

WORKS OF ISRAEL ZANGWILL

THE MELTING-POT

THE AMERICAN JEWISH BOOK COMPANY NEW
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TO THEODORE ROOSEVELT

IN RESPECTFUL RECOGNITION OF HIS STRENUOUS
STRUGGLE AGAINST THE FORCES THAT THREATEN TO
SHIPWRECK THE GREAT REPUBLIC WHICH CARRIES
MANKIND AND ITS FORTUNES, THIS PLAY IS, BY HIS
KIND PERMISSION, CORDIALLY DEDICATED

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language are strictly reserved by the author.*

THE CAST

[As first produced at the Columbia Theatre, Washington, on the
fifth of October 1908]

David Quixano	Walker Whiteside
Mendel Quixano	Henry Bergman
Baron Revendal	John Blair
Quincy Davenport, Jr.	Grant Stewart
Herr Pappelmeister	Henry Vogel
Vera Revendal	Chrystal Herne
Baroness Revendal	Leonora Von Ottinger
Frau Quixano	Louise Muldener
Kathleen O'Reilly	Mollie Revel
Settlement Servant	Annie Harris

Produced by Hugh Ford

[As first produced by the Play Actors at the Court Theatre, London
on the twenty-fifth of January 1914]

David Quixano	Harold Chapin
Mendel Quixano	Hugh Tabberer
Baron Revendal	H. Lawrence Leyton
Quincy Davenport, Jr.	P. Perceval Clark
Herr Pappelmeister	Clifton Alderson
Vera Revendal	Phyllis Relph
Baroness Revendal	Gillian Scaife
Frau Quixano	Inez Bensusan
Kathleen O'Reilly	E. Nolan O'Connor
Settlement Servant	Ruth Parrott

Produced by Norman Page

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Act I

*The scene is laid in the living-room of the small home of the Quixanos
in the Richmond or non-Jewish borough of New York, about five*

o'clock of a February afternoon. At centre back is a double street-door giving on a columned veranda in the Colonial style. Nailed on the right-hand door-post gleams a Mezuzah, a tiny metal case, containing a Biblical passage. On the right of the door is a small hat-stand holding Mendel's overcoat, umbrella, etc. There are two windows, one on either side of the door, and three exits, one down-stage on the left leading to the stairs and family bedrooms, and two on the right, the upper leading to Kathleen's bedroom and the lower to the kitchen. Over the street door is pinned the Stars-and-Stripes. On the left wall, in the upper corner of which is a music-stand, are bookshelves of large mouldering Hebrew books, and over them is hung a Mizrach, or Hebrew picture, to show it is the East Wall. Other pictures round the room include Wagner, Columbus, Lincoln, and "Jews at the Wailing place." Down-stage, about a yard from the left wall, stands David's roll-desk, open and displaying a medley of music, a quill pen, etc. On the wall behind the desk hangs a book-rack with brightly bound English books. A grand piano stands at left centre back, holding a pile of music and one huge Hebrew tome. There is a table in the middle of the room covered with a red cloth and a litter of objects, music, and newspapers.

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The fireplace, in which a fire is burning, occupies the centre of the right wall, and by it stands an armchair on which lies another heavy mouldy Hebrew tome. The mantel holds a clock, two silver candlesticks, etc. A chiffonier stands against the back wall on the right. There are a few cheap chairs. The whole effect is a curious blend of shabbiness, Americanism, Jewishness, and music, all four being combined in the figure of Mendel Quixano, who, in a black skull-cap, a seedy velvet jacket, and red carpet-slippers, is discovered standing at the open street-door. He is an elderly music master with a fine Jewish face, pathetically furrowed by misfortunes, and a short grizzled beard.

MENDEL

Good-bye, Johnny!... And don't forget to practise your scales.

[Shutting door, shivers.]

Ugh! It'll snow again, I guess.

[He yawns, heaves a great sigh of relief, walks toward the table, and perceives a music-roll.]

The chump! He's forgotten his music!

[He picks it up and runs toward the window on the left, muttering furiously]

Brainless, earless, thumb-fingered Gentile!

[Throwing open the window]

Here, Johnny! You can't practise your scales if you leave 'em here!

[He throws out the music-roll and shivers again at the cold as he shuts the window.]

Ugh! And I must go out to that miserable dancing class to scrape the rent together.

[He goes to the fire and warms his hands.]

