

Stories of Child Life
in a
Jewish Colony in Palestine

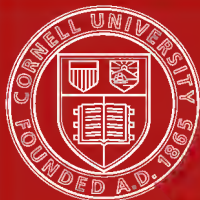
—
Hannah Trager



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Stories of child life in a Jewish colony



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"GIVE ME THE HEART," SAID LEAH, "AND I WON'T TELL"

Frontispiece

Stories of Child Life in a Jewish Colony in Palestine

BY

HANNAH TRAGER

Author of

Festival Stories of Child Life in a Jewish Colony in Palestine, etc.

WITH A PREFACE BY

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ILLUSTRATED



NEW YORK

E. P. DUTTON & COMPANY

681 FIFTH AVENUE

DUTTON
12/50/61

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356 451 B 1
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Printed in the United States of America

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To my dear friend,

Helena Frank

*whose love for my little Palestinians has
encouraged me to write these tales.*

PREFACE

BY PROFESSOR ISRAEL ABRAHAMS

THESE stories have charm. They also possess a rarer quality. They are true. The traveler in the near East cannot fail to notice the contrast between the child of the Arab village and the child of the Jewish Colony. This contrast Mrs. Trager has clearly seen. This contrast she as clearly illustrates in her sketches and tales.

The Jewish child is sometimes graceless enough; but he never degenerates into the gutter-snipe. The reason is to be found in the home life. Judaism is a home religion. Besides that, the very grimness of life in cities has always

given the home its opportunity. The joyousness has had to be supplied from within. And it was so supplied. With all its severity of discipline, Judaism is a happy scheme.

In the Jewish Colonies the problem has not been quite the same as in the towns. The difficulty was both greater and less. It was less because the surroundings were healthier, and there was ready-made an environment for the development of the brighter side of Child life. But the difficulty was greater, because to the early settlers—and it is of them that Mrs. Trager's delightful stories primarily tell—the environment was strange. After all, town life is town life all the world over. But these Jewish children of the Colonists were brought up in circumstances novel to their own parents. To harmonize a life

spent on the soil with religious institutions which for many centuries had been applied to city conditions, was no simple task. How should the child become rural while retaining the higher culture of urbanity? How should the child dig without becoming a boor? If anything, the Colonies retained not too little, but too much, of the elements of town life. Yet the fault, if it be a fault, has had ample compensations. Rural England to-day, in so far as the lighter side of life is concerned, is far behind Jewish rural Palestine. Jewish Colonial life is the reverse of monotonous.

The fact is that in the Colonies parents and children grew up together. In the towns, new conditions have too often meant a break between the generations: the hearts of fathers and children have sometimes become estranged.

But in the Colonies the fathers have gone some way towards the fresher air of the agricultural régime, while the children have been retained a long way in the olden spiritual atmosphere. What type will ultimately emerge it is not easy to foretell. One may be sure that it will be a type distinguished rather by harmony than conflict. Mrs. Trager presents both parents and children in an amiable guise. As to the children, they are full of fun and mischief, with just a little self-consciousness. Yet without this last touch the picture would be false, for it is in the early realization of religion as a vital force that the specific character of the Jewish Child is built. As it is, the writer has given us an historical document; she has caught a transitional moment; the moment when the open air was replacing the

ghetto; and she has given us an artistic record of it. The record, however, is not a mere history. It presents facts that it is of lasting importance for us to know. We see here how the enormous influence which Judaism exerts in life, under all and any conditions, works itself out under new or unusual conditions. But beyond all such considerations the stories are valuable as literature. They reveal many contrasted traits of character, various aspects of child nature; they enable us to perceive the feeling in these children that they are pioneers in a great experiment, and above all they show us that sense of humor without which no Jewish child is complete.

No doubt the stories have a profound significance. To the young reader, however, they will appeal without any

of this subtler sophisticated meaning as stories pure and simple, as pictures of a life they would like to share. To the adult they may point a moral. To the young they will tell a tale. If the latter also catch an echo of the moral—so much the better for them.

I. ABRAHAMMS.

Cambridge.

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**Stories of Child Life in a
Jewish Colony in Palestine**

Stories of Child Life in a Jewish Colony in Palestine

THE RIDE

ONE day an Arab came into the Colony, leading a camel laden with firewood. The camel was kneeling at the door of a house, and the Arab had gone inside with the wood, when the boys came out of Cheder*. Seeing the camel, they at once surrounded it, and began to tease it. When a camel is teased it sets up a horrible noise, something between a grunt and a squeal; but this only amused the boys all the more.

Said one: "I should love to ride on

*An old-fashioned school for teaching the Bible and the Talmud.

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a camel—I have ridden a donkey, but never a camel. I wonder what it feels like.”

“It must be grand,” said Moses; “you are so high up and the camel gives such big strides. It must be quite different from being on a donkey. I wonder, if we gave the Arab a franc, whether he would let us ride round the Colony?”

“Let us try,” said a third.

“But have you got the money to give him?” asked Abraham.

“Not here, but in my savings-box at home.”

“I tell you what,” said another boy; “by the time you have fetched the money we shall be late for Cheder; and if we go home, we shall be told to go and run a message or fetch water or something, and before we return the Arab will have finished stacking the

wood and be gone. Let us get on to the camel at once, have a ride round the Colony, and pay the Arab when we come back.”

The rest agreed that this was by far the safest plan. It was then quickly decided that four boys should mount and have their ride, and then give up their seats to four others, four being as many as could sit on the camel at a time. The camel had a wooden saddle with two paniers slung across it, and a rope bridle, which was tied round the animal's muzzle.

The four boys having got on to its back, a dispute arose as to who should hold the bridle; but there was no time to be lost, so they settled that each of the four should sit in front and guide the camel in his turn, little dreaming that the camel had no intentions whatever of

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being guided by any one of them.

So one boy took the rope and pulled at it to make the camel get up, and one of the bystanders got a twig and poked its muzzle. At first it seemed as if nothing would make it move, and when it did get up, it was so suddenly, that the boys were nearly thrown out of their seats. Then it set off, and, as Moses had said, they were very high up and the camel took very big strides. The boys clung to one another and began to feel dizzy.

“Stop him!” they called out to a boy who was running alongside. “Stop him! we are falling off!”

But it was easier said than done, for now the camel was well under weigh, and the more the boy in front tugged at the rope, the faster went the camel, till the boys on his back screamed with

terror and waved their hands to their comrades, shouting to them to call the Arab to come out and stop it.

But the boys in the road thought they were shouting and waving from excitement, and stood and cheered them, which made the camel begin to run. The boys, who had thought of nothing but a ride round the Colony, now saw it vanish behind them and imagined themselves being carried out into the Desert, there to be murdered by the Bedouins or to die of hunger and thirst—and they yelled aloud.

“Stop that noise!” shouted Abraham, “and instead of screaming, say a Psalm and pray to God to save us, for only He can do that now. And you, Joseph, let go the rope and hold on tight to the saddle.” Abraham was shaking with fear himself, but he took the lead as

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usual and the others were too glad to be told what to do. So they started repeating Psalm after Psalm, as well as they could for crying and the terrible long shakes of the camel. After a time that seemed to them hours, they saw themselves entering an Arab village, and at the door of a certain house the camel knelt down and grunted loudly.

Instantly an Arab woman came out in her blue cotton dress, and seeing the camel with four Jewish boys on its back instead of her husband, she screamed: "Allàh akbar! my husband is dead!" At the sound of her screams the neighbors came rushing to the spot, and the Arab children began pulling at the boys' clothes. They were not used to seeing boys dressed like that, because they themselves wore nothing but short striped shirts, and the quite little ones



"ALLAH AKBARI MY HUSBAND IS DEAD!"

had on still less, or even nothing at all.

The boys were too frightened either to speak or to get off the camel, for the Arabs standing round, some with coal-black eyes and beards, and some with guns over their shoulders, made them think they had fallen into the hands of robbers who would probably kill them.

There was a great hubbub, and the boys did not know much Arabic, but at last Abraham understood what the women were saying to him. They were asking him: "Who killed the master of the camel?" for they all thought he had been killed and the children sent to tell the widow.

Abraham managed to explain what had really happened, and promised money if some one would take them home. Then the women laughed and

the camel's mistress invited the boys into her house, saying she would give them some bread and goat's-milk cheese. Abraham's companions were still too frightened to move, so he got angry and pulled them down off the camel, telling them it would be all right and they would be taken home in time.

They all went into the house and asked for some water to wash with, for it was midday and terribly hot and dusty. The woman brought them a jug of water and they washed their faces and sat down and waited.

Meanwhile the Arab woman had taken some camel-dung and straw, lit a fire and proceeded to bake some thin cakes of maize-flour and water in a tin set on three stones. The cakes looked something like Passover biscuits. She made about ten, and gave two to each

boy, with some cheese and goat's-milk, telling them to eat and that when her husband came back and it got cooler he would take them home.

Feeling a little more cheerful they went back to the jug washed their fingers, said a prayer over the bread, and fell to, for they were very hungry. After the meal they said grace, and then started talking over their adventure.

"Now was I not right," said Abraham, "to say we should repeat a Psalm? Only God could have saved us from the Arabs. Did you not see their guns?" and they all shuddered anew at the recollection.

Presently they grew tired of sitting still, and told the woman they would go and walk about the village. What they saw there disgusted them and made the Colony seem a little Paradise by con-

trast. Near to every hovel was a heap of rubbish and refuse; the flies came and stuck to their hands and faces; the smells were horrid; the children all seemed to have bad eyes and sores, besides being half-naked; and dogs growled and jumped at them; cocks and hens ran between their feet; and suddenly a goat would make straight for one or other of them and knock him over.

So they were quite glad to return to the house, where they found the Arab had come home, and was in such a terrible rage that they were frightened lest he should refuse to take them home, as he had had to walk two hours in the heat of the day, instead of having, after he had disposed of his wood, ridden home on his camel in the evening.

The boys said they would give him

two beshliks, but he would not hear of it and named a large sum, declaring that he would not take them home for less. They said that was all the money they had, but he replied that if they would promise him the larger sum he would trust them to pay him by degrees, as he knew that the Judean boys would keep their word. This, although it meant three months' pocket-money, they were glad enough to do, especially as they heard him tell his wife of the alarm and anxiety of their parents, when they had learnt that Abraham and his three comrades had disappeared riding on a camel.

“I suppose,” said Moses, “we shall be well whipped, but it will seem nothing after the fright we have had.”

“No indeed,” said Joseph, “I shall not mind it a bit, for my conscience will

be clearer, though we never meant to do anything but have a ride round the place.”

The end of it all was, however, that they were all forgiven, and, indeed, the lesson had been severe enough. It had taught them how easily what is originally regarded as a mere bit of mischief may bring misfortune and remorse in its train.

THE PICNIC

THE PICNIC

SCHOOL had just broken up for the holidays, and the boys were at a loose end; so they decided one day to go to a little Colony near by where there was a river, and do some fishing.

The difficulty lay in how to get away without their parents knowing. Their mothers were sure to forbid the expedition, because they would have to pass through an Arab village. It was hoped, however, that inconvenient questions as to where they were going might be evaded. And as to the Arab village, if they took one of the Arab boys who worked on the Colony, he would protect them, and also show them where to fish.

Luck favored them: they all got off unhindered, with their lunch tied up in their handkerchiefs, the Arab boy carrying water-melons. The Colony, Judea by name, was a couple of miles away, and they had a hot trudge through the sand to get there.

When they reached the river side they sat down and devoured the water-melons, the Arab boy getting his share; and then baited their hooks with dough and cast their lines.

They sat and fished. When a ripple appeared on the water, one would cry out: "I have him! I have him!" whereupon they all pulled up their lines, and behold, nothing! This was very disappointing, but now and again one would really catch a very small fish and put it into his can, and then the others would be continually going to look at

it, to see if it were still alive and to give it a little more water, for they were tender-hearted and did not like to see even a fish die.

