NATHAN.

Your mother was a Stauffen : and her brother
(The uncle to whose care you were consigned,
When, by the rigor of the climate chased,
Your parents quitted Germany, to seek

This land once more) was Conrad. He, perhaps,
 Adopted you as his own son and heir
 Is it long since you travelled hither with him?
 Does he still live?

TEMPLAR.

What shall I answer him?
 He speaks the truth. Nathan, 'tis so indeed;
 But he himself is dead. I journeyed here,
 With the last troops of knights, to reinforce
 Our order. But inform me how this tale
 Concerns your Recha's brother.

NATHAN.

Well, your father—

TEMPLAR.

What! did you know him too?

NATHAN.

He was my friend.

TEMPLAR.

Your friend! Oh, Nathan, is it possible?

NATHAN.

Oluf of Filneck did he style himself;
 But he was not a German.

TEMPLAR.

You know that?

NATHAN.

He had espoused a German, and he lived
 For some time with your mother there.

TEMPLAR.

Of this, I beg. But what of Recha's brother?
No more

NATHAN.

It is yourself.

TEMPLAR.

What, I? am I her brother?

RECHA.

He, my brother?

SALADIN.

Are they so near akin?

RECHA (*approaching the TEMPLAR*).

My brother!

TEMPLAR (*stepping back*).

I, your brother?

RECHA (*stopping and turning to Nathan*).

No, in truth,

It cannot be. His heart makes no response.
O God! we are deceivers.SALADIN (*to the Templar*).

Say you so?

Is that your thought? All is deceit in you:
The voice, the gesture, and the countenance,
Nothing of these is yours. How! will you not
Acknowledge such a sister? Then begone!TEMPLAR (*approaching him humbly*).Oh! do not misinterpret my surprise.
Sultan, you never saw your Assad's heart
At any time like this. Then do not err.
Mistake not him and me. (*Turning to NATHAN.*) You
give me much,
Nathan, and also you take much away,
And yet you give me more than you withdraw—
Ay, infinitely more. My sister, sister! (*embraces*
RECHA).

NATHAN.

Blanda of Filneck.

TEMPLAR.

Blanda, ha! not Recha?

Your Recha now no more! Have you resigned
Your child? Give her her Christian name once more,
And for my sake discard her then. Oh, Nathan,
Why must she suffer for a fault of mine?

NATHAN.

What mean you, oh, my children, both of you?
For sure my daughter's brother is my child
Whenever he shall wish.

(While they embrace NATHAN, SALADIN uneasily approaches SITTAH).

SALADIN.

What say you, sister?

SITTAH.

I'm deeply moved——

SALADIN.

And I half tremble when

I think of the emotion that must come:
Prepare yourself to bear it as you may.

SITTAH.

What! How!

SALADIN.

Nathan, a word—one word with you.

(He joins NATHAN, while SITTAH approaches the others to express her sympathy, and NATHAN and SALADIN converse in a low tone.)

Hear, hear me, Nathan. Said you not just now
That he——

NATHAN.

That who?

SALADIN.

Her father was not born
In Germany. You know then whence he came?
And what he was?

NATHAN.

He never told me that.

SALADIN.

Was he no Frank, nor from the Western land?

NATHAN.

He said as much. He spoke the Persian tongue.

SALADIN.

The Persian! need I more? 'Tis he! 'twas he!

NATHAN.

Who?

SALADIN.

Assad, my brother Assad, beyond doubt.

NATHAN.

If you think so, then be assured from this:
Look in this book (*handing him the breviary*).

SALADIN.

Oh, 'tis his hand! once more
I recognize it.

NATHAN.

They know naught of this:
It rests with you to tell them all the truth.

SALADIN (*turning over the leaves of the breviary*).

They are my brother's children. Shall I not
Acknowledge them and claim them? Or shall I
Abandon them to you? (*Speaking aloud.*) Sittah, **they**
are
The children of my brother and of yours. (*Rushes to
embrace them.*)

SITTAH (*following his example*).

What do I hear? Could it be otherwise?

SALADIN (*to the TEMPLAR*).

Proud youth! from this time forward you are bound
To love me. (*To RECHA.*) And henceforth, without
your leave
Or with it, I am what I vowed to be.

SITTAH.

And so am I.

SALADIN (*to the* TEMPLAR).

My son! my Assad's son!

TEMPLAR.

I of your blood! Then those were more than dreams
With which they used to lull my infancy—

(*Falls at SULTAN'S feet.*)

SALADIN (*raising him*).

There, mark the rascal! though he knew something
Of what has chanced, he was content that I
Should have become his murderer! Beware.

(*The curtain falls whilst they repeatedly embrace each other in silence.*)

THE END.

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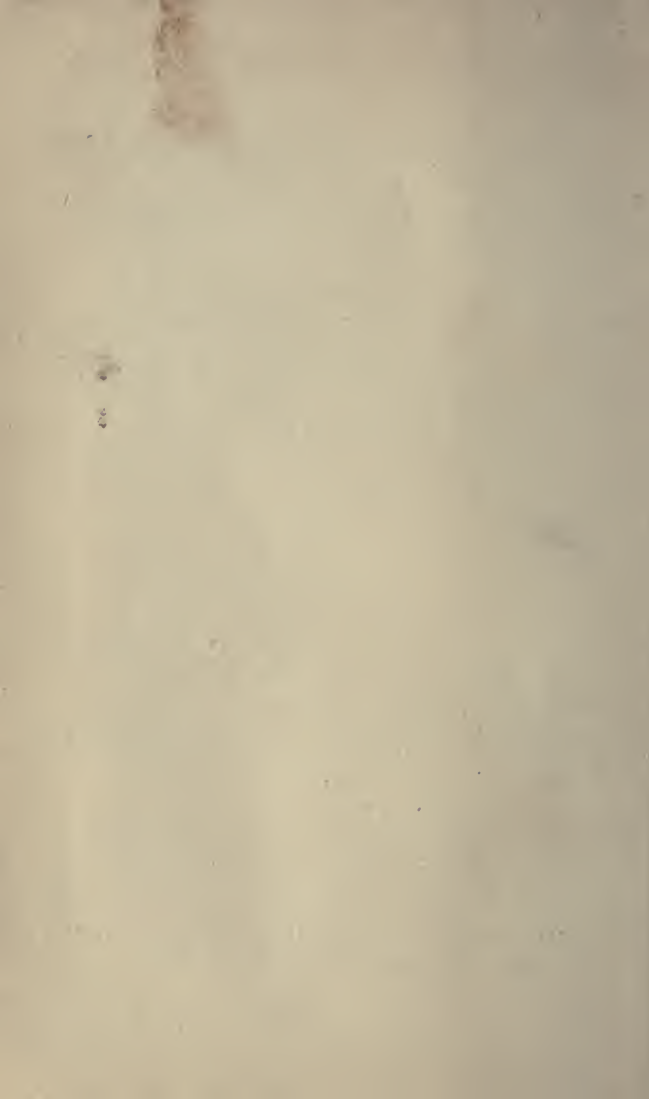
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