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Ach Gott! What a life! What a life!

[He drops dejectedly into the armchair. Finding himself sitting uncomfortably on the big book, he half rises and pushes it to the side of the seat. After an instant an irate Irish voice is heard from behind the kitchen door.]

KATHLEEN *[Without]*

Divil take the butther! I wouldn't put up with ye, not for a hundred dollars a week.

MENDEL *[Raising himself to listen, heaves great sigh]*

Ach! Mother and Kathleen again!

KATHLEEN *[Still louder]*

Pots and pans and plates and knives! Sure 'tis enough to make a saint chrazy.

FRAU QUIXANO *[Equally loudly from kitchen]*

Wos schreist du? Gott in Himmel, dieses Amerika!

KATHLEEN *[Opening door of kitchen toward the end of Frau*

Quixano's speech, but turning back, with her hand visible on the

door]

What's that ye're afther jabberin' about America? If ye don't like God's own counthry, sure ye can go back to your own Jerusalem, so ye can.

MENDEL

One's very servants are anti-Semites.

KATHLEEN [*Bangs her door as she enters excitedly, carrying a folded white table-cloth. She is a young*

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and pretty Irish maid-of-all-work]

Bad luck to me, if iver I take sarvice again with haythen Jews.

[*She perceives Mendel huddled up in the armchair, gives a little scream, and drops the cloth.*]

Och, I thought ye was out!

MENDEL [*Rising*]

And so you dared to be rude to my mother.

KATHLEEN [*Angrily, as she picks up the cloth*]

She said I put mate on a butther-plate.

MENDEL

Well, you know that's against her religion.

KATHLEEN

But I didn't do nothing of the soort. I ounly put butther on a mate-plate.

MENDEL

That's just as bad. What the Bible forbids——

KATHLEEN [*Lays the cloth on a chair and vigorously clears off the litter of things on the table.*]

Sure, the Pope himself couldn't remimber it all. Why don't ye have a sinsible religion?

MENDEL

You are impertinent. Attend to your work.

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[*He seats himself at the piano.*]

KATHLEEN

And isn't it laying the Sabbath cloth I am?

[*She bangs down articles from the table into their right places.*]

MENDEL

Don't answer me back.

[*He begins to play softly.*]

KATHLEEN

Faith, I must answer *somebody* back—and sorra a word of English *she* understands. I might as well talk to a tree.

MENDEL

You are not paid to talk, but to work.

[*Playing on softly.*]

KATHLEEN

And who *can* work wid an ould woman nagglin' and grizzlin' and faultin' me?

[*She removes the red table-cloth.*]

Mate-plates, butther-plates, *kosher, trepha*, sure I've smashed up folks' crockery and they makin' less fuss ouver it.

MENDEL [*Stops playing.*]

Breaking crockery is one thing, and breaking a religion another.

Didn't you tell me when I engaged you that you had lived in other Jewish families?

KATHLEEN [*Angrily*]

And is it a liar ye'd make me out now? I've lived

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wid clothiers and pawnbrokers and Vaudeville actors, but I niver shtruck a house where mate and butther couldn't be as paceable on the same plate as eggs and bacon—the most was that some wouldn't ate the bacon onless 'twas killed *kosher*.

MENDEL [*Tickled*]

Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha!

KATHLEEN [*Furious, pauses with the white table-cloth half on.*]

And who's ye laughin' at? I give ye a week's notice. I won't be the joke of Jews, no, begorra, that I won't.

[*She pulls the cloth on viciously.*]

MENDEL [*Sobered, rising from the piano*]

Don't talk nonsense, Kathleen. Nobody is making a joke of you.

Have a little patience—you'll soon learn our ways.

KATHLEEN [*More mildly*]

Whose ways, yours or the ould lady's or Mr. David's? To-night being yer Sabbath, *you'll* be blowing out yer bedroom candle, though ye won't light it; Mr. David'll light his and blow it out too; and the misthress won't even touch the candleshtick. There's three religions in this house, not wan.

MENDEL [*Coughs uneasily.*]

Hem! Well, you learn the mistress's ways—that will be enough.
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KATHLEEN [*Going to mantelpiece*]

But what way can I understand her jabberin' and jibberin'?—I'm not a monkey!

[*She takes up a silver candlestick.*]

Why doesn't she talk English like a Christian?

