

*"Levi! A great cry of anguish rent the air."*

*Chapter VIII*

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**THE  
GRANDCHILDREN OF  
THE GHETTO**

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# GRANDCHILDREN OF THE GHETTO

## CHAPTER I

ToC

### THE CHRISTMAS DINNER

Daintily-embroidered napery, beautiful porcelain, Queen Anne silver, exotic flowers, glittering glass, soft rosy light, creamy expanses of shirt-front, elegant low-necked dresses—all the conventional accompaniments of Occidental gastronomy.

It was not a large party. Mrs. Henry Goldsmith professed to collect guests on artistic principles, as she did *bric-à-brac*, and

with an eye to general conversation. The elements of the social salad were sufficiently incongruous to-night, yet all the ingredients were Jewish.

For the history of the Grandchildren of the Ghetto, which is mainly a history of the middle classes, is mainly a history of isolation. 'The Upper Ten' is a literal phrase in Judah, whose aristocracy just about suffices for a synagogue quorum. Great majestic luminaries, each with its satellites, they swim serenely in the golden heavens. And the middle classes look up in worship, and the lower classes in supplication. 'The Upper Ten' have no spirit of exclusiveness; they are willing to entertain royalty, rank, and the arts with a catholic hospitality that is only Eastern in its magnificence, while some of them remain Jews only for fear of being considered snobs by society. But the middle-class Jew has been more jealous of his caste, and for caste reasons. To exchange hospitalities

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with the Christian when you cannot eat his dinners were to get the worst of the bargain; to invite his sons to your house when they cannot marry your daughters were to solicit awkward complications. In business, in civic affairs, in politics, the Jew has mixed freely with his fellow-citizens; but indiscriminate social relations only become possible through a religious decadence which they in turn accelerate. A Christian in a company of middle-class Jews is like a lion in a den of Daniels. They show him deference and their prophetic side.

Mrs. Henry Goldsmith was of the upper middle classes, and her husband was the financial representative of the Kensington Synagogue at the United Council; but her swan-like neck was still bowed beneath the yoke of North London, not to say provincial, Judaism. So to-night there were none of those external indications of Christmas which are so frequent at 'good' Jewish houses—no plum-pudding, snap-dragon, mistletoe, not even a Christmas-tree.

For Mrs. Henry Goldsmith did not countenance these coquettings with Christianity. She would have told you that the incidence of her dinner on Christmas Eve was merely an accident, though a lucky accident, in so far as Christmas found Jews perform at leisure for social gatherings. What she was celebrating was the Feast of Chanukah—of the re-dedication of the Temple after the pollutions of Antiochus Epiphanes—and the memory of the national hero, Judas Maccabæus. Christmas crackers would have been incompatible with the Chanukah candles which the housekeeper, Mary O'Reilly, forced her master to light, and would have shocked that devout old dame. For Mary O'Reilly, as good a soul as she was a Catholic, had lived all her life with Jews, assisting while yet a girl in the kitchen of Henry Goldsmith's father, who was a pattern of ancient piety and a prop of the Great Synagogue. When the father died, Mary, with all the other family belongings, passed into the hands of the son, who came up to London from a provincial town, and, with a grateful recollection of her motherliness, domiciled her in his own establishment. Mary knew all the ritual laws and ceremonies far better than her new mistress, who, although a

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native of the provincial town in which Mr. Henry Goldsmith had established a thriving business, had received her education at a Brussels boarding-school. Mary knew exactly how long to keep the meat in salt, and the heinousness of frying steaks in butter. She knew that the fire must not be poked on the Sabbath, nor the gas lit or extinguished, and that her master must not smoke till three stars appeared in the sky. She knew when the family must fast, and when and how it must feast. She knew all the Hebrew and Jargon expressions which her employers studiously boycotted, and she was the only member of the household who used them habitually in her intercourse with the other members. Too late the Henry Goldsmiths awoke to the consciousness of her tyranny, which did not permit them to be irreligious even in private. In the fierce light

which beats upon a provincial town with only one synagogue, they had been compelled to conform outwardly with many galling restrictions, and they had subconsciously looked forward to emancipation in the mighty Metropolis. But Mary had such implicit faith in their piety, and was so zealous in the practice of her own faith, that they had not the courage to confess that they scarcely cared a pin about a good deal of that for which she was so solicitous. They hesitated to admit that they did not respect their religion (or what she thought was their religion) as much as she did hers. It would have equally lowered them in her eyes to admit that their religion was not so good as hers, besides being disrespectful to the cherished memory of her ancient master. At first they had deferred to Mary's Jewish prejudices out of good-nature and carelessness, but every day strengthened her hold upon them; every act of obedience to the ritual law was a tacit acknowledgment of its sanctity, which made it more and more difficult to disavow its obligation. The dread of shocking Mary came to dominate their lives, and the fashionable house near Kensington Gardens was still a veritable centre of true Jewish orthodoxy, with little to make old Aaron Goldsmith turn in his grave.

