



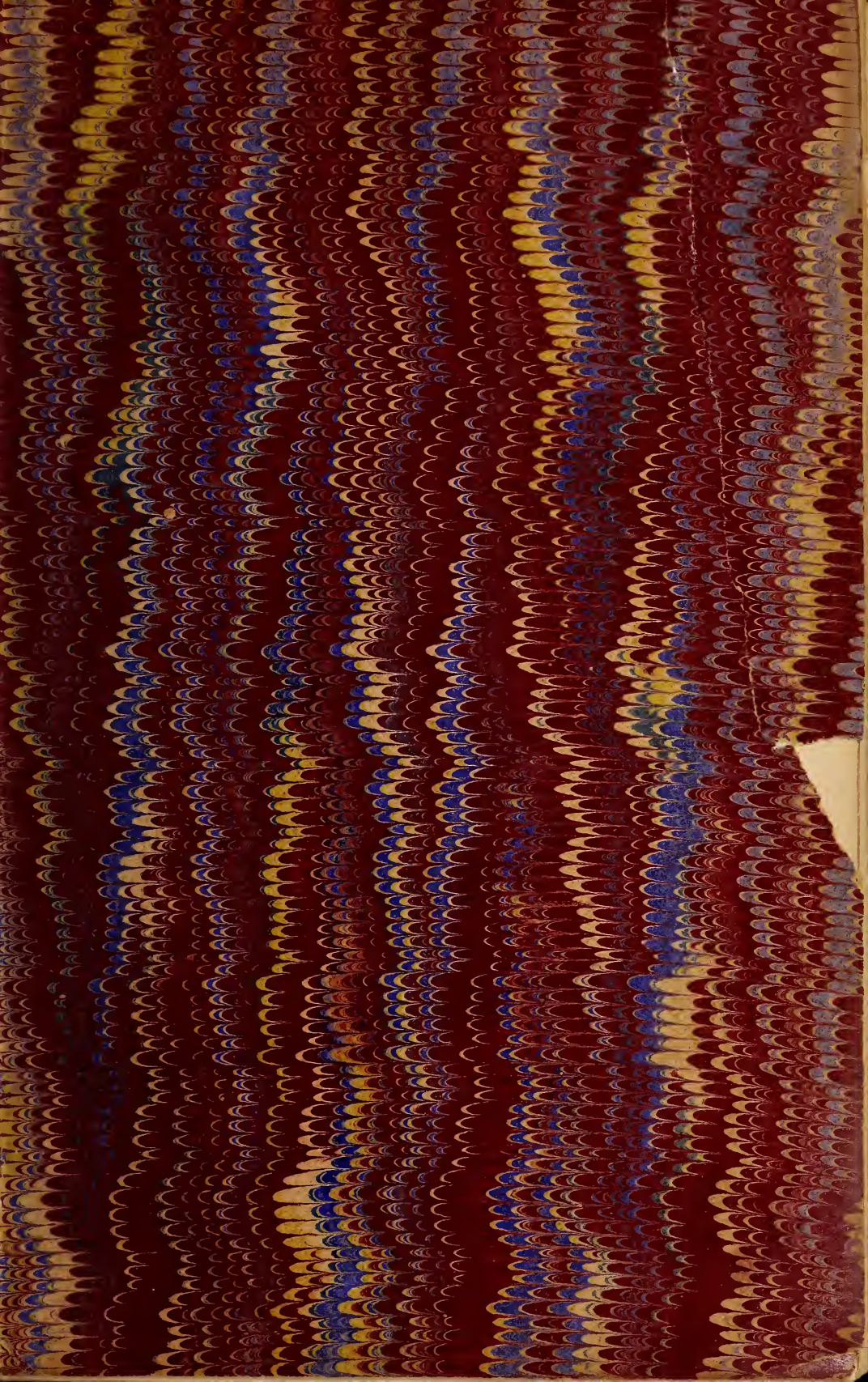
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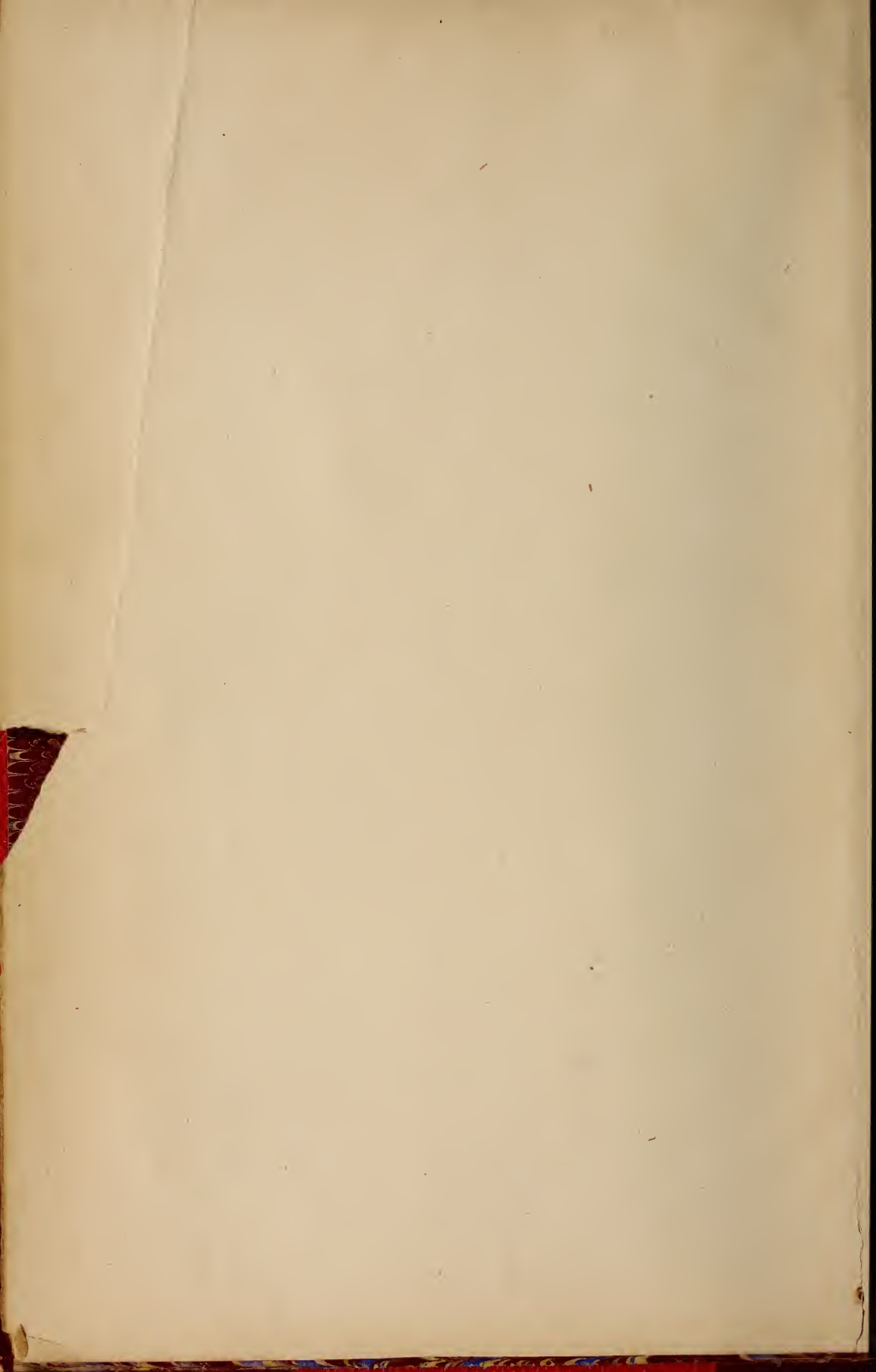
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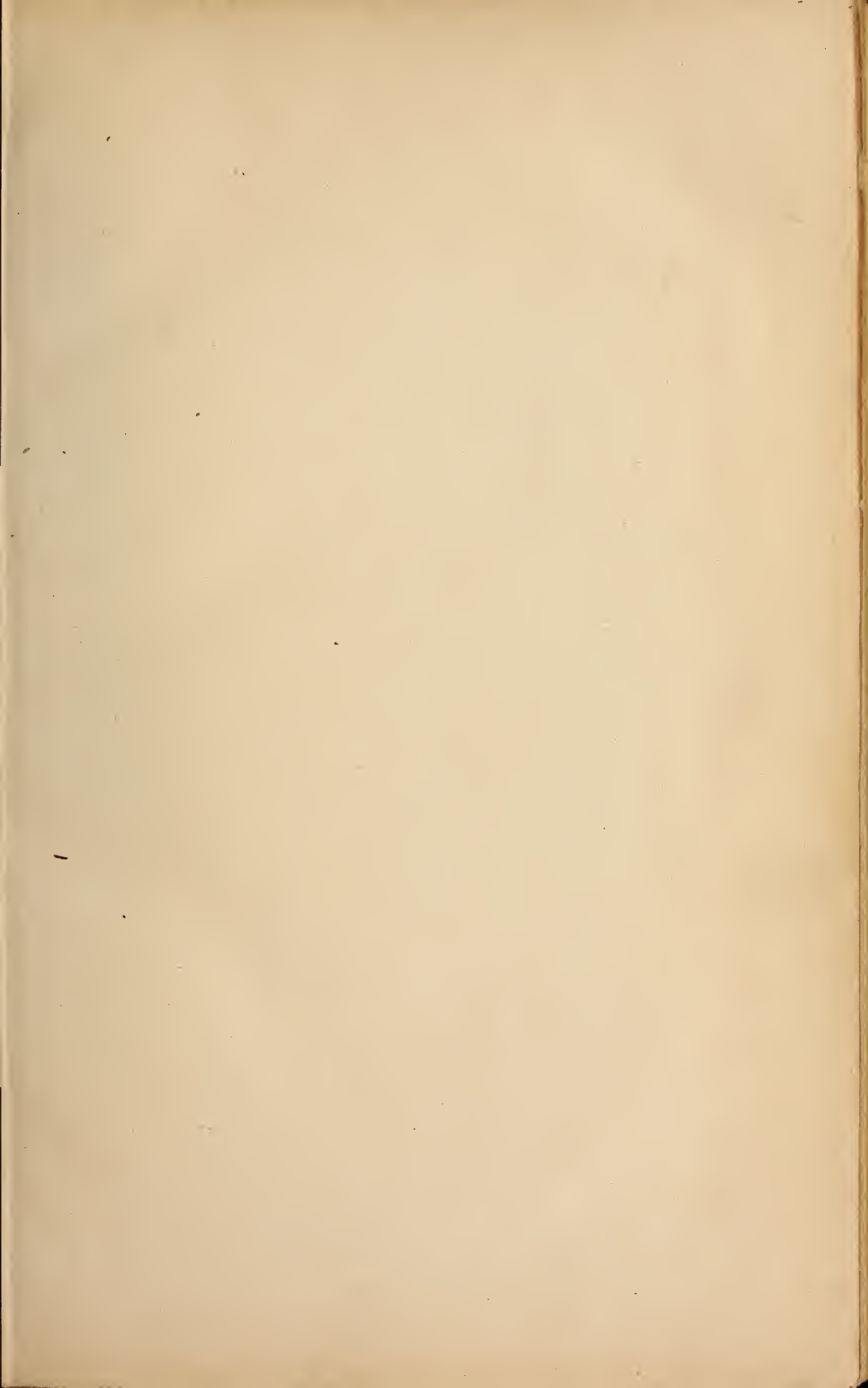
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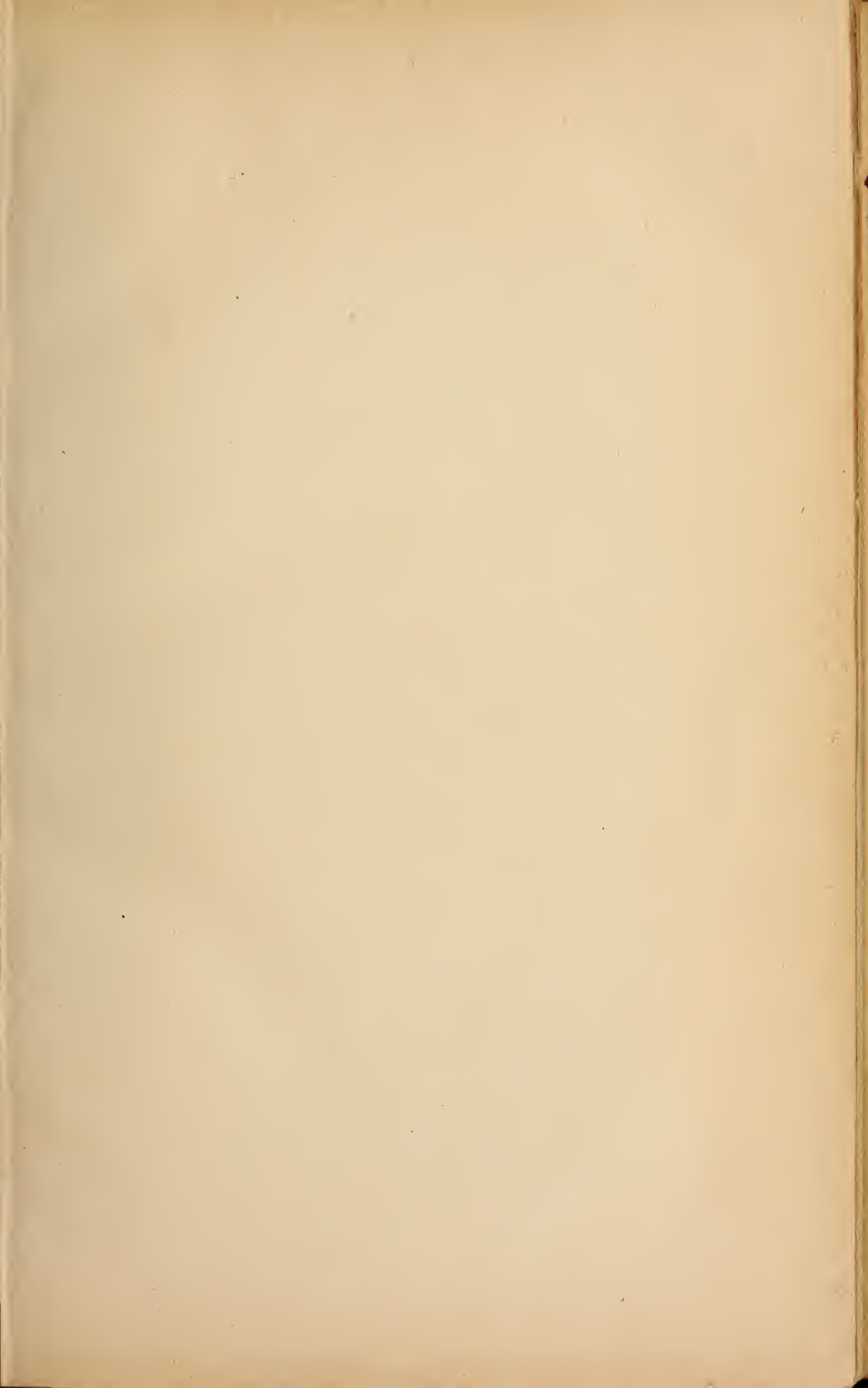
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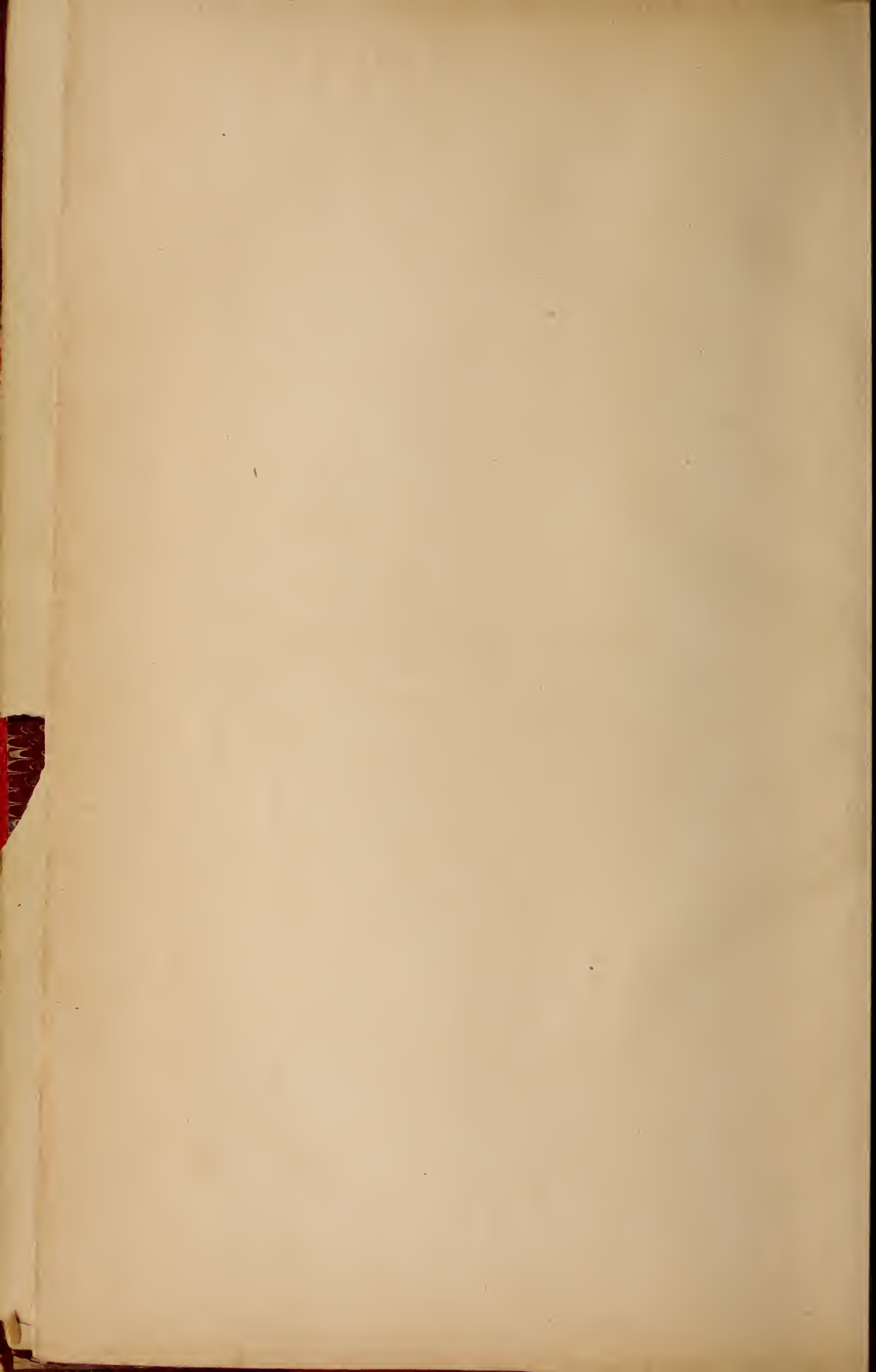






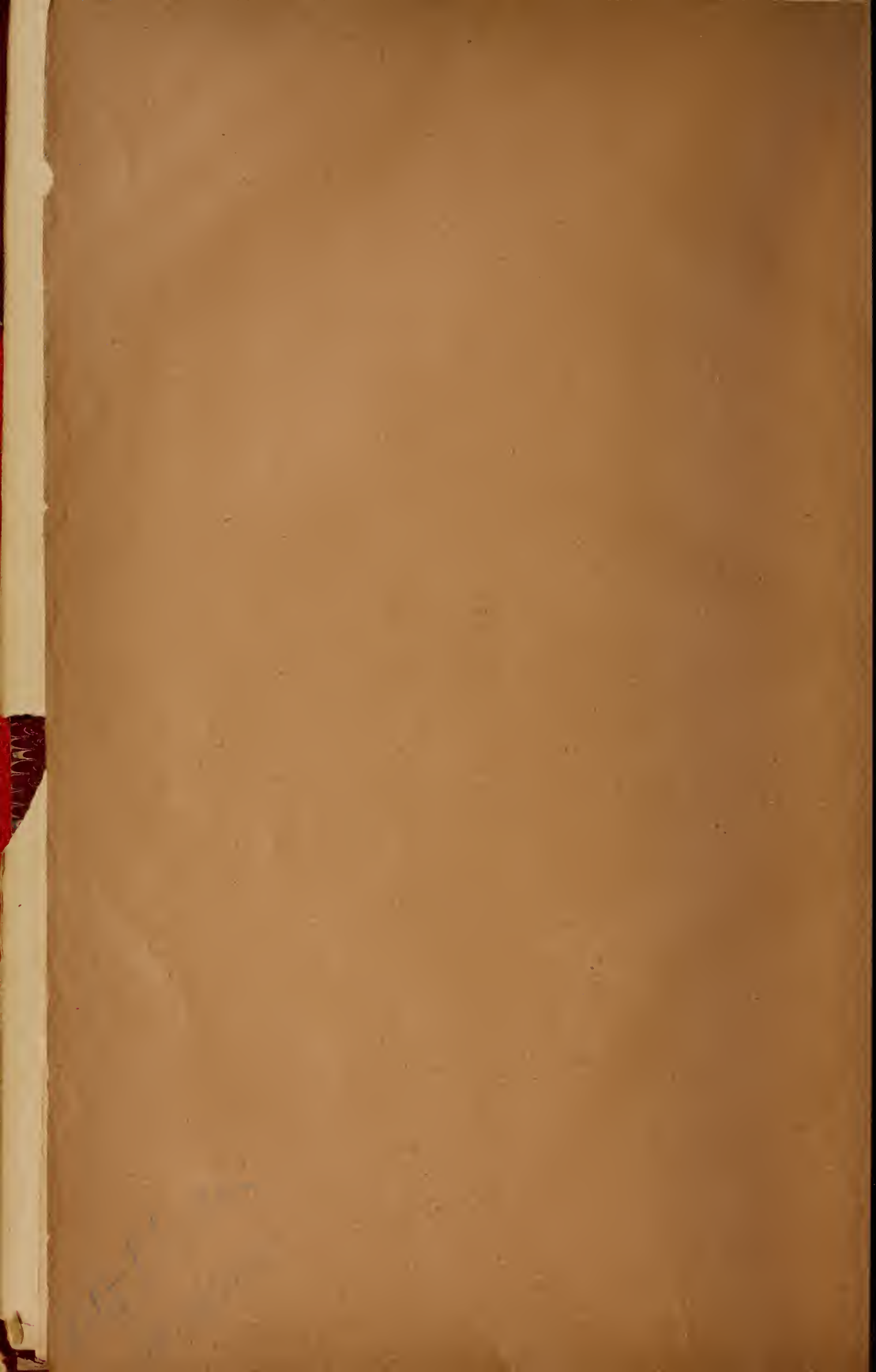






572

Nathan the Wise.



NATHAN THE WISE.

A DRAMATIC POEM IN FIVE ACTS.

Introite, nam et heic Dii sunt.

Apud Gellium.

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN

OF

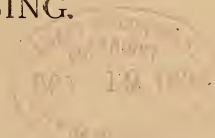
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1894.



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PERSONS.

SULTAN SALADIN.

SITTAH, - - - - - *his sister.*

NATHAN, - - - - - *a rich Jew at Jerusalem.*

RECHA, - - - - - *his adopted daughter.*

DAYA, - - *a Christian woman living in Nathan's
house as companion to Recha.*

A YOUNG TEMPLAR.

A DERVISH.

THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM.

A LAY-BROTHER.

AN EMIR AND SEVERAL OF SALADIN'S MAMELUKES.

THE SCENE IS AT JERUSALEM.

NATHAN THE WISE.

ACT FIRST.

SCENE I.

Entrance-hall in NATHAN'S house. NATHAN returning from a journey. DAYA coming to meet him.

DAYA.

'Tis he himself! 'tis Nathan!—God be praised,
For ever praised, that you have come at last!

NATHAN.

Yes, Daya, God be praised! But why at last?
Had I the wish to hasten my return?
Could I have done so? For Jerusalem
Is full two hundred miles from Babylon
For one who is forced, as I have been, to turn
Often to right and left upon the way;
And gathering in old debts is not a task
That's soon despatched.

DAYA.

O Nathan, at this hour
A wretched, wretched man you might have been!
Your house. . .

NATHAN.

Has been in flames. So much I heard.—
God grant there's nothing more!

DAYA.

It might have been
Burnt to the ground.

NATHAN.

Then, Daya, we could build
Another, and a better one.

DAYA.

'Tis true!—

But Recha by a hair's breadth would have been
Burnt with it.

NATHAN.

Burnt? my Recha? is it she
You mean?—I had not heard that.—So should I
Have needed no house more!—By a hair's breadth
My Recha burnt!—Ha! and she is, perhaps,
Is indeed burnt!—Speak out!—Kill me at once,
And do not torture me.—Yes, she is burnt.

DAYA.

Would you have had such tidings from my lips
If it were so?

NATHAN.

Why terrify me then?—

O Recha! my Recha!

DAYA.

Yours? your Recha?

NATHAN.

How

Could I ever cease to call this child my child!

DAYA.

And do you call all you possess your own
With as much right only?

NATHAN.

Nothing with greater right!

All I possess beside has been bestowed
By nature and by chance. But this I owe
To virtue.

DAYA.

What a price you ask of me

In payment for your kindness! If, indeed,
What has been done for such an end may bear
The name of kindness!

NATHAN.

Such an end? What end?

DAYA.

My conscience . . .

NATHAN.

Daya, let me tell you first . . .

DAYA.

I say, my conscience . . .

NATHAN.

What I bought for you
At Babylon, a stuff so beautiful,
So rich! For Recha even I have scarce
A gift more costly.

DAYA.

What is that to me?

My conscience, I must tell you once for all,
No longer will be stifled.

NATHAN.

How the chain,
The ear-drops, and the ring I chose for you
While at Damascus will delight you too,
I long to see.

DAYA.

Always the same! Content
If you can only give! can only give!

NATHAN.

Do you take gladly, even as I give;—
And still keep silence!

DAYA.

Nathan, who can doubt
That you are upright, generous? And yet . . .

NATHAN.

Yet after all I am a Jew.—Is that
What you meant to say?

DAYA.

What I meant to say you know
Far better.

NATHAN.

Then keep silence!

DAYA.

Be it so!

If what is evil in the sight of God
Is done here, and I cannot hinder it
Nor change it—cannot—let it be on you!

NATHAN.

On me alone!—But Recha, where is she?—
Daya, if you deceive me! . . . Does she know
That I am here?

DAYA.

That I would ask of you!

Still quivers every nerve with terror; still
Fancy paints fire on all she looks upon.
Her soul wakes when she sleeps, sleeps when she
wakes:
Now less than brute, now more than angel seems.

NATHAN.

Poor child! What are we men!

DAYA.

