GHETTO
COMEDIES

ISRAEL
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BY

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New York
THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
LONDON: WILLIAM HEINEMANN
1907

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THE JEWISH TRINITY
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I

With the Christian Mayoress of Middleton to take in to dinner at Sir Asher Aaronsberg's, Leopold Barstein as a Jewish native of that thriving British centre, should have felt proud and happy. But Barstein was young and a sculptor, fresh from the Paris schools and Salon triumphs. He had long parted company with Jews and Judaism, and to his ardent irreverence even the Christian glories of Middleton seemed unspeakably parochial. In Paris he had danced at night on the Boule Miche out of sheer joy of life, and joined in choruses over midnight bocks; and London itself now seemed drab and joyless, though many a gay circle welcomed the wit and high spirits and even the physical graces of this fortunate young man who seemed to shed a blonde radiance all around him. The factories of Middleton, which had manufactured Sir Asher Aaronsberg, ex-M.P., and nearly all his wealthy guests, were to his artistic eye an outrage upon a beautiful planet, and he was still in that crude phase of juvenile revolt in which one speaks one's thoughts of the mess humanity has made of its world. But, unfortunately,
the Mayoress of Middleton was deafish, so that he
could not even shock her with his epigrams. It was
extremely disconcerting to have his bland blasphemies
met with an equally bland smile. On his other hand
sat Mrs. Samuels, the buxom and highly charitable
relict of 'The People's Clothier,' whose ugly pictorial
posters had overshadowed Barstein's youth. Little
wonder that the artist's glance frequently wandered
across the great shining table towards a girl who, if
they had not been so pluckily intent on honouring his
fame, might have now been replacing the Mayoress at
his side. True, the girl was merely a Jewess, and he
disliked the breed. But Mabel Aaronsberg was unex-
pected. She had a statuesque purity of outline and com-
plexion; seemed, indeed, worthy of being a creation of
his own. How the tedious old manufacturer could have
produced this marmoreal prodigy provided a problem
for the sculptor, as he almost silently ate his way through
the long and exquisite menu.

Not that Sir Asher himself was unpicturesque. In-
deed, he was the very picture of the bluff and burly
Briton, white-bearded like Father Christmas. But he
did not seem to lead to yonder vision of poetry and
purity. Lady Aaronsberg, who might have supplied
the missing link, was dead—before even arriving at
ladyship, alas!—and when she was alive Barstein had
not enjoyed the privilege of moving in these high munici-
pal circles. This he owed entirely to his foreign fame,
well see a Saxon pirate or a Norman jongleur in a modern Londoner.'

As if to confirm Barstein’s vision of the bluff and burly Briton, Sir Asher was soon heard over the clatter of conversation protesting vehemently against the views of Tom Fuller, the degenerate son of a Tory squire.

‘Give Ireland Home Rule?’ he was crying passionately. ‘Oh, my dear Mr. Fuller, it would be the beginning of the end of our Empire!’

‘But the Irish have as much right to govern themselves as we have!’ the young Englishman maintained.

‘They would not so much govern themselves as misgovern the Protestant minority,’ cried Sir Asher, becoming almost epigrammatic in his excitement. ‘Home Rule simply means the triumph of Roman Catholicism.’

It occurred to the cynical Barstein that even the defeat of Roman Catholicism meant no victory for Judaism, but he stayed his tongue with a salted almond. Let the Briton make the running. This the young gentleman proceeded to do at a great pace.

‘Then how about Home Rule for India? There’s no Catholic majority there!’

‘Give up India!’ Sir Asher opened horrified eyes. This heresy was new to him. ‘Give up the brightest jewel in the British crown! And let the Russian bear come and swallow it up! No, no! A thousand times no!’ Sir Asher even gestured with his fork in his patriotic fervour, forgetting he was not on the platform.

‘So I imagine the patriarchs to have talked!’ said the Mayoress, admiringly observing his animation. Whereat the sculptor laughed once more. He was amused, too, at the completeness with which the lion of Judah had ended himself with the skin of the British lion. To a cosmopolitan artist this bourgeois patriotism was peculiarly irritating. But soon his eyes wandered again towards Miss Aaronsberg, and he forgot trivialities.