It is probable, though, that Mrs. Henry Goldsmith would have kept a *kosher* table even if Mary had never been

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born. Many of their acquaintances and relatives were of an orthodox turn. A *kosher* dinner could be eaten even by the heterodox, whereas a *trifha* dinner choked off the orthodox. Thus it came about that even the Rabbinate might safely stoke its spiritual fires at Mrs. Henry Goldsmith's.

Hence, too, the prevalent craving for a certain author's blood could not be gratified at Mrs. Henry Goldsmith's Chanukah dinner. Besides, nobody knew where to lay hands upon Edward Armitage, the author in question, whose opprobrious production *Mordecai Josephs*, had scandalised West-End Judaism.

'Why didn't he describe our circle?' asked the hostess, an angry fire in her beautiful eyes. 'It would have at least corrected the picture. As it is, the public will fancy that we are all daubed with the same brush—that we have no thought in life beyond dress, money and solo-whist.'

'He probably painted the life he knew,' said Sidney Graham, in defence.

'Then I am sorry for him,' retorted Mrs. Goldsmith. 'It's a great pity he had such detestable acquaintances. Of course, he has cut himself off from the possibility of any better now.'

The wavering flush on her lovely face darkened with disinterested indignation, and her beautiful bosom heaved with judicial grief.

'I should hope so,' put in Miss Cissy Levine sharply. She was a pale, bent woman, with spectacles, who believed in the mission of Israel, and wrote domestic novels to prove that she had no sense of humour. 'No one has a right to foul his own nest. Are there not plenty of subjects for the Jew's pen without his attacking his own people? The calumniator of his race should be ostracised from decent society.'

'As according to him there is none,' laughed Sidney Graham, 'I cannot see where the punishment comes in.'

'Oh, he may say so in that book,' said Mrs. Montagu Samuels, an amiable, loose-thinking lady of florid complexion, who dabbled exasperatingly in her husband's philanthropic concerns from a vague idea that the wife

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of a committee-man is a committee-woman. 'But he knows better.'

'Yes, indeed,' said Mr. Montagu Samuels. 'The rascal has only written it to make money. He knows it's all exaggeration and

distortion. But anything spicy pays nowadays.'

'As a West Indian merchant, he ought to know,' murmured Sidney Graham to his charming cousin, Adelaide Leon.

The girl's soft eyes twinkled as she surveyed the serious little City magnate with his placid spouse. Montagu Samuels was narrow-minded and narrow-chested, and managed to be pompous on a meagre allowance of body. He was earnest and charitable (except in religious wrangles, when he was earnest and uncharitable), and knew himself a pillar of the community, an exemplar to the drones and sluggards who shirked their share of public burdens and were callous to the dazzlement of communal honours.

'Of course it was written for money, Monty,' his brother, Percy Saville, the stockbroker, reminded him. 'What else do authors write for? It's the way they earn their living.'

Strangers found difficulty in understanding the fraternal relation of Percy Saville and Montagu Samuels, and did not readily grasp that Percy Saville was an Anglican version of Pizer Samuels, more in tune with the handsome, well-dressed personality it denoted. Montagu had stuck loyally to his colours, but Pizer had drooped under the burden of carrying his patronymic through the theatrical and artistic circles he favoured after business hours. Of such is the brotherhood of Israel.

'The whole book's written with gall,' went on Percy Saville emphatically. 'I suppose the man couldn't get into good Jewish houses, and he's revenged himself by slandering them.'

'Then he ought to have got into good Jewish houses,' said Sidney. 'The man has talent, nobody can deny that, and if he couldn't get into good Jewish society because he didn't have money enough, isn't that proof enough his picture is true?'

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'I don't deny that there are people among us who make money

the one Open Sesame to their houses,' said Mrs. Henry Goldsmith magnanimously.

'Deny it, indeed! Money is the Open Sesame to everything,' rejoined Sidney Graham, delightedly scenting an opening for a screed. He liked to talk bombshells, and did not often get pillars of the community to shatter. 'Money manages the schools and the charities and the synagogues, and indirectly controls the press. A small body of persons—always the same—sits on all councils, on all boards! Why? Because they pay the piper.'