A couple of hours passed in this way, and only six or seven little fish had been caught, not enough for each boy to take one home to show his parents how clever he had been. Then, just as they had begun to wonder if they should give it up for the day, there was a scream and a loud splash, and a large ripple came lapping along the face of the water. Chaim, the Dunce, had fallen into the stream! What was to be done? None of them could swim; they had never been near so much water before by themselves, and there was Chaim, setting up shriek after shriek.

“Quick!” cried Abraham; “there is a rope in that basket—tie it round me—so

—two of you take hold of it—now let the Arab boy hold on to that tree, and one of you hold on to him, and let *that* boy give his hand to another . . . That's it!—make a line to the rope, and pull hard when I tell you.”

The others were too terrified to do anything but obey. Abraham, with the rope round him, plunged in, seized the shrieking Chaim by his collar, and shouted: “Pull! Pull!”

The other boys pulled as for dear life, and in another minute Abraham and Chaim were landed drenched and panting on the bank. The boys surrounded Abraham, patted and praised him, and then turned upon poor Chaim, declaring that such a stupid, clumsy fellow was only fit to stay at home with the girls. Chaim felt this deeply, for not only was he wet, cold, and frightened,

but shut out from any fun in the future.

Abraham did not like Chaim very much, for he was a lazy boy and not obliging like the others, but seeing him crying and shivering, he felt a sort of pity for him, and said: "Look here, boys; don't be nasty to him—it might have happened to any one of us. Perhaps he was thinking of the last lesson we had in school, and forgot where he was, and a big fish came along and pulled him into the river."

"It is true," whimpered Chaim; "a big fish was on my line, and I was so excited, I pulled too quickly, and slipped and fell in."

"I don't believe it," said all the others together; "he sometimes imagines things. But let us look for the rod, and if he speaks the truth, the fish will still be on the line."

The rod was now seen hanging on a bush, but quite out of reach except by swimming, and none of our boys, as we said, could swim. Hereupon, up came the Arab boy and said he would get it. "But can you swim?" they cried.

"Aiwàh!" said he; "certainly."

"Then why on earth did you not say so before?"

"I never thought of it," said he, "till I saw Abraham go into the water, and then it was too late."

"You stupid boy!" they exclaimed. "Anyhow, now get us the rod!"

The Arab boy, who had nothing much on, jumped into the stream and soon fetched the rod, and lo and behold! quite a big fish was on the hook.

Then the boys apologized to Chaim for having doubted his word, only—

to whom did the fish really belong? Chaim, it is true, had caught it, but, had it not been for Abraham, Chaim would have been drowned—there would have been no Chaim at all, so that the fish might be said to belong to Abraham. Then, but for the Arab boy, there would be no fish, so did it not rather belong to him? Finally they hit on a bright idea: to lay the dispute before their new teacher.

“Or shall we take it to Chaim’s mother?” said one. “She is very nice and clever, and would tell us what is right.” But Chaim did not like this idea.

“If you do that,” he said, “Mother and my sisters will know I fell into the water, and it will soon be all over the place, and we shall never be allowed

to come again." Which shewed that Chaim, the Dunce, could say a wise thing, too, on occasion.

"Right," said Abraham; "and look here, boys, another thing: we all want to come back here again and have some fun, and, as I said before, what happened to Chaim might happen to any other of us: let us ask the Arab to teach us to swim."

"Good, good!" cried the others; "so we will!"

The Arab boy was quite willing. They promised him some of their pocket-money and nice things to eat, and it was settled that he should give them a swimming lesson once a week.

Then they started for home, to find their teacher. And it was not only that they needed his decision about the fish, but that they wanted to try the master

himself, to take, as it were, the measure of his intellect. That he was kind and just, they already knew, and also that he could teach them nearly everything in the world except Gemara. But it remained to be seen how he would solve a knotty problem like this.

They found the teacher at home, and, after he had promised to keep the thing to himself, they unfolded their tale and produced the fish.

“Well,” said the teacher, with a twinkle in his eye, “my opinion is that the fish should be divided amongst you, that is: between Chaim—who caught it—Abraham, who saved Chaim—and the Arab boy, who swam for the rod.”

The boys were so delighted with this judgment, and so proud of having a master every bit as wise as King Solomon himself, that they forgot all fear

of consequences, and told their parents. And the parents were so much amused, and so pleased to think that the boys had laid the matter before their teacher, that they never thought of scolding them, and the day ended happily for all concerned.

THE HIVE

THE HIVE

IT was Sabbath, in the afternoon, and the boys, free from Cheder, were at a loss to know what to do. They had no books in those days, apart from the Pentateuch and the Gemara; and noisy games, as it was Sabbath, were out of the question. They were already beginning to yawn, when Moses had a sudden idea.

“I know what, boys,” said he, “I’ve thought of something.”

The boys’ faces cleared, and they all looked at Moses with expectation and hope. Moses felt pleased, because for once it was he, Moses—and not Abraham—who was the clever one.

“Well, boys, you know that my father

has a bee-hive on a roof on the farm. Let us climb up and eat some of the honey."

"Good," cried the others; "the only thing is: What about the bees? They sting!" Moses was nonplussed and stood silent.

"Where is Abraham?" was the cry. "Somebody go and fetch Abraham!" So Abraham was fetched, and the matter laid before him. He thought it over for a minute or two, and then said: "We shall manage all right. I shall wear a basket over my head and face, and Moses shall climb up with me and open the hive-door, and hold it while I put in my hand and take out the honey."

The plan sounded excellent. A basket was found loosely enough plaited for him who wore it to see out between the

plaits; and they all went to the building which had the hive on its roof.

The roof was too high to be reached without a ladder, so they got a ladder, too, set it up against the wall, and Abraham and Moses climbed up it and reached the hive.

Moses was seen from below to open the hive-door, and Abraham, wearing the basket, to introduce his hand into the hive.

Suddenly Moses gave a yell, let go the door, and buried his face in his arms. The next moment Abraham was hastily descending the ladder, and all the other boys started shouting and screaming, fleeing in all directions. Moses had opened the door too wide, and the bees had flown out and were attacking every boy within reach.

The noise brought the parents of Moses out of the house, and they saw him still sitting on the roof, trying to protect himself from the bees.

“Come down at once!” called the father, angrily; “I know what you’ve been after, and I shall give you what you deserve.”

“I won’t come down,” said Moses, “unless you promise not to beat me”; and he started running up and down along the edge of the roofing.

His mother screamed with terror. “He will fall off and be killed! Moses, Moses, come down!—here is the ladder. Father won’t beat you—he doesn’t mean it . . . ”

“Come down, you rascal,” said the father; “do you want to frighten your mother to death?”

“Do you promise not to beat me?” asked Moses.

What could his father do? He promised. Then Moses came down, his face swollen with stings and with crying. His mother began to stroke and pity him, but his father said: “Look here, Moses! I promised not to beat you, and I will keep my word, but to-morrow, you will have another punishment, for you are a bad boy.”

What with the pain of the stings and the thought of the unknown punishment to come, Moses got very little sleep that night. He wished with all his heart that he had come down off the roof at once and submitted to the beating, which he well knew he had deserved. Then it would have been over, and the smart of the stings would have

seemed easier to bear. But there was no help for it now, so he tossed on his little bed and waited for the day and what it would bring.

After breakfast, his father bade Moses to follow him; he went to the barn, opened the door, and said: "Go inside—you will spend the day here; and as you will have nothing to do and nothing to eat, you will have time to reflect on your misconduct and to repent. I hope you will also make some good resolutions for the future." He then closed and locked the door and went away, leaving Moses a prisoner.

Meanwhile the other boys had gone to Cheder; but Abraham managed to hear what had befallen Moses, and, when they were let out for dinner, he called the others round him and said:

“Boys, we must do something for Moses—his father has shut him up in the barn.”

“It was all his doing,” cried one; “it is thanks to him I could not sleep all night for my stings.”

“Well said!” cried another. But Abraham’s eyes, usually so dove-like, blazed with indignation. “Shame, shame on you all!” he exclaimed; “were we not all of us ready to eat the honey as well as he? And have you already forgotten what the teacher taught this very morning, that we should bear one the other’s burdens? I shall go to his help by myself.”

Then the others were ashamed, and said: “But what can we do for him?”

“Go home, all of you,” said Abraham, “and each of you fetch me part of

your lunch, and one of you bring a bottle of milk, if you can possibly get it.”

Presently they all met again, each bringing a large part of his lunch in a paper. “Here, Abraham,” they said, “take it.”

“That’s all right,” said Abraham, “but as there are ten of you and only one of Moses, I will take something from each, and you can eat the rest.” From one he took figs, from another cheese, from a third a piece of cake, from a fourth the bottle of milk, from a fifth a handful of Turkish sweetmeat, and so on. He made up a packet and then knotted it up in a handkerchief, to which he attached a stone. The bottle of milk was done up separately.

Then they all went to the door of the barn and called to Moses through the

keyhole. There was no response, and they looked at one another and whispered: "Perhaps he is dead."

"Maybe," said one, "he fell asleep. Let us knock at the door with a stone." They did so, and this time Moses answered them. They explained that they had brought him some food, and would throw it in through the window.

"The window is very high up," said Moses, in a sad voice; "go round and see!" They went and saw that it was indeed very high up; but, one boy climbing on to the shoulders of another, they made a living ladder, and threw in first the food and then the bottle of milk, which, happily, did not break.

Then they returned to the keyhole, spoke words of comfort to Moses, and ran back to Cheder, feeling very happy

and light of heart; for, if there is anything certain in this world, it is that a kind deed brings happiness to the doer.

Moses ate and drank gratefully, and the fact of the friends he had led into mischief and trouble being so good to him, made him feel more sorry than he had felt yet.

In the evening his father came for him, in time to go to Evening Prayer. "Ask God to forgive you your sin, Moses, and then we will go home and mother will give you some supper," he said.

Moses did not want to appear too pleased at this, because he did not want to deceive his father by seeming very hungry, but neither did he want to tell him that he had feasted like a king—so he said nothing, and followed his father to the synagogue. There his

comrades pressed round him and showed him, as well as they could, how delighted they were to see him free again.

THE ORANGES

THE ORANGES

A BRAHAM was laid up with malaria, and his school-fellows came every day to visit him. Malaria is not a catching illness, so the other children were allowed to come and sit with him. But he was feverish and rather irritable, as he was always thirsty and had a nasty taste in his mouth. All he wanted was oranges, and none could be got in the village—only in Jaffa. And as it happened to be the busy season, no one had time to go to town.

One day, when his comrades left him, they said to one another: “What a pity we can’t do something for Abraham. He always does things for us if he pos-

sibly can, and we could shew him that we remember."

"I will tell you what, boys," said Dan. "You know to-morrow we are breaking up school, so why should not some of us go up to the orchards near town, and get him some oranges?"

"Splendid!" they all exclaimed.

"But how?" said Joseph. "We can not walk all the way, it is such a distance; and, if we met some of the Bedouins, they might kill us."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Dan; "whenever I go with my father to Jaffa, and we see some Arabs coming along with camels, they pass us by with a greeting, and nothing happens."

"It would be great fun, wouldn't it," said Moses, "to go to Jaffa and back? I never went there by myself. It would

be *some* adventure to see all the shops, and go to the Arabs' bazaar."

"What is the good of that, if we have no money to buy anything with?"

"Oh, that does not matter! It does not cost money to look on!"

"Well, it isn't a bad idea," said Moses; "it would be nice to have done such a thing. *Won't* the other boys be jealous?"

So it was decided that a few should go. Now, when the others heard it, they *all* wanted to go too, and, as that was not possible, it was decided to draw lots. So they cut up some papers of different colors: the ones who drew red were to go.