MENDEL [*Irritated*]

If you are going on like that, perhaps you had better *not* remain here.

KATHLEEN [*Blazing up, forgetting to take the second candlestick*]

And who's axin' ye to remain here? Faith, I'll quit off this blissid minit!

MENDEL [*Taken aback*]

No, you can't do that.

KATHLEEN

And why can't I? Ye can keep yer dirty wages.

[*She dumps down the candlestick violently on the table, and exit hysterically into her bedroom.*]

MENDEL [*Sighing heavily*]

She might have put on the other candlestick.

[*He goes to mantel and takes it. A rat-tat-tat at street-door.*]

Who can that be?

[*Running to Kathleen's door, holding candlestick forgetfully low.*]

Kathleen! There's a visitor!

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KATHLEEN [*Angrily from within*]

I'm not here!

MENDEL

So long as you're in this house, you must do your work.

[Kathleen's *head emerges sulkily.*]

KATHLEEN

I tould ye I was lavin' at wanst. Let you open the door yerself.

MENDEL

I'm not dressed to receive visitors—it may be a new pupil.

[*He goes toward staircase, automatically carrying off the candlestick which Kathleen has not caught sight of. Exit on the left.*]

KATHLEEN [*Moving toward the street-door*]

The divil fly away wid me if ivir from this 'our I set foot again among haythen furriners——

[*She throws open the door angrily and then the outer door. Vera Revendal, a beautiful girl in furs and muff, with a touch of the exotic in her appearance, steps into the little vestibule.*]

VERA

Is Mr. Quixano at home?

KATHLEEN [*Sulkily*]

Which Mr. Quixano?

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VERA [*Surprised*]

Are there two Mr. Quixanos?

KATHLEEN [*Tartly*]

Didn't I say there was?

VERA

Then I want the one who plays.

KATHLEEN

There isn't a one who plays.

VERA

Oh, surely!

KATHLEEN

Ye're wrong entirely. They both plays.

VERA [*Smiling*]

Oh, dear! And I suppose they both play the violin.

KATHLEEN

Ye're wrong again. One plays the piano—ounly the young ginthleman plays the fiddle—Mr. David!

VERA [*Eagerly*]

Ah, Mr. David—that's the one I want to see.

KATHLEEN

He's out.

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[*She abruptly shuts the door.*]

VERA [*Stopping its closing*]

Don't shut the door!

KATHLEEN [*Snappily*]

More chanst of seeing him out there than in here!

VERA

But I want to leave a message.

KATHLEEN

Then why don't ye come inside? It's freezin' me to the bone.

[*She sneezes.*]

Atchoo!

VERA

I'm sorry.

[*She comes in and closes the door*]

Will you please say Miss Revendal called from the Settlement, and we are anxiously awaiting his answer to the letter asking him to play for us on——

KATHLEEN

What way will I be tellin' him all that? I'm not here.

VERA

Eh?

KATHLEEN

I'm lavin'—just as soon as I've me thrunk packed.

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VERA

Then I must *write* the message—can I write at this desk?

KATHLEEN

If the ould woman don't come in and shpy you.

VERA

What old woman?

KATHLEEN

Ould Mr. Quixano's mother—she wears a black wig, she's that houly.

VERA [*Bewildered*]

What?... But why should she mind my writing?

KATHLEEN

Look at the clock.

[*Vera looks at the clock, more puzzled than ever.*]

If ye're not quick, it'll be *Shabbos*.

VERA

Be what?

KATHLEEN [*Holds up hands of horror*]

Ye don't know what *Shabbos* is! A Jewess not know her own Sunday!

VERA [*Outraged*]

I, a Jewess! How dare you?

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KATHLEEN [*Flustered*]

Axin' your pardon, miss, but ye looked a bit furrin and I——

VERA [*Frozen*]

I am a Russian.

[*Slowly and dazedly*]

Do I understand that Mr. Quixano is a Jew?

KATHLEEN

Two Jews, miss. Both of 'em.

VERA

Oh, but it is impossible.

[*Dazedly to herself*]

He had such charming manners.

[*Aloud again*]

You seem to think everybody Jewish. Are you sure Mr. Quixano is

not Spanish?—the name sounds Spanish.

KATHLEEN

Shpanish!

[She picks up the old Hebrew book on the armchair.]

Look at the ould lady's book. Is that Shpanish?

[She points to the Mizrach.]