II

The end of the meal was punctuated, not by the rising of the ladies, but by the host’s assumption of a black cap, which popped up from his coat-tail pocket. With his head thus orientally equipped for prayer, Sir Asher suddenly changed into a Rembrandtesque figure, his white beard hiding the society shirtfront; and as he began intoning the grace in Hebrew, the startled Barstein felt that the Mayoress had at least a superficial justification. There came to him a touch of new and artistic interest in this prosy, provincial ex-M.P., who, environed by powdered footmen, sat at the end of his glittering dinner-table uttering the language of the ancient prophets; and he respected at least the sturdiness with which Miss Aaronsberg’s father wore his faith, like a phylactery, on his forehead. It said much for his character that these fellow-citizens of his had once
elected him as their Member, despite his unpopular creed and race, and were now willing to sit at his table under this tedious benediction. Sir Asher did not even let them off with the shorter form of grace invented by a wise Rabbi for these difficult occasions, yet so far as was visible it was only the Jewish guests — comically distinguished by serviettes shamefacedly dabbed on their heads — who fidgeted under the pious torrent. These were no doubt fearful of boring the Christians whose precious society the Jew enjoyed on a parlous tenure. In the host’s son Julius a superadded intellectual impatience was traceable. He had brought back from Oxford a contempt for his father’s creed which was patent to every Jew save Sir Asher. Barstein, observing all this uneasiness, became curiously angry with his fellow-Jews, despite that he had scrupulously forborne to cover his own head with his serviette; a racial pride he had not known latent in him surged up through all his cosmopolitanism, and he maliciously trusted that the brave Sir Asher would pray his longest. He himself had been a tolerable Hebraist in his forcedly pious boyhood, and though he had neither prayed nor heard any Hebrew prayers for many a year, his new artistic interest led him to listen to the grace, and to disentangle the meaning from the obscuring layers of verbal association and from the peculiar chant enlivened by occasional snatches of melody with which it was intoned.

How he had hated this grace as a boy — this pious task-work that almost spoilt the anticipation of meals! But to-night, after so long an interval, he could look at it without prejudice, and with artistic aloofness render to himself a true impression of its spiritual value.

'We thank Thee, O Lord our God, because Thou didst give us as an heritage unto our fathers a desirable, good, and ample land, and because Thou didst bring us forth, O Lord our God, from the land of Egypt, and didst deliver us from the house of bondage —'

Barstein heard no more for the moment; the paradox of this retrospective gratitude was too absorbing. What! Sir Asher was thankful because over three thousand years ago his ancestors had obtained — not without hard fighting for it — a land which had already been lost again for eighteen centuries. What a marvellous long memory for a race to have!

Delivered from the house of bondage, forsooth! Sir Asher himself — and here a musing smile crossed the artist’s lips — had never even known a house of bondage, unless, indeed, the House of Commons (from which he had been delivered by the Radical reaction) might be so regarded, and his own house was, as he was fond of saying, Liberty Hall. But that the Russian Jew should still rejoice in the redemption from Egypt! O miracle of pious patience! O sublime that grazed the ridiculous!

But Sir Asher was still praying on:

'Have mercy, O Lord our God, upon Israel Thy people,
upon Jerusalem Thy city, upon Zion the abiding place of Thy glory, upon the kingdom of the house of David, Thine anointed. . . .

Barstein lost himself in a fresh revery. Here was indeed the Palestinian patriarch. Not with the corporation of Middleton, nor the lobbies of Westminster, not with his colossal business, not even with the glories of the British Empire, was Sir Asher's true heart. He had but caught phrases from the environment. To his deepest self he was not even a Briton. 'Have mercy, O Lord, upon Israel Thy people.' Despite all his outward pomp and prosperity, he felt himself one of that dispersed and maltreated band of brothers who had for eighteen centuries resisted alike the storm of persecution and the sunshine of tolerance, and whose one consolation in the long exile was the dream of Zion. The artist in Barstein began to thrill. What more fascinating than to catch sight of the dreamer beneath the manufacturer, the Hebrew visionary behind the English M.P.!

This palatial dwelling-place with its liveried lackeys was, then, no fort of Philistinism in which an artist must needs asphyxiate, but a very citadel of the spirit. A new respect for his host began to steal upon him. Involuntarily he sought the face of the daughter; the secret of her beauty was, after all, not so mysterious. Old Asher had a soul, and 'the soul is form and doth the body make.'