Moses, Dan, and Samson drew red papers. Then, and then only, they realized that, as Joseph had said, they could

not walk so far. Even riding to Jaffa took a few hours. What was to be done? They stood looking at one another and could find no way out of the difficulty. It would not have been any trouble if their parents had known about it, for then they could have taken a mule, or a pony, or a donkey. But their parents were not to know, for they would not have allowed them to go alone, as it was so far, and so many Arabs passed that way.

At last Moses solved the difficulty by saying that he would take their donkey out of the stable and risk it. The others were to meet him in a quiet corner, and, if any one saw him before that, riding alone, they would think that he was going to the fields, taking his brothers their dinner.

So they parted to meet in the morn-

ing. The three lucky boys did not sleep, for it seemed to them that they were going on a great adventure. They could hardly wait for the dawn. Yet they did not dare show their excitement, for, if any one had noticed, he would have guessed something was afoot. So they dressed, went to Shul with their father, had their breakfast and asked their mothers to give them some food, as some of the boys were going to spend the day out. The mothers tied up some food in little red handkerchiefs, and told them not to get into mischief.

As long as they were in the Colony they walked quietly, but when they came to the end of the street they ran, and all the three met at a certain place, Dan, Samson, and Moses with the donkey.

They got onto the donkey, held onto

one another, and all went smoothly, till they came to the sand-hills. Here the donkey stood still and would not move, so they all had to get down, and one pulled the donkey by the reins, while another pushed him from behind. When he started going again, they jumped on his back.

So it went on for a short time, but, just as they came to the top of a sandy hill, the donkey stopped again. At this, Samson got out of temper and, taking a prickly branch, he beat the donkey with it, so as to make him go faster. The donkey got angry, for he was not used to being beaten, threw up his hind legs, and behold! all the three boys flew head over heels into the air. And, as it was at the top of the hill, they all went rolling down it one over another, unable to stop themselves.

Meanwhile the donkey did not wait. The moment he was free of his burden, he turned and ran down the hill towards the Colony. He knew his way home, and, once there, he went quietly into his stable, as if nothing had happened.

Meanwhile the boys jumped up, ran up the hill after the donkey, but no donkey was to be seen, and they could not make out where it had disappeared!

Some of them said: "Perhaps he sank into the sand," for they had heard of such things happening in certain parts.

Suddenly Dan exclaimed: "Look, Moses, there is our donkey!"

They all looked and saw a black speck hurrying towards the Colony. Then they knew that the donkey had gone home. "What is to be done?" said Moses. "Perhaps, as we had so

much trouble with the donkey, we shall get back more quickly walking.”

So they decided to walk; but, as it was so sandy, they could not walk very fast. That did not matter to them, for they were busy talking about what they would do when they got to Jaffa, and how they would spend their time. They could not go back in the heat of the day, so they would have leisure to stroll about and look round—and perhaps there might be some wagon going up to the Colony, in which they could ride back.

They walked along very cheerfully, up and down the sandy hills, only it was getting hot. Suddenly they heard little bells tinkling and they knew what that meant: there were Arabs and camels coming their way.

“What shall we do?” exclaimed Samson, getting a trifle pale.

“Let us walk on,” said Dan.

“What if they are robbers, and not simply a caravan?” said Moses.

They stood looking at one another. Meanwhile the sound came nearer and nearer. “I tell you what,” said Moses, “let us go behind that sandy mound, and lie down flat and cover ourselves with sand. Then, if they pass by on the other side, they will not see us at all, and if they pass by here, and we lie flat and covered over, they will not notice us either.”

“A very good idea,” they said; and they all rushed and hid behind the mound. After lying covered up for a short while—to them it seemed hours—they lifted themselves up one at a time,

and looked over the mound. All was quiet, and no one was to be seen. So they got up and set off again.

“Now was I not right?” said Moses; “they were simply Arabs with their caravans.”

“How could you tell?” said Dan.

“How? By the sound of the bells on the camels’ necks, and the Arabs singing. For if they were robbers they would not sing, and their camels would not have bells, as they would need to go silently.”

“He is right,” said Dan to Samson; “he is getting as wise as our Abraham.”

Moses was pleased. He knew that the boys would tell the others about it.

After a while one of the boys said: “It is getting very hot; let us sit down and rest awhile.”

“What would be the good of resting

in the burning sun?" said another; "let us go on!"

"But I am hungry and thirsty," said Samson. "Well, let us go near that green spot we see there near the marshes, where there is high grass and bushes. There we can sit down and rest, and drink our milk."

Suddenly they heard the galloping of horses. They looked round and saw from a distance that a group of Arabs were galloping towards them with guns over their shoulders.

"Oh, oh!" Samson cried out, "we are lost—they are coming to kill us, or to sell us into slavery."

"Stop that noise," said Moses, who was afraid, too, but would not show it. "Let us run quickly and hide behind that tall grass, and, if they have not noticed us, they will pass us by."

“No, no,” said Samson; “we are lost!”

“Come! come!” said Moses and Dan. But he would not move. So they took hold of him and dragged him along, and told him that, if he would not start and run with them, they would leave him alone. They did not really mean to do this, but they wanted to frighten him. So he ran with them, and they hid behind the bushes in the high grass. None too soon, for the Arabs came nearer and jumped off their horses.

“We are lost; they are looking for us,” repeated Samson, shaking with terror. Moses put his hand over Samson’s mouth lest he should scream or talk.

Meanwhile the horsemen went here and there, as if they were looking for something. Then one called to the others: “Come here!” and the others



MOSES STILL KEPT HIS HAND ON SAMSON'S MOUTH

went up to him. They were coming nearer and nearer.

“Oh, my God, help us, help us!” whispered Moses and Dan. Then they started saying the Shema, and other prayers. Moses still kept his hand on Samson’s mouth. They thought their last moment had come.

But it seemed that the Arab had simply called the others to come up to a certain spot where the grass was high, so that they might rest there from the heat. Unfortunately, the spot happened to be near where the boys were hidden. They took off their guns, and lay about resting and eating.

The boys saw that they had not noticed them; but what if they should see them? They would surely kill them, for they saw some of the men’s faces and they looked like robbers, and they

could not catch what they were saying one to another. All the time they were in deadly fear, too, of Samson suddenly giving a shriek. How long it lasted they had no notion: it might have been minutes or hours, but it seemed days.

At length the Arabs jumped onto their horses and galloped off. For some time the boys were still too frightened to move; but at last Moses got up and said to Dan and Samson: "Let us walk on quickly, for I heard them say that it would take them only twenty minutes to be in Jaffa." But Samson was quite upset: he cried and would not move; he said he was not going, for they would be sure to meet more Arabs.

"Cannot God take care of us, who took care of us now?" cried the others. "Was it your wisdom that saved us? What if we had sat down to eat, or if

they had noticed us before we came to the marshes, and had nowhere to hide?"

"You are right," said Dan; "do you remember the tale of Reb Akiba, how, in his travels, he had with him a lamp, a cock, and a donkey, and how a storm extinguished the lamp, and a wild animal killed the cock, and the lion carried off the ass—and it turned out the best for him in the end? You see God has shown us the same mercy. If our donkey had not run away, we could not have hidden here, for the donkey would have made a noise and we should have been detected. If God wants to protect, He turns misfortunes into blessings."

"Do you hear, Samson?" said Moses; "don't be afraid, and let us move on."

Samson felt rebuked and ashamed, so he stood up and went with them.

Now it happened that the boys, being still rather dazed from their fright, did not notice the way by which they had come into the marshes, and, walking on, they took the wrong road, for the sand-hills looked all alike. So they walked on and on, and thought they were nearing Jaffa. They took the food out of their little bundles and ate walking, not to lose time.

The heat was great, for it was already past midday, and they were very thirsty. But they had by now emptied their milk-bottles and nowhere could they get a drink. After they had walked some time, Dan said: "It does not seem to me like the road to Jaffa, for I distinctly remember the way, and we should have been there by now." They stopped and looked at one another. Then Samson started to cry: "Oh, what will happen

if we took the wrong road? We shall get lost in the desert, for there is no way out of it.”

Samson's howling was like a whip to Moses and Dan. They felt bad enough as it was, but to see the biggest among them behaving like a baby made them wild, and Moses said: “I wish the Arabs had you—it would be a good riddance.”

“I know,” he whimpered, “that you do not want me.”

“Be quiet, you silly!” exclaimed Dan; “are we not feeling as bad as you? A nice man you will make, you coward! They ought to make you the watchman of the Colony for the future. If you saw any one riding, you would go and hide in the barn.”

Samson did not answer, but kept on whimpering.

“Come, let us retrace our steps,” said Moses. “Perhaps we shall find some path which will lead us back into the right road.”

So they turned back. Then they saw an Arab on a donkey, singing to himself, as Arabs generally do when they travel. They decided to go up and ask him the way, for he looked harmless.

They went up to him and asked how far they were from Jaffa. He told them they were on the wrong road. If they turned to the right, it would take them about an hour to get there. Then he asked them if they were Judean boys from Petack Tikvah. They told him they were, and he said that his own village was near their home. The boys were delighted to have met him, for he seemed like a friend. They only wished that they could go home with him, but

that was not to be thought of, for what would all the other boys say? They would not even believe what had happened to them.

So they walked on, and an hour later they began to see some green cactus-hedges. Then they knew that they were near Jaffa. But they felt so tired and thirsty that every step was an effort. What annoyed them most, however, was that Samson kept grumbling and saying he might as well have been killed by the Arabs, for he was dying of thirst, and could not go any further.

“Cheer up!” said Moses. “Can you see those green hedges? Well, there is sure to be some prickly pears on them. We can pick some and eat them. That will quench our thirst.”

This hope cheered them, and they walked on faster.

At last they came to the green hedges, and managed with a stick to knock down a few prickly pears. Now a new trouble beset them. They had the pears, but they could not eat them unless the skin were off, for it is full of tiny hairs like fine needles, and they had no knife with which to peel them.

“Oh, dear, dear,” said Samson; “trouble seems to follow us everywhere!”

“I daresay it will,” said Dan, “so long as you are with us. For our Rabbi says that ‘What thou seekest, that thou shalt find,’ and, as you are always fearing trouble, it comes your way.”

Samson was going to answer sharply and something unpleasant would certainly have come out of it, when Moses exclaimed: “There, boys, I have found a nail in my pocket. We can cut the

skin through with it and peel the pears.”

They did so, quenched their thirst, and were refreshed. At first they thought of staying here to rest, but then they decided it would be better to rest in town.

“Why go to town?” said Dan; “let us go into one of the orchards here, buy some oranges, and then go back after a rest. It would save us a good step.”

“All right,” said Moses. So they went up to an orchard and were going to knock at the door in the wall, when they heard awful shrieks within. They peeped through the large keyhole and they saw a black man bound to a tree, with his hands tied over his head, while an Arab was lashing him with a whip. They did not wait to see more, but rushed away.

Further on, they came to another or-

chard, and, looking through, they only saw a mule, with its eyes covered, going round and round a well to draw water for the gardens. So they decided to go in; but no sooner had they stepped inside than two large dogs rushed on Moses and Samson.

Samson's screams brought out the master, and he called the dogs off, but Samson's clothes were all torn and his leg was bitten. Moses had some severe scratches too. The Arab to whom the orchard belonged told them not to be frightened, and he said the dogs would not have bitten Samson if he had not screamed. He took them inside, washed Samson's wound and tied it up. Then he asked the boys what they wanted.

The boys told him that they came to buy some oranges for a sick friend. He

told them to sit down and rest; he would give them a basketful, and meanwhile he called out to his wife, and told her to give them some food and drink. She gave them water to wash their hands and feet, for the Biblical custom is still kept up among the Arabs, and then brought them a meal.