And that houly picture the ould lady says her pater-noster to! Is that Shpanish? And that houly table-cloth with the houly silver candle——

[Cry of sudden astonishment]

Why, I've ounly put——

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[She looks toward mantel and utters a great cry of alarm as she drops the Hebrew book on the floor.]

Why, where's the other candleshtick! Mother in hivin, they'll say I shtole the candleshtick!

[Perceiving that Vera is dazedly moving toward door]

Beggin' your pardon, miss——

[She is about to move a chair toward the desk.]

VERA

Thank you, I've changed my mind.

KATHLEEN

That's more than I'll do.

VERA *[Hand on door]*

Don't say I called at all.

KATHLEEN

Plaze yerself. What name did ye say?

[Mendel enters hastily from his bedroom, completely transmogrified, minus the skull-cap, with a Prince Albert coat, and boots instead of slippers, so that his appearance is gentlemanly.

Kathleen begins to search quietly and unostentatiously in the table-drawers, the chiffonier, etc., etc., for the candlestick.

MENDEL

I am sorry if I have kept you waiting——

[He rubs his hands importantly.]

You see I have so many pupils already. Won't you sit down?

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[He indicates a chair.]

VERA *[Flushing, embarrassed, releasing her hold of the door handle]*

Thank you—I—I—I didn't come about pianoforte lessons.

MENDEL *[Sighing in disappointment]*

Ach!

VERA

In fact I—er—it wasn't you I wanted at all—I was just going.

MENDEL *[Politely]*

Perhaps I can direct you to the house you are looking for.

VERA

Thank you, I won't trouble you.

[She turns toward the door again.]

MENDEL

Allow me!

[He opens the door for her.]

VERA *[Hesitating, struck by his manners, struggling with her anti-Jewish prejudice]*

It—it—was your son I wanted.

MENDEL *[His face lighting up]*

You mean my nephew, David. Yes, *he* gives violin lessons.

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[He closes the door.]

VERA

Oh, is he your nephew?

MENDEL

I am sorry he is out—he, too, has so many pupils, though at the moment he is only at the Crippled Children's Home—playing to them.

VERA

How lovely of him!

[Touched and deciding to conquer her prejudice]

But that's just what *I* came about—I mean we'd like him to play again at our Settlement. Please ask him why he hasn't answered

Miss Andrews's letter.

MENDEL [*Astonished*]

He hasn't answered your letter?

VERA

Oh, I'm not Miss Andrews; I'm only her assistant.

MENDEL

I see—Kathleen, whatever are you doing under the table?

[*Kathleen, in her hunting around for the candlestick, is now stooping and lifting up the table-cloth.*]

KATHLEEN

Sure the fiend's after witching away the candleshtick.

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MENDEL [*Embarrassed*]

The candlestick? Oh—I—I think you'll find it in my bedroom.

KATHLEEN

Wisha, now!

[*She goes into his bedroom.*]

MENDEL [*Turning apologetically to Vera*]

I beg your pardon, Miss Andrews, I mean Miss—er——

VERA

Revendal.

MENDEL [*Slightly more interested*]

Revendal? Then you must be the Miss Revendal David told me about!

VERA [*Blushing*]

Why, he has only seen me once—the time he played at our Roof-Garden Concert.

MENDEL

Yes, but he was so impressed by the way you handled those new immigrants—the Spirit of the Settlement, he called you.

VERA [*Modestly*]

Ah, no—Miss Andrews is that. And you will tell him to answer her letter at once, won't you, because there's only a week now to our Concert.

[*A gust of wind shakes the windows. She smiles.*]

Naturally it will *not* be on the Roof Garden.

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MENDEL [*Half to himself*]

Fancy David not saying a word about it to me! Are you sure the letter was mailed?

VERA

I mailed it myself—a week ago. And even in New York——
[*She smiles. Re-enter Kathleen with the recovered candlestick.*]

KATHLEEN

Bedad, ye're as great a shleep-walker as Mr. David!
[*She places the candlestick on the table and moves toward her bedroom.*]

MENDEL

Kathleen!

KATHLEEN [*Pursuing her walk without turning*]

I'm not here!

MENDEL

Did you take in a letter for Mr. David about a week ago?

[*Smiling at Miss Revendal*]

He doesn't get many, you see.