Unconscious of the effect he was producing on the sensitive artist, the Rembrandtesque figure prayed on: 'And rebuild Jerusalem, the holy city, speedily and in our days. . . .'

It was the climax of the romance that had so strangely stolen over the British dinner-table. Rebuild Jerusalem to-day! Did Jews really conceive it as a contemporary possibility? Barstein went hot and cold. The idea was absolutely novel to him; evidently as a boy he had not understood his own prayers or his own people. All his imagination was inflamed. He conjured up a Zion built up by such virile hands as Sir Asher's, and peopled by such beautiful mothers as his daughter: the great Empire that would spring from the unity and liberty of a race which even under dispersion and oppression was one of the most potent peoples on the planet. And thus, when the ladies at last rose, he was in so deep a reverie that he almost forgot to rise too, and when he did rise, he accompanied the ladies outside the door. It was only Miss Aaronsberg's tactful 'Don't you want to smoke?' that saved him.

'Almost as long a grace as the dinner!' Tom Fuller murmured to him as he returned to the table. 'Do the Jews say that after every meal?'

'They're supposed to,' Barstein replied, a little jarred, as he picked up a cigar.

'No wonder they beat the Christians,' observed the
young Radical, who evidently took original views. 'So much time for digestion would enable any race to survive in this age of quick lunches. In America, now, they should rule the roast. Literally,' he added, with a laugh.

'It's a beautiful grace,' said Barstein rebusingly. 'The glamour of Zion thrown over the prose of diet.'

'You're not a Jew?' said Tom, with a sudden suspicion.

'Yes, I am,' the artist replied, with a dignity that surprised himself.

'I should never have taken you for one!' said Tom, ingenuously.

Despite himself, Barstein felt a thrill of satisfaction. 'But why?' he asked himself, instantly. 'To feel complimented at not being taken for a Jew — what does it mean? Is there a core of anti-Semitism in my nature? Has our race reached self-contempt?'

'I beg your pardon,' Tom went on. 'I didn't mean to be irreverent. I appreciate the picturesqueness of it all — hearing the very language of the Bible, and all that. And I do sympathize with your desire for Jewish Home Rule.'

'My desire?' murmured the artist, taken aback. Sir Asher here interrupted them by pressing his '48 port upon both, and directing the artist's attention in particular to the pictures that hung around the stately dining-room. There was a Gainsborough, a Reynolds, a Landseer. He drew Barstein round the walls.

'I am very fond of the English school,' he said. His cap was back in his coat-tail, and he had become again the bluff and burly Briton.

'You don't patronize the Italians at all?' asked the artist.

'No,' said Sir Asher. He lowered his voice. 'Between you and I,' said he, — it was his main fault of grammar, — 'in Italian art one is never safe from the Madonna, not to mention her Son.' It was a fresh reminder of the Palestinian patriarch. Sir Asher never discussed theology except with those who agreed with him. Nor did he ever, whether in private or in public, breathe an unfriendly word against his Christian fellow-citizens. All were sons of the same Father, as he would frequently say from the platform. But in his heart of hearts he cherished a contempt, softened by stuf- faction, for the arithmetical incapacity of Trinitarians.

Christianity under any other aspect did not exist for him. It was a blunder impossible to a race with a genius for calculation. 'How can three be one?' he would demand wittily of his cronies. The question was in his eye now as he summed up Italian art to the sculptor, and a faint smile twitching about his lips invited his fellow-Jew to share with him his feeling of spiritual and intellectual superiority to the poor blind
Christians at his table, as well as to Christendom generally.

But the artist refused to come up on the pedestal. 'Surely the Madonna was a very beautiful conception,' he said.

Sir Asher looked startled. 'Ah, yes, you are an artist,' he remembered. 'You think only of the beautiful outside. But how can there be three-in-one or one-in-three?'

Barstein did not reply, and Sir Asher added in a low scornful tone: 'Neither confounding the persons, nor dividing the substance.'