After they had eaten, the boys remained sitting under the shade of the orange trees. It seemed to them paradise, after what they had gone through in the heat and the sand. They were so tired that they fell asleep; and, when the Arab came back with the basket of oranges, he would not wake them, seeing how tired they were.

After an hour or so they woke with a start, and saw that the sun was already beginning to set. So they thanked the Arab for his hospitality and wanted to

pay him for the fruit. But he would not take any money; he said he was pleased to give the ailing Judean boys some of his oranges, and that, if they wanted more, they should come and tell him. They thanked him and said they would send him some of their grapes from the vineyard. He saw them off a little way and put the basket on a stick, so that two of the boys should be able to carry it between them. And then he said: "May Allah see you safely home!"

So the boys started home, full of gladness, thanking God that He had kept them safe, and thinking of the pleasure Abraham would have, for there were in that basket over 50 beautiful oranges. They were a little disappointed that they had not succeeded in going to Jaffa to enjoy the sights, as they had arranged, for it would have been a great

pleasure to have been able to tell the boys what they had seen. However, they had enough to tell them as it was. Meanwhile the sun was setting, but it was a moonlight evening, so they did not mind much, and only hoped they would meet no brigands.

The greatest trouble was still with Samson. His leg was painful from the dog's bite, and he could not walk fast, so they all had to walk slowly. They had already gone half way when Samson sat down on the sand, and said he could not go a step further, as his leg was too bad. Now here they were in a fix, for what was to be done? They could not stay here all night, for they might perhaps be killed by the Bedouins. Yet to leave Samson was out of the question. Moses at last struck on something.

“You know what, Dan,” he said; “let us take the oranges out of the basket, put as many as we can into our handkerchiefs and pockets, then put the basket on our back and make a seat with it. It has two handles. Let Samson sit on it, and we will put the stick through the handles and carry him as our forefathers carried the grapes when they returned from Canaan.”

“That is not a bad plan,” said Dan.

“But I am not a bundle of grapes,” said Samson. “What will they say when they see me entering the Colony like this?”

“I don’t know why God sent such fools into the world,” said Moses. “Did you ever hear anything like it? Here we are offering to carry such a heavy lump as he is, and he does not even say: ‘Thank you,’ but is thinking how he will

look and what others will say! I really do not know why you were named Samson. Your namesake would turn in his grave if he could hear you, for you have not a morsel of his courage—you are even afraid of a dog or a donkey, let alone a lion, and have none of his sense, although in some things he was very foolish, or else he would not have been led astray by Delilah.”

“If you had ever been bitten by a dog, you would have more sympathy for others who have,” said Samson.

“Do you think, you silly, if we had no sympathy, we would take all this trouble to carry you, for we feel very tired now,” said Dan.

So Samson was quiet, and they started making him a seat. When it was finished, he sat on it, and they started off, but every few minutes they had to stop

—so their progress was very slow. At last they got so tired that they could not go a step further.

“God help us!” said Moses. “I don’t know how we are to get home.”

“I wish I never had left it,” said Samson. “Nice fun we have had—nothing but fear and misfortune since we set out!”

“I wish to Heaven you had never come with us,” cried the others. “You were ready enough for the fun, and I don’t believe that you would have taken the trouble to go for the oranges, if it were not for the thought of the pleasure you would have had from it.”

“Oh, don’t let us quarrel,” said Moses, “when we are so tired. Let us sit here, and rest a little and offer up a prayer that God should send us help, and let us say a few Psalms.”

* * * * *

Now to return to the boys' parents. After sunset, all went in to supper. But Moses, Dan, and Samson were not to be found. Their sisters went round to make inquiries, but they could hear nothing. The other boys knew all about it, but they did not want to say anything, as they thought every moment the missing three would be forthcoming.

After sunset, some of the boys went up to the hill that was beyond the Colony, to look out for them. But there was not a sign of them anywhere. It was already getting dark and they began to be frightened, too, lest their comrades should have met with an accident.

Presently the parents of the boys became so anxious that Joseph at last decided to tell the truth. So he went to the boys' parents and told them. They

were terribly upset. The mothers began to cry and to wring their hands, saying they were sure that the boys had been killed by the Arabs, or kidnapped and would be sold as slaves. All the Colony was in a commotion, for every one was friendly to the others and shared their joys and sorrows, and within a few minutes horses were saddled and about a dozen men went out to look for the boys, all in different directions. They arranged that whoever found them should whistle three times to let the others know: as the air is very clear and calm in Palestine, any sound is carried for miles.

It was a bright moonlight night. The men rode on, and every now and then some of them called out the boys' names. Meanwhile, Moses and Dan were quietly praying to God to help and

guard them, and Samson joined in too, crying bitterly. He said it was the pain in his leg that made him weep, but Moses said it was fear. Suddenly Samson cried out: "Do you hear, Moses, the galloping of horses? Oh, they are robbers! Now we are done for! There is nowhere to hide; they will surely kill us!"

"Stop that noise, will you?" cried Dan, giving Samson a pinch, for he heard it too, and felt afraid. But suddenly he heard his name called, and cried out: "We are saved—it is our master!" And they all three started shouting. In a few minutes Dan's father and the master rode up. They jumped off their horses and began to question the boys. Moses told them all. Dan's father took Samson in front of him. They then whistled to the rest,

while two others each put a boy on the horse behind him, and rode home. The remainder of the riders came up with them, and the fathers felt that they would like to give the boys a good whipping, for the anxiety they had caused them. But the mothers, seeing their boys safe, forgot everything, hugged them to their hearts, and said the boys were sufficiently punished with all they had experienced that day. And after all, it was for the good of a neighbor that they had gone.

So they were given a hot supper, and sent to bed, while Samson had the satisfaction of seeing how all felt for him, and sympathized with him, for they said he went to do a good deed, and Moses and Dan never told any one of their elders of the trouble he had given them.

Next morning the three boys were

allowed to stay away from school, for the master thought that they needed a rest after what they had gone through.

So Moses and Dan, and Samson with his bad leg tied up and limping, went to Abraham's house to give him the oranges. They decided to carry them in the basket with the stick through the handles, just like the spies in a picture they had seen. And when they saw Abraham begin to suck an orange, and how he enjoyed it, they felt they were fully repaid for their trouble.

They longed to tell him all their adventures and the bother with Samson, but they had decided to wait till he was quite well again and could take terrible things more lightly.

So they sat and told him about the donkey and the Arab from the village close by, and the kind man who owned

the beautiful orange garden, and allowed him to fancy it had been a day of unclouded pleasure, except for the dog which had bitten Samson by mistake.

THE LAST WAGON LOAD

THE LAST WAGON LOAD

IT was the in-gathering of the harvest. School only lasted half the day, and all the evening the boys worked in the fields, tying up the sheaves of corn. I say they “worked”, but to them it was the best fun in the world, for they threw the sheaves at one another, and every boy raced his comrades, trying to out-do them by tying more sheaves than any one else. And when a wagon had to be loaded, a few boys were put on it to arrange the sheaves as they were thrown up by fathers and brothers, and to jump about on them and press them down. They got wildly excited, up there on the top of the load; and, when the wagon began to move, it was not

uncommon for somebody to fall off and lie crying with a broken head till he was picked up and bandaged and made a little fuss over.

This evening, the very last wagon-load of all was to be brought home to the owner's barn, and the girls were coming out to meet it. Afterwards there was to be a dance and a beautiful supper. Of course the boys were to have a share in everything as a reward for their industry.

The sheaves were being piled up on the wagon, and Moses and two or three others were dancing on the top.

"Jump hard," called Abraham, from below, looking every inch a harvester with his great straw hat and his shirt-sleeves rolled up. "Press it down well! There are plenty more sheaves to come."

Moses gave a great jump, and the next moment nothing was to be seen but sheaves falling out of the wagon one after the other, and a waving of legs and arms. Twenty boys and twenty bundles seemed to be rolling to the ground at once. Nobody was hurt, however, except Moses. But that was just the most unfortunate thing that could have happened. This is why: The boys had all begged their sisters to make them little blue-and-white flags, in the Jewish colors, with a Shield of David sewn on to them, and they were going to enter the Colony sitting on the wagons (of which really three or four would come in together), waving these flags and singing some Psalms—145 to 150—which they had learnt by heart, to a joyful old Jewish melody. And Moses, who had a fine voice, was to be the

soloist—that is, to sing bits by himself, the others then joining in.

And now there he lay, with a badly bruised leg; and the others were so upset by the spoiling of their cherished plan, that they were as cross as cross could be, and told Moses it was all owing to his carelessness that he had fallen and hurt his leg. Tears came into his eyes. After all the weeks of practicing, and all the looking forward to this happy day—why, there were nights when he had hardly slept for thinking of it—he was not to sing at all! And his leg was very sore. The tears overflowed, and ran down his cheeks into the stubble.

Then the others felt that they were acting very unkindly, and Abraham said: “Poor Moses! Don’t cry! We did not really mean it—of course you

couldn't help it, and what is done, is done. One of you go and call his father, and we will take him home."

The boys, still rather cross, and thinking they were going to miss some of the fun, began to grumble. But, of course, they would have done what Abraham told them in the end, for they never deserted a companion in his distress. Just then, however, Moses' father came up with two or three younger men, and heard what happened. He was going to take Moses and carry him to his mother, when Moses said: "Father, listen, I worked very hard and helped you a lot with the sheaves."

"You did so, my son," said his father, "and you will be a good Colonist and help to take away the reproach of our people that we cannot, as some declare, do agricultural work."

“And look here, boys,” said one of the young men, “if the trouble is about the singing, we will all help you. Let us hear the tune of the Psalms—the words we know—and we will walk alongside you and sing, too. And we will call the other young fellows to join us; they will soon catch the melody. In that way there will be fifty voices instead of twenty, and many of the young men can sing very well.”

Moses smiled for all his pain, and said: “Thank you, thank you!” He felt as if he could never say “Thank you” often enough, because now he knew the boys would forgive him for falling off the wagon.

“You are a brave boy,” said his father, “and you must think that God has chosen you to suffer in a good cause.”

So Moses was lifted on to the wagon and laid down on the sheaves, and Abraham and Dan sat beside him and held his hand. After what his father had said, Moses was now a hero in their eyes—they almost envied him what had happened.

As they drew near the Colony, all the boys' sisters, with their girl-friends, came out to meet them in their Sabbath dresses, mostly simple white muslin, in which every big and little girl looks her best. They had made themselves wreaths of poppies and marigolds, and what more beautiful ornaments could they wear? Those who had a flower-garden had picked roses and put them in their hair, and the little girls had their Sabbath ribbons in their long, thick plaits. Some of the girls carried trays with cooling drinks, and cakes

and biscuits for the hungry ones, and every face wore a smile. The older men and their wives stood in the doorways, and they also smiled happily to see the loaded wagons coming in from the fields.

When they heard the singing of the young harvesters, the tears of joy came into their eyes. Most of the older folk could remember the day when the first field was sown, and the early days of struggle and trouble came back to their minds. Now wagon-loads of corn were coming in, and their sons and little grandsons were bringing it home with song.

“Truly, truly,” whispered the old folk to themselves, “he that goeth forth on his way weeping, bearing the good seed, shall come again with joy, carrying the sheaves!”

‘After all,’ said Moses’ father that night, “it happened for the best. Instead of only the little boys singing and praising God for the harvest, all the young fellows of the Colony were singing too, and it was such a Harvest Time as perhaps never was in Palestine since the days of old.”

THE GARDENERS

THE GARDENERS

LEAH had been with her father to the German Colony, to have some flour ground there in the mill, and had come home full of excitement and plans.

“It is perfectly lovely there, girls,” she said to her friends, Sarah, Miriam, and the others. “They have flowers in all their gardens; there is honeysuckle climbing up the porches; and there are roses and other creepers besides; and they have boxes with mignonette and geraniums. I asked for some seeds, and they were very kind and gave me all these.” So saying, Leah unfolded a paper in which were smaller parcels with a different kind of seed in each.