'Well, sir, and is not that a good reason?' asked Montagu Samuels. 'The community is to be congratulated on having a few public-spirited men left in days when there are wealthy German Jews in our midst who not only disavow Judaism, but refuse to support its institutions. But, Mr. Graham, I would join issue with you. The men you allude to are elected, not because they are rich, but because they are good men of business, and most of the work to be done is financial.'

'Exactly,' said Sidney Graham in sinister agreement. 'I have always maintained that the United Synagogue could be run as a joint-stock company for the sake of a dividend, and that there wouldn't be an atom of difference in the discussions if the councillors were directors. I do believe the pillars of the community figure the Millennium as a time when every Jew shall have enough to eat, a place to worship in, and a place to be buried in. Their State Church is simply a financial system, to which the doctrines of Judaism happen to be tacked on. How many of the councillors believe in their established religion? Why, the very beadles of their synagogues are prone to surreptitious shrimps and unobtrusive oysters! Then take that institution for supplying *kosher* meat. I am sure there are lots of its committee who never inquire into the necrologies of their own chops and steaks, and who regard kitchen Judaism as obsolete; but, all the same, they look after the finances with almost fanatical zeal. Finance fascinates them. Long

after Judaism has ceased to exist, excellent gentlemen will be found regulating its finances.'

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There was that smile on the faces of the graver members of the party which arises from reluctance to take a dangerous speaker seriously.

Sidney Graham was one of those favourites of society who are allowed Touchstone's licence. He had just as little wish to reform, and just as much wish to abuse, society as society has to be reformed and abused. He was a dark, bright-eyed young artist with a silky moustache. He had lived much in Paris, where he studied impressionism and perfected his natural talent for causerie, and his inborn preference for the hedonistic view of life. Fortunately he had plenty of money, for he was a cousin of Raphael Leon on the mother's side, and the remotest twigs of the Leon genealogical tree bear apples of gold. His real name was Abrahams, which is a shade too Semitic. Sidney was the black sheep of the family—good-natured to the core, and artistic to the finger-tips, he was an avowed infidel in a world where avowal is the unpardonable sin. He did not even pretend to fast on the Day of Atonement. Still, Sidney Graham was a good deal talked of in artistic circles, his name was often in the newspapers, and so more orthodox people than Mrs. Henry Goldsmith were not averse to having him at their table, though they would have shrunk from being seen at his. Even Cousin Addie, who had a charming religious cast of mind, liked to be with him, though she ascribed this to family piety—for there is a wonderful solidarity about many Jewish families, the richer members of which assemble loyally at one another's births, marriages, funerals, and card-parties, often to the entire exclusion of outsiders. An ordinary well-regulated family (so prolific is the stream of life) will include in its bosom ample elements for every occasion.

'Really, Mr. Graham, I think you are wrong about the *kosher* meat,' said Mr. Henry Goldsmith. 'Our statistics show no falling off

in the number of bullocks killed, while there is a rise of two per cent. in the sheep slaughtered. No, Judaism is in a far more healthy condition than pessimists imagine. So far from sacrificing our ancient faith, we are learning to see how tuberculosis lurks in the lungs

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of unexamined carcasses and is communicated to the consumer. As for the members of the *Shechitah* Board not eating *Kosher*, look at me.'

The only person who looked at the host was the hostess. Her look was one of approval—it could not be of æsthetic approval, like the look Percy Saville devoted to herself, for her husband was a cadaverous little man with prominent ears and teeth.

'And if Mr. Graham should ever join us on the Council of the United Synagogue,' added Montagu Samuels, addressing the table generally, 'he will discover that there is no communal problem with which we do not loyally grapple.'

'No, thank you,' said Sidney with a shudder. 'When I visit Raphael, I sometimes pick up a Jewish paper and amuse myself by reading the debates of your public bodies. I understand most of your verbiage is edited away,' he looked Montagu Samuels full in the face, with audacious *naïveté*; 'but there is enough left to show that our monotonous group of public men consists of narrow-minded mediocrities. The chief public work they appear to do, outside finance, is, when public exams. fall on Sabbaths or holidays, getting special dates for Jewish candidates, to whom these examinations are the avenues to atheism. They never see the joke. How can they? Why, they take even themselves seriously.'

'Oh, come!' said Miss Cissy Levine indignantly. 'You often see "laughter" in the reports.'