III

A sudden commission recalled Barstein to town before he could even pay his after-dinner call. But the seed sown in his soul that evening was not to be stifled. This seed was nothing less than the idea of a national revival of his people. He hunted up his old prayer-books, and made many discoveries as his modern consciousness depolarized page upon page that had never in boyhood been anything to him but a series of syllables to be gabbled off as rapidly as possible, when their meaning was not still further overlaid by being sung slowly to a tune. 'I might as well have turned a prayer-wheel,' he said regretfully, as he perceived with what iron tenacity the race beaten down by the Roman Empire and by every power that had reigned since, had preserved its aspiration for its old territory. And this mystery of race and blood, this beauty of unforgetting aspiration, was all physically incarnate in Mabel Aaronsberg.

He did not move one inch out of his way to see her, because he saw her all day along. She appeared all over his studio in countless designs in clay. But from this image of the beauty of the race, his deepening insight drove him to interpret the tragedy also, and he sought out from the slums and small synagogues of the East End strange forlorn figures, with ragged curls and wistful eyes. It was from one of these figures that he learnt to his astonishment that the dream of Zion, whereof he imagined himself the sole dreamer, was shared by myriads, and had even materialized into a national movement.

He joined the movement, and it led him into strange conventicles. He was put on a committee which met in a little back-room, and which at first treated him and his arguments with deference, soon with familiarity, and occasionally with contempt. Hucksters and cigar-makers held forth much more eloquently on their ideals than he could, with far greater command of Talmudic quotation, while their knowledge of how to run their local organization was naturally superior. But throughout all the mean surroundings, the petty wrangles, and the grotesque jealousies that tarnished the movement he retained his inner exaltation. He
had at last found himself and found his art. He fell to work upon a great Michel-angelesque figure of the awakening genius of his people, blowing the trumpet of resurrection. It was sent for exhibition to a Zionist Congress, where it caused a furor, and where the artist met other artists who had long been working under the very inspiration which was so novel to him, and whose work was all around him in plaque and picture, in bust and book, and even postcard. Some of them were setting out for Palestine to start a School of Arts and Crafts.

Barstein began to think of joining them. Meantime the Bohemian circles which he had adorned with his gaiety and good-fellowship had been wondering what had become of him. His new work in the Exhibitions supplied a sort of answer, and the few who chanced to meet him reported dolefully that he was a changed man. Gone was the light-hearted and light-footed dancer of the Paris pavement. Silent the licentious wit of the neo-Pagan. This was a new being with brooding brow and pained eyes that lit up only when they beheld his dream. Never had Bohemia known such a transformation.

IV

But a change came over the spirit of the dream. Before he could seriously plan out his journey to Palestine, he met Mabel Aaronsberg in the flesh. She was staying in town for the season in charge of an aunt, and the meeting occurred in one of the galleries of the newer art, in front of Mabel’s own self in marble. She praised the Psyche without in the least recognising herself, and Barstein, albeit disconcerted, could not but admit how far his statue was from the breathing beauty of the original.

After this the Jewish borderland of Bohemia, where writers and painters are courted, began to see Barstein again. But, unfortunately, this was not Mabel’s circle, and Barstein was reduced to getting himself invited to that Jewish Bayswater, his loathing for which had not been overcome even by his new-found nationalism. Here, amid hundreds of talking and dancing shadows, with which some shadowy self of his own danced and talked, he occasionally had a magic hour of reality—with Mabel.

One could not be real and not talk of the national dream. Mabel, who took most of her opinions from her brother Julius, was frankly puzzled, though her marmoreal gift of beautiful silence saved her lover from premature shocks. She had, indeed, scarcely heard of such things. Zionism was something in the East End. Nobody in her class ever mentioned it. But, then, Barstein was a sculptor and strange, and, besides, he did not look at all like a Jew, so it didn’t sound so horrible in his mouth. His lithe figure stood out almost Anglo-Saxon amid the crowds of hulking...
undersized young men, and though his manners were
not so good as a Christian's—she never forgot his
blunder at her father's dinner-party—still, he looked
up to one with almost a Christian's adoration, instead
of sizing one up with an Oriental's calculation. These
other London Jews thought her provincial, she knew,
whereas Barstein had one day informed her she was
universal. Julius, too, had admired Barstein's sculpt-
ure, the modern note in which had been hailed by
the Oxford elect. But what most fascinated Mabel
was the constant eulogy of her lover's work in the
Christian papers; and when at last the formal proposal
came, it found her fearful only of her father's dis-
approval.