“Plenty for all of us! Let us plant them at once!”

The other girls liked the idea immensely. They found some wooden boxes, old cans and even some old saucepans; filled them with mold, and planted the seeds. While they were thus busy, Abraham, who was Leah's brother, and one or two other boys, came along, and stood watching them.

“What do you want, boys?” said Miriam.

“Why, nothing,” answered they; “we were just watching you.” Now the girls were always suspicious of the boys, specially when they were very quiet, but it was difficult to see what they could be up to just then, so Miriam only said: “Well, will you fetch us some water?—because the seeds must be watered as soon as they are put in.”

“What seeds are these?” asked Joseph.

“Carnation seeds,” said Leah, proudly.

“And mine,” said Sarah, “are geranium seeds.”

“And in my saucepan,” said little Judith, “there will come up mignonne!”

“Well,” said Abraham, “we will get you some water; but, if we help you this time, you must help us another.” And off the boys went.

“All the same,” said Miriam, with a sigh, as she smoothed the top of her mold, “I wish the boys had not come in just this moment—I don’t trust them.”

“They soon find out when something new is going on,” said Judith; “but they can’t stand *our* prying on *them*.” Leah

was reminded of the adventure of the melon, and smiled. Unfortunately, Abraham also was thinking of that unlucky day; and, as they went to get the water, he said to his companions: "I have thought of an excellent plan for paying out Leah for eating the heart of that melon. You remember what an unfair advantage she took of us? We could not help ourselves at all. But now she will have a surprise, for instead of carnations coming up in her box, there will be potatoes."

"But how? But how?" exclaimed the others, looking at Abraham as if they thought he were a magician who could make potatoes grow out of carnation seeds.

"It is very easy," said Abraham. "Tonight, when they are all in bed and the moon is up, I will take out the flower

seeds, and put in half-a-dozen small potatoes, such as my father keeps for seed. The girls will never guess till the potatoes bloom, for I'm sure they don't know that a carnation plant looks any different from a potato."

The boys shouted and slapped their legs with delight, and Moses said: "We can all do the same," for boys are thoughtless creatures, and rarely realize the effect of what they do till it is too late. Neither Abraham nor any other of the party understood how intensely the girls were looking forward to their flowers, and what a pleasure they were going to spoil.

"So you can," said Abraham; "but I would rather you let it alone, because this is an account I have to settle with Leah, and one or other of you might be caught at it, and then the whole thing

would be wrong." The others were a little disappointed, but they felt that Abraham was right.

A few weeks had passed. Every morning the girls had hurried to look at the flower-boxes, which were set out in the garden, and were now rewarded by seeing little rows of green sprouts; but they all took more interest in Leah's garden than in their own, because of the beautiful carnations of which they had heard so much. Leah was going to take a bunch to the teacher at the school, and each of her friends was to have one to wear pinned to her dress.

It was curious that the leaves should be so like potato leaves, but it was of no consequence—the flowers were the thing! And when the flowers began to show, they seemed to be a pretty shade of mauve; and, though Leah could not

remember any carnations of that color, she thought they would, no doubt, be very choice when they came out.

“They have no smell,” said Judith, kneeling beside them, and putting her little nose to the bud—“at least, no nice smell.”

“And the leaves are so large,” said Miriam, “and so very like potato-leaves. Let us go and look at the potatoes in the vegetable garden, and compare.”

They went and looked at the potato-patch, and they could see no difference between the leaves there and those in the flower-box, so they went to Leah’s mother and asked her what she thought. She advised them to wait a week and see what would happen. At the end of the week the flowers, which were no more like the carnations Leah had admired so much in the German Colony than

before, fell off, and nothing remained but the large, dark green leaves.

Then the girls pulled up the plants, and lo! at the roots were a lot of very tiny little potatoes. Leah gave one look, and then flung down the plant she was holding, rushed upstairs, and threw herself on to her bed in a passion of tears. She was still lying there and sobbing when Abraham came in from Cheder. His mother told him what had happened, and said that whoever had played such an unkind trick on his sister had acted very cruelly. She then told him to go and call Leah to come to dinner.

Abraham went slowly up to her room, and when she sat up on the bed, sobbing out that she could not eat any dinner, for her heart was broken, and when he saw her swollen eyes and knew

it was all his doing, he felt very much ashamed of himself—for, even though the boys tease their sisters, they love them all the time.

His mother asked no questions. Abraham ate his dinner quickly, then he went to his own corner, emptied out his money-box, ran to the stable, led out a donkey, jumped on to its back, and made it trot its fastest to the German Colony where Leah had got the seeds.

Here he went to a Colonist with a garden, and asked him to sell him some carnations and geraniums. At first the Colonist said he had none to sell; but, when he saw that Abraham was really in trouble, he let him have as much as he could comfortably carry.

Abraham rode joyfully home, although he did not like the idea of having to tell Leah that it was he who had

put the potato-seeds into her flower-box. Indeed, he wondered at first whether he could somehow avoid telling her the whole story, but he thought: "If I don't say it was I, Leah will suspect some other boy unjustly. And it says: 'He who rules his spirit is greater than he who takes a city.' So I must conquer my pride and tell the whole truth."

Abraham kept to his resolve: he told Leah, and he told his parents, and they all forgave him, because they saw that he was really repentant and had done all he could to make up for his unkind action.

THE SCHOOL

THE SCHOOL

ONE day after Cheder, Abraham said to the other boys: "Come out after supper to the haystack and hear the great news!"

"Tell it now, tell it to us now!" cried the boys, pressing round him. Abraham said he could not stop then, as it was his turn to help the Arab boy to water the cattle and drive them home, and after that, he would have to go to synagogue with his father. In those days, even much younger boys, quite little ones, went sometimes two and three times a day to pray with their father or their elder brother.

"After supper, after supper!" he repeated, and ran off.

All the boys worried their mothers that evening to give them supper early, and the poor mothers, who were busy and tired enough as it was, got rather cross and said they supposed that all this hurry was to be off to some mischief. This frightened the boys a bit, lest mother should send them out to fetch water, or to dig up potatoes, so they thought it best to sit quiet and say no more. In due time, however, they assembled at the haystack and sat down in a ring round Abraham to hear the great news. Abraham was in no hurry to part with it.

“No,” said he, “don’t be so impatient. Where is Joseph? I don’t see him . . . ”

“Here, here!” cried Joseph. “At your elbow! Begin, begin!”

“Wait a minute, boys! I hear some-

one running—look, it is Chaim, the Dunce, late as ever—we had nearly forgotten him. Well, how will he like it, I wonder?”

“Here, Chaim,” called out the boys, “make haste and sit down; you have had time to eat two suppers. Now, Abraham, out with it, quick.”

“Well, boys,” said Abraham, “you all know the new building at the end of the Chovevé Tzion Street?”

“Of course, of course!”

“Well, I heard my father say at dinner that it will be a school for us; that we shall have masters, like the boys in Europe, to teach us French, Hebrew, Arabic, and all sorts of other things. We shall still learn with the teacher, but not all day as we do now—it will not be a Cheder—it will be a school.”

Hardly had Abraham closed his

mouth, when the rest jumped up and began hopping and dancing about like mad. "A school! A school!" they shouted; "we are to have a school!"

"Don't make fools of yourselves," said Abraham; "sit down again and let us talk. Why should we not have a school? My sister told me that in Europe there is a school in every village—it's nothing new. And you know there is one in Jerusalem, anyhow, for the girls."

"Oh, won't it be nice?" cried one; "they have benches in a school for only two to sit on; one isn't jammed up together as in Cheder."

"How should you know?" asked Moses. "Have you ever been to school?"

"I wonder," said Chaim, the Dunce, "if they whip you in a school——"

“——and if they pull your ears as our teacher does,” said Joseph, stroking his own, with a compassionate face.

“How could you get on with your lessons if you were never whipped?” asked Levi. This was a question no one cared to answer.

“Let us each ask our big brothers and sisters,” said Abraham, “what they do to you in a school, and this time to-morrow we will tell each other what we have heard.”

The boys had no night to speak of for excitement, and were up early next morning, so as to catch their elder brothers and sisters before they started work, and find out what happened to them in school in Russia. Now the older people thought this a fine opportunity to tease the younger ones, and, when the boys met again that evening,

there was less enthusiasm for the school than the evening before. One of them had heard that at a school, when you do not know your lesson, you are made to stand in a corner and hold up a large slate, on which is written, "PUNISHMENT FOR LAZINESS," and each pupil, as he leaves the room, gives the dunce a slap in the face, the unhappy one himself not being allowed to go home to dinner.

Another time, it appeared, he might be kept in the class-room all day and all night to copy out his lesson one hundred times. A boy who talked in class, or played pranks, had to stand with his hands tied behind him for twelve hours. Somebody said he did not believe all this, but he was told to hold his tongue, as he knew nothing about it.

“If it is all true,” said Joseph, “I think I would rather stay at Cheder and have my ears pulled by the teacher.”

“Not I,” said Moses; “I want to learn everything there is to know, and be a very clever, great man—I shall not mind what they do to me.”

“I know who will have all the punishments one after the other,” said Chaim, “and that is Abraham, for he is the worst of us all, only he always manages to get off. But in a school he wo——” —Chaim was going to say “won’t”—but the others all went for him at once, shouting: “If you tell tales of Abraham, we will make it so hot for you that the master’s punishments will be nothing to compare with ours. How many times more would you have been beaten if Abraham had not begged you off? How many times——”

“Never mind, boys,” said Abraham; “I can take my own part, and why should we have to be punished at all? If we are good and pay attention and do our best to know our lessons, all will be well. And we shall still be able to have fun after school-hours. Besides, we don’t want people to say that Petach Tikvah is a place of ignoramuses. Let Petach Tikvah take the lead!”

“Petach Tikvah takes the lead!” cried the other boys with one voice. And this was a motto among them till another came into fashion, and right well they lived up to it.

A week passed, and then, one day, Moses rushed up to a group of boys and panted out: “The teachers are coming this evening! A room is being prepared for one next door to us!”

“What? Teachers?” cried the others; “will there be more than one?”

“Why, of course,” said Moses, who till then had never thought of more than one himself; “think of all the different things we have to learn! I believe a lady teacher is coming, too.”

“Go on!” cried the boys. “Whatever for?”

“For the girls, you sillies.”

“What,” they all screamed out, “girls?—are the girls going to school also?”

“Won’t that be fun?” said Joseph. “I hope they sit next to me: I shall tie their plaits together.”

“You just drop that,” said Abraham, severely. “Do you want to stand twelve hours with your hands tied behind your back?”

Then they all fell to wondering what the teachers would be like, and resolved not to go to bed that night before the wagon had come from Jaffa. But the teachers did not arrive either that night or the next—not till the eve of the opening of the school.

That night hardly a child in the Colony slept. The bigger children lay awake because they were going to school—the little ones, because they hoped to the last to be allowed to go, too.

When morning came, the elder children put on their Sabbath suits and frocks, as it was the opening day, and the girls plaited bright ribbons into their hair and buttoned on neat aprons, quite new, which they had made for the occasion, for the girls, unlike the boys, had been told weeks before about going

to school and had been sewing as they had never sewed before.

Some children were still finishing breakfast when they heard the school bell. Up they jumped and off they all rushed. The little ones, who saw themselves left behind, cried bitterly. They cried every morning for some days, when the bell rang and the others ran off to school without them, but after a while their tears dried more quickly and they became reconciled to things as they were.

When the boys and girls reached the school, the principal master came out to meet them, made them all go in quietly, and took their names down in a book. Then lessons commenced as in any other school, but to these children the whole thing was quite new, and it was at least an hour before they could settle

down and attend to what the teachers were saying.