This morning, long
She lay with eyes fast closed as if in death.
Then sudden starting up, she cried aloud;
“Hark! hark! my father’s camels come! I hear
His own kind voice!”—Her eyes grew dim, her arm
Sank powerless, and her head fell back again
Upon her pillow.—To the gates I ran!
And see! you come, you come indeed! It was
A miracle! Her whole soul had gone forth
To be with you—and him.

NATHAN.

And him ?

DAYA.

With him

Who saved her from the flames.

NATHAN.

Who was it ? who ?

Who saved my Recha ?

DAYA.

A young Templar, brought
A captive to this place not long before,
And spared by Saladin.

NATHAN.

A Templar spared
By Saladin ? Could not a miracle
Less great save Recha ?

DAYA.

But for him who staked
A second time what he so regained, she would
Have perished.

NATHAN.

Lead me to this noble man !—
Where is he, Daya, where ? You gave him all
The treasure I had left with you ? gave all ?
And promised more ? much more ?

DAYA.

How could we ?

NATHAN.

Then

You did not ? did not ?

DAYA.

None knew whence he came
Nor where he went. Led by his ear alone,

His mantle spread before, through flame and smoke
 He pressed where the voice called to us for help.
 We thought him lost already when at once
 He stood before us, out of smoke and flame
 Bearing her in his strong arms high upheld.
 Cold and unmoved by our loud clamorous thanks
 He put his burden down, and in the crowd
 He vanished.

NATHAN.

Not for ever, let me hope!

DAYA.

Under the palm-trees there we saw him pass
 A few days later, walking back and forth
 Beside the grave of Him who rose again.
 Joyful I hastened to him, offered all,
 Thanked him, entreated him but once to see
 The gentle creature who could find no rest
 Till she had wept out at his feet her tears
 Of gratitude. In vain! He was as one
 Deaf to our prayers, and heaped on me such words
 Of bitter mockery...

NATHAN.

That in dismay

You left him?

DAYA.

Only to return again

Day after day, and be received with scorn.
 What have I not endured! what would I not
 Endure still from him!—But it has been long
 Since last he came to walk beneath the palms
 That shade the grave of our risen Lord,
 And none knows where he is.—You seem amazed
 And lost in thought?

NATHAN.

I did but ask myself

How on a mind like Recha's it has worked
 To be despised by one she must esteem
 Most noble; to be thrust away, and yet
 So drawn to him.—How long must heart and head
 Together strive, till either hate or grief
 Had conquered! Yet how oft in such a strife
 Does neither conquer, and quick Fancy comes
 To mingle in the conflict and lead forth
 The dreamer, the enthusiast, in whom
 The head now overcomes the heart, and now
 The heart the head.—O pitiful exchange!—
 If she is what I think her, 'tis this last
 That has befallen Recha.

DAYA.

But so good,

So gentle!

NATHAN.

A visionary still!

DAYA.

One—whim,

If you will have it so, is dear to her
 Above the rest. Her Templar was no man,
 No dweller upon earth; an angel, one
 To whose peculiar care even as a child
 She loved to think herself intrusted, left
 The cloud that had concealed him, hovered near
 Amid the flames, and took on him at last
 The semblance of a Templar.—Do not smile!—
 Who knows? it may have been! Or if you smile,
 Do not at least awake her from a dream
 That Christian, Jew, and Mussulman unite
 In cherishing;—how sweet a dream!

NATHAN.

To me

Sweet also!—Go to her, good Daya; see
 What she's about, if I may speak to her.—
 Then let me seek for him at once, this strange
 Capricious angel. If it please him yet
 To wander here below and play so ill
 His knightly part, I shall soon find him out
 And bring him to her.

DAYA.

It is no light task

That you have undertaken.

NATHAN.

The sweet dream

To a far sweeter waking will give place.—
 For trust me, Daya, to the heart of man
 A fellow-man must ever be more dear
 Than any angel.—So you will not chide,
 Will not be angry with me when you see
 Our angel-dreamer healed?

DAYA.

How kind you are!

Yet at the same time how unkind!—I'll go!
 But hark! but see!—She comes to you herself.

SCENE II.

RECHA *and the preceding.*

RECHA.

Is it you my father, you indeed? and not
 Only a part of you? I thought you had
 But sent your voice before. What mountains now,
 What streams, what deserts part us? Once again

Under the same roof, and you do not haste
To meet your Recha, your poor Recha, who
Was almost, almost burnt to death! Not quite,
But almost. Do not shudder! Yet it is
A fearful thing to burn to death.

NATHAN.

My child!

My own dear child!

RECHA.

What rivers you have crossed,
Euphrates, Tigris, Jordan,—who can tell
How many more beside?—And oh, how oft
I've trembled for you, till the fire came
So near me! Since the fire came so near,
To die by drowning only seems to me
Relief, refreshment, rescue.—But you are
Not drowned; I am not burnt. O how we shall
Rejoice together and praise God! He bore
You and your bark across the treacherous stream
Upon the wings of angels, though to you
Invisible. And He it was who sent
My angel to me, bade him visibly
On his white pinions bear me through the flames...

NATHAN.

(White pinions! yes, the mantle spread before
The Templar.)

RECHA.

Visibly he bore me through
The flames, by his broad pinions fanned aside.—
I too have seen an angel; I have seen
My angel face to face.

NATHAN.

Recha would be
Worthy of such a vision, and would see
Nothing in him more fair than he in her.

RECHA (smiling).

Whom do you flatter now, my father? whom?
The angel or yourself?

NATHAN.

Yet had it been
A man—such a man as nature daily forms—
Who rendered you this service, in your sight
He must have been an angel; must and would.

RECHA.

Not such an angel, no! surely he was
A real one!—For have not you yourself
Taught me there may be angels, and that God
For those who love Him can work miracles?
I love Him.

NATHAN.

And He loves you too, and works
For you and such as you each day, each hour
Fresh miracles: yes, from eternity
Has done so.

RECHA.

How I like to hear that!

NATHAN.

What,
Because it sounds so natural to say
A Templar rescued you, is it the less
A miracle? The greatest miracle
Is that a true, a real miracle
Can be, should be so natural a thing.
But for this universal miracle
A thinking mind would hardly ever call

By such a name what none but children must
So call, who only follow after what
Is newest, only gape with wonder at
The unaccustomed.

DAYA (*to* NATHAN).

Will you now confuse
Still more by subtleties like these a brain
Already overwrought?

NATHAN.

Leave that to me!—
Would not my Recha think it miracle
Enough to have been rescued by a man
Who himself by no common miracle
Had first been rescued? For who heard before
That Sultan Saladin had ever spared
A Templar? that a Templar ever asked
That he would spare him? hoped for it? could give
More than his leathern sword-belt in return
For freedom, and at most his dagger?

RECHA.

This,
My father, this but proves that he was not
A Templar; that he only seemed to be.—
No Templar to Jerusalem is brought
Except to meet with certain death; and none
Was ever in Jerusalem so free
To come and go: how then could such a one
Have rescued me at night?

NATHAN.

She reasons well!—
Now, Daya, speak! It was from you I heard
That he was brought a captive to this place.
Doubtless you know more.

DAYA.

So 'tis said indeed;—
 But 'tis said also he was spared because
 He was so like the Sultan's brother, one
 Most dearly loved. And yet for twenty years
 This brother has been dead,—I was not told
 His name, nor where he died—and the whole tale
 Is so incredible it must be false.

NATHAN.

Why Daya, what is there in this that's so
 Incredible? It cannot be—yet may—
 You would reject it to believe what's more
 Incredible? Why could not Saladin,
 Whose love for all his brothers is well known,
 In earlier years have loved one brother best?—
 Do no two faces ever look alike?—
 Are old impressions always lost?—Since when
 Does the same cause no longer bring about
 The same effect?—What's here incredible?—
 Truly, wise Daya, you could find in this
 No miracle; and miracles alone
 Call for . . . I should have said, deserve belief.

DAYA.

You are jesting.

NATHAN.

Only because you jest with me.—
 But even so, Recha, is your rescue still
 A miracle, impossible except
 To Him whose pleasure 'tis—if not His sport—
 Ever by feeblest means to turn aside
 The stern resolves, the proud designs of kings.

RECHA.

My father, if I err, you know I err
 Not willingly.

NATHAN.

No, rather you receive
 Instruction willingly.—See then! a brow
 Arched in this way or that; a nose that's shaped
 Thus and not otherwise; eyebrows that have
 A harsher or a softer sweep; a line,
 A curve, an angle, a mere nothing in
 This European face;—and you are saved
 From death by fire in Asia! Ye who seek
 For miracles, is this no miracle?
 What need of any angel?

DATA.

Yet what harm,
 Nathan, if one should wish to think one's self
 Saved by an angel rather than a man?
 Does it not make one feel one's self more near
 To the First Cause incomprehensible
 Whence rescue came?

NATHAN.

Pride! nothing but pride!
 The iron vessel would with silver tongs
 Be taken from the fire, that it may seem
 A silver vessel to itself.—You ask
 What is the harm? You should have asked instead
 What is the use?—For when you speak of this
 As “making one feel nearer God,” your words
 Are either senseless or else blasphemous.—
 And there is harm; yes, there is harm in it.—
 Come, listen both!—This angel or this man,
 Do you not long to render him some great,
 Some mighty service?—Yet what service can
 Be rendered to an angel? You may sigh
 And pray to him, offer him thanks and vows,

Give alms and fast upon his holy day,
 And dwell upon the thought of him until
 You melt with ecstasy.—To me it seems
 You serve your neighbor and yourself thereby
 Far more than you serve him. He does not grow
 The fatter for your fasting, is not made
 The richer by your spending, will not gain
 New splendor from your ecstasy, nor from
 Your trust in him new might. Is it not so?
 But on the other hand, a man . . .

DAYA.

A man

Would indeed have allowed us to perform
 Some service for him, would have given us
 Occasion for such service. And God knows
 How ready to perform it we have been!
 But he wished nothing, needed nothing, was
 Sufficient in himself and to himself
 As only angels are, as only they
 Can be.

RECHA.

And when he vanished from our sight . . .

NATHAN.

He vanished?—Vanished how?—Beneath the palms
 No longer let himse'f be seen?—Or have
 You sought him elsewhere?

DAYA.

That we have not done.

NATHAN.

You have not, Daya?—Now then, see the harm!—
 Cruel enthusiasts!—What if he is—sick! . . .

RECHA.

Sick!

DAYA.

O no, he is not sick!

RECHA.

How cold

The chill that has come over me!—My brow,
Just now so warm,—O feel it, Daya, how
'Tis all at once like ice!

NATHAN.

He is a Frank,

And to this climate cannot yet have grown
Accustomed. He is young, and still unused
To his hard calling, to its hunger, toil,
And watchful nights.

RECHA.

Sick! sick and suffering!

DAYA.

Nathan means only that it may be so.

NATHAN.

Now he lies there without a friend, without
The gold to buy friends!

RECHA.

Ah, my father!

NATHAN.

There

He lies without attendance, counsel, help,
The prey of pain and death!

RECHA.

Where? where?

NATHAN.

He who for one whom he had never known,
Had never seen—enough for him, she was
A fellow-creature—rushed into the flames . . .

DAYA.

Nathan, spare her !

NATHAN.

Who did not seek to know
Her whom he rescued, that she might not have
To thank him . . .

DAYA.

Spare her, Nathan !

NATHAN.

Who had no wish
Ever to see her more, unless it were
To rescue her again—enough for him,
She was a fellow-creature . . .

DAYA.

Cease and look !

NATHAN.

He, he in death has nothing to console,
Nothing to cheer him but the consciousness
Of that good deed !

DAYA.

Cease ! you are killing her !

NATHAN.

And you have killed him—might have killed him
so !—

Recha ! Recha ! 'tis a healing draught,
Not poison that I offer you. He lives !—
Come to yourself !—he may even not be sick !

RECHA.

Not dead ? not sick ?

NATHAN.

Surely not dead ! For God
Rewards here too the good done here.—But go !—
Do you not see it now, how much more hard
Right-doing is than pious ecstasy ?

How gladly they who shrink from effort yield
 To pious ecstasy—although at times
 Unconscious of their motive—to escape
 The greater labor of right-doing ?

RECHA.

Ah,

My father, never leave me to myself !—
 May he not be upon a journey ?

NATHAN.

Go !—

He may.—I see a Mussulman who views
 My loaded camels with a curious eye.
 Do you know him ?

DAYA

Ha! it is your dervish!

NATHAN.

Who ?

DAYA.

The dervish who played chess with you.

NATHAN.

What, he ?

Al-Hafi ?

DAYA.

Now the Sultan's treasurer.

NATHAN.

How so? Al-Hafi? Are you dreaming still?—
 But it is he!—and see, he comes this way.
 In with you quickly!—What shall I hear next ?

SCENE III.

NATHAN *and the* DERVISH.

DERVISH.

Open your eyes even wider, if you can !

NATHAN.

Is it you? or is it not?—A dervish in
A garb so rich?

DERVISH.

Why not? Can nothing then
Be made of a dervish? nothing?

NATHAN.

Much, indeed!—
But a true dervish, I have always thought,
Would not let anything be made of him.

DERVISH.

By the Prophet! it may be that I am not
One of the right sort. Yet we sometimes must. . .

NATHAN.

Must, dervish!—Should a dervish say he must?
No man must ever,—and a dervish must?
What must he?

DERVISH.

What another begs of him
And he himself thinks right, a dervish must.

NATHAN.

By our God! well said.—Embrace me, friend.—
For you are still my friend?

DERVISH.

Why not ask first
What has been made of me?

NATHAN.

In spite of that
My friend!

DERVISH.

May I not hold some place that would
Unfit me for your friendship?

NATHAN,

If at heart

You are a dervish yet, I'll take the risk.
The servant of the State is not yourself,
Only your robe of office.

DERVISH.

And that too

Will be respected.—At a court of yours
What should I be?

NATHAN.

A dervish, nothing more.

If anything beside, why then—my cook.

DERVISH.

Yes! that I might unlearn my trade with you.—
Your cook! not even your butler?—Come, confess
The Sultan knows me better.—For I am
His treasurer.

NATHAN.

The Sultan's? you?

DERVISH.

Though not

The keeper of the greater treasure; that
Is in his father's hands;—but only of
The treasure for his household.

NATHAN.

It is large,

The Sultan's household.

DERVISH.

Larger than you think;

There's not a beggar but belongs to it.

NATHAN.

Yet Saladin to beggars is so fierce
A foe. . .

DERVISH.

That he'd destroy them root and branch,
Though he beggar himself in doing so.

NATHAN.

Bravo!

'Tis as you say, I think.

DERVISH.

And he is now
As good as beggared!—For his treasury
Is every day at sunset more, far more
Than empty, since however high the flood
Poured in each morning, it has ebbed away
Long before noon.

NATHAN.

Because it is in part
Drained off through channels that can neither be
Closed up nor filled.

DERVISH.

You have it!

NATHAN.

That I know!

DERVISH.

It is indeed unfitting for a prince
To be a vulture among carcasses.
But it is ten times worse when princes are
Like carcasses for vultures.

NATHAN.

O not so,

Dervish! not so!

DERVISH.

'Tis well for you to say
It is not so!—Tell me, what would you give
To buy my office from me?

NATHAN.

I must hear
First what your office brings you in.

DERVISH.

To me?
Not much. But you it would enrich. For when
The treasury is empty—as it is
So often—you have but to open wide
The floodgates of your wealth, let it rush in,
And take such interest on it as you will.

NATHAN.

And on the interest of the interest?

DERVISH.

Yes!

NATHAN.

Until my capital itself becomes
Nothing but interest.

DERVISH.

That does not please you? Then
Our friendship's at an end! I had indeed
Counted upon your aid.

NATHAN.

My aid? How so?

DERVISH.

I thought that you would help me to fulfil
My task with honor; that your coffers would
Be always open to me.—You refuse?

NATHAN.

Now let us understand each other! Here
There's a distinction to be made.—For you,
The dervish Hafi, I would gladly do
All that I could.—But for the defterdar
Of Saladin, for that Al-Hafi—him—

DERVISH.

Did I not guess it? You are still as kind
As you are wise and prudent!—Only yet
Have patience! for the two Al-Hafis shall
Be parted soon.—Look at this robe of state
Given me by the Sultan! Long before
It falls in rags such as a dervish wears,
'Twill hang here in Jerusalem, while I
Tread the hot sand barefoot and light of heart
With my teachers on the Ganges.

NATHAN.

Like enough!

DERVISH.

And play chess with them.

NATHAN.

Your supreme delight!

DERVISH.

Think what beguiled me!—Was it that I might
Myself no longer beg? that I might play
The rich man among beggars? Could that change
The richest beggar in a moment to
A poor rich man?

NATHAN.

Surely it was not that!

DERVISH.

But something far more commonplace! I felt
The power of flattery for the first time, felt
Its influence in the Sultan's generous yet
Delusive words—

NATHAN.

Which were . . . ?

DERVISH.

That none can know,
Except a beggar, how a beggar feels;
None but a beggar has learnt how to give
To beggars kindly. "Your predecessor was
Too cold," he said, "too harsh; and when he gave
He gave so grudgingly, must be informed
So closely in regard to those who asked
For succor. Not content to know the want,
He would know also what had caused it, that
The gift might be apportioned sparingly
According to the cause. Such will not be
Al-Hafi! Saladin will not in him
Seem so unkindly kind! He is not like
The choked reed that in fitful troubled streams
Gives out the clear still waters it received.
Al-Hafi thinks and feels as I do!"—So
The fowler sweetly piped until the bird
Was in the net at last.—Fool that I was!
Duped by a dupe!

NATHAN.

Gently, gently, my friend!

DERVISH.

What!—Then it was not folly to oppress,
To burden, plunder, torture, and destroy
Hundreds of thousands, only to appear
The benefactor of a few? to ape
The Most High in His bounty, which descends
In sunshine and in rain alike upon
The fruitful field and desert plain, upon
The just and unjust, and yet not to have
The ever full hand of the Most High? What!
It was not folly too. . .

NATHAN.

Enough! have done!

DERVISH.

Let me but speak of my own folly!—What!
It was not folly to look only on
The good side of such folly, that I might
Take part in it because of that good side?
That was not folly?

NATHAN.

Get you quickly back,
Al-Hafi, to your desert; for I fear
Among your fellow-men you will soon cease
To be a man.

DERVISH.

I fear the same. Farewell!

NATHAN.

But why so hasty?—Will the desert fly
Before you reach it?—Wait, Al-Hafi, wait!—
If he would but listen!—Ho, Al-Hafi! here!—
He's gone, and I had hoped from him to learn
Something of our Templar, whom perhaps
He knows.

SCENE IV.

DAYA *entering hastily*. NATHAN.

DAYA.

O Nathan, Nathan!

NATHAN.

Well, what now?

DAYA.

He has appeared! He has appeared again?

NATHAN.

Who, Daya?

DAYA.

He!

NATHAN.

When does not "he" appear?—
Or is your "he" the only one so called?—
That should not be! no, should not, even though
He were an angel!

DAYA.

Back and forth he walks
Under the palm-trees, and from time to time
He gathers dates.

NATHAN.

And eats them?—and is still
A Templar?

DAYA.

Why torment me?—She had guessed
His presence while the thickly clustering palms
Yet hid him from her, and her eager eyes
Follow him without ceasing. She entreats—
Implores—that you will go to him at once.
O hasten! From her window she will make
Some sign to show you whether he has gone
Still higher, or turned off upon the way.
O hasten!

NATHAN.

Just as I dismounted from
My camel?—Is that fitting?—Rather go
Yourself and tell him that I have returned.
For though while I was absent from my house
He would not enter it, this honest man,
He will not be unwilling when he hears
That Recha's father has sent for him. So go,
Say that I beg. . .

DAYA.

He will not come to you.—
He will not cross the threshold of a Jew.

NATHAN.

At last detain him, or keep watch upon
His movements.—Go, and I'll be with you soon.

(NATHAN hastens in and DAYA out.)

SCENE V.

An open place with palm-trees under which the Templar is walking up and down. A lay-brother follows him at a little distance on one side as if wishing to speak to him.

TEMPLAR.

He is not here without a purpose!—See
What a sidelong look he casts upon my hands!—
Good brother, . . . or is it father I should say?

LAY-BROTHER.

Only brother,—only lay-brother, at
Your service.

TEMPLAR.

Truly, good brother, if I had
Something myself! but I have nothing—

LAY-BROTHER.

Yet

I thank you! God return a thousandfold
What you would have given! 'Tis the will, and not
The gift that makes the giver.—Neither was
I sent to ask for alms.

TEMPLAR.

Then you were sent?

LAY-BROTHER.

Yes, from the the monastery there below.

TEMPLAR.

Where I hoped just now to find a pilgrim's meal?

LAY-BROTHER.

The board was filled; come back again with me.

TEMPLAR.

For what? What does it matter that 'tis long
Since I have tasted meat? The dates are ripe.

LAY-BROTHER.

Take heed in eating of that fruit. For if
Enjoyed too freely, it obstructs the spleen,
Makes melancholy blood.

TEMPLAR.

What if I am
Disposed, though, to be melancholy now?—
'Twas not to give this warning you were sent?

LAY-BROTHER.

O no!—I was to question you, find out
Something about you, sound you as it were.

TEMPLAR.

And yet you tell me so yourself?

LAY-BROTHER.

Why not?

TEMPLAR.

(A crafty brother!)—Does the cloister hold
Many more who are like you?

LAY-BROTHER.

How can I say?

I must obey, kind sir.

TEMPLAR.

And here you have
Obeyed and have not reasoned?

LAY-BROTHER.

Would it have been
Obedience otherwise?

TEMPLAR.

(How true it is,
Simplicity is always in the right!)—
But you may tell me who it is would know
More of me?—I could swear 'tis not yourself.

LAY-BROTHER.

Would it become me? would it profit me?

TEMPLAR.

Whom would it then become and profit, that
He is so curious?

LAY-BROTHER.

The Patriarch, I suppose.—
For it was he who bade me follow you.

TEMPLAR.

It was the Patriarch? Can it be that he
Knows the red cross on the white mantle yet
No better?

LAY-BROTHER.

I know it!

TEMPLAR.

Well, brother, well:—I am
A Templar, and a captive.—I may add:
Taken at Tebnin when we thought to storm
That stronghold on the last day of the truce
And make our way to Sidon.—I may add:
Taken with twenty more; but I alone
Was spared by Saladin. The Patriarch knows
Now all he needs to know—more than he needs.

LAY-BROTHER.

But hardly more than he already knew.—
He would ask also why the Sultan spared
You, and you only.

TEMPLAR.

Do I know myself ?

I knelt upon my mantle, with bared neck
Waiting the stroke: then Saladin drew near,
Looked at me closely, signed to those around
To raise me up. I was unbound; I wished
To thank him; saw his eyes were filled with tears;
Stood speechless: till without a word he turned
And left me.—Let the Patriarch now declare
The meaning of this riddle.

LAY-BROTHER.

He concludes

That God must have preserved you by such means
For great, great things.

TEMPLAR.

Yes, for great things indeed !

To save a Jewish maiden from the flames;
To lead a band of curious pilgrims on
The road to Sinai, and some trifles more
Of the same sort.

LAY-BROTHER.

Be sure the rest will come

All in good time.—Meanwhile 'tis not amiss.—
Perhaps the Patriarch himself may have
Some far more weighty task to offer you.

TEMPLAR.

You think so, brother ?—Has he let you hear
Something of this ?

LAY-BROTHER.

Yes, truly!—I was first
To sound you, to find out if you would be
The right man for it.

TEMPLAR.

Sound me then!—(I'll see
How he will sound me!)—Well?

LAY-BROTHER.

The shortest way
Would be at once to tell you what it is.
The Patriarch wishes.

TEMPLAR.

Surely!

LAY-BROTHER.

He would like
To send a letter by you.

TEMPLAR.

What, by me?
I am no messenger.—And this would be
So much more glorious than to save the life
Of a Jewish maid?

LAY-BROTHER.

It must be! For—so says
The Patriarch—on this letter hangs the fate
Of Christendom. God will hereafter give
In Heaven—the Patriarch says—a special crown
To him who shall deliver it. And none—
The Patriarch says—is worthier than yourself
To wear that crown.

TEMPLAR.

None worthier than I?

LAY-BROTHER.

For none could be more skilled—the Patriarch says—
That crown to merit.

TEMPLAR.

None more skilled than I?

LAY-BROTHER.

You are free here; can look about you; know
How to storm cities, how defend them; can
Appraise—the Patriarch says—at once the strength
And weakness of the inner wall just built
By Saladin; can best describe it too
To those who fight for God.

TEMPLAR.

If I could learn,
Good brother, what is in the letter...

LAY-BROTHER.

That
I hardly know. 'Tis to King Philip though.
The Patriarch... Often have I wondered how
A man so holy, one whose thoughts are given
To heavenly contemplation, should be yet
So well instructed also in regard
To things of earth. It must go hard with him.

TEMPLAR.

Well then? the Patriarch?—

LAY-BROTHER.

Knows most surely, most
Undoubtedly, both how and where, and with
How large a force, and from what side, if now
War should break out again, the Sultan will
First take the field.

TEMPLAR.

The Patriarch knows all this ?

LAY-BROTHER.

Yes, and would gladly send King Philip word,
That he may measure to its full extent
The danger, and judge whether it were well
To seek renewal, at whatever cost,
Of the truce brought so lately to a close
By your brave Order.

TEMPLAR.

What a Patriarch! So
The kind, good, worthy man would have me for
No common messenger; he needs—a spy.—
Good brother, tell your Patriarch that so far
As you could sound me, I am not the one
To serve his purpose.—I must hold myself
As still a captive; and a Templar's trade
Is to strike boldly with his sword, and not
To play the spy.

LAY-BROTHER.

Just as I thought!—Nor do
I blame you for it.—What is best comes last.—
The Patriarch has found out upon what part
Of Lebanon the fortress lies in which
The Sultan has concealed great sums of gold,
Kept by his father's foresight to supply
The war's expenditure. From time to time,
With few attendants, and by paths that are
Frequented least, he journeys to this place.—
You see it now ?

TEMPLAR.

Not in the least!

LAY-BROTHER.

What then
 Could well be easier than at such a time
 To seize the Sultan? put an end to him?—
 You start?—Oh, two God-fearing Maronites
 Have offered, if some valiant man will lead
 The way, to venture on the deed.

TEMPLAR.

And does
 The Patriarch take me for this valiant man?

LAY-BROTHER.

He thinks King Philip could from Ptolemais
 Best aid your enterprise.

TEMPLAR.

Mine, brother? mine?
 Mine, did you say? Have you not heard, just heard,
 What debt I owe the Sultan?

LAY-BROTHER.

Yes, I have heard.

TEMPLAR.

And yet. . .

LAY-BROTHER.

All well and good,—the Patriarch says—
 But God and your Order. . .

TEMPLAR.

Can change nothing here!
 Command no wickedness!

LAY-BROTHER.

No, surely not!—
 But what is wicked in man's sight may not—
 The Patriarch says—be wicked in the sight
 Of God.

TEMPLAR.

I owe my life to Saladin:
And shall I take his ?