'He's so orthodox,' she murmured, as they sat in
a rose-garlanded niche at a great Jewish Charity Ball,
lapped round by waltz-music and the sweetness of love
confessed.

'Well, I'm not so wicked as I was,' he smiled.

'But you smoke on the Sabbath, Leo—you told
me.'

'And you told me your brother Julius does the same.'

'Yes, but father doesn't know. If Julius wants to
smoke on Friday evening, he always goes to his own
room.'

'And I shan't smoke in your father's.'

'No—but you'll tell him. You're so outspoken.'

'Well, I won't tell him—unless he asks me.'

She looked sad. 'He won't ask you—he'll never
get as far.'

He smiled confidently. 'You're not very encourag-
ing, dear; what's the matter with me?'

'Everything. You're an artist, with all sorts of
queer notions. And you're not so—you blushed and
hesitated—'not so rich—'

He pressed her fingers. 'Yes, I am; I'm the richest
man here.'

A little delighted laugh broke from her lips, though
they went on: 'But you told me your profits are small
—marble is so dear.'

'So is celibacy. I shall economize dreadfully by
marrying.'

She pouted; his flippancy seemed inadequate to the
situation, and he seemed scarcely to realize that she
was an heiress. But he continued to laugh away her
fears. She was so beautiful and he was so strong
—what could stand between them? Certainly not the
Palestinian patriarch with whose inmost psychology he
had, fortunately, become in such cordial sympa-
thy.

But Mabel's pessimism was not to be banished even
by the supper champagne. They had secured a little
table for two, and were recklessly absorbed in them-

's At the worst, we can elope to Palestine,' he said at
last, gaily serious.
Mabel shuddered. 'Live entirely among Jews!' she cried.

The radiance died suddenly out of his face; it was as if she had thrust the knife she was wielding through his heart. Her silent reception of his nationalist rhapsodies he had always taken for agreement.

Nor might Mabel have undeceived him had his ideas remained Platonic. Their irruption into the world of practical politics, into her own life, was, however, another pair of shoes. Since Barstein had brought Zionism to her consciousness, she had noted that distinguished Christians were quite sympathetic, but this was the one subject on which Christian opinion failed to impress Mabel. 'Zionism's all very well for Christians — they're in no danger of having to go to Palestine,' she had reflected shrewdly.

'And why couldn't you live entirely among Jews?' Barstein asked slowly.

Mabel drew a great breath, as if throwing off a suffocating weight. 'One couldn't breathe,' she explained.

'Aren't you living among Jews now?'

'Don't look so glum, silly. You don't want Jews as background as well as foreground. A great Ghetto!' And again she shuddered instinctively.

'Every other people is background as well as foreground. And you don't call France a Ghetto or Italy a Ghetto?' There was anti-Semitism, he felt — uncon-
their slowly-won privileges jeopardized if too many other Jews came in their wake. He consulted his own pre-Zionist psychology. "Yes," he decided. "Every Jew who moves into our country, our city, our watering-place, our street even, seems to us an invader or an interloper. He draws attention to us, he accentuates our difference from the normal, he increases the chance of the renewal of Rishus (malice). And so we become anti-Semites ourselves. But by what a comical confusion of logic is it that we carry over the objection to Jewish aggregation even to an aggregation in Palestine, in our own land! Or is it only too logical? Is it that the rise of a Jewish autonomous power would be a standing reminder to our fellow-citizens that we others are not so radically British or German or French or American as we have vaunted ourselves? Are we afraid of being packed off to Palestine and is the fulfilment of the dream of eighteen centuries our deadliest dread?"

The thought forced from him a sardonic smile.

"And I feared you were like King Henry—never going to smile again." Mabel smiled back in relief.

"We're such a ridiculous people," he answered, his smile fading into somberness. "Neither fish, flesh, fowl, nor good red herring."

"Well, finish your good white fowl," laughed Mabel. She had felt her hold over him slipping, and her own apprehensions now vanished in the effort to banish his gloom.

But she had only started him on a new tack. "Fowl!" he cried grimly. "Kosher, of course, but with bits of fried Wurst to ape the scraps of bacon. And presently we shall be having water ices to simulate cream. We can't even preserve our dietary individuality. Truly said Feuerbach, "Der Mensch ist was er isst." In Palestine we shall at least dare to be true to our own guts." He laughed bitterly.