When they came out of school at dinner-time, their minds and hearts were so full that they could say very little to each other, just then. They did not feel like themselves—they felt like quite different people—as if something wonderful and very good had happened to them and they were starting on a new life. But when their parents began to question them, then they found their tongues, and could not say enough in praise of the new master of the school and the lessons.

Now you will know, without my telling you, that novelty wears off everything; and, when you hear that our boys and girls did not always find school quite as delightful as the first day, you will not be surprised. Sometimes the

new lessons seemed hard, and sometimes there had to be punishment, but none of the dreadful things were done to them that were foretold by their brothers and sisters. There was no pulling of ears, either, for the new teachers knew better than to do anything that might injure a child for its whole life.

The girls had to work hardest, because, while the boys had nothing much to do after school-hours, they had to help their mothers, and to do their home-lessons when they were already tired out. However, they were so pleased to be learning something more than to say their prayers and to read Hebrew, and so determined not to be out-done by the boys, that their teacher was delighted with them, and they made rapid progress.

The boys improved in health, be-

cause the new school-house was much more airy than the Cheder; and they were also less restless and mischievous at home, because their minds had been more interested and occupied, and the masters would send them out for a run in between two lessons, instead of scolding them for fidgeting.

But they had plenty of enterprise left, as some of these stories will shew.

THE PLANTING OF THE TREES

THE PLANTING OF THE TREES

SCHOOL broke up early that day for some reason, and the teacher of the Talmud Torah was away, so the boys had some extra free time. They had just decided to go to the fields and get the Arab shepherds to let them play on their pipes, when Abraham came along and said: "Father has just got some young fruit-trees from Mikveh Israel and they have to be planted at once, and I've got to help. It will take some days."

The other boys felt very gloomy at the idea of having no Abraham for several days, because, as you know, there was no one like him for getting them all into mischief and out of it again.

But the teachers had talked to them so nicely about being better boys and taking their share in cultivating and beautifying Palestine, that they said: "Well, let us all do a little work to the glory of God and of our land, and help Abraham plant the trees."

Abraham was very pleased to think the others were not going to desert him. They went home for their shovels and met in the orchard of Abraham's father, who was there digging a large deep hole. When he saw it was deep enough, he put in the little tree, and the boys shoveled in the earth about its roots, and then jumped and stamped upon it to press it down, so that the tree should stand firmly. Then he took a piece of twine and measured space after space, and shewed every boy where he was to dig a hole.

As there were about twenty boys and the ground was fairly soft and light, it did not take so very long to dig twenty holes, and Abraham's father dug two or three in the time.

When it came to the last few trees, he called Abraham and said: "Now, my son, choose one of these trees for your own and plant it on one side, so that you may remember which it is. If you see the leaves worm-eaten, water it and spray it with some stuff I will give you. If you see it growing crooked, tie it to a firm straight stick. Will you take care of your tree, Abraham, if you have it for your very own?"

"Oh, yes, father!" cried Abraham; "I shall watch you and see what you do to your trees and do the same to mine."

"That is right," said the father; "and whenever you feel tempted to do a mean

or bad action, come and look at your tree, see how it grows and buds, just as God meant it to do; think of the sweet, juicy fruit it will have by-and-by. And when you see it covered with pink blossom (it is an apricot) remember that your soul is a more beautiful thing even than your tree! God made them both, and, just as the tree gives pleasure to all who see it, so can you. And, just as the tree needs to be watched and watered and kept free of grubs and insects, so must the soul be tended and taught how to grow, and guarded from selfish thoughts and bad tempers and ugly crooked habits. Do you understand me, Abraham?"

"I do, father! And, please, I would like to have two trees side by side. One I will take care of and the other I will neglect, and when I have behaved badly

I will come and look at the ugly tree and say, 'Abraham, that is you yourself!' "

The other boys, who were all listening very attentively, laughed.

"I am afraid," said his father, smiling, "that the trees are too precious for one of them to be intentionally spoilt, if we can help it. But if you look about, you will see many another plant that could not grow nicely because it came up in a dark corner, and when you do, ask yourself: 'Is it the plant's fault?' No, it is not. It was sown in poor soil, so that the root found no food, and a plant wants food and air and sunshine, just as a soul needs love and teaching and happiness. The poor plant struggled. Its little roots sought all round in the stony ground, but they found nothing, as hungry grubs came and ate

what little there was. It tried to grow tall and reach the sunshine, but it was too weak and it withered away. It tried to put out a few green leaves, like the other plants, but caterpillars came and nibbled them off. Then the poor plant could do no more, and could never have pink flowers or juicy fruit, so it just gave up and remained poor and ugly and useless. And it is just the same with the soul. So remember, Abraham, and all of you boys, when you come across a soul that is mean and ugly and has no flowers or fruit to show, ask yourselves: 'Was it all the soul's fault?' Maybe there was no one to tend it, to give it the sunshine of love, to see that it grew straight, to keep away the grubs from its root and the caterpillars from its leaves. Pity that soul

and never think: 'I am better than you!' ”

Abraham felt very glad to think all the boys should see what a good wise father he had, who could teach them such a beautiful lesson standing in an orchard; and all the boys resolved at once to be kinder to Chaim, the Dunce, who was not only stupid at lessons, but not quite as nice to them as he might be.

Perhaps *he* also was a little tree which had not been taught to grow straight, and perhaps, if they all lent a hand, something could still be done. They resolved to talk it over with Abraham at the next opportunity, and then Abraham planted his tree, and they all went to home and supper, tired, but very happy.

THE RESCUE
OR
ONE GOOD TURN DESERVES
ANOTHER

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TOWARDS sunset one day, when the boys went to drive the cattle home from the fields for milking, they saw some Arabs' cattle grazing in Joseph's father's field.

The Arabs had a habit of often turning their cattle into the Judeans' fields, even into the wheat-fields. This did a great deal of harm, as a good deal was spoilt by the oxen and asses treading down the wheat, as well as eating it. They usually chose a Friday afternoon; as they knew the Judeans went home earlier to prepare for the Sabbath.

When the boys saw the Arabs' cattle in the field, David said to Nathan and the others: "You drive our cattle home, and I will try and drive some of their cattle into Joseph's father's barn, and he will keep them there, till the Arabs come and pay the fine for the damage done."

No sooner did David attempt to drive them in than he was suddenly knocked on the head insensible with a heavy stick that the Arabs usually carry.

When he came to himself, he was in a dark place with his hands tied. He realized at once that the Arab had taken him, and he felt very frightened, for he thought they surely meant to kill him. The Arabs, however, had no idea of killing him, or doing him any harm, but they meant to keep him prisoner till the Judean Colonists paid a good

ransom for him, and thus they hoped to be revenged for the fines they had often had to pay when they let their cattle into the Judeans' fields.

Meanwhile Nathan and the other boys drove their cattle home; and, as he was late and Sabbath nearly in, he was not ready, and he got a good scolding from his mother. This upset him so much that he forgot all about David; but, when he returned from Shul and had eaten the Sabbath meal, Nathan felt he could not sleep happily until he had been to see whether David had succeeded in driving the Arab's cattle to the barn.

He found David's family very worried as he had not returned home as usual, and this increased when they heard from Nathan what he had meant to do with the Arabs' cattle. David's

mother felt sure he was killed, and, being very delicate, the shock made her faint. His father rushed out to tell some neighbors what had happened to David, and in a few minutes there was quite a commotion. Nathan was asked if he had seen an Arab with the cattle, but he said he had not.

In a short time a party of men and boys started out for the Arab village, to see if they could get any news of David, as such a thing had never happened before.

When they got near the village, the dogs all started barking furiously, and the noise brought the Arabs out with their guns, for they thought the Bedouins must be attacking them, as they sometimes did. But when they saw the men were Judeans, they became friendly, and asked what they wanted;

and, after enquiries had been made, they replied that they had not seen any of their boys.

The Colonists then asked to be taken to the Sheik of the village; and they told him their reason for coming. "My brothers," said he, "do you think we are robbers? God forbid! If such a thing happened in my village, I would punish the culprit severely. To prove I am your friend, I will send out a few of our Arabs to help you search for the lad, for maybe the Bedouins have captured him."

David's father and his friends were very downhearted, for they felt what the Sheik had said was very likely true, and what would make the search harder and longer was that it was the Sabbath, and they could not ride or carry guns on that day. They divided themselves into

three parties, and each party went a different way. They promised the Arabs a good reward if David was found.

The Sheik was a cunning man, and was really trying to deceive the Judeans; and, when they had started on their search, he bade the Arabs who really had captured David to take him and hide him some distance from the village, so that some of the Arabs he had sent with the Judeans might find him, and say that the Bedouins had captured him and that they would give him up only for a large ransom. Thus ransom-money would come to the village, as well as the money the Judeans had promised to pay the Arabs who went in the search-parties.

All this time poor David was lying and crying silently in a dark place, not knowing his friends had been in the

village asking for him. So he was terribly frightened when he felt himself suddenly lifted up, and, as he thought, carried out to be killed. Instead, the Arab jumped on a horse and put him in front of him and tied a cloth over his mouth, so that he could not call out, and off they started at a gallop with a few other Arabs. David's feelings can better be imagined than described; but he had the inherited pluck of his nation and in his helplessness trusted in God.

At last, after what seemed to be a very long ride, they came to a hut and put him in, untied the rag from his face, and gave him some water to drink; and they then told him to lie quiet on some straw in the corner of the hut; for they had no wish to be really unkind to the boy, but only wanted the money from the Judeans.

They themselves guarded the hut, with guns on their knees, to shoot any one who came along who did not belong to them; and they kept themselves awake by talking of what they hoped would be done when they gained the ransom money.

There is an old saying that "There's many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip," and now we shall see how David was rewarded for some past kindness of his and his boy-friends to a young Arab called Abdul. He was in the party the Sheik had sent David with. He almost worshiped his young Judean friends, and was determined to do his very best to save David and yet be careful not to betray his own people. So, after a little thought, he returned quietly to the village and got a spirited young pony and also a good strong rope. He then came

back near to the hut in which David was lying, having first tied his pony not far off to a young tree growing in the ruin of what was supposed to be the tomb of some holy man.

As it became lighter, he went up to the Arabs who were guarding the hut, and taking out some dates and bread that he had brought, he offered to share his food with them. Knowing he belonged to the village, they gladly accepted. Then Abdul said: "Let me guard the hut with your gun, while you all have a sleep, and, if I hear any one coming, I will waken you." The Arabs were very thankful for this chance of a little sleep, for there might later in the day be an order sent from the Sheik to travel further on.

When Abdul saw the Arabs were fast asleep, he went into the hut, gently

touched David, and whispered that he meant to try and save him, but, to do so, David must be very quiet and cautious. We can imagine David's delight and thankfulness when he recognized Abdul, and eagerly listened to his plans. He first untied the knots in the rope that bound his hands but left the rope loosely on in case some of the Arabs came in; then he told him to continue lying quietly all that day. When night came on again and it was quite dark before the moon rose, he was to get up very cautiously and go to the old ruined tomb where Abdul had tied the pony. He was to untie it and ride straight ahead, until he came to the Ogei River, from where he could easily find his way to the Colony. As soon as he got near the Colony, he was to leave the pony free, and it would return to the village

fold, as it was accustomed to do. After he had got home safely, Abdul begged him not to mention to any one how he had helped him to escape, for, if he did, the Arabs might hear of it, and would be so furious that they would kill him.

No words can describe David's joy, for the whole thing was so wonderful to him that it was difficult for him to believe that he could escape. Every moment of that day seemed years to him, and he thought the sun would never set. But at last night came on, and some Arabs came in to see how their prisoner was faring. Seeing him lying quietly, they thought he was asleep and went out quite contented, feeling the boy was safe.