'That must mean the speaker was laughing,' explained Sidney, 'for you never see anything to make the audience laugh. I appeal to

Mr. Montagu Samuels.'

'It is useless discussing a subject with a man who admittedly speaks without knowledge,' replied that gentleman with dignity.

'Well, how do you expect me to get the knowledge?' grumbled Sidney. 'You exclude the public from your gatherings—I suppose to prevent them rubbing shoulders with the swells, the privilege of being snubbed by whom is the reward of public service. Wonderfully practical idea that—to utilise snobbery as a communal force! The

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United Synagogue is founded on it. Your community coheres through it.'

'There you are scarcely fair,' said the hostess, with a charming smile of reproof. 'Of course there are snobs amongst us, but is it not the same in all sects?'

'Emphatically not,' said Sidney. 'If one of our swells sticks to a shred of Judaism, people seem to think the God of Judah should be thankful; and if he goes to synagogue once or twice a year, it is regarded as a particular condescension to the Creator.'

'The mental attitude you caricature is not so snobbish as it seems,' said Raphael Leon, breaking into the conversation for the first time. 'The temptations to the wealthy and the honoured to desert their struggling brethren are manifold, and sad experience has made our race accustomed to the loss of its brightest sons.'

'Thanks for the compliment, fair coz,' said Sidney, not without a complacent cynical pleasure in the knowledge that Raphael spoke truly, that he owed his own immunity from the obligations of the faith to his artistic success, and that the outside world was disposed to accord him a larger charter of morality on the same grounds. 'But if you can only deny nasty facts by accounting for them, I dare say Mr. Armitage's book will afford you ample opportunities for

explanation. Or have Jews the brazenness to assert it is all invention?'

'No; no one would do that,' said Percy Saville, who had just done it. 'Certainly, there is a good deal of truth in the sketch of the ostentatious, over-dressed Johnsons, who, as everybody knows, are meant for the Jonases.'

'Oh yes,' said Mrs. Henry Goldsmith. 'And it's quite evident that the stockbroker who drops half his *h's*, and all his poor acquaintances, and believes in one Lord, is no other than Joel Friedman.'

'And the house where people drive up in broughams for supper and solo-whist after the theatre is the Davises', in Maida Vale,' said Miss Cissy Levine.

'Yes, the book's true enough,' began Mrs. Montagu Samuels. She stopped suddenly, catching her husband's eye, and the colour heightened on her florid cheek. 'What

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I say is,' she concluded awkwardly, 'he ought to have come among us, and shown the world a picture of the cultured Jews.'

'Quite so, quite so!' said the hostess. Then, turning to the tall, thoughtful-looking young man who had hitherto contributed but one remark to the conversation, she said, half in sly malice, half to draw him out: 'Now you, Mr. Leon, whose culture is certified by our leading University, what do you think of this latest portrait of the Jew?'

'I don't know; I haven't read it,' replied Raphael apologetically.

'No more have I,' murmured the table generally.

'I wouldn't touch it with a pitchfork,' said Miss Cissy Levine.

'I think it's a shame they circulate it at the libraries,' said Mrs. Montagu Samuels. 'I just glanced over it at Mrs. Hugh Marston's

house. It's vile. There are actually Jargon words in it. Such vulgarity!

'Shameful!' murmured Percy Saville; 'Mr. Lazarus was telling me about it. It's plain treachery and disloyalty, this putting of weapons into the hands of our enemies. Of course we have our faults, but we should be told of them privately or from the pulpit.'

'That would be just as efficacious,' said Sidney admiringly.

'More efficacious,' said Percy Saville unsuspectingly. 'A preacher speaks with authority, but this penny-a-liner——'

'With truth?' queried Sidney.

Saville stopped, disgusted, and the hostess answered Sidney half coaxingly.

'Oh, I am sure you can't think that. The book is so one-sided. Not a word about our generosity, our hospitality, our domesticity—the thousand and one good traits all the world allows us.'

'Of course not; since all the world allows them, it was unnecessary,' said Sidney.

'I wonder the Chief Rabbi doesn't stop it,' said Mrs. Montagu Samuels.

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'My dear, how can he?' inquired her husband. 'He has no control over the publishing trade.'

'He ought to talk to the man,' persisted Mrs. Samuels.

'But we don't even know who he is,' said Percy Saville; 'probably "Edward Armitage" is only a *nom de plume*. You'd be surprised to learn the real names of some of the literary celebrities I meet about.'