LAY-BROTHER.

Saladin is still
A foe to Christendom,—the Patriarch says—
And can acquire no right to be your friend.

TEMPLAR.

My friend ? because I will not act the part
Of a base thankless villain ?

LAY-BROTHER.

Yet in truth
We are free from all claims of gratitude,—
The Patriarch says—free before God and man,
If what is done for us has not been done
For our own sake alone. And it is said
That for this reason only you were spared
By Saladin, because he saw in you
A likeness to his brother.

TEMPLAR.

The Patriarch knows
That too, and yet ?—If it were so indeed !
Ah, Saladin !—Could nature have bestowed
Only some feature of thy brother's face
With nothing answering to it in my soul ?
And that which answered, could I silence it
At the good pleasure of a Patriarch ?—
Nature, thou dost not lie so ! Nor does God
In His own works so contradict Himself !—
Go, brother !—Do not stir my wrath !—Go ! go !

LAY-BROTHER.

I go content, more so than when I came.
We cloister-brethren have but to obey.

SCENE VI

The TEMPLAR, *and* DAYA, *who has been watching him for some time at a distance and now comes forward.*

DAYA.

The cloister-brother has not left him in
The best of humors, so it seems to me.—
Yet my errand cannot be delayed.

TEMPLAR.

'Tis well!

Does not the proverb speak truth when it says
A monk, a woman are the two claws of
The Devil? And to-day he casts me from
The one into the other.

DAYA.

What do I see?

You, noble knight? you? Thanks be to God!
A thousand thanks!—Where have you been so long?
You were not sick?

TEMPLAR.

No.

DAYA.

You were well then?

TEMPLAR.

Yes.

DAYA.

Your absence has greatly troubled us.

TEMPLAR.

Indeed?

DAYA.

You were upon a journey?

TEMPLAR.

Right!

DAYA.

And have
Returned today?

TEMPLAR.

Yesterday.

DAYA.

Today

'Tis Recha's father who has come. And now
Recha may surely hope. . .

TEMPLAR.

For what?

DAYA.

For that

Which she so often has entreated you
To grant. Her father now himself has sent
To summon you. He comes from Babylon
With twenty camels bearing heavy loads
Of the most costly spices, stones, and stuffs
That India, Persia, Syria, China too
Could furnish.

TEMPLAR.

Of such things I have no need.

DAYA.

By his own people he is honored as
A prince. And yet they call him, strange to say,
Nathan the Wise, and not the Rich.

TEMPLAR.

To them

Perhaps may rich and wise both mean the same.

DAYA.

But above all he should be called the Good.
For you can scarce conceive how good he is.
When he heard how much Recha owed to you,

What at that moment would he not have done,
What would he not have given in return!

TEMPLAR.

You think so?

DAYA.

Try it! come and see!

TEMPLAR.

See what?

How soon such moments pass?

DAYA.

If he were not

So good, could I have chosen to remain
So long with him? You think I do not feel
My value as a Christian? In my youth
It never was foretold me I should come
After my husband to the Holy Land
Only to take charge of a Jewish maid.
For my dear husband was an equerry
In Emperor Frederick's army...

TEMPLAR.

And by birth

A Swiss, who had the honor granted him
Of drowning in the same stream with his lord.—
Woman, how many times you've told me that!
When will you cease to persecute me?

DAYA.

What,

I persecute you?

TEMPLAR.

Yes, yes, persecute.

I never wish to see you, never wish
To hear from you again! I will not be

So constantly reminded of a thing
 That I did without thinking, that when now
 I think of it I wonder why I did.
 And though I would not indeed repent of it,
 Yet see! if it were to happen so once more,
 The fault would be your own if I should act
 Less rashly, ask some questions beforehand—
 And let what is burning burn.

DAYA.

May God forbid!

TEMPLAR.

Do me the favor from this day forth not
 To know me. This at least I beg of you.
 Spare me the father too. A Jew's a Jew.
 I'm a rough Suabian. From my soul long since
 The maiden's image vanished, if it dwelt
 There ever.

DAYA.

But yours still remains in hers.

TEMPLAR.

What does it there? what does it?

DAYA.

Who can tell?

Men are not always what they seem to be.

TEMPLAR.

Yet are seldom better than they seem.

(He turns away.)

DAYA.

O stay!

Why will you hasten from me?

TEMPLAR.

Do not make
These palm-trees hateful, woman, where I once
So loved to linger.

DAYA.

Go, thou German bear!
Go!—But I must not lose him from my sight.
(She follows him at a distance.)

ACT SECOND.

SCENE I.

The Sultan's palace SALADIN and SITTAH playing chess.

SITTAH.

How you are playing, Saladin, to-day!

SALADIN.

Not well? And yet I thought 'twas well.

SITTAH.

For me;
Though hardly even that. Take back that move.

SALADIN.

Why take it back?

SITTAH.

Your knight's in danger.

SALADIN.

True.—

So, then!

SITTAH.

So I now threaten you at once
With queen and bishop.

SALADIN.

True again.—Then check!

SITTAH.

How does that help you? For I guard myself,
And you are where you were.

SALADIN.

There's no escape
From this dilemma without loss, I see.
So be it! take the knight.

SITTAH.

I will not. Look,
I pass by.

SALADIN.

No great favor, since you care
More for this place than for the knight.

SITTAH.

Perhaps.

SALADIN.

But do not reckon here without your host.
For see! Can you not think what I would say?

SITTAH.

How can I? How too could I think you were
So weary of your queen?

SALADIN.

I of my queen?

SITTAH.

'Tis plain already, I shall win to-day
Only my thousand dinars, nothing more.

SALADIN.

Why not?

SITTAH.

Because you labor so to lose,
Are bent on losing, if need be by force.—
And that I did not count on. For besides
That such a game lacks interest, have I not

Ever when I have lost won most from you?
Do you not then to comfort me bestow
Double the stake upon me?

SALADIN.

So perhaps
You also, little sister, when you lost,
Labored to lose?

SITTAH.

It may have been, at least,
Your kindness, brother, that prevented me
From learning to play better.

SALADIN.

We neglect
The game. Let us end it!

SITTAH.

As it stands? Then check!
And check again!

SALADIN.

This final check that takes
My queen too from me I had not foreseen.

SITTAH.

May it not be helped? Let us see!

SALADIN.

No, take the queen.
I never had good fortune with that piece.

SITTAH.

With the piece only?

SALADIN.

Off with it!—I care
No more for it. All is again secured.

SITTAH.

My brother has instructed me too well
How to deal courteously with queens.

(She leaves the queen standing.)

SALADIN.

Take it or leave it! 'Tis no longer mine.

SITTAH.

Why should I take it? Check!—check!

SALADIN.

Go on!

SITTAH.

Check!—and check!—and check!

SALADIN.

Checkmate!

SITTAH.

Not quite:

Bring your knight forward, or do what you will.
It matters little.

SALADIN.

Right!—You have won, and now
Al-Hafi pays. Let him be quickly called!—
You were not, Sittah, in the wrong; my thoughts
Were not upon the game. And then these smóoth
And polished pieces, what are they to us?
They stand for nothing, have no meaning.—But
The loser seeks a pretext. It was not
The shapeless pieces, Sittah, made me lose:
Your skill, your calm, swift glance. . .

SITTAH.

So from defeat
Now too you would but pluck the sting. Enough,
Your thoughts had wandered, even more than mine.

SALADIN.

Than yours? What made yours wander?

SITTAH.

Not indeed

Your absent-mindedness!—O Saladin,
When shall we play again as often?

SALADIN.

Well,

Let us play while we may!—Because the war
Will now begin again?—Let it begin!—
The sooner too the better!—I was not
The first to draw the sword; I would have had
The truce renewed; would gladly have bestowed
My Sittah on a husband worthy of
Herself. Such must be Richard's brother, since
He is his brother.

SITTAH.

How you love to praise

Your Richard!

SALADIN.

If our brother Melek had

Then wedded Richard's sister: ha! that would
Have been a household! Ha! the first, the best
Of all that's best and noblest upon earth!—
You hear, I am not slow to praise myself.
I think I'm worthy of my friend.—And then,
Then would the world have seen a race of men!

SITTAH.

Did I not laugh the dream at once to scorn?
You do not, will not know these Christians. All
Their pride is to be Christians, and not men.
Even that which by their founder was designed
To leaven with humanity the mass

Of superstition, even that they love
 Not for this reason, that it is humane:
 Because Christ teaches, Christ has practised it.—
 Well for them that he was so good a man!
 Well for them that they have such trust in him
 And in his goodness!—Yet what goodness?—Not
 His goodness but his name they spread abroad;
 'Tis that must put to shame and swallow up
 The names of all good men. It is the name,
 The name alone they think of.

SALADIN.

For why else
 Should you and Melek have been called upon
 To bear the name of Christians, or renounce
 The wedded love of Christians?

SITTAH.

'Tis as if
 By Christians as such only could be felt
 That love which is implanted in the heart
 Of man and woman by their Maker!

SALADIN.

True,
 They have believed so many foolish things,
 These Christians, it may well be they believe
 This also!—But you are mistaken here.—
 The Templars, not the Christians, are to blame,
 And that as Templars, not as Christians, for
 The failure of the whole. They will not part
 With Acre, which to Melek would be brought
 By Richard's sister as her dower. Lest
 The knight should suffer loss, they have put on
 The monk, the silly monk. And hoping too
 By a bold stroke perhaps to win the day,

They could not wait the closing of the truce.—
 Let them come on! the more the merrier!—
 If all beside were but as it should be!

SITTAH.

What else is wrong? What else has troubled you?

SALADIN.

Something that always troubled me.—I've been
 With our father upon Lebanon.
 He is full of care . . .

SITTAH.

Alas!

SALADIN.

He can no more;

On every side it fails him; everywhere
 'Tis lacking, now in this place, now in that—

SITTAH.

What fails him? what is lacking?

SALADIN.

What, indeed,

But that I scarce vouchsafe to call by name?
 What, when I have it, is superfluous,
 And when I have not, indispensable.—
 Where can Al-Hafi be? Has no one gone
 To call him?—Gold, the vile accursed thing!—
 At last, Al-Hafi, you have come!

SCENE II.

The dervish AL-HAFI, SALADIN, SITTAH.

AL-HAFI.

So then

The subsidy from Egypt has arrived?
 If it be but enough!

SALADIN.

What, you have news?

AL-HAFI.

Not I. I thought to find it here.

SALADIN.

Pay out

A thousand dinars now to Sittah.

(He walks up and down absorbed in thought.)

AL-HAFI.

Pay!

Instead of: take! Why that is even less
Than nothing!—And to Sittah?—now again
To Sittah? And 'twas lost?—'twas lost again
At chess?—There it is standing still, the game!

SITTAH.

You grudge me my good fortune?

AL-HAFI *(looking at the board)*.

Grudge you what?

If—But you surely know . . .

SITTAH *(signing to him)*.

Hist, Hafi! hist!

AL-HAFI *(to SITTAH)*.

You grudge it rather to yourself!

SITTAH.

Al-Hafi, hist!

AL-HAFI *(to SITTAH)*.

Were the white pieces yours? You offered check?

SITTAH.

'Tis well he did not hear!

AL-HAFI.

Does he move next?

SITTAH (*going up nearer to him*).

Tell me that I shall have my money.

AL-HAFI (*still looking intently at the board*).

Yes,

You'll have it as you always have it.

SITTAH.

How,

Al-Hafi, are you mad?

AL-HAFI.

The game is not

Yet ended. Saladin, you have not lost.

SALADIN (*scarcely listening*).

Pay! only pay!

AL-HAFI.

Pay! pay! There stands your queen.

SALADIN (*in the same way*).

She counts for nothing, is not in the game.

SITTAH (*to AL-HAFI*).

Tell me that I may send for it.

AL-HAFI (*still gazing at the board*).

Of course,

The same as ever.—Even though your queen
Should count for nothing, you are not even then
Checkmated yet.

SALADIN (*going up to the board and
throwing it down*).

I am, I will be.

AL-HAFI.

So

'Tis with the game as with the stake! As that
Is won, so this is paid.

SALADIN (*to SITTAH*).

What does he say?

SITTAH (*from time to time signing
to AL-HAFI*)

You know him; know he loves to wrangle, loves
To be entreated; is indeed, perhaps,
A little envious.

SALADIN.

Surely not of you?

Not of my sister? What is this I hear,
Al-Hafi? Envious? you?

AL-HAFI.

It may be so!—

I wish I had her head; I wish I had
A heart like hers.

SITTAH.

Meanwhile he has not failed
To pay me, and will pay to-day.—Go now,
Al-Hafi, go, that I may send at once.

AL-HAFI.

No, I'll no longer help you to keep up
This mummery. He must know it.

SALADIN.

Who? and what?

SITTAH.

Is this your promise, Hafi? this the way
You keep faith with me?

AL-HAFI.

So far? Could I think 'twould go

SALADIN.

You'll tell me nothing?

SITTAH.

Be discreet,
Al-Hafi, I beseech you!

SALADIN,

What is this
That Sittah has to beg so solemnly,
So urgently, and from a stranger, from
A dervish rather than her brother? Now,
Al-Hafi, I command you.—Dervish, speak!

SITTAH.

Do not take a trifle, brother, more to heart
Than it is worth. You know I've won at chess
The same amount from you at different times:
And since I have no need of money, since
It has not been too plentiful of late
In Hafi's treasury, the stakes were left
Uncalled for until now. But do not fear!
They shall be given neither to yourself,
Nor Hafi, nor the treasury.

AL-HAFI.

If that
Were only all!

SITTAH.

There's more of the same kind.—
What you have set apart for me has been
Unclaimed, for a few months unclaimed.

AL-HAFI.

'Tis not
Even yet the whole.

SALADIN.

Not yet?—Will you not speak?

AL-HAFI.

Since we have looked for succor to arrive
From Egypt. . .

SITTAH (*to SALADIN*).

Why listen to him?

AL-HAFI.

Sittah has
Not only received nothing. . .

SALADIN.

But besides
Has lent me money. Is it not so?

AL-HAFI.

She has
Maintained your court; furnished the whole amount
Expended by you.

SALADIN.

Ha! that is like her!

(embracing her.)

SITTAH.

Who
But you, my brother, made me rich enough
To be so generous?

AL-HAFI.

He will make you soon
As poor again as he himself is.

SALADIN.

Poor?

Her brother poor?—When had I more? When
less?—

A cloak, a sword, a horse,—a God! What else
Do I need? When can I want for these? And yet,
Al-Hafi, I could quarrel with you.

SITTAH.

No,

Do not quarrel with him, brother. If I could
But lighten too my father's cares!

SALADIN.

Ah, now

You cast me down again!—I for myself
Lack nothing, can lack nothing. But he lacks,
He is in want, and all of us with him.—
What shall I do?—It may be long before
Help comes from Egypt. What has kept it back
God knows! All's quiet there as yet.—To save,
Retrench, lay up, that I would gladly do
If I alone must suffer, I alone
And none beside.—But what would it avail?
A horse, a cloak, a sword I still must have:
And from my God there's nothing to abate,
Since He contents Himself already with
So little, with my heart.—I had in truth
Counted, Al-Hafi, on a surplus in
Your treasury.

AL-HAFI.

A surplus?—Say yourself,

Would you not have empaled me, or at least
Have had me hanged if you had found me with
A surplus? A deficiency! that might
Be ventured sooner.

SALADIN.

What is to be done?

Was there no other you could borrow from
Instead of Sit ah?

SITTAH.

Would I let that right
Be taken from me, brother? and by him?
I still must claim it, for I am not yet
Quite without means.

SALADIN.

Only not quite! 'Twas this
Alone was wanting!—Go, Al-Hafi, take
From any one you can! and as you can!
Go, borrow, promise.—Only, Hafi, not
From those I have made rich. To ask of them
Would be to take back what I gave them. Go
To the most avaricious; they will lend
Most gladly, seeing that their gold with me
Will gain great increase.

AL-HAFI.

I know none of those.

SITTAH.

Now, Hafi, that I think of it, I heard
Your friend had just returned.

AL-HAFI (*starting*).

My friend? what friend

SITTAH.

The Jew you praised so highly.

AL-HAFI.

I? a Jew?

SITTAH.

To whom—for I recall the very words
You used in speaking of him once—to whom
His God has given in full measure both
The least and greatest of the good things of
This world.

AL-HAFI.

I said so?—What could I have meant?

SITTAH.

The least thing, wealth. The greatest, wisdom.

AL-HAFI.

How?

'Twas of a Jew I said it? of a Jew?

SITTAH.

Could you not say it of your Nathan?

AL-HAFI.

Yes!

Of him I could! of him!—I had not thought
Of Nathan.—So he has returned?—'Tis true
He has some wealth.—Quite true: the people once
Called him the Wise! They called him too the Rich.

SITTAH.

Now more than ever he is called the Rich,
For the whole city rings with the report
Of costly jewels and rare merchandise
Brought by him.

AL-HAFI.

'Tis again the Rich: 'twill be
Again the Wise.

SITTAH.

How, Hafi, if you went
To him?

AL-HAFI.

For what? To borrow money? Yes,
You know him well.—He lend!—His wisdom is
He lends to no one.

SITTAH.

'Twas far otherwise,
Al-Hafi, you once spoke of him.

AL-HAFI.

At most

He'll sell you goods on credit if need be.
But lend you money? that he'll never do.—
Yet he's a Jew like few beside: has wit;
Knows something of the world; can play chess well.
But he's distinguished above other Jews
Not less in evil than in good.—On him
'Tis vain for you to count.—He gives, indeed,
Alms to the poor; and gives perhaps for this,
To outdo Saladin: though it may be
Not quite so much, yet just as willingly,
As unobtrusively. Christian and Jew
And Mussulman and Parsee, 'tis to him
All one.

SITTAH.

And such a man. . .

SALADIN.

How is it that

I have not heard of him?

SITTAH.

He would not lend
To Saladin? to Saladin, who needs
Only for others, not himself?

AL-HAFI.

Ah, there

You have the Jew again, the common Jew!—
He is so jealous in his giving, is
So envious! Each reward of God bestowed
In the world he'd seize on for himself alone.
He will not lend that he may have to give.

The Law commands him to be merciful,
Nowhere commands him to comply with all
That others ask of him: 'tis mercy then
Has made him uncomplying. Though we've been
Somewhat estranged of late, think not for that
I have not done him justice. In all else
He'll gladly do you service; but in this
He will not. I'll go knock at other doors. . .
I have bethought me of a Moor who's rich
And avaricious. . .

SITTAH.

But what need of haste,
Al-Hafi?

SALADIN.

Let him go!

SCENE III.

SALADIN. SITTAH.

SITTAH.

Did he not seem
As if he would escape me! What does this mean?—
Has he been himself deceived, or is it that
He would deceive us?

SALADIN.

Why do you ask me?
I never heard of him until to-day,
Your Jew, your Nathan, and scarce know even now
Of whom you speak.

SITTAH.

How can it be you know
So little of a man of whom 'tis said
That he has found the graves of Solomon

And David, and has power to loose their seals
By a mighty hidden word, and bring to light
Wealth so enormous that no meaner source
Could have supplied it?

SALADIN.

If his wealth is drawn
From graves, 'tis not from those of Solomon
And David. Fools lie buried there.

SITTAH.

Or knaves!—
The source of this man's riches is in truth
Far more productive, more unfailing than
A grave, though filled with mammon.

SALADIN.

For he is
A merchant, as I hear.

SITTAH.

His camels pass
On every highway, every desert, while
His ships are moored in every harbor. 'Twas
Al-Hafi who first told me this, told too
In what a noble generous way his friend
Spent what he thought it not beneath him thus
By diligent toil to earn. With what delight
He told how free from prejudice his mind;
His heart how open to all virtue, how
In unison with all beauty!

SALADIN.

Yet but now
Al-Hafi spoke with such uncertainty,
Such coldness of him.

SITTAH.

Not with coldness, with
Confusion 'Twas as if he feared to praise,
Yet would not blame him undeservedly.—
Or how? can it be indeed that even this man,
The best of his people, is not wholly free
From their defects? that Al-Hafi has indeed
Reason to blush for him in this respect?—
Be that as it may!—Be the Jew more or less
Of a Jew; if he's but rich, enough for us!

SALADIN.

You would not take his own from him by force?

SITTAH.

What is it you call force? With fire and sword?
No, no; with the weak what need of any force
But that of their own weakness?—Come with me
To my harem; I would have you hear the voice
Of a female-singer I bought yesterday.
Meanwhile a plan may ripen that I've formed
Against this Nathan.—Come!

SCENE IV.

In front of NATHAN'S house on the side towards the palm-trees. RECHA and NATHAN come out. DAYA joins them soon after.

RECHA.

You have staid too long,
My father. You will hardly find him now.

NATHAN.

If he's not here, not here beneath the palms,
Yet elsewhere I'll soon find him.—Have no fear!—
See, is not Daya coming?

RECHA.

She has lost
All trace of him.

NATHAN.

Perhaps not.

RECHA.

She would come
More quickly if she had not.

NATHAN.

It may be
She has not seen us yet.

RECHA.

She sees us now.

NATHAN.

And hastens towards us.—But be calm! be calm!

RECHA.

Would you then have a daughter who could be
Unmoved at such a moment? have no care
Who saved her life?—a life so dear to her
Only because she owed it first to you.

NATHAN.

I would not have you other than you are,
Even though I know that in your soul now stirs
Something far different.

RECHA.

What, my father? what?

NATHAN.

You ask me that? ask it so anxiously?
What is now taking place within you is
But nature and innocence. Let it cause you then
No fear. To me, to me it causes none.

Yet promise, if your heart some day should speak
More plainly, you will not conceal from me
Its lightest wish.

RECHA.

I tremble at the thought
That I could ever hide my heart from you.

NATHAN.

No more of this! 'Tis settled once for all.—
And here is Daya.—Well?

DAYA.

He's walking still
Under the palm-trees; you'll soon see him pass
Beyond that wall.—Look, there he comes!

RECHA.

And seems
Uncertain whether to direct his steps
Backward? or forward? to the right? or left?

DAYA.

No, no; his custom is most frequently
To take the monastery-path, which leads
This way.—See!

RECHA.

You are right.—Have you met him yet?
Have you spoken to him? How is he to-day?

DAYA.

The same.

NATHAN

Then do not let him find you here.
Stand farther back, or rather go within.

RECHA.

But one more look, my father!—Ah, the hedge!
It steals him from me.

DAYA.

Come, your father's in
The right! He might turn back upon the spot
If he should see you.

RECHA.

Ah, the hedge!

NATHAN.

And if
He comes out suddenly, he cannot fail
To see you. Therefore go within!

DAYA.

Come! Come!
I know a window where we may watch them...

RECHA.

Yes?

(They both go in.)

SCENE V.

NATHAN *and the* TEMPLAR.

NATHAN.

I almost fear to meet him, almost feel
Abashed by his rugged virtue. Strange, indeed,
That any human being should have power
So to impress another! Ha! he comes!—
By Heaven! a manly youth. I like him, like
His kindly though defiant glance! his quick
Firm step! 'Tis but the outer shell that is
So bitter, not the kernel.—Where before
Have I seen such another? Noble Frank,
Forgive me...

TEMPLAR.

What?

NATHAN.

Allow me...

TEMPLAR.

What, Jew? what?

NATHAN.

To speak to you.

TEMPLAR.

Can I prevent it? But

Be brief.

NATHAN.

Stay, I implore you; do not turn
So proudly, so contemptuously from a man
Whom you have bound to you for ever.

TEMPLAR.

How?

Ah, I can almost guess it! Are you not...

NATHAN.

I am the father of the maiden whom
You saved; my name is Nathan, and I come...

TEMPLAR.

If 'tis to thank me,—spare me that! I've had
Too many thanks already to endure
For such a trifling service.—As for you,
You surely owe me nothing. Did I know
She was your daughter? 'Tis a Templar's place
To hasten to the aid of all who are
In danger and distress. My life beside
Was at that moment burdensome to me,
And willingly, most willingly I seized
The first occasion for another life
To cast it in the balance,—even though
'Twas but for the life of a Jewess.

NATHAN.

Great!

Great and repulsive!—Yet the meaning is
 Not far to look for. Modest greatness seeks
 Behind what is repulsive to escape
 The admiration it would shun.—But if
 The meed of admiration be despised,
 Is there no other you would less despise?—
 You are a stranger here, a captive, else
 I would not question you so boldly. Speak,
 Command me, noble Knight: what can I do
 To serve you?

TEMPLAR.

You can do nothing.

NATHAN.

I am rich.

TEMPLAR.

The richer Jew has never been to me
 The better Jew.

NATHAN.

Should you because of that
 Not use the best that he has? not use his wealth?

TEMPLAR.

I will not utterly forswear it; no,
 For the sake of my mantle I will not. As soon
 As that is threadbare, neither stitch nor rag
 Holding together longer, then I'll come
 And ask to borrow from you stuff to make
 Or gold to buy a new one.—Do not look
 All at once so downcast! You are still secure.
 See, 'tis in good condition yet. Though here
 In this corner there's a spot where it was scorched
 When I bore your daughter through the flames.

NATHAN (*seizing the mantle and gazing at the spot*).

'Tis strange

That such an evil-looking spot as this
Should witness more in favor of a man
Than his own lips. How I long to kiss that spot!
Ah, pardon me!—I could not help it.

TEMPLAR.

What?

NATHAN.

A tear fell on it.

TEMPLAR.

It can do no harm!

'Tis but one drop the more.—(Almost has
This Jew begun to move me.)

NATHAN.

Will you not send

Your mantle to my daughter, that she too
May press her lips upon this spot, since now
She must hope in vain to fall herself at your feet?

TEMPLAR.

But Jew,—Your name is Nathan?—Nathan, then—
Your words are so—are so well chosen—so
Well put together—Truly—I had thought—

NATHAN.

Disguise yourself, dissemble as you will,
Here still I find you out. You were too kind,
Too true to be polite. The maiden was
All feeling; the messenger she sent to you
All readiness; the father far away.—
You cared for her good name; you fled from her;
Fled that you might not conquer. For this too
I have to thank you.

TEMPLAR.

I must confess you know
How a Templar ought to feel.

NATHAN.

How a Templar ought?
Only a Templar? only ought? and for
This reason only, that his Order so
Commands? I know how good men feel, I know
That in every land there are good men to be found.

TEMPLAR.

With a difference though, I hope?

NATHAN.

With a difference, yes,
In color, dress, appearance.

TEMPLAR.

Also here
There are sometimes fewer, sometimes more than
there?

NATHAN.

In that respect the difference is but small.
For great men everywhere have need of space,
And if too closely planted they obstruct
Each others' growth. But men of average worth,
Such as we ourselves are, everywhere abound.
Only must one not find fault with the rest;
The gnarled must put up with the knobbed, the stem
That overtops its fellows must not boast
That it alone did not shoot up from the earth.

TEMPLAR.