At last the first glimmer of the moon appeared and David knew that it was near midnight, so he loosened the knots

of the rope and slipped his hands through—then gently crawled out of the hut. He could almost hear his heart beating with the fear that he might disturb the sleeping Arabs; but the sand around kept his footsteps from being heard, and, when he got a little way off he began to race for his life, and did not stop till he came to the ruined tomb.

There he found the pony, as Abdul had promised. He jumped onto its bare back and galloped towards the river. When quite near, he suddenly heard the noise of galloping horses. "Oh, my God, save me!" he quietly said to himself, for he felt the Arabs had found out that he had escaped and were pursuing him. There was nowhere for him to hide—what was he to do?—so near home and yet so helpless! (he was

only about half-an-hour's walk from the edge of the Colony). His faith, however, did not fail him, and he kept a brave heart. Then suddenly he thought he would free the pony, so that the Arabs, seeing it galloping homewards in the darkness of the night (for luckily the moon was hidden by the clouds), might think he was riding it and try to recapture him.

He was right in his calculations, for no sooner did they hear the pony galloping in a different direction than they seemed to stop for a moment as if to decide what to do, and then off they went after it. Then he started at once to race home; on the way he met some of the rescue-party, and great was their joy when his parents saw him alive.

The elders determined that no such risks should be run again, and so they

agreed that it would be wise that all the boys over a certain age should be taught how to handle and use a gun or a pistol; but only the most trustworthy and careful boys were given them. The younger and more careless boys were never allowed to interfere with the Arabs' cattle unless a boy with a gun or a pistol was with them.

Like most lawless, ignorant people, the Arabs after this had a wholesome dread of interfering with the Judean boys, knowing they were well able to defend themselves. Thus, through the gratitude of an Arab boy for kindnesses received by him in the past, David escaped the cunning old Sheik and his tribe, who did not even gain the money they had hoped to gain.

THE EYE EPIDEMIC

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THERE was an epidemic of eye-disease in the Colony, and in nearly every house one or two of the family had bad eyes. Although the attack did not often last more than a day or two, it was always accompanied by great pain.

What troubled the boys most was that the epidemic came just at a time when they might enjoy themselves to their hearts' content. The oranges and lemons were ripe, and what fun it was shaking the trees and watching the beautiful balls of golden fruit fall to the ground! What fun it was, too, when one of the boys got up on a ladder to pick the fruit and some of the others

drew the ladder away and left him hanging to a branch! What shouts of laughter there would be!

So thought Abraham, Joseph, Dan, and Alek as they lay or sat in darkened rooms—some of them writhing in pain. Fortunate were those who only had one eye bad. They used to help the others who had both eyes bad, and often visited them.

Alek, Dan, and Joseph were able to go to see Abraham, who had both eyes very sore, so sore, that near his home they could hear him crying. When they went in, they found him running up and down the room, like a caged lion, owing to the pain.

“Don’t cry,” said Joseph; “for if you do you will only make the inflammation worse.”

“Oh, you don’t know how painful it is,” said Abraham.

“Don’t I?” said Joseph; “both my eyes yesterday were nearly as bad as yours, but my mother put wet tea-leaves, tied up in a rag, on my eyes, every half hour, and this, by degrees, took the pain away.”

“Mother! mother! Quick! quick!” shouted Abraham, on hearing this. His mother rushed in, wondering what had happened. “Joseph says his mother put wet tea-leaves on his eyes and they took the pain away. Do put some on mine.”

“No need to shout so loud,” said his mother, “and frighten the life out of me, you young scamp.”

Although she spoke sharply to her boy, she went off quickly to get the tea-leaves, for she knew from experience

what the pain was. Then she came back and made him lie down quietly, and tied a poultice of wet tea-leaves over his eyes; and in a little while the pain was less.

But Abraham was not as grateful as he ought to have been, and grumbled that he could not go out with the others.

Dan said: "Have patience."

"Oh, it's all very well for you to talk of having patience," said Abraham. "You have only one eye bad—just wait till you have two."

A quarrel was just starting between the two boys, for both were quick-tempered, when Chaim, the Dunce, rushed in and told Abraham that the doctor had just arrived, that he was going to stay an hour in the Colony, and that if any one wanted to see him he must hurry up to the dispensary at once.

Now the doctor came only once a week, and if they missed him they all knew they must bear the pain for another week unless Dame Nature stepped in, as she generally did, and cured the patient by some very simple means of her own.

Even for those who had only one eye bad the walk to the dispensary was very painful owing to the sunshine, which made them feel they must keep both eyes shut while going.

“What can we do?” said Dan.

“I have a plan,” said Chaim, who, though very stupid when he first came to the Colony, was growing quite sharp through contact with the other boys.

“Whatever can Chaim’s plan be?” they all exclaimed, with laughter.

“Why,” said Chaim, “each of you tie his handkerchief to my belt and hold

on to the other end, and then we can all go together.”

“Well thought,” said Joseph, teasingly; “only Chaim can think of such plans.”

“It is not so bad a plan as you think,” said Abraham; “but I would say, let’s take two ropes and tie one end on to Chaim’s waistbelt, and we will each hold on to the rope, one after the other, and let him lead us. I saw in a picture once that they do this when men are climbing mountains.”

Chaim then ran into the barn and brought out two ropes and did as Abraham had suggested; and some of the girls who had sore eyes joined, too, in holding on to the ropes. As they walked along, they found it was not quite so easy as they at first thought, for one or

two tripped over each other; then another in mischief would give a sharp pull at the rope and make the others slip. Some of the older ones, seeing them walk along, cried out: "Bravo, Chaim, you are a fine leader. A fool for once leading the wise. Never mind, it's a very good thought, Chaim."

At last they arrived at the dispensary; the doctor came out; and, when he saw how they had all come, he burst out laughing, and said: "Here, at least, it is not the blind leading the blind. Clever boy, Chaim; go along and bring all to me in the same way. It will save time, for I am very busy to-day and shall have to leave soon."

Chaim was simply delighted that he thought of this plan, and received such praise, and the boys could not help

being thankful to him for his timely help; for they wanted to get cured quickly, so as to be able to go into the orchards and pull and pack the oranges. Therefore they willingly laid their heads on the doctor's knee, while he penciled the edges of their eyelids. It was very painful and brought tears to their eyes, but they did not mind, so long as they got better.

Meanwhile Chaim brought another batch of boys and girls, and then took back those that the doctor had attended to.

In a few days they were all well enough to go into the orchard, and the fun and the joy began. When they came across ripe juicy oranges, they put them by for Chaim, because they felt how much they owed him for his

thoughtfulness; and they decided, too, to be kinder to him in future.

After the young people had picked the oranges and taken them into the cellar, the packing was started and they were allowed to help—and they just loved taking the golden fruit and carefully wrapping each orange in tissue paper before they were packed in cases to be sent abroad, generally to Europe. Whenever they came across an orange too ripe to be packed, they were allowed to eat it, if their elders thought it could be spared.

This was not enough for them, and they could not resist teasing some one. So, when the elders had left the cellar for a few minutes, they began to play ball with the oranges, throwing them at one another. Just as Dan was throwing

a soft orange at Abraham, a man happened to come in, and, by mistake, it struck him, splashing all over his beard. He looked so very funny that all the boys began laughing and could not stop. This made him very angry, and he asked who had thrown the orange: when no one answered, he grew still more angry. As a matter of fact, only Joseph saw who had thrown it, and he would not tell on Dan.

The man then thought they must all be in the conspiracy against him; so he did not say much, but went out and broke a branch off a tree near by and called to another man, telling him how outrageously the boys had behaved to him.

He then locked the cellar door, and ordered them to confess. As none of them did, he laid them in turn across



THE ORANGE STRUCK HIM, SPLASHING ALL OVER HIS BEARD

his knees, and gave each a sound whipping.

Joseph bravely bore his whipping rather than tell on Dan, and even Dan told the boys, after he had had *his* whipping, that for the life of him he could not say why he had not confessed that he had thrown the orange; and he added, sorrowfully: "You know that sometimes the Evil Spirit, or Satan, gets hold of us, and takes our will away, and prevents us doing what we know is right."

"Yes, that is so," said the others; "we feel the same sometimes, too. In fact, it seems as if Satan has been busy with us all, and preventing us from enjoying the orange season. First with bad eyes; and now Reb Shmuel will tell every one of our behavior, and no one

will let us help them to pack oranges again.”

“I don’t care,” said Alek. “Let’s all come into our orchard and shake down the fruit, for there’s plenty there yet.”

The parents meanwhile had heard of the boys’ behavior, and things did not turn out as they wanted during the rest of that orange season, for each boy was kept in his own home and made to do plenty of work in packing and in other ways, without any fun or play; and they sometimes felt so tired that they were thankful, that season, to see the last of the oranges, and felt they would never again care either to gather them, or pack them, or even to eat them.

Boys’ memories, however, are rather short, and no doubt when the oranges were ripe the next year, they were as eager about helping; but they had

learnt a good lesson, and determined in the future to work steadily while at work, and play well when at play, and not mix the two up together.

THE MELON

THE MELON

THE boys had been very mischievous for some time past, and had played so many pranks that Reb Chaim declared: "The next boys caught in mischief will be whipped outside the synagogue for all to see." This was very sobering.

Abraham assembled his fellow-pupils on Sabbath afternoon, and said: "Look here, boys, we shall have to be careful, and for the next few weeks keep very quiet and not be seen or heard, till they forget how bad we were; and then we can begin again by degrees."

"But meantime," said Moses, dolefully, "whatever shall we do with ourselves out of Cheder?"

"I wish," said Joseph, "we hadn't

been quite so bad. If we had been only a *little* bad, we could have gone on much longer."

"Well," said Abraham, "we *were* very bad indeed, and we must take the consequences. But we shall find a way to have a little fun, all the same. I will think of something before next Sabbath. And meantime we must all be as good as we know how."

The other boys had complete confidence in Abraham. During that next week, whenever they saw him staring fixedly at the teacher in Cheder, or walking along by himself out-of-doors, they whispered one to another: "He is thinking of something to do!" And they were quite sure that he would find it; nor were they mistaken.

Late next night, the great silver moon of Palestine saw the figure of a little

boy with a tin can slip out of one of the houses and run lightly into the gardens attached. "The howling of the wilderness" was heard all round, for the jackals and foxes were barking and whining on the outskirts of the Colony; but for what had the boy brought the tin can, if not to beat on it with a stick to frighten them off? He beat his can, and was answered from the distance by an Arab watchman, who beat on his, and who shouted to keep the foxes out of the vine-yards.

The boy ran through the garden till he came to the melon-patch, where he went more slowly and looking carefully about him.

The Arab boy, Achmet, who was supposed to guard the melon-patch, lay fast asleep in the moonlight with his can and his stick beside him. The next

minute, however, as luck would have it, he opened his eyes, and, seeing the little Jewish boy, made a bound forward and seized hold of him.

“What are you doing here?” he asked. “I’ll tell your father.”

“It’s no business of yours,” said Abraham, for it was he; “let me go, Achmet—it’s my own father’s garden, and I can do as I please in it.”

“You are up to some mischief,” persisted Achmet, who knew Abraham well, keeping hold of him with his strong hands.

“Look here, Achmet,” said Abraham, “if I make you a nice present, will you help me to do what I want?”

The idea of a present was very tempting to Achmet, who was a boy himself, and very poor, with next to nothing of his own.

“What will you give me?” he asked, but without letting Abraham go; and then he caught sight of a pocket-knife in his captive’s hand, and said: “If you give me that knife, I’ll do it.”

“I’ll buy you one like it next time father takes me to Jaffa,” said Abraham, to whom it seemed easier to part with his pocket-money than with his knife, which he loved.

“No,” said Achmet, “I want the knife in your hand. Give it me now and I will help you.”

“And you won’t tell?”

“I won’t tell.”

Abraham gave a sigh: “Well, take the knife; here it is—and now, listen . . .”