"You're not very romantic," Mabel pouted. Indeed, this Barstein, whose mere ideal could so interrupt the rhapsodies due to her admissions of affection, was distinctly unsatisfactory. She touched his hand furtively under the tablecloth.

"After all, she is very young," he thought, thrilling. And youth was plastic—he, the sculptor, could surely mould her. Besides, was she not Sir Asher's daughter? She must surely have inherited some of his love for Palestine and his people. It was this Philistine set that had spoiled her. Julius, too, that young Oxford prig,—he reflected illogically,—had no doubt been a baleful influence.

"Shall I give you some almond-pudding?" he replied tenderly.

Mabel laughed uneasily. "I ask for romance, and you offer me almond-pudding. Oh, I should like to go to a Jewish party where there wasn't almond-pudding!"

"You shall—in Palestine," he laughed back.

She pouted again. "All roads lead to Palestine."
They do,' he said seriously. 'Without Palestine our past is a shipwreck and our future a quicksand.'

She looked frightened again. 'But what should we do there? We can't pray all day long.'

'Of course not,' he said eagerly. 'There's the new generation to train for its glorious future. I shall teach in the Arts and Crafts School. Bezalel, it's called; isn't that a beautiful name? It's from Bezalel, the first man mentioned in the Bible as filled with Divine wisdom and understanding in all manner of workmanship.'

She shook her head. 'You'll be excommunicated. The Palestine Rabbis always excommunicate everything and everybody.'

He laughed. 'What do you know about Palestine?'

'More than you think. Father gets endless letters from there with pressed flowers and citrons, and olive-wood boxes and paper-knives — a perennial shower. The letters are generally in the most killing English. And he won't let me laugh at them because he has a vague feeling that even Palestine spelling and grammar are holy.'

Barstein laughed again. 'We'll send all the Rabbis to Jericho.'

She smiled, but retorted: 'That's where they'll send you, you maker of graven images. Why, your very profession is forbidden.'

'I'll corner 'em with this very Bezalel text. The cutting of stones is just one of the arts which God says

He had inspired Bezalel with. Besides, you forget my statue at the Bâle Congress.'

'Bâle isn't Palestine. There's nothing but superstition and squalor, and I'm sorry to say father's always bolstering it all up with his cheques.'

'Bravo, Sir Asher! Unconsciously he has been bolstering up the eventual Renaissance. Your father and his kind have kept the seed alive; we shall bring it to blossom.'

His prophetic assurance cast a fresh shade of apprehension over her marmoreal brow. But her face lightened with a sudden thought. 'Well, perhaps, after all, we shan't need to elope.'

'I never thought for a moment we should,' he answered as cheerfully. 'But, all the same, we can spend our honeymoon in Palestine.'

'Oh, I don't mind that,' said Mabel. 'Lots of Christians do that. There was a Cook's party went out from Middleton for last Easter.'

The lover was too pleased with her acquiescence in the Palestinian honeymoon to analyse the terms in which it was given. He looked into her eyes, and saw there the Shechinah — the divine glory that once rested on Zion.

V

It was in this happier mood that Barstein ran down to Middleton to plead his suit verbally with Sir Asher
Aaronsberg. Mabel had feared to commit their fates to a letter, whether from herself or her lover. A plump negative would be so difficult to fight against. A personal interview permitted one to sound the ground, to break the thing delicately, to reason, to explain, to charm away objections. It was clearly the man’s duty to face the music.

Not that Barstein expected anything but the music of the Wedding March. He was glad that his original contempt for Sir Asher had been exchanged for sincere respect, and that the bluff Briton was a mere veneer. It was to the Palestinian patriarch that he would pour out his hopes and his dreams.

Alas! he found only the bluff Briton, and a Briton no longer genially, but bluntly, bluff.

‘It is perfectly impossible.’

Barstein, bewildered, pleaded for enlightenment. Was he not pious enough, or not rich enough, too artistic or too low-born? Or did Sir Asher consider his past life improper or his future behaviour dubious? Let Sir Asher say.