'Oh, if he's a Jew you may be sure it isn't his real name,' laughed Sidney. It was characteristic of him that he never spared a shot,

even when himself hurt by the kick of the gun. Percy coloured slightly, unmollified by being in the same boat with the satirist.

'I have never seen the name in the subscription lists,' said the hostess with ready tact.

'There is an Armitage who subscribes two guineas a year to the Board of Guardians,' said Mrs. Montagu Samuels. 'But his Christian name is George.'

"'Christian" name is distinctly good for "George,'" murmured Sidney.

'There was an Armitage who sent a cheque to the Russian Fund,' said Mr. Henry Goldsmith; 'but that can't be an author: it was quite a large cheque!'

'I am sure I have seen Armitage among the Births, Marriages, and Deaths,' said Miss Cissy Levine.

'How well read they all are in the national literature!' Sidney murmured to Addie.

Indeed, the sectarian advertisements served to knit the race together, counteracting the unravelling induced by the fashionable dispersion of Israel, and waxing the more important as the other links, the old traditional jokes, bywords, ceremonies, card-games, prejudices, and tunes, which are more important than laws and more cementatory than ideals, were disappearing before the over-zealousness of a parvenu refinement that had not yet attained to self-confidence. The Anglo-Saxon stolidity of the West-End synagogue service, on week days entirely given over to paid praying-men, was a typical expression of the universal tendency to exchange the picturesque primitiveness of the Orient for the sobrieties of fashionable civilisation. When Jeshurun waxed fat, he did not

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always kick, but he yearned to approximate as much as possible

to John Bull without merging in him; to sink himself and yet not be absorbed—not to be, and yet to be. The attempt to realise the asymptote in human mathematics was not quite successful, too near an approach to John Bull generally assimilating Jeshurun away. For such is the nature of Jeshurun. Enfranchise him, give him his own way, and you make a new man of him; persecute him, and he is himself again.

'But if nobody has read the man's book,' Raphael Leon ventured to interrupt at last, 'is it quite fair to assume his book isn't fit to read?'

The shy dark little girl he had taken down to dinner darted an appreciative glance at her neighbour. It was in accordance with Raphael's usual anxiety to give the devil his due that he should be unwilling to condemn even the writer of an anti-Semitic novel unheard. But, then, it was an open secret in the family that Raphael was mad. They did their best to hush it up, but among themselves they pitied him behind his back. Even Sidney considered his cousin Raphael pushed a dubious virtue too far, in treating people's very prejudices with the deference due to earnest, reasoned opinions.

'But we know enough of the book to know we are badly treated,' protested the hostess.

'We have always been badly treated in literature,' said Raphael. 'We are made either angels or devils. On the one hand, Lessing and George Eliot; on the other, the stock dramatist and novelist, with their low-comedy villain.'

'Oh!' said Mrs. Goldsmith doubtfully, for she could not quite think Raphael had become infected by his cousin's propensity for paradox. 'Do you think George Eliot and Lessing didn't understand the Jewish character?'

'They are the only writers who have ever understood it,' affirmed Miss Cissy Levine emphatically.

A little scornful smile played for a second about the mouth of the dark little girl.

'Stop a moment,' said Sidney. 'I've been so busy doing justice to this delicious asparagus that I have

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allowed Raphael to imagine nobody here has read *Mordecai Josephs*. I have, and I say there is more actuality in it than in *Daniel Deronda* and *Nathan der Weise* put together. It is a crude production, all the same; the writer's artistic gift seems handicapped by a dead weight of moral platitudes and high falutin, and even mysticism. He not only presents his characters, but moralises over them—actually cares whether they are good or bad, and has yearnings after the indefinable. It is all very young. Instead of being satisfied that Judæa gives him characters that are interesting, he actually laments their lack of culture. Still, what he has done is good enough to make one hope his artistic instinct will shake off his moral.'

'Oh, Sidney, what are you saying?' murmured Addie.

'It's all right, little girl. You don't understand Greek.'

'It's not Greek,' put in Raphael. 'In Greek art beauty of soul and beauty of form are one. It's French you are talking, though the ignorant ateliers where you picked it up flatter themselves it's Greek.'

'It's Greek to Addie, anyhow,' laughed Sidney. 'But that's what makes the anti-Semitic chapters so unsatisfactory.'

'We all felt their unsatisfactoriness, if we could not analyse it so cleverly,' said the hostess.

'We all felt it,' said Mrs. Montagu Samuels.

'Yes, that's it,' said Sidney blandly. 'I could have forgiven the rose-colour of the picture if it had been more artistically painted.'

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