Well said! And yet what people were the first
To practise this fault-finding? were the first
To call themselves the chosen people? How

If I should indeed not hate this people, yet
If I could not but look down upon them for
Their pride? Their pride, which is now shared with
them

By Mussulman and Christian, that their God
Is the only true God!—Do you start that I,
A Christian and a Templar, should so speak?
This pious madness, this belief that some
Have a better God than others, and must force
That better God on the whole world as the best,
When and where has it shown itself in a darker form
Than here? than now? He whose eyes are here, are
now

Not opened . . . But let him who will be blind!—
Forget what I have said, and leave me!

(He turns to go.)

NATHAN.

Ha!

You know not how much more I shall force myself
Upon you.—Come, we must, we must be friends!—
Look down upon my people as you like.
We did not choose our people. Are we then
Ourselves our people? What is it that we call
Our people? Christian and Jew, are they rather
these
Than men? Ah, if in you I should have found
One more, content to call himself a man!

TEMPLAR.

By Heaven, you have, Nathan! you have!—Your
hand!—
I am ashamed even for so short a time
To have mistaken you.

NATHAN.

And I am proud
That you should have done so. What is common is
Alone mistaken seldom.

TEMPLAR.

And what is rare
Can hardly be forgotten.—Nathan, yes;
We must, we must be friends.

NATHAN.

Rather, are friends
Already.—How my Recha will rejoice!—
And ah, how bright the distant prospect now
Opening before me!—Only know her first!

TEMPLAR.

I long to meet her!—But who rushes there
Out of your house? Is it not Daya?

NATHAN.

Yes,
'Tis she. So anxious?

TEMPLAR.

Surely nothing can
Have harmed our Recha?

SCENE VI.

The preceding, and DAYA entering hastily.

DAYA.

Nathan! Nathan!

NATHAN.

Well?

DAYA.

Pardon me, noble knight, for breaking in
Upon you.

NATHAN.

What is it?

TEMPLAR.

What is it?

DAYA.

The Sultan has sent.

The Sultan desires to speak to you. O God,
The Sultan!

NATHAN

To me? the Sultan? He must wish
To see what I have brought with me. Send word
That hardly anything is yet unpacked.

DAYA.

He would see nothing, he would speak to you,
To you in person, and at once.

NATHAN.

I'll come.—

Go now, go!

DAYA.

Do not take it ill, sir Knight!—
O God, we are so troubled! What can it be
The Sultan wishes?

NATHAN.

That we'll soon find out.

Go, only go!

SCENE VII.

NATHAN *and the* TEMPLAR.

TEMPLAR.

You do not know him then?—

I mean, have not met him?

NATHAN.

Saladin? Not yet.

I have neither shunned him nor have I sought him
out.

Common report spoke far too well of him
For me not rather to believe than see.
But now—even if report have spoken false—
He has, by sparing you . . .

TEMPLAR.

Yes, that at least

Is true. The life I now live he bestowed.

NATHAN.

And so bestowed a double, threefold life
On me. This changes all between us, this
For ever binds me to his service. Scarce
Can I wait to hear what he will first command.
I am prepared for everything, prepared
To confess too that I am so for your sake.

TEMPLAR.

I myself could never thank him, often since
As I have crossed his path. What he felt for me
Vanished again as quickly as it came.
Who knows if he still remembers me? And yet
He must remember me once more, if but
To decide my fate at last. 'Tis not enough
That at his bidding, in accordance with
His will, I am yet alive: I must also know
According to whose will I am to live.

NATHAN.

You are right; all the more reason why I should
Remain no longer.—Some chance word may fall
That will lead me to speak of you.—Forgive me if
I hasten . . . But when will you come to us?

TEMPLAR.

As soon

As I may.

NATHAN.

As soon as you will.

TEMPLAR.

To-day then.

NATHAN.

And

Your name?

TEMPLAR.

My name was—is Von Stauffen.—Curd
Von Stauffen.

NATHAN.

Von Stauffen?—Stauffen?

TEMPLAR.

Why does it seem

To strike you so?

NATHAN.

Von Stauffen?—Of that name
Several perhaps already have . . .

TEMPLAR.

O yes!

Several of that name once lived and now moulder
here.

My uncle himself—my father, I should have said,—
But why does your look grow keener as 'tis fixed
Upon me?

NATHAN.

O nothing! nothing! How can I see
Too much of you?

TEMPLAR.

Therefore I leave you first.
The searcher's gaze not seldom has found more
Than he wished to find. I fear it, Nathan. So
Let time by degrees, not curious questioning,
Make us known to each other.

(He goes out)

NATHAN

(looking after him with amazement)

"The searcher has
Not seldom found more than he wished to find."—
Does it not seem as though he read my soul?—
Yes, that may happen to me also.—Not
Wolf's height, Wolf's bearing only, but his voice.
Just so Wolf threw his head back; so Wolf bore
His sword; so passed his hand across his brow
As if to hide the fire of his glance.—
How such deep-seated memories will remain
Slumbering within us till a word, a tone
Awakens them!—Von Stauffen!—Right, quite right!
Filnek and Stauffen.—I must soon know more
About this; soon. Only first to Saladin.—
How? is not Daya watching for me there?—
Come nearer, Daya.

SCENE VIII.

DAYA.

NATHAN.

NATHAN.

What you both most long
To know, is not why Saladin has sent.

DAYA.

Can you blame her for it? You had just begun
To speak familiarly together, when
The Sultan's message frightened us away
From our window.

NATHAN.

Tell her that she may look for him
At any moment.

DAYA.

Are you sure of it?

NATHAN.

I can trust you, Daya? Be upon your guard,
I beg you. You shall not repent. In this
Your conscience too will find its own account.
Only spoil nothing I have planned. Relate
And question with discretion, with reserve.

DAYA.

That you should never until now have thought
Of such a thing!—I go; do you go too.
For see! there comes a second messenger
From the Sultan. 'Tis your dervish, Hafî.
(She goes)

SCENE IX.

NATHAN. AL-HAFI.

AL-HAFI.

Ha!

I was looking for you.

NATHAN.

Is he in such haste?
What does he want with me?

AL-HAFI.

Who?

NATHAN.

Saladin.—

I am coming now.

AL-HAFI.

To whom? To Saladin?

NATHAN.

It was not Saladin who sent you?

AL-HAFI.

No.

Has he already sent?

NATHAN.

He has.

AL-HAFI.

Well, then

'Tis so.

NATHAN.

What is so?

AL-HAFI.

That you. . . I am not to blame;
God knows I am not.—What have I not said of you,
How have I not belied you that I might
Prevent it!

NATHAN.

Might prevent what? What is so?

AL-HAFI.

That you are now the Sultan's defterdar.
I pity you! But I'll not stay here to see.
I go this hour; I go, whither you've heard.
Already, and know the way.—If there's anything
You'd have me to deliver for you, speak!
I am at your service, if it be no more
Than what a man stripped of his clothing even
May carry about with him.

NATHAN.

But reflect,

Al-Hafi, that you have told me nothing yet.
What are you talking of?

AL-HAFI.

You've brought the bags
Along with you?

NATHAN.

The bags?

AL-HAFI.

The money, then,
You are to lend him.

NATHAN.

And is it nothing more?

AL-HAFI.

Shall I look on and see how day by day
He drains you to the dregs? Shall I look on
While wasteful prodigality draws out
From the granaries of wise beneficence,
Never bare before, till the very mice there die
Of hunger?—You may hope perhaps that he
Who needs your money will be ready too
To follow your advice?—Has Saladin
Ever listened to advice?—Think, Nathan, think
What happened just now when I was with him!

NATHAN.

What?

AL-HAFI.

When I came to him he had been playing chess
With his sister. Sittah does not play so ill;
And the game, which Saladin had given up,
Was standing as 'twas left. I looked and saw
That it was far from being lost. His king
Had only to move nearer to the pawn
Upon her check. . . If I could show you how!

NATHAN.

Oh, I can trust you!

AL-HAFI.

His rook would have been
Set free, and Sittah would have lost.—All this
I wished to tell him, and I called him.—Think! . . .

NATHAN.

He was not of your opinion?

AL-HAFI.

He would hear
Nothing I had to say, threw down the board
Contemptuously, and answered once for all
He wished to be checkmated; wished to be!
Do you call that playing?

NATHAN.

Hardly playing well;
'Tis but to play at playing.

AL-HAFI.

Yet the game
Was for no trifling stake.

NATHAN.

Gold lost or won,
That is what matters least. But to refuse
To hear you! on a subject of such weight
Not to listen! not to praise your eagle glance!
'Tis this that cries for vengeance; is it not so?

AL-HAFI.

I tell you but to show you what he is.
But I'll bear with him no longer. Here I run
From one sordid Moor to another to find out
Who'll lend him money! I who never yet
Could beg for myself must borrow now for him.
To borrow is not much better than to beg,
As to lend on usury is not much more
Than stealing. With my Ghebers on the banks

Of the Ganges I need neither, and need be
 The tool of neither. Only on the banks
 Of the Ganges, of the Ganges there are men.
 You alone would be counted worthy here to dwell
 Upon the Ganges.—Will you come with me?—
 Leave him the trumpery stuff. He'll rob you else
 Little by little. So the drudgery will
 Be done with. Come!

NATHAN.

I should think, indeed, for that
 There's time enough. But I'll consider it,
 Al-Hafi. Wait. . .

AL-HAFI.

Consider? No, such things
 Are not to be considered.

NATHAN.

Only wait
 Till I've seen the Sultan; till I've taken leave. . .

AL-HAFI.

He who considers seeks a reason for
 Not doing. He who cannot choose at once
 To live true to himself, must live always
 The slave of others.—As you will!—Farewell!
 As you think best.—My way lies there, yours here.

NATHAN.

Al-Hafi! You'll first settle your affairs?

AL-HAFI.

'Twould be a farce! What's in my treasury
 Is not worth counting; and my reckoning
 You'll answer for—or Sittah. So farewell!

(He goes out.)

NATHAN (*looking after him.*)

I'll answer for it!—Strange, kind, noble,—what
Shall I say more of him?—The true beggar is,
He only and alone, the real king!

(*Goes out on the other side.*)

ACT THIRD.

SCENE I.

In NATHAN'S house.

RECHA and DAYA.

RECHA.

What was it, Daya, that my father said?
“At any moment I might look for him?”
That sounds—does it not?—as if he'd soon be here.—
Yet how many moments have gone by!—Ah well,
Who thinks of those already gone?—I'll live
Each moment for the next. 'Twill come at last,
The one when I shall see him.

DAYA.

Had it not been
For the Sultan's message, Nathan would himself
Have brought him to you.

RECHA.

When it has come indeed,
That moment; when my dearest wish has been
Fulfilled, my most ardent wish: what then?—what
then?

DAYA.

What then? Why then, I hope, my most ardent
wish
Will also be fulfilled.

RECHA.

What will take the place
Of that wish which has reigned so long supreme
above
All others in my breast?—Nothing? The thought
Fills me with terror! . . .

DAYA.

Mine, my wish will take
The place of that which is fulfilled; my wish
To know that you are in Europe, in the hands
Of those who are worthy of you.

RECHA.

You are wrong.—
What made this wish yours, that must hinder it
From being mine. Your fatherland draws you:
Shall mine not hold me? shall the thought of yours,
Still lingering in your soul, have greater power
Than the one I can see and touch and hear, than
mine?

DAYA.

Strive as you will! The ways of Heaven are
The ways of Heaven. And if it were through him
Who saved you that his God, for whom he fights,
Would lead you to the people, to the land
That you were born for?

RECHA.

Daya, dear Daya! what
Are you saying? You have strange fancies of your
own!
“His, his God! for whom he fights!” To whom
Does God belong? what sort of God is this
Who belongs to a man? who must let men fight for
Him?—

And how can we know for what spot on earth we are
born

If it be not for the one that gave us birth?—
If my father heard you!—What has he done to you,
That you'd have me place my happiness as far
As possible from him? What has he done,
That with the seed of reason he has sown
Unmixed, you long to mingle in my soul
The weeds and flowers of your native land?—
He will not have them, your gay flowers!—nor
I either, dear, dear Daya! For I feel,
Though they clothe it with such beauty, they exhaust
The soil and make it barren; and I grow
So faint, so giddy with their fragrance, with
Their sweet oppressive fragrance!—You have learnt
To bear it. I'll not blame the stronger nerves
That endure it; but it is too much for mine.
How your angel has already made me play
The fool!—In my father's presence I still blush
For my folly.

DAYA.

Folly!—As if reason here
Had anything to do!—If I might speak!

RECHA.

May you not speak? Have I not been all ear
When you told me of the heroes of your faith?
Have I not always wondered at their deeds
And shed tears for their sorrows? Though in truth
Their faith has never seemed to me to be
Their most heroic virtue, all the more
Consoling to me was the lesson, that
Submission to God's will does not depend
Wholly on what we think of God.—And so

My father often told us; you yourself
 Have often joined in with him: why pull down
 Alone what you have helped him to build up?—
 Dear Daya, 'tis no time to talk of this
 When we hope so soon to meet our friend. And yet
 For me it is, since it concerns me more
 Than I can express to know whether he too . . .
 But hark!—Is there not some one at our door?
 If it were he! Hark, Daya!

SCENE II.

RECHA. DAYA. THE TEMPLAR, *for whom some one outside opens the door with the words:*

Enter here!

RECHA (*as if wishing to fall at his feet*).

'Tis he! my preserver!

TEMPLAR.

To avoid this I have come

So late; and yet—

RECHA.

I'll only at the feet
 Of this proud man thank God again, and not
 The man, who no more wishes to be thanked
 Than the water-vessel does that quenched the fire.
 That let itself be filled, that let itself
 Be emptied without caring: so the man.
 He too was only thrust into the flames:
 And then by chance I fell into his arms;
 By chance remained there, like a spark upon
 His mantle; till at last I know not what
 Thrust us both out again.—What need is here
 For thanks?—In Europe, wine has urged men on
 To far greater deeds.—A Templar must act so;
 Must fetch, like a dog that is somewhat better trained,
 Out of fire as well as water.

TEMPLAR.

(who has been watching her with astonishment and uneasiness.)

O Daya, if

In my grief and bitterness I treated you
Unkindly, why repeat each foolish word
I uttered? 'Twas too cruel a revenge!
Yet, if you'll only now...

DAYA.

I think, sir knight,
That these little stings inflicted on her heart
Have not greatly harmed you there.

RECHA.

You were in grief?
And were more avaricious with your grief
Than with your life?

TEMPLAR.

Sweet, lovely child! How is
My soul divided between eye and ear!—
It was not you I saved; no, no, not you.—
For who could know you and not save you? who
Would have waited till I came?—Truly—fear—
Disguises!

(A pause during which he seems absorbed in gazing at her.)

RECHA.

But I find you still the same.—

(Another pause, until she goes on as if to interrupt his gaze,
Will you not tell us, though, where you have been?
I might almost ask you where you are.

TEMPLAR.

I am—

Where perhaps I should not be. —

RECHA.

And have also been
Where you should not have been? That is not well.

TEMPLAR.

I've been upon—what is the mountain called?
Upon Mount Sinai.

RECHA.

Ah, can you tell me then
If it is true...

TEMPLAR.

What? what? If it is true
That the place may still be seen where Moses stood
Before God when. . .

RECHA.

Not that; for where he stood
He stood before God. And I know enough
Already about that.—But is it true
That on that mountain 'tis not half so hard
To go up as to come down?—For with me,
On all the mountains I have ever climbed,
It was just the other way.—You turn from me?
You will not look at me?

TEMPLAR.

'Tis that I wish
To listen to you.

RECHA.

Rather, you do not wish
For me to see that my simplicity
Has made you smile; that you smile because I found
Nothing of more importance to inquire
Of this holiest of all mountains. Is it not so?

TEMPLAR.

Now let me look into your eyes again!—
 What? you have cast them down? you have ceased
 to smile?
 When I would read in your glance, in your doubt-
 ful glance,
 What I hear, what your voice so plainly tells me—
 then
 You are silent?—Ah, Recha! Recha! how true it was,
 What he said! “Only know her first!”

RECHA.

Who said?—of whom?

TEMPLAR.

“Only know her first!” your father said to me;
 Said it of you.

DAYA.

Did I not say the same?

Did I not say it also?

TEMPLAR.

But where is
 Your father? Is he with the Sultan still?

RECHA.

No doubt.

TEMPLAR.

Still there?—How forgetful I have been!
 No, no; not there.—He is waiting for me now
 At the monastery. So it was agreed,
 I think. Let me go to bring him.

DAYA.

Stay, sir knight,
 Stay! That is my affair.

TEMPLAR.

Not so, not so!

He is expecting me, not you. Besides,
He may perhaps . . . who knows? he may have had
Some trouble with the Sultan. . . You do not know
The Sultan!—Believe me, there is danger if
I do not go.

RECHA.

Danger?

TEMPLAR.

Danger for me,

For you, for him, if I do not quickly go.

(He goes out.)

SCENE III.

RECHA and DAYA.

RECHA.

What is it, Daya?—So soon?—What ails him? What
Has driven him away?

DAYA.

Let him go, let him go.

'Tis no bad sign, I think.

RECHA.

Sign? of what?

DAYA.

That something is going on within. It works,
And must not overwork. Let him alone.
Now 'tis your turn.

RECHA.

My turn? You are, like him,

Incomprehensible.

DAYA.

The time has come
When you may repay him for all the anxious hours
That he has caused you. But do not be too harsh,
Too eager for revenge.

RECHA.

You may yourself
Know what you mean.

DAYA.

Are you already then
So calm again?

RECHA.

I am; yes, I am . . .

DAYA.

Confess, at least, that his uneasiness
Rejoices you, and that you owe to it
What ease you now enjoy.

RECHA.

If it be so,
'Tis without my knowledge! What I could confess
At most would be how it surprises me
That such a calm should follow in my heart
So soon on such a storm. The sight of him,
His words, his tone . . .

DAYA.

Have sufficed you?

RECHA.

Sufficed me? no,
That I cannot say—far from it—

DAYA.

Have only stilled
The fierce hunger then.

RECHA.

If you will have it so.

DAYA.

'Tis not I who will.

RECHA.

He'll be ever dear to me;
Ever dearer than my life: although my pulse
No longer changes at the mere sound of
His name; although my heart no longer beats
More swiftly, more strongly when I think of him.—
But what am I saying? Come, dear Daya, come
To the window that looks out upon the palms.

DAYA.

So the fierce hunger is not wholly stilled?

RECHA.

I would see the palms too now, not only him
Beneath the palms.

DAYA.

This chill may be followed by
Another fever.

RECHA.

What chill? I am not cold.
I see with no less pleasure what I see
With more repose.

SCENE IV.

An audience-room in SALADIN'S palace. SALADIN and SITTAH.

SALADIN.

(turning towards the door as he enters.)

Bring the Jew here as soon
As he comes. He does not seem to be in haste.

SITTAH.

He was not at hand, perhaps; could not be found,
At once.

SALADIN.

Sister! sister!

SITTAH.

You look as if
You were to fight a battle.

SALADIN.

And with arms
That I have not learnt to use. I must lay snares;
Must dissemble; must threaten; must walk on slip-
pery ice.

When could I do that? Where could I have learnt
To do it?—And all this I must do for what?
Ah, what?—For gold!—To wring gold from a Jew
By threats!—To such trifling arts must I descend
For the most trifling of all trifles!

SITTAH.

Yet
There's no trifle, brother, that unduly scorned
Will not avenge itself.

SALADIN.

Too true! But if
This Jew should be indeed the good, wise man
The dervish once described to you?

SITTAH.

O then,
What cause then for alarm? The snare is laid
For the avaricious Jew, the timid Jew,
Not for the good, not for the wise man. He
Is ours already without snares. To hear
How such a man will speak, to watch him, how

He either rends asunder with bold strength
Or winds with cautious foresight past the net;
That pleasure you will have beside.

SALADIN.

'Tis true,

That will delight me.

SITTAH.

Nothing then remains

To hinder you. For if he is but one
Of the crowd, but a Jew like any other Jew,
You will not be ashamed to seem to him
What he believes all men to be? Who would
To such a one seem better, seems to him
A dupe, a fool.

SALADIN.

I must do evil, then,

Lest evil men should think evil of me?

SITTAH.

Yes!

If you call it evil-doing to make use
Of each thing according to its nature.

SALADIN.

What

Has a woman's brain conceived that it knows not how
To beautify! But this finely pointed blade
Will break, I fear, in my rude grasp!—Such tools
Have need to be handled as they were contrived,
With the utmost skill.—Yet if I must, I must!
I'll dance even as I can; and would indeed
Rather dance worse than better.

SITTAH.

Do not mistrust

Yourself! I'll vouch for it that you can do
What you will. How men like you would have us
think

That your sword alone has done great things for you!
The lion, when he hunts game with the fox,
Is ashamed not of the guile but of the fox.

SALADIN.

And how you women love to drag men down
To a level with yourselves!—Go now, go!—
I believe I know my lesson.

SITTAH.

I must go?

SALADIN.

You would not stay?

SITTAH.

Not stay, perhaps. . . not stay
In sight of you—but here in the next room.

SALADIN.

To listen there? No, no, that must not be.—
Away! away! I hear him coming.—See
That you do not stay without! I'll see to it.

*(As SITTAH goes out through one door, NATHAN enters at the
other and SALADIN takes a seat.)*

SCENE V.

SALADIN and NATHAN.

SALADIN.

Come nearer, Jew!—Nearer!—Come closer still!—
And have no fear!

NATHAN.

Let that be for your foes!

SALADIN.

Your name is Nathan?

NATHAN.

Yes.

SALADIN.

You call yourself

Nathan the Wise?

NATHAN.

Not I.

SALADIN.

The people then

Have called you so.

NATHAN.

The people, that may be!

SALADIN.

Do not think that I despise the people's voice.
I have long wished to know the man they call
The Wise.

NATHAN.

What if they called him so in sport?
What if wise to them meant prudent only, and he
Alone were prudent who well understood
His own advantage?

SALADIN.

His true advantage, you mean?

NATHAN.

Then the most selfish man would be indeed
The most prudent. Then would wise and prudent be
Indeed the same.

SALADIN.

I hear you prove what you wish
To contradict. Where man's true advantage lies,
You know, though the people do not. Or at least
You have sought to know it; have thought of it; and
this
Already makes the wise man.

NATHAN.

That each thinks
Himself to be.

SALADIN.

Enough of modesty!
To find that only where we hoped to find
Dry reason, is distasteful.

(He springs up.)

To the point!

But be upright, Jew!

NATHAN.

Sultan, I'll serve you so
As to deserve your favor.

SALADIN.

Serve me? how?

NATHAN.

You shall have the best of all; shall have it at
The lowest price.

SALADIN.

What are you speaking of?
Not of your wares?—My sister will not fail
To chaffer with you. *(That for the listener!)*—
But I wish nothing from the merchant.

NATHAN.

Then

You would doubtless learn what I have seen or heard
Of the foe, who are now again in motion?—If
I may speak without disguise. . .

SALADIN.

I already know
What I need to know of that. I would question you
On a subject far removed.—Since you are so wise,
Tell me what faith, what law has given you
Most light?

NATHAN.

Sultan, I am a Jew.

SALADIN.

And I

A Mussulman. The Christian is between.—
 Of these three religions only one can be
 The true.—A man like you does not remain
 Where the accident of birth has cast him, save
 From insight, grave reasons, choice of what is best.
 Well, share your insight with me. Let me hear
 The reasons I have not time to seek myself.
 Let me know—of course in confidence—the choice
 Determined by these reasons, that I too
 May make it mine. You start? You gaze at me?
 I may be the first sultan who has had
 Such a whim; though in truth 'tis one that seems to
 me

Not unworthy of a sultan.—Am I not right?
 Speak then, speak! Or would you first have time
 To reflect? You shall have it. (Is she listening still?
 I'll take her by surprise, and hear from her
 If 'twas well done.)—Think quickly! I'll be gone
 Only a moment.

(He goes into the next room to which SITTAH withdrew.)

SCENE VI.

NATHAN. *(alone.)*

What would the Sultan? what?—
 I am ready to give gold; and he asks for—truth
 For truth! And would have it so—so bare, so blank,—
 As if truth were a coin! Yes, if it were
 Like some ancient coin, to be valued by its weight!—
 That might be! But a new coin, only made
 By the stamp of the die to be counted out upon
 The money-changer's board, that truth is not!
 As gold into a bag, can truth be swept

Into the brain? Who's the Jew here? I or he?
 Yet if he should in truth be seeking truth?
 To suspect that he does but use truth as a snare
 Would be too little! For a great man what's
 Too little? He who comes as a friend knocks first
 And listens, does not rush so rudely in.—
 I must be upon my guard!—how? in what way?—
 It will not do to be the stiff-necked Jew.—
 And to be no Jew at all will do still less,
 For if no Jew, why not a Mussulman?—
 I have it! That may save me! We put off
 Not children only with a tale.—He comes.
 Let him come!

 SCENE VII.

SALADIN *and* NATHAN.

SALADIN.

(So the coast is clear!)—I have not returned
 Too soon? You have reflected?—Now then, speak!
 No soul can hear us.

NATHAN.

Would that the whole world heard!

SALADIN.

So sure is Nathan? Ha! I call that wise!
 Never to hide truth! to stake all beside
 For that! body and soul! lands and life!

NATHAN.

Yes! yes! when 'tis needful and can be of use.

SALADIN.

One of my titles I may hope henceforth
 To bear with right, Reformer of the World
 And of the Law.

NATHAN.

A glorious title! Yet
Before I show you, Sultan, all that's in
My heart, I may tell you a short tale?

SALADIN.

Why not?
I have ever been a friend of tales well told.

NATHAN.

Well told, that I cannot promise you.

SALADIN.

Again
Such proud humility?—Begin, begin!

NATHAN.

In the East, many years ago, there lived a man
Who possessed a ring of priceless worth, the gift
Of one he loved. The stone was an opal, which
shone

With a hundred varied hues, and had the power
To render him who wore it in that faith
Pleasing to God and man. What wonder then
If the man in the East never let it leave his hand,
And sought to keep it as an heritage
In his own household? He bequeathed the ring
To the son he loved best, and commanded him
To leave it to that one among his sons
Whom he in turn loved best; and so always,
Without regard to birth, by virtue of
The ring alone, the best beloved son
Was to be head and ruler of the house.—
Understand me, Sultan.

SALADIN.

I understand. Go on!

NATHAN.

So now this ring, passing from son to son,
Came at last to a father of three sons, who all

Were alike obedient and therefore alike beloved.
 Yet from time to time—as the father found himself
 Alone with each, and the others did not share
 The outpouring of his heart—now this one seemed,
 Now that, now the third, most worthy of the ring,
 Which he was weak enough to promise each.
 So it went on as long as it went on.—
 But the kind father, when he came to die,
 Knew not what to do. It grieved him to offend
 Two of his sons who trusted in his word.
 So he sent in secret for a jeweller,
 And bade him make for him two other rings
 By the pattern of the first, and not to spare
 Either labor or expense, that the three might be
 In all respects the same. When this was done
 And the rings were brought, the father could not tell
 Himself which was his own. Joyful and glad,
 He called for his sons, each one apart, and gave
 To each apart his blessing—and his ring—
 And died.—You hear me, Sultan?