But Sir Asher would not say. ‘I am not bound to give my reasons. We are all proud of your work — it confers honour on our community. The Mayor alluded to it only yesterday.’ He spoke in his best platform manner. ‘But to receive you into my family — that is another matter.’

And all the talk advanced things no further.

‘It would be an entirely unsuitable match.’ Sir Asher caressed his long beard with an air of finality.

With a lover’s impatience, Barstein had made the mistake of seeking Sir Asher in his counting-house, where the municipal magnate sat among his solidities. The mahogany furniture, the iron safes, the ledgers, the silent obsequious clerks and attendants through whom Barstein had had to penetrate, the factory buildings stretching around, with their sense of throbbing machinery and disciplined workers, all gave the burly Briton a background against which visions and emotions seemed as unreal as ghosts under gaslight. The artist felt all this solid life closing round him like the walls of a torture-chamber, squeezing out his confidence, his aspirations, his very life.

‘Then you prefer to break your daughter’s heart!’ he cried desperately.

‘Break my daughter’s heart!’ echoed Sir Asher in amaze. It was apparently a new aspect to him.

‘You don’t suppose she won’t suffer dreadfully?’ Barstein went on, perceiving his advantage.

‘Break her heart!’ repeated Sir Asher, startled out of his discreet reticence. ‘I’d sooner break her heart than see her married to a Zionist!’

This time it was the sculptor’s turn to gasp.

‘To a what?’ he cried.

‘To a Zionist. You don’t mean to deny you’re a Zionist?’ said Sir Asher, sternly.
Barstein gazed at him in silence.

"Come, come," said Sir Asher. "You don't suppose I don't read the Jewish papers? I know all about your goings-on."

The artist found his tongue. "But— but," he stammered, "you yearn for Zion too."

"Naturally. But I don't presume to force the hand of Providence."

"How can any of us force Providence to do anything it doesn't want to? Surely it is through human agency that Providence always works. God helps those who help themselves."

"Spare me your blasphemies. Perhaps you think you are the Messiah."

"I can be an atom of Him. The whole Jewish people is its own Messiah—God working through it."

"Take care, young man; you'll be talking Trinity next. And with these heathen notions you expect to marry my daughter! You must excuse me if I wish to hear no further." His hand began to wander towards the row of electric bells on his desk.

"Then how do you suppose we shall ever get to Palestine?" inquired the irritated artist.

Sir Asher raised his eyes to the ceiling. "In God's good time," he said.

"And when will that be?"

"When we are either too good or too bad for our present sphere. To-day we are too neutral. Besides, there will be signs enough."

"What signs?"

"Read your Bible. Mount Zion will be split by an earthquake, as the prophet ——"

Barstein interrupted him with an impatient gesture. "But why can't we go to Jerusalem and wait for the earthquake there?" he asked.

"Because we have a mission to the nations. We must live dispersed. We have to preach the unity of God."

"I have never heard you preach it. You lowered your voice when you denounced the Trinity to me, lest the Christians should hear."

"We have to preach silently, by our example. Merely by keeping our own religion we convert the world."

"But who keeps it? Dispersion among Sunday-keeping peoples makes our very Sabbath an economic impossibility."

"I have not found it so," said Sir Asher, crushingly.

"Indeed, the growth of the Saturday half-holiday since my young days is a remarkable instance of Judaizing."

"So we have to remain dispersed to promote the week-end holiday?"

"To teach international truth," Sir Asher corrected sharply; "not narrow tribalism."

"But we don't remain dispersed. Five millions are herded in the Russian Pale to begin with."
"The Providence of God has long been scattering them to New York."
"Yes, four hundred thousand in one square mile. A pretty scattering!"
Sir Asher flushed angrily. "But they go to the Argentine too. I heard of a colony even in Paraguay."
"Where they are preaching the Unity to the Indians."
"I do not discuss religion with a mocker. We are in exile by God's decree — we must suffer."
"Suffer!" The artist's glance wandered cynically round the snug solidities of Sir Asher's exile, but he forbore to be personal. "Then if we must suffer, why did you subscribe so much to the fund for the Russian Jews?"