KATHLEEN [*Turning*]

A letter? Sure, I took in ounly a postcard from Miss Johnson, an' that ounly sayin'——

VERA

And you don't remember a letter—a large letter—last Saturday—
with the seal of our Settlement?

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KATHLEEN

Last Saturday wid a seal, is it? Sure, how could I forgit it?

MENDEL

Then you *did* take it in?

KATHLEEN

Ye're wrong entirely. 'Twas the mistress took it in.

MENDEL [*To Vera*]

I am sorry the boy has been so rude.

KATHLEEN

But the mistress didn't give it him at wanst—she hid it away
bekaz it was *Shabbos*.

MENDEL

Oh, dear—and she has forgotten to give it to him. Excuse me.
[*He makes a hurried exit to the kitchen.*]

KATHLEEN

And excuse *me*—I've me thrunk to pack.
[*She goes toward her bedroom, pauses at the door.*]
And ye'll witness I don't pack the candleshtick.
[*Emphatic exit.*]

VERA [*Still dazed*]

A Jew! That wonderful boy a Jew!... But then
[Pg 19]

so was David the shepherd youth with his harp and his psalms, the
sweet singer in Israel.

[*She surveys the room and its contents with interest. The windows
rattle once or twice in the rising wind. The light gets gradually
less. She picks up the huge Hebrew tome on the piano and puts it
down with a slight smile as if overwhelmed by the weight of alien
antiquity. Then she goes over to the desk and picks up the printed
music.*]

Mendelssohn's Concerto, Tartini's Sonata in G Minor, Bach's
Chaconne...

[*She looks up at the book-rack.*]

"History of the American Commonwealth," "Cyclopædia of
History," "History of the Jews"—he seems very fond of history.
Ah, there's Shelley and Tennyson.

[*With surprise*]

Nietzsche next to the Bible? No Russian books apparently——
[*Re-enter Mendel triumphantly with a large sealed letter.*]

MENDEL

Here it is! As it came on Saturday, my mother was afraid David
would open it!

VERA [*Smiling*]

But what *can* you do with a letter except open it? Any more than with an oyster?

MENDEL [*Smiling as he puts the letter on David's desk*]
[Pg 20]

To a pious Jew letters and oysters are alike forbidden—at least letters may not be opened on our day of rest.

VERA

I'm sure I couldn't rest till I'd opened mine.

[*Enter from the kitchen Frau Quixano, defending herself with excited gesticulation. She is an old lady with a black wig, but her appearance is dignified, venerable even, in no way comic. She speaks Yiddish exclusively, that being largely the language of the Russian Pale.*]

FRAU QUIXANO

Obber ich hob gesogt zu Kathleen——

MENDEL [*Turning and going to her*]

Yes, yes, mother, that's all right now.

FRAU QUIXANO [*In horror, perceiving her Hebrew book on the floor, where Kathleen has dropped it*]

Mein Buch!

[*She picks it up and kisses it piously.*]

MENDEL [*Presses her into her fireside chair*]

Ruhig, ruhig, Mutter!

[*To Vera*]

She understands barely a word of English—she won't disturb us.

VERA

Oh, but I must be going—I was so long finding the house, and look! it has begun to snow!

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[*They both turn their heads and look at the falling snow.*]

MENDEL

All the more reason to wait for David—it may leave off. He can't be long now. Do sit down.

[*He offers a chair.*]

FRAU QUIXANO [*Looking round suspiciously*]
Was will die Shikseh?

VERA
What does your mother say?

MENDEL [*Half-smiling*]
Oh, only asking what your heathen ladyship desires.

VERA
Tell her I hope she is well.

MENDEL
Das Fräulein hofft dass es geht gut——

FRAU QUIXANO [*Shrugging her shoulders in despairing astonishment*]
Gut? Un' wie soll es gut gehen—in Amerika!
[*She takes out her spectacles, and begins slowly polishing and adjusting them.*]

VERA [*Smiling*]
I understood that last word.

MENDEL
She asks how can anything possibly go well in America!
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VERA
Ah, she doesn't like America.

MENDEL [*Half-smiling*]
Her favourite exclamation is "*A Klog zu Columbessen!*"

VERA
What does that mean?

MENDEL
Cursed be Columbus!

VERA [*Laughingly*]
Poor Columbus! I suppose she's just come over.

MENDEL
Oh, no, it must be ten years since I sent for her.

VERA
Really! But your nephew was born here?

MENDEL

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