SALADIN (*who has turned uneasily
away from him.*)

I hear, I hear!—

Make haste to end your tale.

NATHAN.

I have ended it.

What is left scarce needs to be told.—The father
 dead,
 Each came with his ring, each claimed to be head of
 the house.
 They questioned, they wrangled, they went to law.
 In vain!

It was impossible to prove which was
The right ring—

*(After a pause during which he has waited
for the SULTAN to speak.)*

Almost as impossible
As for us to prove now which is—the right faith.

SALADIN.

That is your answer to my question ?

NATHAN.

That
Is but my excuse if I do not trust myself
To distinguish between the rings, which the father
caused
To be made so that none might distinguish them.

SALADIN.

The rings!—
Do not trifle with me!—The religious I have named
Are to be distinguished even in regard
To clothing, to meat and drink!

NATHAN.

And only not
In regard to their foundation.—For all three,
Are they not founded upon history?
Either written or handed down by word of mouth?
And does not history rest only on
Fidelity and faith?—Whose faith then, whose
Fidelity do we doubt least, if not
Those of our kindred? of whose blood we are?
Who from our childhood up have given proof
Of their love? who never have deceived us, save
When it was for our good?—How can I trust
To my forefathers less than you trust yours?
Or how, on the other hand, can I ask you
To say that yours have lied in order not

To gainsay mine? Or yet again, the same
Holds also for the Christian. Does it not?

SALADIN.

(By the living God! the man is right. I must
Be silent.)

NATHAN-

Let us go back to our rings.

As I have said, the sons brought suit, and each
Swore to the judge that he received the ring
From his father's own hand,—which indeed was
true!—

According to the promise given him
Long since, that he should afterwards enjoy
The ring's prerogative:—which was not less true!—
The father, each declared, could not have been
Faithless to him; and rather than allow
Such a father, such a dear father to be so
Suspected, he must charge his brothers—though
He would gladly still believe the best of them
In all things else—with having played him false:
And he would soon find out the traitors, soon
Take vengeance on them.

SALADIN.

And the judge?—I long

To hear what he said to them.

NATHAN.

The judge spoke thus:

“Unless you bring the father now at once
Before me, I command you to depart
From my judgment-seat. Do you think that I am here
To answer riddles? Or will you wait until
The right ring finds a tongue to speak?—Yet stay!
This ring, I hear, has power to make beloved,
To render him who wears it pleasing both
To God and man. That must decide! For that

The false rings cannot do! Which one of you
Do the other two love best?—You are silent? What,
The rings work backward only? not outward? Each
Loves himself best?—O then you are all three
Deceived deceivers! All your rings are false!
The true ring has been lost. To hide its loss,
To replace it, the father had three made for one.”

SALADIN.

Splendid! splendid!

NATHAN.

“And so,” the judge went on,
“If you will not have my counsel in the place
Of my decision, go!—But I counsel you
To take the whole thing as it is. As each
Had his ring from his father, so let each
Think his own ring the true one.—It may be
The father would no longer put up with
The tyranny of the one ring in his house.—
Surely he loved you all, and all alike,
Since he would not suffer two to be oppressed
That the other might be favored.—Let each vie
With the rest in attaining to the measure of
That love, so free from prejudice! let each
As for a wager strive to bring to light
The power of the stone in his own ring!
Let him seek to aid that power by gentleness,
By loving forbearance, by beneficence,
By resignation to God’s will! And when
Your children’s children’s children have revealed
The power of the stone, I summon you
After a thousand thousand years to stand
Again before this judgment-seat. Then will
A wiser man than I sit here and speak.”—
So said the modest judge.

SALADIN.

O God! God!

NATHAN.

Saladin, if you feel yourself to be
This wiser promised man . . .

SALADIN.

*(rushing up to NATHAN and seizing his hand, which he does not
let go till the end.)*

I who am dust?

Who am nothing? O God!

NATHAN.

Sultan, what moves you so?

SALADIN.

Nathan, dear Nathan! The thousand thousand years
Of your judge are not yet past.—His judgment-seat
Is not mine.—Go!—Go!—But be my friend.

NATHAN.

And Saladin has no more to say?

SALADIN.

No more.

NATHAN.

Nothing more?

SALADIN.

Nothing at all.—And why?

NATHAN.

I had hoped to find occasion for a request.

SALADIN.

For that what need to find occasion?—Speak!

NATHAN.

I come from a far journey, and on my way
Gathered in debts.—I have almost too much
In ready money.—For the times begin
Again to threaten;—and I hardly know
Where to bestow it safely.—I had thought
That you perhaps—since the approach of war
Renders gold more needful—might have use for it.

SALADIN.

(looking him full in the face.)

Nathan!—I'll not ask if Al-Hafi has
Been with you;—or if some suspicion urges you
To make this offer of yourself . . .

NATHAN.

Some

Suspicion?

SALADIN.

I have deserved it.—Forgive me!—for
I was about . . .

NATHAN.

Not to ask me for it?

SALADIN.

Yes!

NATHAN.

Then both are served! If I do not send the whole?
'Tis because of the young Templar whom you know.
To him I have first a large amount to pay.

SALADIN.

A Templar? You will not aid my deadliest foes?

NATHAN.

I speak only of one whose life you spared.

SALADIN.

Ah, what do you remind me of!—I had
Forgotten the youth!—You know him?—Where is he?

NATHAN.

How?

You have not heard, then, that the kindness shown
To him through him has fallen upon me?
He risked the life you had just spared to save
My daughter from the flames.

SALADIN.

Ha! so he looked!

So might my brother Assad too have done
Whom he resembles!—If he is still here,

Go bring him to me!—I have said so much
 To my sister of this brother whom she knows
 Only by name, that I would have her see
 His living image! How out of one good deed,
 Though born of passion, other good deeds flow!
 Go bring him!

NATHAN. (*letting go SALADIN'S hand.*)

This moment! and the rest will be
 As I have said?

(*He goes out.*)

SALADIN.

If my sister had but heard!—
 Let me hasten to her!—How shall I tell her all?—

(*He goes out on the other side.*)

SCENE VIII.

*Under the palm-trees near the monastery, where the TEMPLAR is
 waiting for NATHAN.*

TEMPLAR. (*walking up and down as if
 struggling with himself till he breaks out.*)

Here stands the wearied victim still!—I'll know
 No more, no more of what is going on—
 Within me; will not forebode what may go on.—
 Enough, I fled in vain! in vain!—And yet
 What could I do but fly?—Now come what will!—
 The blow could not be turned aside, it fell
 Too swiftly, fell at last though shunned so long.—
 To see her, whom I had so little wish
 To see, and to resolve never again
 To lose sight of her—What resolve? Resolve
 Is purpose, deed; and I, I suffer, can
 But suffer.—To see her, and to feel my life

Was woven in with hers, bound up with hers,
Were one.—Are one.—To live apart from her
Is inconceivable; would be my death,—
And wheresoever after death we are,
There too my death.—If this be love, why then
The Templar loves indeed—the Christian loves
The Jewish maiden.—But what matters that?
Here in the Promised Land—to me therefore
A land of promise evermore!—I've cast
More than one prejudice away.—What would
My Order? As a Templar I am dead;
Have been so since the hour when I became
The prisoner of Saladin. The head
That Saladin gave back to me is not
The old one.—'Tis a new one, and of all
That cramped that other, all that was instilled
Into that other, it knows nothing.—'Tis
A better one, more suited to this land
Which was my father's. For with it I think
For the first time as my father must have thought
If the tales that have been told me were not false.—
Yet never have they seemed more worthy of
Belief than now, that I stumble where he fell.—
He fell! Let me rather fall with men than stand
With children!—His example is the pledge
Of his approval. And for whose beside
Do I care to seek?—For Nathan's?—Oh, from him
I may hope to have encouragement as well!—
What a Jew!—Yet he would seem no more than a
Jew!—

He comes, comes quickly and with joyful look.
But who comes otherwise from Saladin?
Here, Nathan, here!

SCENE IX.

NATHAN *and the* TEMPLAR.

NATHAN.

How? is it you?

TEMPLAR.

You've been

A long while at the Sultan's.

NATHAN.

Not so long.

I was detained on my way there.—Truly, Curd,
The man does not belie his fame. His fame
Is but his shadow.—Let me tell you, though, . . .

TEMPLAR.

Tell me what?

NATHAN.

That he would speak to you at once.
Come with me to my house, where I have first
Something to see to for him: then we'll go.

TEMPLAR.

Your house!—I'll never enter it again,
Nathan, unless . . .

NATHAN.

You have been there? You have talked
With Recha?—How were you pleased with her?

TEMPLAR.

Beyond

Expression!—But I'll never see her more!—
No, never! never!—For you then would have
To promise me that I should be allowed
To see her always, always.

NATHAN.

How do you mean

For me to understand this?

TEMPLAR.

(After a short pause, suddenly clasping Nathan in his arms.)

My father!

NATHAN.

Young man!

TEMPLAR *(as suddenly releasing him)*

Not son?— I beseech you, Nathan!

NATHAN.

Dear young man!

TEMPLAR.

Not son?—I beseech you!—I implore you by
The earliest ties of nature!—Do not place
Above those ties the later bonds imposed
By custom!—Be content to be a man!—
Do not thrust me from you, Nathan!—

NATHAN.

Dear, dear friend!

TEMPLAR.

And son? not son?—Not even though gratitude
Has made a way into your daughter's heart
For love? Not even though two wait but a sign
From you in order to be one?

NATHAN.

Young knight,

You take me by surprise.

TEMPLAR.

How, Nathan, how?

I take you by surprise with your own thoughts?—
You do not know them when you hear them from
My lips?—How do I take you by surprise?

NATHAN.

Before I have heard even which Stauffen was
Your father?

TEMPLAR.

At such a moment you can feel
Nothing-but curiosity?

NATHAN.

For see!

I myself knew a Stauffen once, whose name
Was Conrad.

TEMPLAR.

What if it was my father's too?—
I have the same name as my father: Curd
Is Conrad.

NATHAN.

Yet could my Conrad not have been
Your father. For he was what you are; was
A Templar; was never married.

TEMPLAR.

What of that?

NATHAN.

How?

TEMPLAR.

Oh, in spite of that he might have been
My father!

NATHAN.

You jest.

TEMPLAR.

And you are too exact!—

What would it matter if 'twere so? The race
Is not to be despised.—Do not ask me for
My ancestral proofs, and I'll dispense with yours.
Not that I doubt your lineage. God forbid!
You may trace it back to Abraham: the rest
I know myself; will swear to it myself.

NATHAN.

You are bitter.—Do I deserve it?—Have I yet
Refused you anything?—I will not at
A moment's notice take you at your word.—
That is all.

TEMPLAR.

That is all? O forgive me, then! . . .

NATHAN.

And now

Come with me!

TEMPLAR.

Where?—To your house?—Not there!—It burns!—
I'll wait here.—If we are to meet again
I shall see her often enough. If not, I've seen
Too much of her already. . .

NATHAN.

I'll return

As soon as possible.

SCENE X.

The TEMPLAR, and soon afterwards DAYA.

TEMPLAR.

Already more

Than enough!—The human brain can hold so much;
Yet is often all at once so full! so full
Of a trifle!—Let it be full of what it will!—
I must have patience! For the soul works in
The upheaving stuff, soon makes room for itself,
And light returns, and order.—Do I love
For the first time?—Was what I have known as love
Not love?—Is love only what I now feel? . . .

DAYA.

(Coming stealthily towards him from the side.)

Sir knight! sir knight!

TEMPLAR.

Who calls?—Ha, Daya, you?

DAYA.

I have crept past him. But we might be seen
Where you now stand.—Come near, behind this tree.

TEMPLAR.

What is it?—Why this secrecy?

DAYA.

It is

A secret that has brought me to you, or
I should have said two secrets, one of which
I alone know, the other only you.—
What if we should exchange? You tell me yours,
I'll tell you mine.

TEMPLAR.

With pleasure, if you'll say
What you consider mine. But that perhaps
Will be made clear by yours.—Begin, then.

DAYA.

No,

Sir knight; you first, I follow. Mine would be
Of no use to you before I found out yours.—
Only be quick!—For if I find it out
By questioning, my secret shall remain
My secret, while you will be rid of yours.—
And yet, poor knight! . . . O that you men should
think

You can have such a secret from a woman!

TEMPLAR.

How

If we ourselves do not know we have it, though?

DAYA.

That may be. I must have the kindness then
To tell you yours.—Why did you leave us in
Such haste? Why not return with Nathan?—Say,
Were you so little pleased with Recha? or
So much?—So much! so much!—Teach me to know
The fluttering of the poor bird when he clings
To the lime-twig!—Come, confess it quickly, that
You love her, love her even to madness, and
You shall hear something. . .

TEMPLAR.

Even to madness? Yes,
You know what you are talking of.

DAYA,

Ah well,
Grant me the love: I'll not insist upon
The madness.

TEMPLAR.

Because it is a thing of course?—
A Templar love a Jewish maid! . . .

DAYA.

That does
Indeed seem to be senseless.—Yet at times
There's more sense in a thing than we suppose;
And 'twould not be so unheard of, after all,
If the Saviour led us to Himself by paths
That the wise and prudent of their own accord
Would not have entered.

TEMPLAR.

You grow solemn?—(If
Instead of Saviour I say Providence,
Is she not in the right?)—You make me feel
More curious than I am wont to be.

DAYA.

O this,
You know, is the land of miracles!

TEMPLAR.

(At least
A land where strange things happen. And why not,
When the whole world is thronging here at once?)—
Dear Daya, take for granted what you will:
That I love her; that I cannot even think
How I shall live without her. . .

DAYA.

Swear, sir knight,
Swear then to make her yours; to rescue her
Here for all time, there for eternity.

TEMPLAR.

And how?—How can I?—Can I swear to do
What is not in my power?

DAYA.

'Tis in your power.
By a single word I'll put it in your power.

TEMPLAR.

So that the father also will consent?

DAYA.

Father? what father? The father must consent.

TEMPLAR.

Must, Daya?—He has not fallen among thieves.
He "must" do nothing.

DAYA.

Must be willing then;
Must in the end be willing.

TEMPLAR.

Willing and must!—
But Daya, what if I should tell you that
I have myself ventured to sound this note
Before him?

DAYA.

And he did not fall in?

TEMPLAR.

He fell in,
But with a discord that offended me.

DAYA.

You let him see the shadow of a wish
For Recha, and he did not spring up with
Delight? but instead drew back coldly? made
Objections?

TEMPLAR.

Something of that kind.

DAYA.

Why then

I'll hesitate no longer—

(Pause.)

TEMPLAR.

How is it that

You are hesitating still?

DAYA.

He is so kind!—

I myself owe so much to him!—although

He will not hear of such a thing!—God knows

My heart bleeds to compel him.

TEMPLAR.

Put an end,

Daya, to this uncertainty! Yet if

You are yourself uncertain whether that

Which you propose may be called good or bad,

Shameful or praiseworthy,—be silent! I'll

Forget that you have anything to hide.

DAYA.

That spurs me on instead of checking me.

Know, then, that Recha is no Jewess; that

She is—a Christian.

TEMPLAR.

Yes? I wish you joy!

Was your travail hard? Yet do not fear such pangs!

Go on with zeal to people heaven, since

You can people earth no more!

DAYA.

My news, sir knight,

Did not deserve this scoffing answer. What?

That Recha is a Christian, does it not

Rejoice you, you who love her, you who are

A Christian, a Templar?

TEMPLAR.

More especially
As she is a Christian of your making.

DAYA.

Ah,

Do you understand it so? Let it pass so!—No!
I should like to see who could convert her! 'Tis
Her good fortune long to have been what she is now
Unfitted to become.

TEMPLAR.

Explain yourself,
Or—go!

DAYA.

She is a Christian child; was born
Of Christian parents; is baptized . . .

TEMPLAR. (*quickly.*)

And what
Of Nathan?

DAYA.

He is not her father.

TEMPLAR.

Not
Her father?—You know this?

DAYA.

I know it to be the truth,
Which has often caused me to shed tears of blood.—
He is not her father . . .

TEMPLAR.

And has brought her up
As his daughter? has brought up the Christian child
As a Jewess?

DAYA.

He has.

TEMPLAR.

She knew not, never heard
From him that she was born a Christian, not
A Jewess?

DAYA.

Never!

TEMPLAR.

He not only brought

The child up in this error? but has left
The maiden in it also?

DAYA.

'Tis too true!

TEMPLAR.

Nathan—How? The wise, good Nathan could
So falsify the laws of nature, so
Mislead the outgoing of a heart that left
To itself would have sought another course? You
have
Indeed confided to me something of
Importance,—something that may have results,—
That confuses me,—so that I know not yet
What I shall do.—Therefore leave me! Give me
time.—

He will return. He might surprise us. Go!

DAYA.

I should die of terror.

TEMPLAR.

I am in no mood

To talk now with him. If you meet him, say
That he'll find me at the Sultan's.

DAYA.

Yet do not show

That you are displeased with him.—'Twas only meant
To set the thing in motion, to remove
Any scruple that you might feel on account
Of Recha!—But when you take her back with you
To Europe, you'll not leave me here behind
Without her?

TEMPLAR.

That will be arranged. So go!

ACT FOURTH.

SCENE I.

In the cloisters of the monastery. The LAY-BROTHER and soon after the TEMPLAR.

LAY-BROTHER.

Yes, yes! the Patriarch is right! In all
That he has given me to do for him
I have not prospered.—But why send me on
Such errands? I cannot over-reach; cannot
Persuade; do not like to pry into everything,
To have a finger in everything.—'Twas not
For this I left the world, I for myself,
Only to be so mixed up with it now
For others.

TEMPLAR. (*coming up to him hastily.*)

Good brother, here you are at last!
I've been seeking you for a long while.

LAY-BROTHER.

Seeking me?

TEMPLAR.

You no longer know me?

LAY-BROTHER.

O yes! But I had thought
That I should never in my life again
Set eyes upon you. So I hoped to God!—
For the dear God, He knows how hard it was
To speak to you as I had to speak. He knows
Whether I wished to find an open ear
With you; knows too how greatly I rejoiced
When you so roundly and at once refused
What was not fitting for a knight.—But now
You come; now it has worked upon you!

TEMPLAR.

How?

You know why I have come? I hardly know
Myself.

LAY-BROTHER.

You have considered; have found out
That the Patriarch after all is not so much
In the wrong; that gold and honor may be won
By accepting his proposal; that a foe
Is still a foe, even though he may have been
Seven times our guardian angel. This you've weighed
With flesh and blood; and now you come—Ah God!

TEMPLAR.

Kind pious man! be content. 'Tis not for that
I come; 'tis not on that account I seek
The Patriarch. I still think upon that point
As I used to think, and not for the whole world
Would I lose the good opinion of a man
So upright, kind, and pious as yourself.—
I come only to ask the Patriarch
For counsel.

LAY-BROTHER.

You the Patriarch? A knight
Ask counsel of a—priest?

(looking anxiously around.)

TEMPLAR.

Yes;—the affair

Is somewhat priestly.

LAY-BROTHER.

The priest does not ask
The knight for counsel, let the matter be
Ever so knightly.

TEMPLAR.

'Tis because he has
The privilege of transgressing, one that we
For our part do not envy him.—Indeed,

If I were acting for myself, had but
 To answer to myself, I should not need
 Your Patriarch's advice. But certain things
 I would rather do badly for another than
 Do well alone.—Religion, I now see,
 Is also party-spirit; and the man
 Who thinks he is most impartial yet upholds
 Unconsciously the banner of his own.
 Since this is so, it must be for the best.

LAY-BROTHER.

I say nothing in reply to that, sir knight,
 For I do not rightly understand you.

TEMPLAR.

And yet!—

(What is it I would have? Authority
 Or counsel?—Plain or learned counsel?)—Thanks,
 Good brother, for the hint.—What Patriarch?—
 Be you my Patriarch! 'Tis the Christian in
 The Patriarch I would question, rather than
 The Patriarch in the Christian.—The thing is this. . .

LAY-BROTHER.

No more, sir knight!—You mistake me.—Who knows
 much
 Has many cares, and I have sworn to have
 But one.—For my good fortune, here he comes.
 Stay where you are. He has seen you.

SCENE II.

*The TEMPLAR. The LAY-BROTHER. The PATRIARCH, who is
 coming through the cloisters with great ecclesiastical pomp.*

TEMPLAR.

I should prefer
 To avoid him.—He is not the man for me!—
 A stout, red-visaged, affable prelate! And
 What state!

LAY-BROTHER.

You should see him on his way to court.
Now he is only coming from the sick.

TEMPLAR.

How Saladin must be put to shame by him!

PATRIARCH.

(As he approaches he beckons to the LAY-BROTHER)

Here!—You were with the Templar. What does he
want?

LAY-BROTHER.

I know not.

PATRIARCH.

(Going up to the TEMPLAR, while the attendants and the LAY-BROTHER draw back.)

Well, sir knight!—I am rejoiced
To see the brave young man!—What, still so young?
By God's help something may be done with you.

TEMPLAR.

Hardly more, reverend sir, than has been done
Already. Somewhat less perhaps.

PATRIARCH.

I hope,

At least, that a knight so pious may long live
And prosper for the good of Christendom
And of God's cause! That cannot fail to be
If youthful courage will be guided by
The ripe advice of age!—But tell me, how
Can I serve you?

TEMPLAR.

By giving me what my youth most lacks,
Advice.

PATRIARCH.

Right gladly!—Only the advice
Is to be followed.

TEMPLAR.

Not blindly?

PATRIARCH.

Who says that?—

None must assuredly neglect to use
 The reason that God gave him—where it belongs.—
 Does it belong though everywhere?—O no!—
 For instance, when God graciously makes known
 By one of His angels—that is to say, by one
 Of the servants of His word—a means by which
 The welfare of Christendom, the safety of
 His Church may be promoted, may be secured
 In some unusual and peculiar way:
 Who then by reasoning should undertake
 To search into the absolute sovereign will
 Of Him who created reason? and presume
 To weigh and measure by the petty rules
 Of a vain honor the eternal laws
 Of the Majesty of Heaven?—But enough
 Of this.—Let me know in what you would be advised.

TEMPLAR.

Suppose then, reverend father, that a Jew
 Had an only child—a daughter; that this child
 Had been brought up by him with the greatest care
 In everything that is good; that he loved her more
 Than his own soul; that she loved him in return
 With the same devotion. If 'twere whispered now
 To one of our Order that this maiden was
 No daughter of the Jew; he had picked her up
 In her childhood, bought her, stole her,—what you
 will;
 She was known to be a Christian child; had been
 Baptized; the Jew had only brought her up
 As a Jewess; had let her pass for a Jewess and
 His daughter:—reverend father, in such a case
 What should be done?

PATRIARCH.]

I shudder!—First of all
 You must declare to me, sir 'night, if this
 Is a fact or an hypothesis. Tl t is,
 Whether it was invented, or has occurred
 And continues to occur.

TEMPLAR.

I should think 'twould be
 One and the same thing, only to obtain
 Your opinion.

PATRIARCH.

One and the same thing?—See then how
 The pride of human reason leads astray
 In spiritual matters!--Not at all! For if
 The case you have brought forward is no more
 Than an exercise of wit, 'tis not worth while
 To consider it in earnest. Thereupon
 I shall refer you to the theatre,
 Where such themes are debated with applause
 And argued *pro et contra*.--But if this
 Is no theatrical performance, meant
 Only to make sport of me, but a fact;
 If it has happened in our diocese,
 In our dear city of Jerusalem:--
 Why then . . .

TEMPLAR.

What then?

PATRIARCH.

Then must the Jew forthwith
 Suffer the penalty by papal and
 Imperial law assigned for such a crime,
 Such an outrage.

TEMPLAR.

He must?

PATRIARCH.

And that law condemns the Jew
Who has led a Christian to apostasy
To be burnt alive.

TEMPLAR.

It does?

PATRIARCH.

How much more the Jew
Who has snatched by violence a Christian child
From the covenant of her baptism! For is not all
That is done to children violence?—save indeed
What the Church does to children.

TEMPLAR.

But this child,
If the Jew had not taken pity on her, might
Have died of want.

PATRIARCH.

No matter! the Jew must burn!
Better to die of want here than be saved
To perish everlastingly.—Besides,
Why should the Jew interfere with God? Whom
God
Would rescue He can rescue without him.

TEMPLAR.

And can also in spite of him, I should think, make
blest
Hereafter.

PATRIARCH.

No matter! the Jew must burn!

TEMPLAR.

That goes
Against me! All the more so since 'tis said
He has brought her up not so much in his own
As in no belief, and has taught her about God
Neither more nor less than reason would require.

Patriarch.

No matter! the Jew must burn. . . should be thrice
burnt

For that alone!—What, let a child grow up
With no belief at all?—not teach a child
The great duty of believing? This is too much!
I am surprised, sir knight, that you yourself. . .

Templar.

Reverend sir, the rest, God willing, at
Confession.

(Is about to go.)

Patriarch.

You will not answer me?—This Jew,
This miscreant, you will not name him?—will
Not bring him to me on the spot?—I'll go
At once then to the Sultan.—Saladin,
By the terms of capitulation, which he swore
To observe, must protect us, must, in all the laws,
In all the precepts that may be reckoned part
Of our most holy faith! God be praised! we have
The original; we have his hand, his seal.—
'Twill not be hard to make him understand
How dangerous even for the state it is
To believe in nothing! Every civil bond
Is loosened, is sundered if men are allowed
To believe in nothing.—Away with such a crime
From the face of the earth! . . .

Templar.

Pity I cannot stay
To hear the excellent sermon somewhat more
At leisure. I am sent for by the Sultan.

Patriarch.

Yes?

Well, then—Indeed—

TEMPLAR.

Shall I prepare him for
Your coming?

PATRIARCH.

Oh, I know that you have found
Great favor with him!—Only say, I beg,
That I am at his service.—'Tis my zeal
For God that moves me. What I do too much
I do for Him alone.—Think of that, sir knight!
And what you have just told me of the Jew
Was a problem only, was it not?—that is . . .

TEMPLAR.

A problem.

(He goes out.)

PATRIARCH.

*(Which I must investigate
More thoroughly: another errand for
The brother Bonafides.) Here, my son!*
(He goes out conversing with the lay-brother.)

SCENE III.

*A room in the Sultan's palace, into which slaves are bringing
many bags of gold and placing them side by side on the floor.*

SALADIN and soon after SITTAH.

SALADIN.

Truly, there is no end to it!—How much
Is still remaining?

A SLAVE.

About half.

SALADIN.

Then take

What is left to Sittah.—And Al-Hafi, where
Is he? He must have charge of this.—Or how
If I should send it to my father? Here
It will slip through my fingers.—We grow hard
At last; and now 'twill surely cost some skill

To win much from me. Till at least the gold
From Egypt comes, let poverty look out
For itself!—If but the spending at the grave
May go on! If the Christian pilgrims may
Not have to leave us empty-handed! If . . .