Sir Asher looked mollified at Barstein's acquaintance with his generosity. "That I might suffer with them," he replied, with a touch of humour.
"Then you are a Jewish patriot," retorted Barstein.
The bluff British face grew clouded again.
"Heaven forbid. I only know of British patriots. You talk treason to your country, young man."
"Treason — I!" The young man laughed bitterly.
"It is you Zionists that will undermine all the rights we have so painfully won in the West."
"Oh, then you're not really a British patriot," Barstein began.

"I will beg you to remember, sir, that I equipped a corps of volunteers for the Transvaal."
"I dare say. But a corps of volunteers for Zion — that is blasphemy, narrow tribalism."
"Zion's soil is holy; we want no volunteers there: we want saints and teachers. And what would your volunteers do in Zion? Fight the Sultan with his million soldiers? They couldn't even live in Palestine as men of peace. There is neither coal nor iron — hence no manufactures. Agriculture? It's largely stones and swamps. Not to mention it's too hot for Jews to work in the fields. They'd all starve. You've no right to play recklessly with human lives. Besides, even if Palestine were as fertile as England, Jews could never live off one another. And think how they'd quarrel!"

Sir Asher ended almost good-humouredly. His array of arguments seemed to him a row of steam-hammers.
"We can live off one another as easily as any other people. As for quarrelling, weren't you in Parliament? Party government makes quarrel the very basis of the Constitution."

Sir Asher flushed again. A long lifetime of laying down the law had ill prepared him for repartee.
"A pretty mess we should make of Government!" he sneered.
"Why? We have given Ministers to every Cabinet in the world."
‘Yes — we’re all right as long as we’re under others.’
Sir Asher was recovering his serenity.
‘All right so long as we’re under others!’ gasped the artist. ‘Do you realize what you’re saying, Sir Asher? The Boers against whom you equipped volunteers fought frenziedly for three years not to be under others! And we — the thought of Jewish autonomy makes us foam at the mouth. The idea of independence makes us turn in the graves we call our fatherlands.’
Sir Asher dismissed the subject with a Podsppannian wave of the hand. ‘This is all a waste of breath. Fortunately the acquisition of Palestine is impossible.’
‘Then why do you pray for it — “speedily and in our days”?’
Sir Asher glared at the bold questioner.
‘That seems a worse waste of breath,’ added Barstein, dryly.
‘I said you were a mocker,’ said Sir Asher, severely.
‘It is a Divine event I pray for — not the creation of a Ghetto.’
‘A Ghetto!’ Barstein groaned in sheer hopelessness. ‘Yes, you’re an anti-Semite, too — like your daughter, like your son, like all of us. We’re all anti-Semites.’
‘I am anti-Semite! Ho! ho! ho!’ Sir Asher’s anger broke down in sheer amusement. ‘I have made every allowance for your excitement,’ he said, recovering his magisterial note. ‘I was once in love myself.
But when it comes to calling me an anti-Semite, it is obvious you are not in a fit state to continue this interview. Indeed, I no longer wonder that you think yourself the Messiah.’
‘Even if I do, our tradition only makes the Messiah a man; somebody some day will have to win your belief. But what I said was that God acts through man.’
‘Ah, yes,’ said Sir Asher, good-humouredly. ‘Three in-one and one-in-three.’
‘And why not?’ said Barstein, with a flash of angry intuition. ‘Aren’t you a trinity yourself?’
‘Me?’ Sir Asher was now quite sure of the sculptor’s derangement.
‘Yes — the Briton, the Jew, and the anti-Semite — three-in-one and one-in-three.’
Sir Asher touched one of the electric bells with a jerk. He was quite alarmed.
Barstein turned white with rage at his dismissal. Never would he marry into these triune tribes. ‘And it’s the same in every land where we’re emancipated, as it is called,’ he went on furiously. ‘The Jew’s a patriot everywhere, and a Jew everywhere and an anti-Semite everywhere. Passionate Hungarians, and true-born Italians, eagle-waving Americans, and loyal Frenchmen, imperial Germans, and double Dutchmen, we are dispersed to preach the Unity, and what we illustrate is the Jewish trinity. A delicious irony! Three-
in one and one-in-three.' He laughed; to Sir Asher
his laugh sounded maniacal. The old gentleman was
relieved to see his stalwart doorkeeper enter.

Barstein turned scornfully on his heel. 'Neither
confounding the persons nor dividing the substance,'
he ended grimly.