Next morning, Sabbath, when the boys saw Abraham in Shul, they knew by his face that all was well: he had

found something to do, and, no doubt, for that very afternoon. Abraham's fair little face was always lovely, but, when he had some mischief in hand, it was like an angel's, because he felt so happy. Strangers were taken in by it without Abraham having any wish to deceive them, but his father felt a bit suspicious that Sabbath morning, and kept him closely to his prayer-book, signing to the other boys to stand away.

As they left the synagogue, however, Abraham whispered to one of them: "At the haystack—after dinner." The word went round in no time, and that afternoon, when parents were reading and dozing, and big sisters sitting together in the garden, the boys crept out, one by one, and made their way separately to the haystack in question.

In the stack was a sort of hollow,

from which hay had been taken out, and in the cave sat Abraham waiting for the boys.

“Well, well?” asked the boys, impatiently; “what is it?”

“Two of you help me,” said Abraham, “to pull out this sack.”

A sack, with a great round thing inside, was dragged from under the haystack and opened, and, behold! there appeared a gigantic green melon of the very finest quality. The boys shouted with glee.

“From my father’s garden,” explained Abraham, “but it cost me dear”; and he told them of his night’s adventure, as we already know it, and how Achmet had helped him to select the melon and to hide it under the hay. “And now, who has a knife to cut it up?”

No one had a knife, so a boy was dispatched home to get one. He took every precaution not to be seen, but some one spied him running away again towards the haystack, and just as a few slices had been cut out of the melon, which was of a most lovely pink inside and full of juice, there was a rustle, and a head looked in at the cave's entrance. Horror! It was a girl.

"What are you up to?" she said. "I shall tell father." Two or three pairs of hands caught hold of her skirt.

"No, you won't!" cried the boys; "you daren't!"

"Dare I not? What can you do to me?"

The boys felt there were fifty things they could do to her, but at that moment they could not think of one.

"Leah," they begged, "don't tell!

Sit down and you shall have a share of the melon.”

“Give me the heart,” said Leah, “and I won’t tell.” Now the heart of a melon is the sweetest, the softest, and the juiciest part. The boys were very angry.

“Greedy thing!” they said; “who ever heard the like? Only a girl would be so mean.”

“You can choose,” said Leah. “Either I have the heart, or I tell.”

What could they do? They gave her the heart, and she ate it and went away. The boys were very vexed, but the melon was delicious all the same, and they felt at first as if they could go on eating it forever. Presently, however, a boy was asked if he would have another slice, and he said: “No more for me, thank you.”

Then Abraham remarked: “We

must eat it all, because it will be as much as we can manage to keep the rind out of the way till Sabbath is over, when we can bury it.”

So they kept on at it, eating more slowly, and some of them getting a little pale, till it was at last finished. Then they tried to get up to go home, but they could not rise—still less walk.

“We will stay here a little longer,” they said, “and we shall be all right presently.”

But in a short time they began to feel pains inside them, and these got worse, till they rolled about and moaned aloud.

They would have liked to put all the blame on Abraham, but poor Abraham was just as ill as they were, and besides—they had all been quite ready to praise him and to eat the melon which

he had provided for them, and for which he had sacrificed his precious knife, so how could they now turn against him, and call him names? As they had enjoyed themselves together, so they must now suffer together, and even if they felt very ill, and as if they could never look at a melon again their life long, at least their good fellowship would be unbroken, and they would not have to think as meanly of themselves as they thought of Leah.

THE FIGS

THE FIGS

IT was a half-holiday, and the boys were wondering how best to spend it. There was plenty of work for them to do in the fields, but, as they had already been asked to do it, it had no attraction for them, so they had to think of something else.

Ever since they started going to school, they had tried to behave better and to give less trouble—"For we go to school," said Abraham, "to improve ourselves, and so we should not behave like the Arabs." The only thing they allowed themselves now, except when their spirits got the upper hand of their good resolves, was to tease the girls. Indeed, if anything, they teased them

more than ever, partly because the girls, to whom study was a newer and more delightful thing than to the boys and who consequently made more rapid progress, used to show off before them, talking in Hebrew and French, and making fun of their brothers when the latter could not understand them.

This made the boys very wild, and, as they could not fight the girls, they played tricks on them whenever they got a chance.

They were still devising what to do with themselves that afternoon, when Abraham's mother called him into the house, for the boys were sitting not far away in the shade of the barn; and in a few minutes he came rushing back, saying: "Boys, we shall have a jolly day! Mother has just told me to go with Leah to the Arab village to buy some

eggs and fowls, and, as Leah is inviting the other girls, it will be splendid, for we shall have them quite in our power."

"We?" asked the others; "are all of us to go with you?"

"Of course," said Abraham. "But you must go up the road, past the vineyards, and then sit down quietly till you see me and the girls coming. If they see us all starting off together, they will think we are up to some mischief and refuse to come."

In about ten minutes' time the girls set off, six of them, riding two-by-two on donkeys, Abraham and another boy with them on foot. Presently they came upon the other boys lolling on the grass.

"Come along with us, boys," called the girls; "we are going to the Arab village to buy eggs."

"Come along!" echoed Abraham;

“what are you lazy things doing there, on such a fine day?”

The boys nudged each other, got up, and joined the party, walking along quietly, and only calling now and again to an Arab at work in the fields, for nearly all the peasants round about were known to them and were quite friendly.

When they had reached the village, and while their sisters were buying the fowls, eggs, and cheese for their mothers, the boys foregathered with the young Arabs, and practiced shooting with a bow-and-arrow and riding on goats, which is a very difficult art indeed, because a goat's back is very narrow, and he is very slippery, and very sudden in his movements—but it can be done. Presently—all too soon!—the girls reappeared with laden baskets, and

were helped onto the donkeys to ride home. Of the two girls on the first donkey, one held the reins and the other a basket of eggs. The second pair of girls had the fowls with their legs tied together, while the two girls on the third donkey had another basket of eggs and one of ripe green and purple figs fresh from the tree. The boys had by now forgotten about paying off the girls; but, at the sight of these delicious figs, they suddenly felt very thirsty and asked to have some.

The girls told them that they must wait till they got home and then ask their mothers. This put up the boys' temper, and one of them gave the fig donkey a slash with a twig he had in his hand.

The donkey started to trot, and the girls began to cry out and scold, for the

next minute the two other donkeys began trotting too, and the girls could not stop them, because their hands were taken up, all but one pair, with the baskets and the live fowls. Besides, you can no more stop a donkey that is determined to trot than you can make him trot when he is resolved to walk. The boys got excited, ran after the donkeys laughing, and the boy with the twig went on hitting the third donkey, till at last the donkey kicked and threw both the girls and the baskets into the road, which was happily sandy and soft. The first minute the boys were frightened, but, as soon as they saw the girls were not hurt and only messed all over with the smashed eggs, they laughed more than ever and made a dash for the figs, which had rolled out of the basket, each boy securing at least one. The

girls picked themselves up and, being full of sense, told one another that it was no use grumbling or crying, they must just lead the donkeys home with what was left, adding in a whisper: "We will say nothing much at home, but to-morrow we will all go and tell the master, because the boys will mind that more than they would anything else. If we all go, it won't be so much like telling tales, besides which, we won't mention any boy by name, and we will ask the master to speak to the whole class, without trying to find out who began it; they were really one as bad as another."

While the girls whispered together, the boys secretly untied the legs of the fowls, and then called out: "Look, look, your fowls are running away!"

The girls started off in pursuit, and

then Abraham said: "Boys, we must help to catch them, for if they get into the wheat we shall never find them again, and I don't want my mother to have the loss."

So the girls never knew till long after how the fowls got loose, for, when they saw the boys helping to catch them, they concluded that the peasant woman had tied them up badly.

After that they set off again for home, but the boys disappeared before they got to the houses, and only turned up at nightfall, when they hoped their parents would be too tired to take them in hand. And not only were they not whipped, but their parents never said a word about it, not even next morning. The fact was, the girls had taken their mothers into their confidence and said: "We don't want to see the boys beaten,

but we do think they should have a severe lesson, and we will see they get it—leave it to us!”

The boys began to feel a bit uncomfortable. How could the whole thing have blown over so quickly? Why had the girls apparently not said how it was the eggs were broken, and why the fig basket was all but empty, when so many figs had been paid for? But there was not much time for puzzling—the bell rang and all set off for the school.

Here the mystery was solved. When the pupils had taken their seats, the master stood up with a note in his hand and a graver face than he had ever shewn before. It was not merely grave, it was dark with sadness and displeasure.

“Boys,” he said, “I have here a note which tells me what I had never ex-

pected to hear. I will mention no names, and indeed no names have been mentioned to me, but I know that I have before me a number of Jewish boys, children of our Colony of Petach Tikvah, who have been guilty of three grave sins: Unkindness to their sisters, cruelty to animals, and the destruction of the property of others. What is to be the future of our Colony, what is to be the future of our Country, if the children to whom we entrust it disobey the Mosaic law and the teachings of our sages? 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself,' said the Torah. 'Let the honor of thy neighbor be as dear to thee as thine own,' say the Rabbis. Which of these two precepts were you Judean boys thinking of yesterday? Which of the two were you trying to obey?"

Here the teacher paused and looked steadily at the boys, who all hung their heads and blushed. The teacher went on in the same tone, speaking slowly and keeping his gaze fixed on the boys: "Your neighbor's honor was not very dear to you, when you sent your sisters home in the state in which I saw them, as it happened, from my window, without knowing the reason. That was not the sort of home-coming to which they had looked forward, when they started so happily in the afternoon."

Here the master accidentally, perhaps, looked at Abraham, who went all colors. "And you were cruel to the donkey, which you hit until it kicked and upset the girls. The Mosaic law teaches kindness to the animals that serve us; they are to rest on the Sabbath together with us, the ox is not to

be muzzled while threshing, but to have a mouthful of corn now and again. And in the Talmud we are told that a man should feed his animals before he sits down to his own supper. Was not the angel angry with Balaam for beating his ass? And what do we find in Proverbs? Are we not told that the good man is kind to his beast, but the wicked is cruel? Have you not been told of the Rabbi who was struck blind for not protecting the hunted fawn that leapt to him for protection, and only cured of his blindness by saving a calf from the butcher's knife? Should not a Jewish child, therefore, be kind to all God's creatures—can he say he has never been taught? And what about those broken eggs? Were they yours to break? And even had they been, have you, has any of us, the right to

waste what is given us for food? As it was, they belonged to some one else.”

The master stopped, and still the class sat silent with downcast looks. Then one, two, three, four, five boys, Abraham and Moses among them, got up and went straight to their master.

“Master,” they said, “we see now that we acted very wrongly. We did not mean any harm; we just wanted to have a bit of fun, only we never seem to know when to stop till the harm is done. What are we to do now?”

“What would have been done in Moses’ day?” asked the teacher.

“If any one stole or caused a loss,” said Abraham, “he had to pay to make up for it. So I will give all I have saved to pay for the eggs and the figs.”

“Oh, the figs too?” asked the teacher.

“Why, yes,” said Abraham, “that was

what made us so cross; we were so thirsty and they would not give us a taste of the figs.”

“I know,” said the teacher; “then did you all scramble for the figs while the girls were picking themselves up?”

The boys blushed again, but they said: “We will all give our savings, and we will ask the girls’ forgiveness, and promise not to torment them again, and we will never ill-treat an animal; and, if we see any one else doing so, we will stop them.”

The master then shook hands with all the five, and said: “That is right; I know now that you five were the ring-leaders, but I know also that you are not afraid to own up, and that you are ready to make reparation and a good resolve for the future. I feel much happier again, and so, I am sure, do

you. God alone can see 'the end of a thing in its beginning,' but you may always be quite sure that, if the beginning of a 'bit of fun' is bad, so will the end of it be too. And now to lessons!"

THE END