SITTAH.

What does this mean? Why send the gold to me?

SALADIN.

Pay yourself with it and lay up the rest.

SITTAH.

Is Nathan not here with the Templar yet?

SALADIN.

He is seeking him everywhere.

SITTAH.

See what I've found

In looking over my old jewels.

(Showing him a small picture.)

SALADIN.

Ha!

My brother! 'tis he, 'tis he!—Was he! was he!—
Ah dear brave youth, that I should have lost thee, and
So soon! With thee what might I not have done;
What at thy side have done!—Leave it with me,
The picture, Sittah. I remember how
He gave it to your elder sister, to
His Lilla, one morning when she clung to him
And would not let him go. 'Twas the last time
He rode forth.—Ah, I let him ride alone!—
Ah, Lilla died of grief, and never would
Forgive me that I let him ride alone!
He returned no more!

SITTAH.

My poor brother!

SALADIN.

Do not mourn
 For him!—Some day we shall all return no more!
 And then,—who knows? It is not death alone
 That keeps back such a youth as he was from
 The goal. He has other foes beside, to whom
 The strongest even as the weakest oft
 Succumb. However that be, I must compare
 This picture with the young Templar, must find out
 If my fancy has misled me.

SITTAH.

'Twas for that
 I brought it to you. Give it back, though, give!
 A woman's eye, let me tell you, will judge best.

SALADIN. (*to a doorkeeper who appears.*)

Who is there? The Templar? Let him enter!

SITTAH.

Not

To disturb you, not to confuse him . . .

(*She takes a seat on a sofa apart, and covers
 her face with her veil.*)

SALADIN.

'Tis well!—(And now
 His voice! what will that be? Surely Assad's voice
 Still slumbers somewhere in my soul!)

SCENE IV.

The TEMPLAR and SALADIN.

TEMPLAR.

'Tis I,

Your captive, Sultan, . . .

SALADIN.

My captive? I granted life,
 Shall I not grant freedom also?

TEMPLAR.

What becomes you

To do, becomes me to hear only, not
 To prescribe. But, Sultan,—to give special thanks
 For my life suits neither my condition nor
 My character.—That life, in any case,
 Is again at your disposal.

SALADIN.

Do not use it then

Against me!—It is not that I grudge the foe
 A pair of hands more. But a heart like yours,
 'Twould be hard to give that up to them.—Brave
 youth,

I have not been deceived in you! You are
 My Assad both in soul and body. See!
 I could ask you where all this long, long while you
 have

Been hidden? in what cavern you have slept?
 In what Ginnistan, by what kind Div this flower
 Has been cherished, that it blooms so freshly still?
 See! I could wish to remind you of what we did
 Together here and there! I could chide you that
 You have had a secret from me! have kept back
 An adventure from me! Yes, I could do it if
 I saw you only, not myself.—Ah well!
 Of this sweet reverie so much at least
 Is true, that in the autumn of my life
 An Assad is to bloom for me again.—
 Does it content you also?

TEMPLAR.

Everything

That comes to me from you—be it what it may—
 Was my heart's wish already.

SALADIN.

We'll put that to

The test at once.—You will stay with me, will
you not ?

As Christian, as Mussulman, no matter how !
In the white mantle or the Arab cloak,
The turban or the felt: even as you like !
I have never asked that the same bark should grow
On every tree.

TEMPLAR.

Else you would not have been
What you are, the hero who would fain become
The Gardener of God.

SALADIN.

If you think no worse
Of me, we are half agreed already ?

TEMPLAR.

Quite !

SALADIN (*offering his hand.*)

Your word ?

TEMPLAR (*taking it.*)

Myself!--Herewith receive more
Than you could have taken from me. Wholly yours !

SALADIN.

Too much gain for one day ! too much !--And he,
Did he not come with you ?

TEMPLAR.

Who ?

SALADIN.

Nathan.

TEMPLAR (*coldly.*)

No.

I came alone.

SALADIN.

What a deed that was of yours!
And what a wise chance, that such a deed was done
In aid of such a man!

TEMPLAR.

Yes, yes!

SALADIN.

So cold?—

No, young man! When God has done some good
By means of us, we must not be so cold!—
Even out of modesty we must not wish
To seem so cold!

TEMPLAR.

Yet each thing in this world
Has so many different sides!—We so often fail
To see how they fit together!

SALADIN.

Hold fast then
To what is best, and praise God! For He knows
How they fit together.—But if you are in truth
So hard to please, young man, I must also be
Upon my guard with you. I too, alas!
Am a thing of many sides, that may often seem
Not to fit well together.

TEMPLAR.

That cuts me to
The quick!—For suspicion is so little one
Of my faults. . .

SALADIN.

Well, tell me now of whom you are
Suspicious?—It would seem, of Nathan.—What?
Suspicious of Nathan? you?—Explain yourself!
Give me the first proof of your confidence.

TEMPLAR.

I have nothing against Nathan. 'Tis with myself
Alone that I am angry.

SALADIN.

And for what?

TEMPLAR.

That I should have dreamed a Jew could ever cease
To be a Jew; that waking I should have dreamed
It could be so.

SALADIN.

Out with this waking dream!

TEMPLAR.

You know of Nathan's daughter, Sultan. What
I did for her, I did it—because I did.
Too proud to reap thanks where I had not thought
Of sowing them, day by day I refused
To see her. The father was away: he came;
He heard; he sought me out; he thanked me; wished
That his daughter might please me; spoke of prospects;
spoke
Of a brighter future.—Well, I let myself
Be persuaded. I came, I saw, I found indeed
A maiden. . . Ah, Sultan, I am ashamed!

SALADIN.

Ashamed

Of what?—that a Jewish maiden should have made
Such an impression? surely not of that?

TEMPLAR,

That to this impression my rash heart, subdued
By the father's friendly talk, gave way so soon!--
Fool that I was! A second time I sprang
Into the fire.--I wooed and was despised.

SALADIN

Despised?

TEMPLAR.

The wise father did not meet me with
A flat refusal. The wise father, though,
Must first inquire, must first reflect. Of course!
Did I not do the same? Did I not first
Inquire, reflect, when she was shrieking in
The flames? By God! 'tis something beautiful
To be so wise, so prudent!

SALADIN.

You must have
More patience with an old man! Can he long
Persist in his refusal? Will he ask
That you should first become a Jew?

TEMPLAR.

Who knows?

SALADIN.

Who knows?—He who knows Nathan better than
To believe it.

TEMPLAR.

The superstition that has grown
With our growth, even when we know it to be such,
Does not lose its power to control us. All
Are not free who make sport of their chains.

SALADIN.

A sage
Remark! Yet Nathan, Nathan . . .

TEMPLAR.

And the worst
Of superstitions is to think one's own
The most endurable . . .

SALADIN.

That perhaps is true!
Yet Nathan . . .

TEMPLAR.

To confide to it alone
The guidance of mankind, till their dim eyes
Have grown accustomed to the clearer light
Of truth; to it alone . . .

SALADIN.

But Nathan!—He
Is above this weakness.

TEMPLAR.

So I also thought! . . .
But if this paragon among men should be
Such a common Jew that he looks about in search
Of Christian children only to bring them up
As Jews:—what then?

SALADIN.

Who accuses him of this?

TEMPLAR.

The maiden even with whom he lures me on,
With the hope of whom he seemed as if he wished
To repay me for what I had done for her:—even she
Is not his daughter, but a Christian child,
Either stolen or lost.

SALADIN.

And yet in spite of that
He will not give her to you?

TEMPLAR (*with violence.*)

Whether he will
Or not, what does it matter? He is found out,
The tolerant talker! On this Jewish wolf
In the philosophic sheep-skin I'll find means
To let loose dogs that will run him down at last!

SALADIN (*sternly*).

Peace, Christian!

TEMPLAR.

What? peace, Christian?—Shall the Jew
And Mussulman have leave to play the Jew,
The Mussulman, and the Christian not be free
To play the Christian too?

SALADIN (*more sternly*).

Peace, Christian!

TEMPLAR (*with more composure*).

I feel

The weight of the reproof that Saladin
Has pressed into that name! Ah, if I knew
How Assad,—Assad in my place would here
Have acted!

SALADIN.

Not much better!—He would have been
Just as impetuous!—But who taught you how
Like him to bribe me with a word?—If this
Is true of Nathan, I myself scarce know
What to think of him.—Meanwhile he is my friend,
And of my friends one must not quarrel with
The other.—Be cautious! Do not give him up
To the violence of the Christian rabble! Keep
From your clergy what they would urge me to avenge!
Be a Christian to spite no Jew, no Mussulman!

TEMPLAR.

It might have been too late had it not been
For the Patriarch's bloodthirsty zeal! But thanks
To that, I feared to become his tool!

SALADIN.

You went.

To the Patriarch first, before you came to me?

TEMPLAR.

In the storm of passion, in the whirlwind of
Uncertainty!—Forgive me!—You'll find, I fear,

Nothing more in me now to remind you of
Your Assad.

SALADIN.

Unless it be that very fear!

I think I know from what faults our virtues grow.
Cultivate these, and those will not harm you much
With me.—But go! Seek Nathan as he sought you.
I must make peace between you.—And if you were
In earnest about the maiden, she is yours!
Nathan also must be made to see
That he should not have deprived a Christian child
Of swine's flesh!—Go!

(The TEMPLAR goes out and SITTAH leaves the sofa.)

SCENE V.

SALADIN *and* SITTAH.

SITTAH.

How strange!

SALADIN.

Say, Sittah, must
My Assad not have been indeed a brave,
A handsome youth?

SITTAH.

If it was he who sat
For this picture, and not the Templar rather!—But
How is it you forgot to question him
About his parents?

SALADIN.

And especially
About his mother? If she never was
In this land?

SITTAH.

'Twould be well to ask!

SALADIN.

O nothing is
 More likely! For Assad was so well received
 By beautiful Christian ladies, was so wild
 About beautiful Christian ladies, that in truth
 'Twas once the talk—But I will not speak of it.—
 Enough, I have him back!—with all his faults,
 With all the changeful moods of his warm heart,
 I have him back again!—Nathan must give
 The maiden to him, Sittah; must he not?

SITTAH.

Must give her to him? Must give her up to him!

SALADIN.

Surely! What right to her has Nathan, if
 He is not her father? He who saved her life
 Alone should exercise the right of him
 Who gave her life.

SITTAH.

How, Saladin, if you were
 To send for her at once? to take her from
 Her unrightful owner?

SALADIN.

Is that needful?

SITTAH.

No,

Not needful!—'Tis only curiosity
 That makes me ask it. For of certain men
 I long to know as soon as possible
 What kind of woman they love.

SALADIN.

Send for her then.

SITTAH.

May I, brother?

SALADIN.

But Nathan must be spared!
Nathan must not think that we would use force
To part him from her.

SITTAH.

Have no fear!

SALADIN.

And I,
I must see for myself where Al-Hafi is.

SCENE VI.

The open entrance-hall of NATHAN'S house on the side towards the palm-trees, as in the first scene of the first act. Some of the costly articles of merchandise mentioned there are lying unpacked upon the ground.

NATHAN and DAYA.

DAYA.

O all

Is splendid! all is exquisite! O all
Is such—as only you could give! Where was
The silver stuff made with the golden vines?
What did it cost you?—That is what I call
A wedding-dress! No queen on earth could wish
For a better.

NATHAN.

Wedding-dress? Why wedding-dress?

DAYA.

Yes, yes! you did not think of it indeed
When you bought it.—But truly, Nathan, it must be
That and no other! For a wedding-dress
'Tis as if made to order. The white ground,
Emblem of innocence; the golden stream

That wanders through that ground, emblem of
wealth.

Do you see? How lovely!

NATHAN.

Of whose wedding-dress
Are you talking in parables so learnedly?
Are you a bride?

DAYA.

I?

NATHAN.

Who then?

DAYA.

I?—

Good God!

NATHAN.

Well, who then? Of whose wedding-dress
Are you speaking?—All that you see is yours.

DAYA.

Is mine?

Is meant for me?—Is not for Recha?

NATHAN.

What

I have brought with me for Recha is not yet
Unpacked. Come, take what is your own.

DAYA.

My own!—

No, tempter! not even though it were the wealth
Of the whole world! I'll not touch it unless you
swear

To make use of an opportunity
Such as Heaven will hardly grant you a second time.

NATHAN.

Make use? of what?—Opportunity? for what?

DAYA.

The Templar loves Recha: give her to him! So
Is your sin, which I'll hide no longer, at an end.
So Recha comes among Christians once again,
Becomes again what she is, and is again
What she was; and you, with all your kindness, which
We cannot thank you for sufficiently,
Have not heaped coals of fire upon your head.

NATHAN.

Still harping on the same thing!—Only with
A new string, which I fear will neither hold
Nor keep in tune.

DAYA.

How so?

NATHAN

I'd sooner far

Give Recha to him than to any one else on earth.
But then. . . You must have patience!

DAYA.

Patience still?

Patience? Are you not harping too upon
The same thing?

NATHAN.

Have patience for a few days more! . . .
But who comes there? A cloister-brother? Go;
See what it is he wants.

DAYA (*going towards the lay-brother.*)

What can it be!

NATHAN.

Give!—and before he asks.—(If I but knew
How to question the Templar without telling him
What has made me so curious! For if I tell him all,
And find my suspicion groundless, I have staked
The father to no purpose.)—What does he wish?

DAYA.

He wishes to speak to you.

NATHAN.

Well, let him come;

And leave us.

SCENE VII.

NATHAN *and the* LAY-BROTHER.

NATHAN.

(I am too eager to remain

Her father!—But may I not remain so though
I cease to bear that name?—She, she herself
Will still look on me as her father when
She knows how I wish it.)—What can I do for you,
Good brother?

LAY-BROTHER.

Not much.—I am glad to see you well.

NATHAN.

You know me?

LAY-BROTHER.

Who does not know you? You've stamped your
name

In many a hand; in mine too, years ago.

NATHAN.

Come, brother, come; let me do it again then.

LAY-BROTHER.

Thanks!

I'll take nothing; 'twould be stealing from the poor.—
But let me remind you of my name. I too
Can boast that I once placed something in your hand
Which was not to be despised.

NATHAN.

Forgive me!—I am
Ashamed—Say what?—and take to make amends
Sevenfold the value of the same.

LAY-BROTHER.

Hear first
How I was myself reminded this very day
Of the pledge I intrusted to your care.

NATHAN.

The pledge
You intrusted to my care?

LAY-BROTHER.

A short while since,
I dwelt as a hermit not far from Jericho,
On Quarantana. Then came Arab thieves,
Who broke up my chapel and my hermit's cell
And dragged me away with them. By great good
chance
I escaped and fled here to the Patriarch,
To beg from him some other little spot
Where I might serve my God in solitude
Until my blessed end.

NATHAN.

I stand on coals,
Good brother. Make it short! The pledge! the
pledge
You intrusted to me!

LAY-BROTHER.

I'll soon speak of that.—
The Patriarch promised me a hermitage
On Tabor when one was empty; and meanwhile
Has kept me here as a lay-brother in
The monastery, where I still remain,
And wish myself a hundred times a day
On Tabor. For the Patriarch uses me
For all manner of things that fill me with
Disgust. For instance. . .

NATHAN.

Make haste, good brother, make haste!

LAY-BROTHER.

I am coming to it now! Some one to-day
Has told him that there lives near by a Jew
Who is said to have brought up a Christian child
As his daughter.

NATHAN (*starting.*)

How?

LAY-BROTHER.

Only hear me to the end!—

He has sent me to find this Jew, and is enraged
At the thought of such an outrage, which to him
Seems the true sin against the Holy Ghost;—
That is, the sin which of all sins we hold
To be the greatest; only, God be thanked,
We know not rightly what it is:—then waked
My conscience, and I felt that I myself
Also perhaps long since had given cause
For the commission of this great sin.—Say,
Did not a horseman eighteen years ago
Bring you a young child but a few weeks old?

NATHAN.

How is this?—Surely—

LAY-BROTHER.

Look at me well!—I am

That horseman.

NATHAN.

You?

LAY-BROTHER.

My master, who sent the child,
Was named—if I remember—Von Filnek—Wolf
Von Filnek.

NATHAN.

Right!

LAY-BROTHER.

The mother had just died,
And the father was forced of a sudden to depart
For Gaza,—I think—whither the poor child could
Not follow him: so he sent her to you. And 'twas
At Darun I met you, was it not?

NATHAN.

Quite right!

LAY-BROTHER.

'Twould not be strange if my memory played me
false.

I have had so many masters, and this one
I served but a short time. He soon after died
At Askalon; and was indeed a kind
Good master.

NATHAN.

Yes, yes! I owe him so much! so much!
More than once he saved me from the sword!

LAY-BROTHER.

O then

You were the more willing to receive his child?

NATHAN.

As you may suppose.

LAY-BROTHER.

And where is she now?

She is not dead, I hope?—Do not say she's dead!—
If we alone know of this matter, all
Is well.

NATHAN.

Is well?

LAY-BROTHER.

Trust me, Nathan, 'tis so!

For see, this is how I think! If in the good
I mean to do there's something that's too much

Like evil, I prefer to leave the good
 Undone; because we always know indeed
 What is evil, but are far from being sure
 What is good.—'Twas natural that this Christian
 child,
 Since you wished to bring her up most kindly,
 should
 Be brought up by you as your own.—And if
 You have done this with all love and faithfulness,
 Ought you now so to be rewarded? That
 I cannot see. It would have been more wise
 To have her brought up as a Christian by
 Some other; but you would not then have loved the
 child
 Of your friend. And children at that tender age
 Need love, though it were a wild beast's love, even
 more
 Than they need Christianity. For Christianity
 There's time yet. If the maiden has grown up
 In your sight sound and pious, she remains
 In God's sight what she was before. Is not
 The Christian built upon the Jewish faith?
 It has often angered me, has cost me tears
 Enough to see how Christians can forget
 That our Lord himself was a Jew.

NATHAN.

Good brother, you
 Must plead my cause for me when hatred and
 Hypocrisy rise up against me—for
 A deed—ah, for a deed!—You, only you
 Shall know it!—But take it with you to your grave!
 Never have I been led by vanity
 To speak of it to another. To you alone
 I'll speak of it. Pious simplicity

Alone can understand what that man may do
Who has no will but God's.

LAY-BROTHER.

You are moved, and your eyes
Are filled with tears.

NATHAN.

You met me with the child
At Darun. But you did not know that a few days
Before, the Christians had put to death all the Jews
In Gath, even women and children; you did not
know
That my own wife, with seven hopeful sons,
Had been burnt alive there in my brother's house,
Where they had taken refuge.

LAY-BROTHER.

Righteous God!

NATHAN.

When you came, for three days and nights I had
lain in dust
And ashes before God and wept.—Had wept?—
Had also called God to account, cried out
Against Him, cursed myself and the whole world,
Sworn hatred to all Christians. . .

LAY-BROTHER.

Ah, I can well

Believe it!

NATHAN.

But reason by degrees returned.
She spoke with gentle voice: "And yet God is!
Yet even this also was by God's decree!
Come, practise what you long have understood,
What to practise surely is not harder than
To understand, if you only will. Rise up!"—

I stood upon my feet and cried to God:
"I will! if Thou willest only that I should will!—
Just then you came and handed me the child
Wrapped in your cloak.—What you said to me and I
To you, I have forgotten. Only this
I know, that I took the child, laid it upon
My bed, kissed it, fell on my knees and sobbed:
"O God! out of seven Thou hast given me back
one!"

LAY-BROTHER.

Nathan, you are a Christian!—By Heaven, you are
A Christian! A better Christian never lived!

NATHAN.

Well for us that what makes me seem to you
A Christian makes you seem to me a Jew!—
But we'll speak of this no longer. Here there's need
Of action! And although a sevenfold love
Soon bound me to this one strange maiden; though
The thought now tortures me that I must lose
My seven sons again in losing her:—
Yet if I am required by Providence
To give her up,—I obey.

LAY-BROTHER.

That is what I was
About to counsel you. Your own good sense
Has counselled it already.

NATHAN.

'Tis not the first
Who comes that shall have her though!

LAY-BROTHER.

No, surely not!

NATHAN.

He who has not a greater right to her
Than I, must have an earlier,—some tie
Of nature and of blood.

LAY-BROTHER.

So I think too!

NATHAN.

If you know of any kinsman she may have,
Name me the man who is her brother, or
Her uncle or cousin: and from such a one
She will not be withheld—she who is formed
To be the ornament of any house,
Of any faith.—You know more, I hope, than I
Of her father's kindred.

LAY-BROTHER.

Hardly, good Nathan!—For
You have heard already, I was with him but
A short time.

NATHAN.

You can tell me though at least
Who the mother was? Was she not a Stauffen?

LAY-BROTHER.

That

May be!—I think so.

NATHAN.

Was not her brother's name
Conrad von Stauffen?—was he not a Templar?

LAY-BROTHER.

If

I am not mistaken. But hold! I had forgot
There's a little book of my master's I still have,
Which I took from his bosom when we buried him

At Askalon. 'Tis a book with prayers in it.
We call it a breviary.—Some Christian man,
I thought, may have use for it.—Not I indeed—
I cannot read—

NATHAN.

No matter!—Only go on.

LAY-BROTHER.

In this little book before and after stand,
As I have been told, in my master's hand the names
Of his kindred and of hers.

NATHAN.

O happy chance!

Go! run! bring me the little book at once!
I am ready to give for it its weight in gold
And a thousand thanks beside! Go quickly, run!

LAY-BROTHER.

I'll bring it gladly! But what my master wrote
Is in Arabic. *(He goes.)*

NATHAN.

All the same to me! Make haste,
Good brother!—O God! if I might keep her still,
And buy with her such a son!—That can hardly be!
Let it end now as it will!—Who can have told
The Patriarch? I must not forget to ask.—
What if it came from Daya?

SCENE VIII.

NATHAN and DAYA.

DAYA *(entering hastily)*.

Think, Nathan!

NATHAN.

Well?

DAYA.

The poor child was so frightened when she heard
That she was sent for . . .

NATHAN.

By the Patriarch ?

DAYA.

By

The Sultan's sister, Princess Sittah.

NATHAN.

Not

By the Patriarch ?

DAYA

No, by Sittah!—Did you not hear?—
Princess Sittah has sent for her.

NATHAN.

For whom ?

Has sent for Recha?—Sittah has sent for her?—
Well, if 'tis Sittah who has sent, and not
The Patriarch . . .

DAYA.

How came you to think of him ?

NATHAN.

You have heard nothing from him lately ? and
Have told him nothing ?

DAYA.

Told him ? I ?

NATHAN.

Where are

The messengers ?

DAYA.

At your door.

NATHAN.

To make more sure,
I'll speak to them myself.—If 'tis only not
The Patriarch who is behind this!

(He goes.)

DAYA.

And I—I fear
Something far worse. The only daughter of
So rich a Jew would be no bad choice for
A Mussulman.—The Templar has lost her if
I do not venture on the second step,
If I do not tell her also who she is.—
Courage! When next I am alone with her
I'll not let slip the chance! That will be—perhaps
Today, if I go with her. There's no harm
At least in giving her a hint. Yes, yes!
It must be done! Now or never! It must be done!

(She follows Nathan.)

FIFTH ACT.

SCENE I.

*The room in SALADIN'S palace to which the bags of gold were
taken, and where they are still to be seen.*

SALADIN, and soon after several MAMELUKES.

SALADIN *(as he enters.)*

There the gold is lying yet! And no one knows
Where to find the dervish, who has fallen upon
A chess-board somewhere doubtless, and forgot
Himself;—so why not me?—Patience! What now?

A MAMELUKE.

Good news, Sultan! Rejoice, Sultan, rejoice!
The caravan from Cairo has arrived,
With seven years' tribute from the fruitful Nile.

SALADIN.

Bravo, Ibrahim! You are indeed
A welcome messenger!—At last! at last!—
Many thanks for your tidings.

THE MAMELUKE (*waiting.*)

(Is that all?)

SALADIN.

What are you waiting for?

THE MAMELUKE.

A welcome, and

No more?

SALADIN.

What more would you have?

THE MAMELUKE.

No gift

For the bringer of good tidings?—So am I
The first whom Saladin has learnt to pay
With words!—I may make my boast of it!—the first
With whom he played the miser!

SALADIN.

Take then one

Of these bags of gold.

THE MAMELUKE.

No, not now! not if

You were to give me all of them!

SALADIN.

So proud?—

Come, there are two for you!—He has gone? he is
In earnest? he has more nobleness of mind
Than I?—'Tis surely harder far for him
To refuse than for me to give.—Ibrahim!—
What has come over me, so near my end,

To wish to be another, not myself?—
Will Saladin not die as Saladin?—
Then he should not have lived as Saladin.

A SECOND MAMELUKE.

Sultan, . . .

SALADIN.

If you have come to tell me. . .

SECOND MAMELUKE.

That

The caravan from Egypt has arrived.

SALADIN.

I know it already.

SECOND MAMELUKE.

So I am too late!

SALADIN.

Why too late?—Take for your good will
One or two of these bags of gold.

SECOND MAMELUKE.

Say three!

SALADIN.

Yes, if you can count!

SECOND MAMELUKE.

There's a third one who
Is coming,—if he can come, that is.

SALADIN.

How so?

SECOND MAMELUKE.

He has broken his neck perhaps! For when we
three
Had made sure that the caravan was in sight,
We rode off at full speed. The foremost fell,

And I took the lead till we reached the city gates;
But Ibrahim, the grasping fellow, knows
More of the streets than I.

SALADIN.

Oh, the one who fell!

Ride back to him.

SECOND MAMELUKE.

That I will!—And if he lives,
The half of what you have given me is his.

He goes.)

SALADIN.

See what a noble nature he too has!—
Who can boast of such mamelukes? May I not
think
That my example helped to make them what
They are?—Away with the thought, at the very last,
Of accustoming them to another! . . .

A THIRD MAMELUKE.

Sultan, . . .

SALADIN.

Are you

The one who fell?

THIRD MAMELUKE.

No. I was sent to say
That Emir Mansor, who led the caravan,
Is dismounting. . .

SALADIN.

Bring him in! quickly!—'Tis he indeed!

SCENE II.

EMIR MANSOR *and* SALADIN.

SALADIN.

Welcome, Emir! How has it fared with you?—
Mansor, Mansor, you have kept us waiting long!

MANSOR.

This letter, Sultan, will inform you what
Your Abulkassem had first to suppress,
What tumult raging in Thebais kept
Our convoy from departing. We have since
Made such haste as we could.

SALADIN.

I believe you!—Take,
Good Mansor, . . . you are willing, are you not? . . .
Take at once a fresh escort, and go on
To my father at Lebanon with the greater part
Of the gold you have brought.

MANSOR.

Right gladly!

SALADIN.

Your escort must
Be large enough. It has not been so safe
Round Lebanon of late. Have you not heard?
The Templars are astir again. So be
On your guard!—But come! where is the caravan?
I must see it and look to all this for myself.—
And you! tell Sittah I'll be with her then.

SCENE III.

*The palm-trees in front of NATHAN'S house, where the TEMPLAR
is walking up and down.*

TEMPLAR.

I cannot, will not go to into his house.—
Surely he'll show himself at last!—That once

They should have watched for me so eagerly!—
 And now I may happen some day to be asked
 Not to pass so often before his door.—I am
 Too ready to take offence.—What has he done
 To make me so bitter against him?—He said yes:
 He has refused me nothing. And Saladin
 Has taken upon himself to speak to him.—
 How? can in me the Christian be indeed
 More deeply rooted than in him the Jew?—
 Who rightly know himself? Could I grudge him
 else

His petty conquest from the Christians?—Though
 No petty conquest, such a creature!—Such
 A creature? whose?—Not that of the slave
 Who floated the block ashore on life's barren strand
 And left it there! The artist's rather, his
 Who saw in the rude block the godlike form
 To which he shaped it.—Recha's true father, spite
 Of the Christian who begot her, is the Jew—
 Will remain to eternity the Jew.—For if
 I thought of her only as a Christian maid,
 Apart from what such a Jew alone could give,—
 Speak, my heart,—what wouldst thou find in her
 To please thee? Nothing! Little!—Even her smile,
 If it were no more than the soft sweet play
 Of quivering muscles; if what made her smile
 Were all unworthy of the charm with which
 It clothes itself upon her lips; not even
 Her smile! I've seen more beautiful than hers
 Lavished on false wit, on idle toys, on scorn,
 On flatterers and base lovers!—Did these too
 Enchant me? Did these too inspire the wish
 To flutter my life out in their sunshine?—No,
 They did not. And I bear ill-will to him

Who gave her this high worth? What if I deserved
 The mocking words with which I was dismissed
 By Saladin? 'Tis bad enough that he
 Should think so! How little, how contemptible
 I must seem to him!—And all for a woman!—Curd,
 This will never do! Turn about! What if Daya's
 tale

Could not easily be proved?—See, there he comes
 Out of his house, talking . . . Ha! with whom?—
 With my cloister-brother? He knows all then! is
 Betrayed to the Patriarch!—What have I done!—
 That a single spark of this passion in the brain
 Should work such havoc!—Let me think though now
 What to do next! I'll wait apart here till
 The cloister-brother leaves him.

SCENE IV.

NATHAN *and the* LAY-BROTHER.

NATHAN (*coming forward*).

Thanks again,

Good brother, many thanks!

LAY-BROTHER.

The same to you!

NATHAN.

To me? from you? for what? for my stubbornness
 In forcing on you what you do not want?—
 As if yours had been less than mine! You'll not
 be made
 Any richer than your friend.

LAY-BROTHER.

The book belongs
 To the daughter, not to me; 'tis the daughter's sole
 Inheritance from her father.—True, she has you.—

NATHAN.

And you have not even seen her!—Come to us soon,
Come often, good brother!—If the Patriarch hears
Nothing today!—What does it matter though?—
Tell him today if you will.

LAY-BROTHER.

Not I. Farewell!

(*He goes out.*)

NATHAN.

Do not forget us, brother!—Would to God
That I could here under this open sky
Fall on my knees at once! How the knot which has
So long perplexed me loosens of itself!—
O God! how light my heart is that I now
Have nothing more to conceal! that I may walk
As freely now in man's sight as in Thine,
Thou who alone dost not need to judge man by
His deeds, which so seldom are his deeds, O God!

SCENE V.

NATHAN *and the* TEMPLAR, *who comes towards* NATHAN *from the*
side.

TEMPLAR.

Wait, Nathan, take me with you!

NATHAN.

Is it you, sir knight?
Where were you that you did not meet me at
The Sultan's?

TEMPLAR.

We missed each other. Do not take offence!

NATHAN.

Not I, but Saladin . . .

TEMPLAR.

You had gone when I came.

NATHAN.

You have seen him! 'Tis well then.

TEMPLAR.

He would see us both
Together.

NATHAN.

So much the better. I was on
My way to him. Come with me.

TEMPLAR.

Nathan, who
Has just left you?

NATHAN.

You do not know him?

TEMPLAR.

Was it not
The good lay-brother whom the Patriarch likes
To use as a runner?

NATHAN.

That may be! He is with
The Patriarch.

TEMPLAR.

'Tis no bad policy to send
Simplicity in advance of roguery.

NATHAN.

Yes, the simplicity of the dull,—not that
Of the pious.

TEMPLAR.

In such no Patriarch believes.

NATHAN.

For him I'll answer that he will not aid
His Patriarch in wrong-doing.

TEMPLAR.

So at least

He looks.—But has he told you nothing of me ?

NATHAN.

Of you ? He has not mentioned you by name.—
He can hardly know your name ?

TEMPLAR.

Hardly.

NATHAN.

He did

Indeed say something of a Templar. . .

TEMPLAR.

What ?

NATHAN.

What he could not have meant for you.

TEMPLAR.

Who knows ? Let us hear !

NATHAN.

He said that a Templar had accused me to
His Patriarch. . .

TEMPLAR.

Accused you ?—With his permission, that
Is false.—Hear me, Nathan !—I am not the man
To deny anything that I have done. What I did
I did ! But neither am I one to say
That all I have done was well done. Why should I be
Ashamed of a fault ? Have I not the firm resolve
To amend it ? And do I not know what a man may do
Who so resolves ?—Hear me Nathan !—I am
The lay-brother's Templar, who is said to have
Accused you.—You know what vexed me ! what made
my blood
Boil in my veins ! I came to throw myself
Body and soul into your arms. How cold

I found you—how lukewarm—for lukewarm is still
worse

Than cold; how bent on putting me off you were;
With what far-fetched questions you answered me;
I scarce

Can think of it even now if I would be calm.—
Hear me, Nathan!—While my mind was in
This ferment, Daya came creeping after me,
And thrust on me her secret, which at once
Seemed to solve the riddle of your conduct.

NATHAN.

How?

TEMPLAR.

I thought that what you had taken so by force
From the Christians, you were not willing to restore
To a Christian. And so I was minded, short and
good,

To put the knife to your throat.

NATHAN.

Short and good?

And good?—Where is the good?

TEMPLAR.

I was wrong, of course!—

You are not to blame.—Daya knows not what she
says—

Hates you perhaps—seeks only in this way
To bring misfortune on you.—That may be!—

I am a self-sufficient, wayward youth;
Lack judgment; do now too little, now too much.—
That may also be! Forgive me, Nathan.

NATHAN.

If

You speak so. . .

TEMPLAR.

In short, I went to the Patriarch!—
 But I did not name you. As I said before,
 That is false! I only told him of the case
 In general terms, to ask what he thought.—That too
 I might have left undone: for did I not know
 Already that the Patriarch was a knave?
 Could I not instead have called you to account?—
 Must the poor maiden run the risk through me
 Of losing such a father?—But what next?
 The villainy of the Patriarch, which was still
 The same as ever, brought me to myself
 By the shortest road.—For hear me, hear me out!—
 Say that he knows your name: well, what of that?—
 He can take her from you only if she belongs
 To you alone. He can drag her only from
 Your house into the cloister.—Give her to me!
 Give her to me, and let him come then. Ha!
 He will find it hard to take my wife from me!—
 Give her to me! quickly!—Whether she is
 Your daughter or not your daughter! whether she is
 A Christian or Jewess or neither! What do I care?
 I'll not ask you either now or ever again
 In my life. Be that as it may!

NATHAN.

You think, perhaps,
 That I must hide the truth?

TEMPLAR.

Be that as it may!

NATHAN.

I have never yet denied, either to you
 Or to any one whom it becomes to know,
 That Recha is a Christian, and not my own
 But my foster-daughter.—Why have I not told her?—
 As to that, I need answer only to herself.

TEMPLAR.

Even to her you need not.—Grant her this,
Never to look on you in another light!
Spare her the disclosure!—You alone as yet
Have power to dispose of her. Then give her to me!
Give her to me, Nathan! 'Tis I alone
Who can save her for you a second time—and will!

NATHAN.

Yes—could! but no longer can. 'Tis too late for that.

TEMPLAR.

How too late?

NATHAN.

Thanks to the Patriarch. . .

TEMPLAR.

To the Patriarch? thanks? thanks to him? for what?
Has he sought to deserve our thanks? for what? for
what?

NATHAN.

That we now know who her kindred are; now know
Into whose hands she may safely be given up.

TEMPLAR.

Let him thank him for that—who has more to thank
him for!

NATHAN.

From these hands you must now receive her, not
from mine.

TEMPLAR.

Poor Recha! How everything is against you! What
To other orphans would be happiness
Is your misfortune!—Nathan!—These kindred of hers,
Where are they? Who are they?

NATHAN,

A brother has been found,
To whom you must sue for her.

TEMPLAR.

A brother? What
Is this brother? A soldier? A priest? Let me
hear what I have
To look for.

NATHAN.

He is neither, I believe,—or both.
I can hardly tell yet.

TEMPLAR,

And besides?

NATHAN.

A man
With whom she will be well cared for.

TEMPLAR.

Yet he is
A Christian!—I scarce know what to think of you!—
Do not take it unkindly, Nathan!—Will she not have
To play the Christian among Christians till
She becomes at last what she has played so long?
Will not the good seed you have sown be choked
And stifled by the tares?—And that troubles you
So little? In spite of it you can say to me—you?—
That Recha will be well cared for with him?

NATHAN.

So
I think! so I hope!—If there's anything she lacks
With him, will she not still have you and me?

TEMPLAR.

O what can she lack? Will not the brother see
That the sister is well provided for with food
And clothing, with sweetmeats and with jewels? What
Can a sister need more? Truly, she will need
A husband also!—Well, that too, that too
The brother will provide for her in good time.

He will find her one! the more Christian the better!—O
 What an angel, Nathan, you have made of her
 To let others spoil for you!

NATHAN.

No fear of that!

We shall never have cause to love her less than now.

TEMPLAR.

Do not say that! Do not say it of my love!
 Mine will be robbed of nothing, let it be
 Ever so little! Not even of a name!—
 But hold!—Has she any knowledge yet of what
 Is passing?

NATHAN.

She may have; though I know not whence.

TEMPLAR.

No matter; she shall, she must in either case
 Learn from me first what fate now threatens her.
 My wish never to speak to her again,
 Never to see her till I could call her mine,
 Gives way.—I hasten. . .

NATHAN.

Stay! whither?

TEMPLAR.

To her!

To see for myself whether this maiden-soul
 Will be man enough to form the sole resolve
 That is worthy of her!

NATHAN.

What resolve?

TEMPLAR.

To think

No more of you or her brother—and to follow me—
 Even if she must become a Moslem's wife
 By doing so.

NATHAN.

Stay! You'll not find her there;
She is with Sittah, the Sultan's sister.

TEMPLAR.

Since when?

NATHAN.

If you'd meet the brother there too, come with me.

TEMPLAR.

The brother? whose? Sittah's or Recha's?

NATHAN.

Both,

Perhaps. But come! I beg you, come with me!

(He leads the TEMPLAR away.)

SCENE VI.

In SITTAH'S harem.

SITTAH *and* RECHA *conversing together.*

SITTAH.

Sweet maiden, how I delight in you! But why
So anxious? so unhappy? so afraid?
Be cheerful! be more talkative! more at ease!

RECHA.

Princess, . . .

SITTAH.

Not Princess! Call me Sittah,—your friend,—
Your sister. Call me mother!—I might almost be
Your mother.—So young! so wise! so pious too!
What do you not know! How much you must have
read!

RECHA.

I read?—Sittah, you are laughing at
Your foolish little sister. I can scarce read.

SITTAH.

Can scarce, deceiver?

RECHA.

Only my father's hand.—
I thought you spoke of books.

SITTAH.

Yes, yes! of books.

RECHA.

Well, books 'twould be hard for me to read.

SITTAH.

In earnest? You are

RECHA.

In earnest. My father does not care
For that cold book-learning which but stamps itself
In lifeless characters upon the brain.

SITTAH.

What are you saying?—Yet he is not far wrong!
And all that you know . . .

RECHA.

I learnt from his lips alone,
And of most of it could even tell you how
And where and why he spoke of it.

SITTAH.

So all
Is made more clear. So the whole soul learns at once.

RECHA.

Sittah also, I am sure, has read
Little or nothing.

SITTAH.

I do not pride myself
On the contrary.—But why? Speak boldly! Why?

RECHA.

She is sincere; is unaffected; is
Like no one but herself.

SITTAH.

And what of that?

RECHA.

Books seldom leave us so, my father says.

SITTAH.

O what a man your father is!

RECHA.

Is he not?

SITTAH.

How near he always comes to the mark!

RECHA.

Does he not?—

And this father—

SITTAH.

What is it, love?

RECHA.

This father—

SITTAH.

You weep?

RECHA.

And this father—Ah, I must speak or my heart will
break!

(Throws herself weeping at Sittah's feet.)

SITTAH.

Child, what has happened? Recha?

RECHA.

This father I am—

To lose!

SITTAH.

Lose him? you? how so?—Be calm!—
That can never be!—Rise!

RECHA.

'Twas not in vain
You offered to be my friend, my sister!

SITTAH.

I am!

I am indeed!—But rise! else I must call
For help.

RECHA (*controlling herself and rising*).

Forgive me! ah, forgive me!—My grief
Made me forget for a moment who you are.
With Sittah avails no weeping, no despair.
Reason, cold calm reason, that alone
Can move her. Whose cause that pleads with her, he
wins!

SITTAH.

What then?

RECHA.

No, my friend, my sister, no!
Do not suffer another father to be forced
Upon me.

SITTAH.

Another father? forced on you?
Who can do it? who can wish to do it, love?

RECHA.

Who? My kind, my cruel Daya, she
Can wish it—can do it.—Yes, you do not know
This kind, this cruel Daya! God forgive—
Reward her! She has done me so much good—
So much evil!

SITTAH.

Evil to you?—Then she can have
But little that is good in her.

RECHA.

Yes, much!

Much that is good!

SITTAH.

Who is she?

RECHA.

A Christian, who
 In my childhood cared for me! so cared for me!—
 You cannot think! Who so little let me miss
 A mother!— May God repay her for that!—And yet
 She has so frightened, so tortured me!

SITTAH.

About what?

Why? and how?

RECHA.

Ah, the poor woman is,
 As I said, a Christian;—must torture out of love.—
 Is one of those enthusiasts who believe
 That they have found the only way to God! . . .

SITTAH.

Now I understand!

RECHA.

And feel compelled
 To bring into that way all those who fail
 To find it.—How can they do otherwise?
 For if that way is the only one, how then
 Can they look on unmoved and see their friends
 Enter upon some other,—which must lead
 To ruin, to eternal ruin? So
 Would it be possible at once to love
 And hate the self-same person.—Nor is that
 What has forced me to complain of her. Her sighs,
 Her warnings, her prayers, her threats I could have
 borne,
 Would gladly have borne! for they always led to
 thoughts
 That were good and useful. And which of us, after
 all,
 Is not flattered to be loved so dearly by
 Another, no matter whom, that he cannot bear
 To think of losing us for ever?

SITTAH.

True!

Very true!

RECHA.

But this—this goes too far! To this
There is nothing I can oppose; no patience, no
Reflection; nothing!

SITTAH.

Oppose to what? to whom?

RECHA.

To what she has just disclosed to me, as she says.

SITTAH.

Disclosed to you? just disclosed?

RECHA.

Only just now!

As we were on our way here, we drew near
A ruined Christian temple. All at once
She stood still, as if struggling with herself,
And with tearful eyes looked now towards heaven,
now
Towards me. "Come," she said to me at last,
"Let us go through this temple; 'tis the shortest
path."

She went; I followed her, and gazed with awe
At the tottering walls around me, till again
She stood still, and we found ourselves before
The sunken steps of a crumbling altar. Think
How I felt, when weeping bitterly she fell
At my feet, wringing her hands . . .

SITTAH.

Kind-hearted child!

RECHA.

And by the God who on that very spot
 Had listened to so many prayers, performed
 So many miracles, she entreated me,
 With looks of true and heartfelt sympathy
 Entreated me to have pity on myself!
 Or at least to forgive her if she must disclose
 The claims of her church upon me.

SITTAH.

(’Tis as I thought!—

Unhappy woman!)

RECHA.

I was of Christian blood;
 Was baptized; was not Nathan’s daughter; he was
 not
 My father!—Sittah! Sittah! see me again
 At your feet . . .

SITTAH.

Recha!—My brother is coming! rise!

 SCENE VII.

SALADIN *and the preceding.*

SALADIN.

What is this, Sittah?

SITTAH.

She is beside herself!

SALADIN.

Who is she?

SITTAH.

You know . . .

SALADIN.

Our Nathan’s daughter?

SITTAH.

Child,

Come to yourself!—The Sultan . . .

RECHA.

I will not rise!—
Will not look on the Sultan's face!—will not behold
The reflection of eternal justice, of
Eternal goodness in his eyes, upon
His brow . . .

SALADIN.

Rise!

RECHA.

Till he has promised me . . .

SALADIN.

Come! I promise you . . . no matter what!

RECHA.

Neither more nor less than to leave my father to me
And me to him!—I know not yet who else
Would be my father. Nor do I wish to know.
Does blood alone make a father? blood alone?

SALADIN (*raising her up*).

I see how it is!—Who was so cruel as
To speak to you—to you of such a thing?—
But is it certain? is it fully proved?

RECHA.

It must be! For Daya had it from my nurse.

SALADIN.

Your nurse!

RECHA.

Who in dying confided it to her.

SALADIN.

Dying?—Raving too, perhaps!—And what
If it be so?—Blood indeed, blood alone
Is far from making a father! hardly makes
The father of a beast! at most but gives
The first right to earn that name! Do not be
afraid!—

Listen to me! As soon as two fathers strive
Which shall have you,—leave them both and take a
third!—

Take me for your father!

SITTAH.

O yes! do that!

SALADIN.

I'll be a kind father, a very kind father!—Stay!
I've thought of something better.—What use have
you

For fathers? How if they should die? Look round
Betimes for some one who will vie with you
In living! You know of no one? . . .

SITTAH.

Do not make her blush!

SALADIN.

That is just what I most wish to do. A blush
Makes an ugly face so fair: will it not make
A beautiful face even more beautiful?
I have asked your father Nathan to meet me here,
And some one else. Can you guess who it is?—
You will
Allow me, Sittah?

SITTAH.

Brother!

SALADIN.

That I may see,
Sweet maiden, how you will blush before him.

RECHA.

Blush?

Before whom?

SALADIN.

Little dissembler! Grow pale, then!—
As you will and can!

(*A female slave enters and approaches SITTAH.*)

They are not already there?

SITTAH.

Let them enter!—'Tis they, brother!

LAST SCENE.

NATHAN and the *TEMPLAR* with the preceding.

SALADIN.

My dear kind friends!—

To you, Nathan, to you I must say first

You may send for your gold as soon now as you
like! . . .

NATHAN.

Sultan! . . .

SALADIN.

'Tis my turn to serve you now . . .

NATHAN.

Sultan! . . .

SALADIN.

The caravan has come at last.

I am richer than I have been for a long, long while.—
Say what you need to do something great! You too,
You merchants, can never have more gold than you
want!

NATHAN.

Why speak first of this trifle?—I see there
An eye in tears that I long to wipe away.

(*Goes up to RECHA.*)

You have wept? What ails you? You are my
daughter still?

RECHA.

My father!

NATHAN.

We understand each other. Enough!—
Be content! be calm! If only your heart is still
Your own! If only it fears no other loss!
Your father you have not lost!

RECHA.

None, none beside!

TEMPLAR.

None beside?—I was mistaken then.
 What we do not fear to lose we have never yet
 Believed that we possessed, have never yet
 Wished to possess.—Nathan, this changes all!—
 We came here, Saladin, at your command.
 But I had misled you: trouble yourself no more!

SALADIN.

So rash again, young man?—Is everything
 To come to you unsought? Is your every wish
 To be divined beforehand?

TEMPLAR.

You hear for yourself,
 Sultan! see for yourself!

SALADIN.

'Tis sad indeed
 That you were not more sure!

TEMPLAR.

I am sure now.

SALADIN.

He who presumes on a kindness takes it back.
 What you rescued is not on that account your own;
 Else would the robber who through love of gain
 His braved the flames be a hero as well as you!
(Going up to RECHA to lead her towards the TEMPLAR.)
 Come, dear maiden, come! Do not be so hard
 Upon him! For if he were other than he is,
 Less hasty, less proud, he might not have saved your
 life.

You must set the one against the other.—Come!
 Put him to shame! do what 'twas for him to do!
 Confess your love! offer yourself to him!
 And if he scorns you, if he ever should
 Forget how much more in this step you have done
 for him

Than he for you. . . What has he done for you?
 Only let himself be a little smoked!—why then
 There is nothing of my Assad in him! then
 'Tis his mask he bears, and not his heart! Come,
 love, . . .

SITTAH.

Go to him! go, love, go! 'Tis little enough
 For your gratitude; 'tis nothing after all.

NATHAN.

Hold, Saladin! hold, Sittah!

SALADIN.

You too?

NATHAN.

There's another who must speak here. . .

SALADIN.

Who denies that?

Such a foster-father, Nathan, as you have been,
 Has a voice in the matter without doubt! The first,
 If you choose.—You see, I know everything.

NATHAN.

Not yet!—

I am not speaking of myself, but of
 Another, whom I must beg you to hear first.

SALADIN.

Who is that?

NATHAN.

Her brother!

SALADIN.

Recha's brother?

NATHAN.

Yes!

RECHA.

My brother? I have a brother?

TEMPLAR (*starting from his moody silence.*)

Where is he? where
Is this brother? Not here yet? I was to meet him
here.

NATHAN.

Have patience!

TEMPLAR (*with the utmost bitterness.*)

He has found her a father:—will he find
No brother for her?

SALADIN.

This passes all the rest!
Christian! a thought so base would not have crossed
My Assad's lips.—Go on as you have begun!

NATHAN.

Forgive him!—I forgive him!—In his place,
At his age, who can say what we too might have
thought?

(*Going up to the TEMPLAR with a friendly air.*)

Suspicion follows on mistrust, sir knight!—
If you had told me your real name at once. . .

TEMPLAR.

How?

NATHAN.

You are no Stauffen!

TEMPLAR.

Who am I then?

NATHAN.

Your name is not Curd von Stauffen!

TEMPLAR.

What is it then?

NATHAN.

Leo von Filnek.

TEMPLAR.

How?

NATHAN.

You start?

TEMPLAR.

With right!

Who says so?

NATHAN.

I, who have more to tell you yet.
But I do not accuse you of falsehood.

TEMPLAR.

You do not?

NATHAN.

That name may be also yours.

TEMPLAR.

So I should think!

('Twas God bade him say that!)

NATHAN.

For your mother--she
Was a Stauffen. Her brother, your uncle, who
brought you up,
With whom your parents left you in Europe when
They returned to this land to seek a milder clime,—
His name was Curd von Stauffen; he may perhaps
Have adopted you as his son.—Has it been long
Since you came here with him? Is he still alive?

TEMPLAR.

What shall I say?—Nathan!--You are right!
He is dead. As for me, I came here only with
The last reinforcement of our Order.—But what
Of Recha's brother? what has that to do
With him?

NATHAN.

Your father. . .

TEMPLAR.

You knew him ?

NATHAN.

He was my friend.

TEMPLAR.

Your friend, Nathan ?

NATHAN.

He bore the name of Wolf
Von Filnek; but was no German. . .

TEMPLAR.

You know that too ?

NATHAN.

He had only married a German; had only gone
For a short time with her to her native land. . .

TEMPLAR.

No more, I beg you!—But Recha's brother ? . . .

NATHAN.

You

Are her brother !

TEMPLAR.

I ?

RECHA.

He my brother ?

SITTAH.

They

Brother and sister !

SALADIN.

Brother and sister !

RECHA (*going towards him.*)

Ah,

My brother!

TEMPLAR (*drawing back.*)

Your brother!

RECHA (*turning to Nathan.*)

It cannot, cannot be!

His heart knows nothing of it!—O God! we are
Deceivers!

SALADIN (*to the TEMPLAR.*)

You think so? can think so? You are yourself
A deceiver! Everything is false in you,
Face and voice and walk! Nothing is yours!
Not to acknowledge such a sister! Go!

TEMPLAR (*approaching him with deference.*)

Do not mistake my silence, Sultan! nor
In a moment such as your Assad never could
Have seen, judge wrongly of him as well as of me!

(*Going up quickly to NATHAN.*)

You take from me, Nathan, and you give me! both
With full hands!—No! you give more than you take!
Infinitely more!

(*Embracing RECHA.*)

My sister! ah,

My sister!

NATHAN.

Blanda von Filnek.

TEMPLAR.

Not Recha? not

Your Recha?—O God! you disown her! you give
her back

Her Christian name! you disown her on my account!—
Why must she suffer for it, Nathan? she?

NATHAN.

Suffer for what?—O my children!—for is not
My daughter's brother my child too—if he will be?
(*While they embrace each other, SALADIN speaks to his
sister.*)

SALADIN.

What say you, sister?

SITTAH.

I am moved . . .

SALADIN.

And I,

I almost shrink from the thought of what will be
More moving still! Prepare for it as you can.

(*Turning to NATHAN.*)

Nathan, a word with you!

(*As NATHAN approaches him, SITTAH goes up to the
brother and sister to express her sympathy, and
NATHAN and SALADIN speak in a low tone.*)

Did you not say

That their father was no German? was not born
A German? What was he then? Where was he
born?

NATHAN.

He himself would never tell me what he was.
From him I heard nothing.

SALADIN.

But he was no Frank?

No European?

NATHAN.

Oh, he owned as much!—
He liked best to speak Persian . . .

SALADIN.

Persian? What
Do I wish for more? 'Tis he! was he!

NATHAN.

Was who?

SALADIN.

My brother! my Assad! I am sure of it!
Quite sure!

NATHAN.

Of what you have found out for yourself
Take then the assurance in this book!

(Giving him the breviary.)

SALADIN *(opening it eagerly)*.

Ah, his hand! I recognise that too!

NATHAN.

Still they know nothing! Still it rests with you
Alone to say what they shall hear!

SALADIN *(turning over the leaves)*.

I am not

To acknowledge my brother's children?—my children? Not

To acknowledge them? I? Leave them perhaps
to you?

(Aloud again.)

'Tis they! 'tis they, Sittah, 'tis they! They both
Are my brother's . . . your brother's children!

(He rushes up to embrace them.)

SITTAH *(following him)*.

What do I hear?

Yet could it fail to be?—

SALADIN *(To the TEMPLAR)*.

Now, headstrong youth,
You must, must love me!

(to RECHA.)

Now I am in truth
What I offered to be, whether you will or not!

SITTAH.

I too!

SALADIN (*turning again to the* TEMPLAR).
My son! my Assad! my Assad's son!

TEMPLAR.

I of your kindred!—So those dreams with which
In childhood I was cradled were indeed
More, yes, more than dreams!

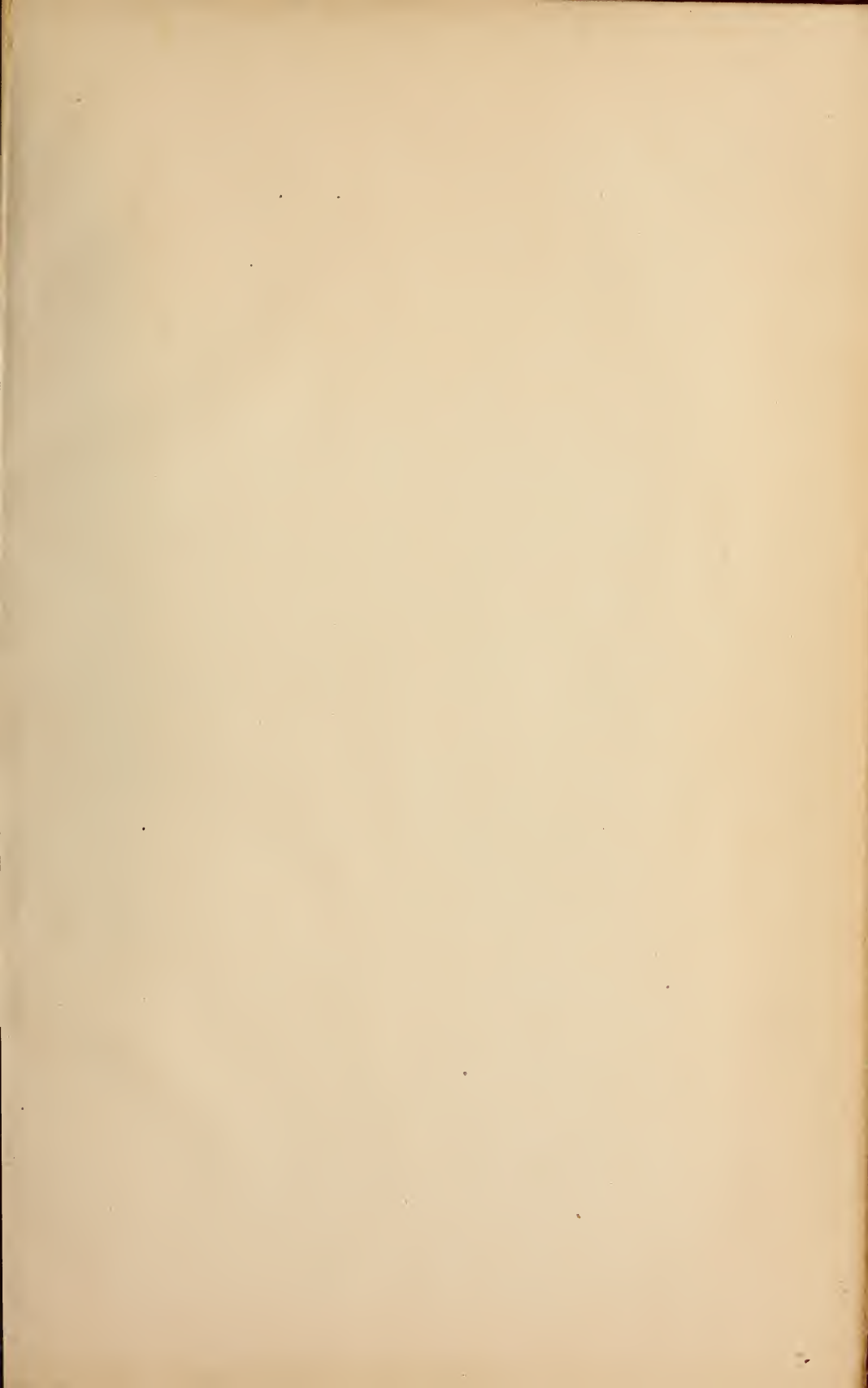
(*He falls at SALADIN's feet.*)

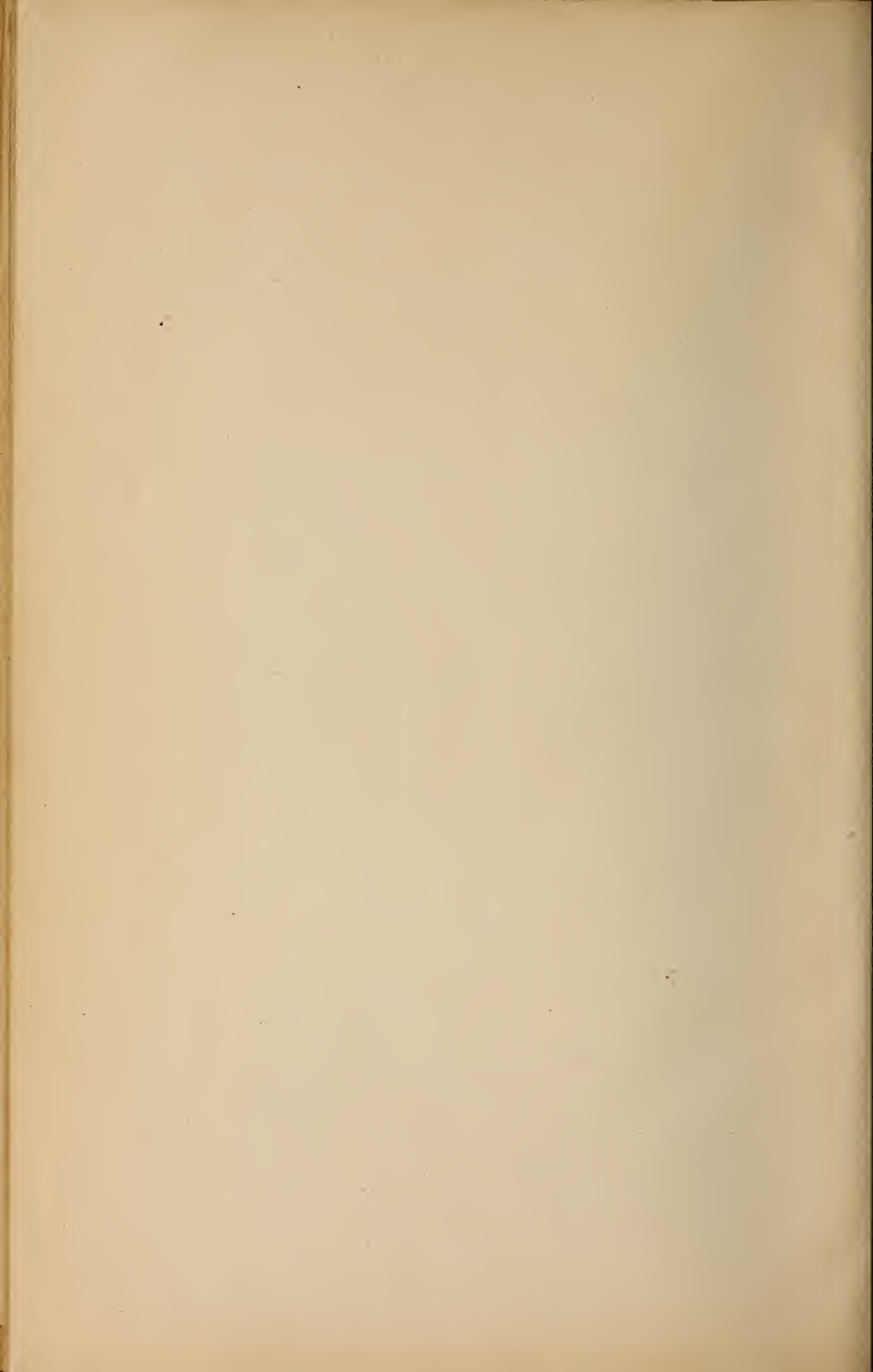
SALADIN (*raising him up*).

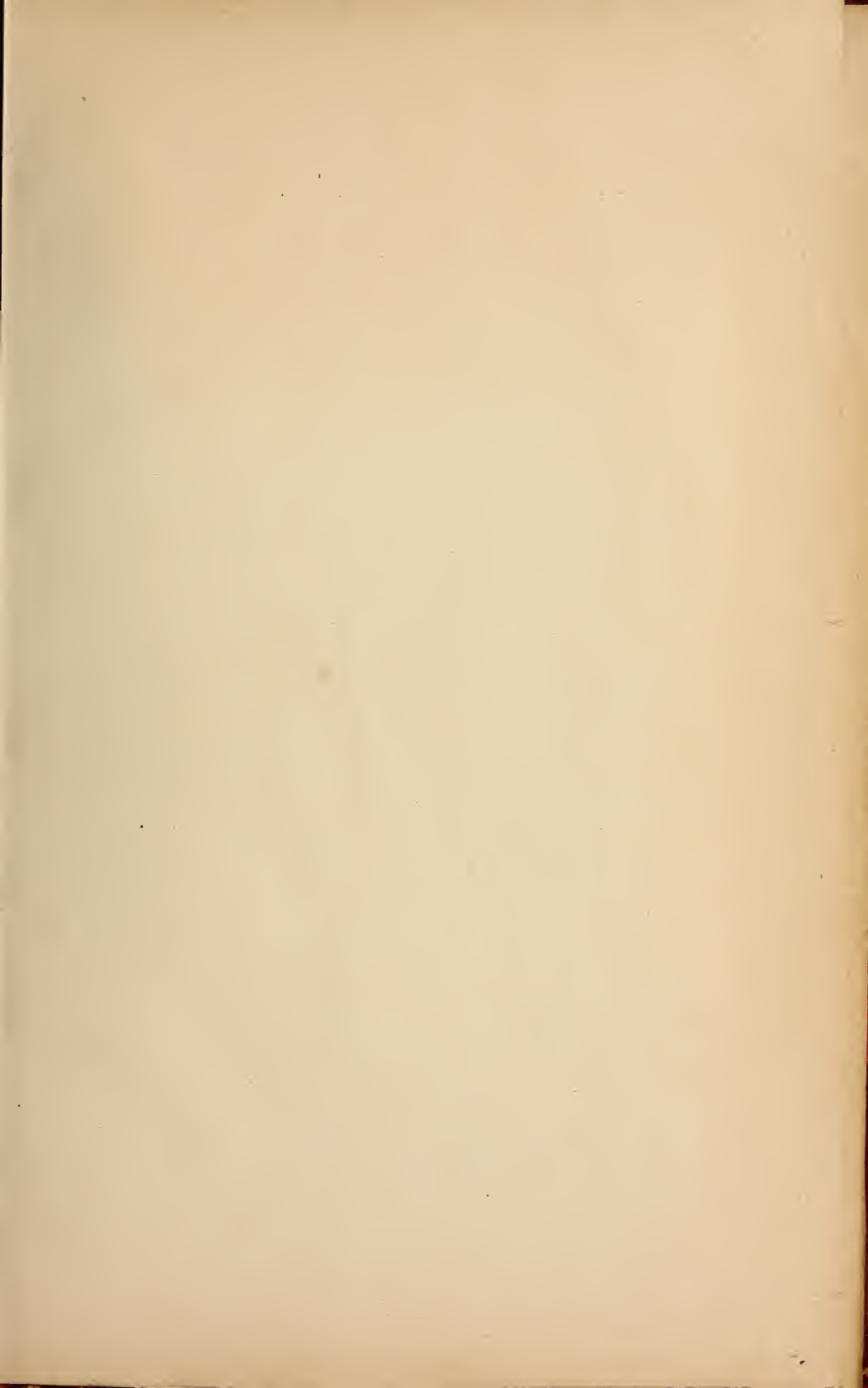
The scapegrace! See,
He knew something of this, and yet he would
Have let me murder him! Only wait, though, wait!

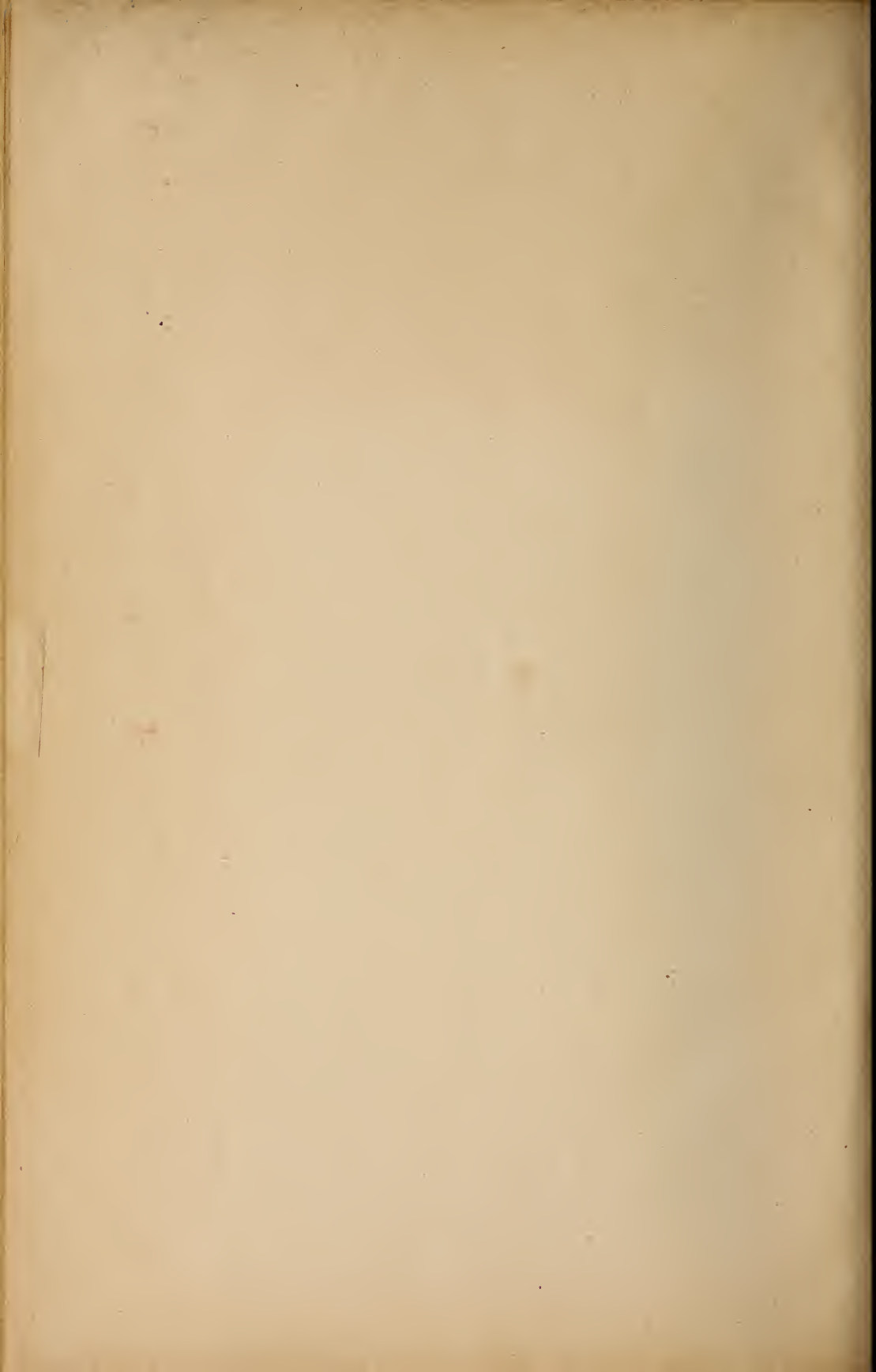
(*As they all again silently embrace the curtain falls.*)

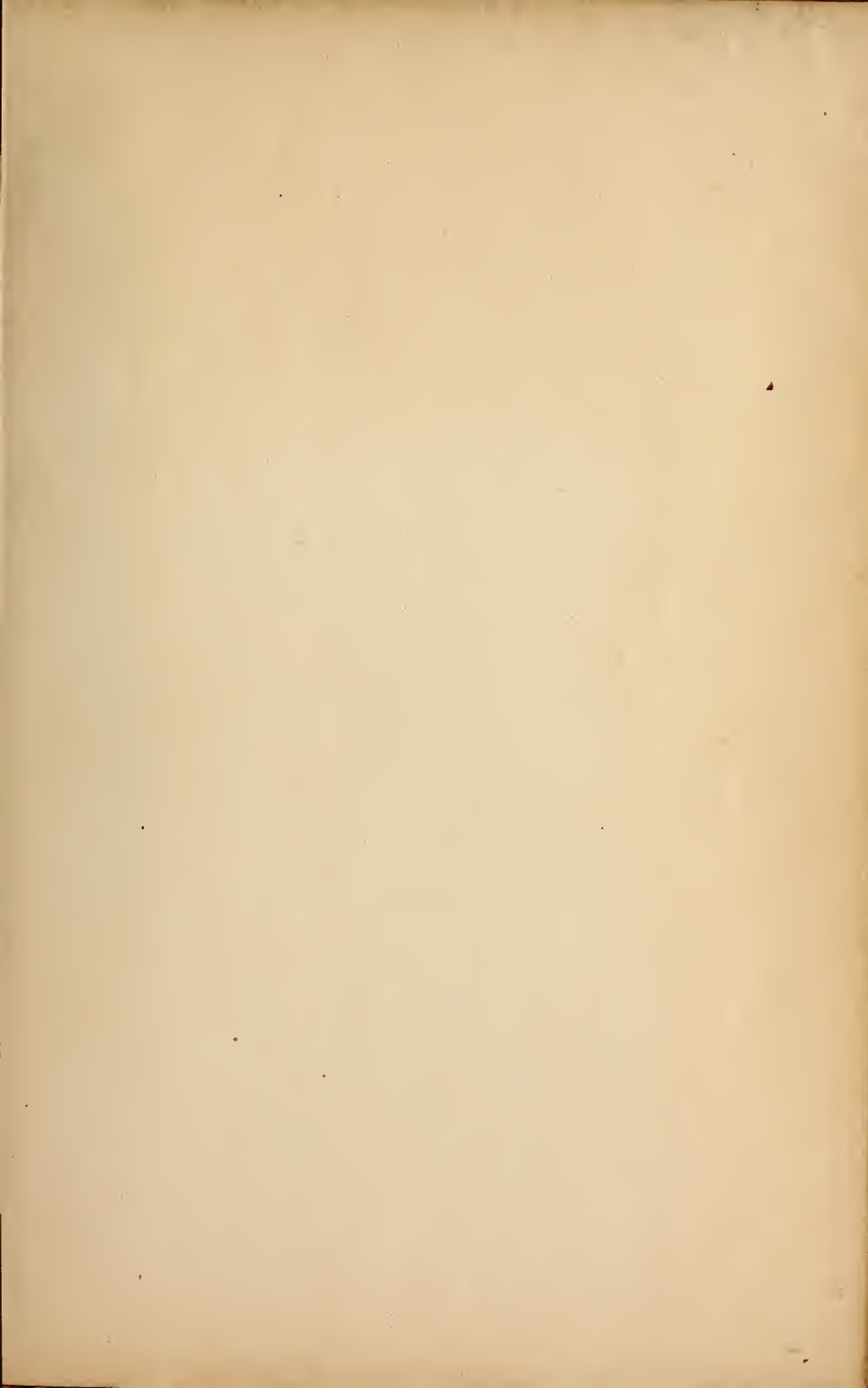
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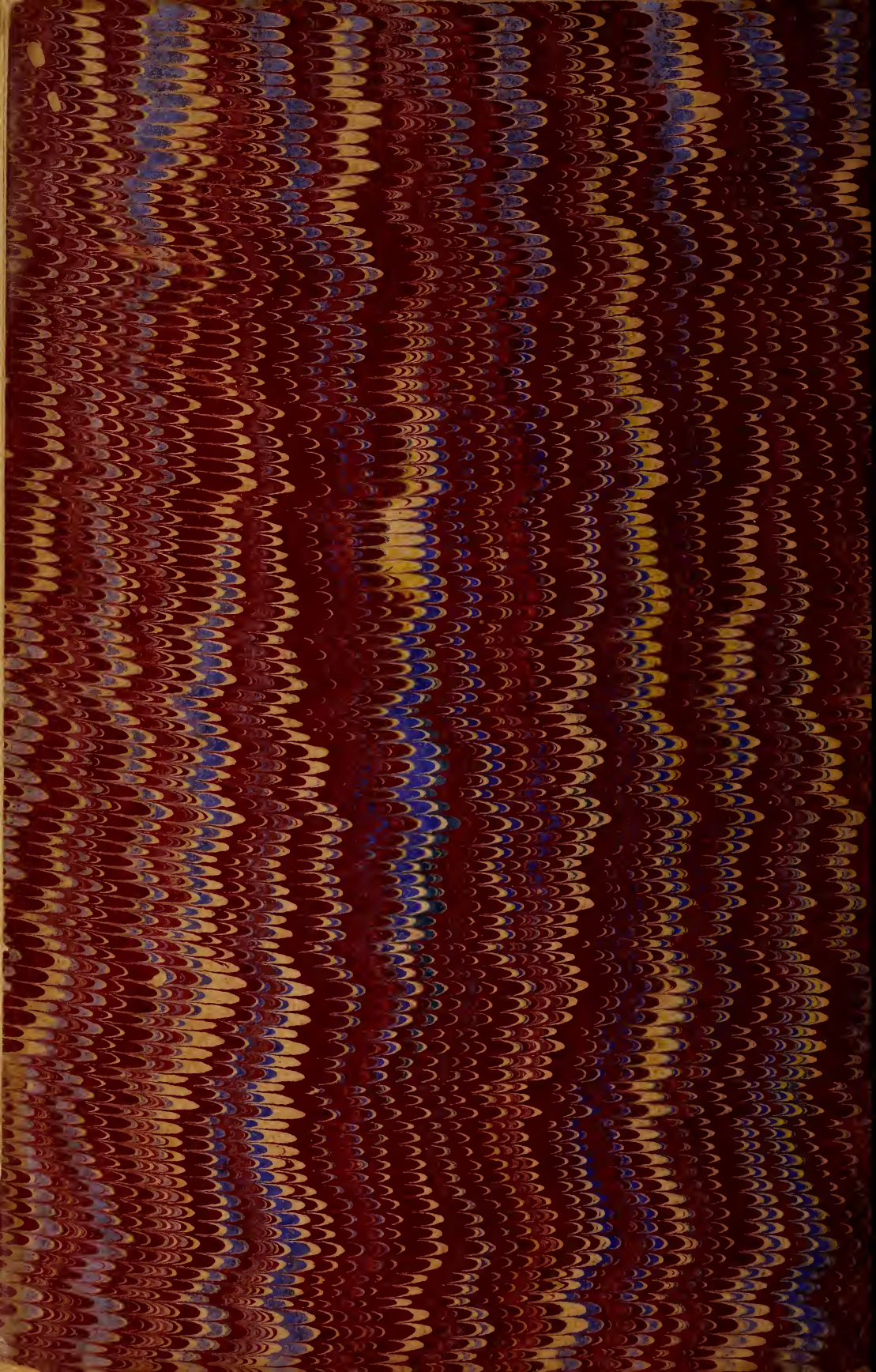


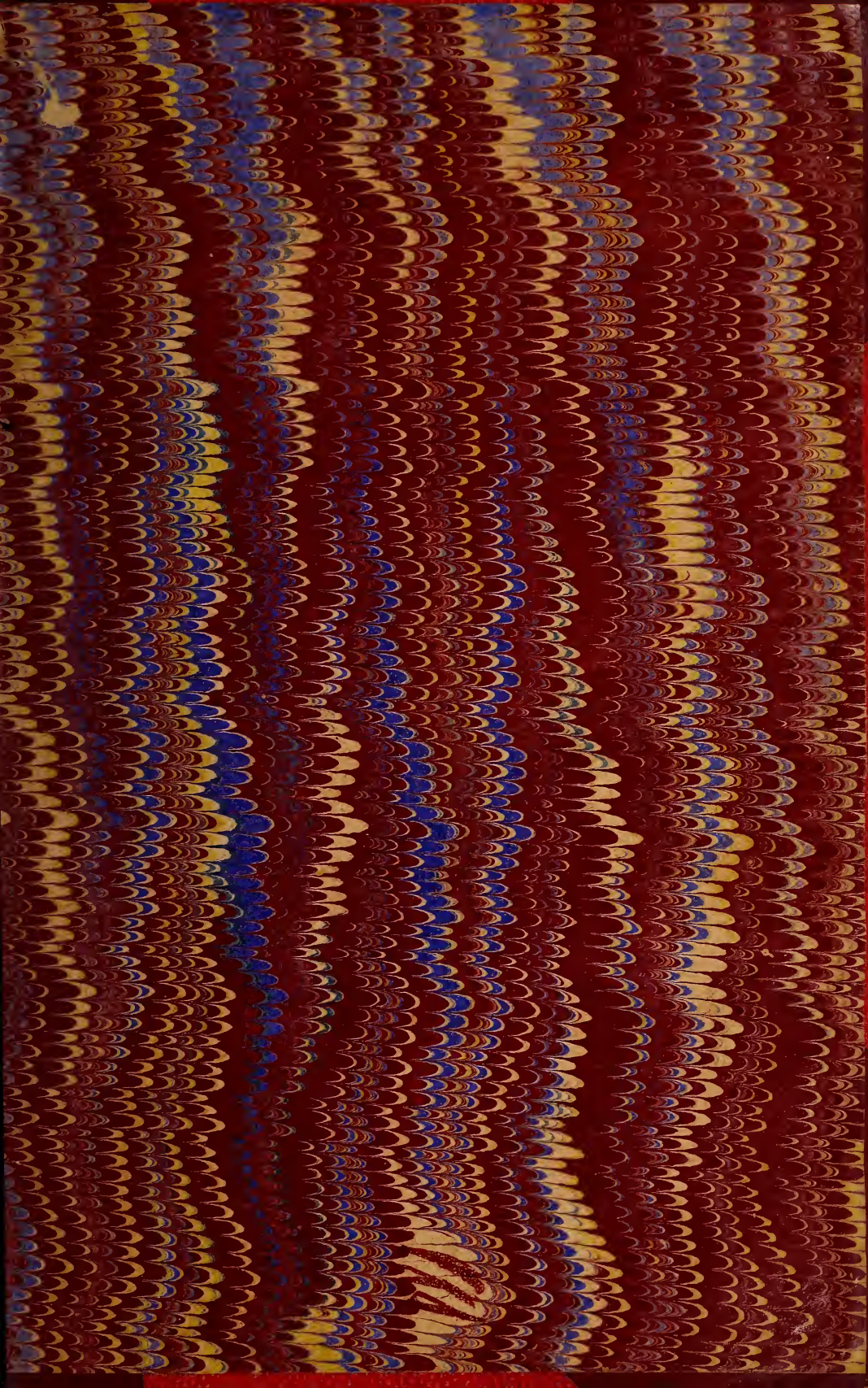




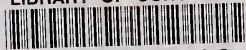








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