

"you find it here," repeated the old man stubbornly.

But the boy was full of the passion of youth, youth that knows! He set his lips. "Men of wisdom do not stop in inherited prejudice. There must be some better reason. Perhaps some of the fault is ours!"

Then his mother put down her hands and stared in great pain at him. He was in truth denying his people! That was all her understanding. But the old man went to a secret cupboard. From it he procured a small bag, which he handed to the boy. "For all thy expenses till thy return, my son," he said.

He paused, to finish. "Thou art about to deny thy name and thy faith—but thou art also a good Jew!"

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NICOLAI NOVIKOFF entered the university successfully. With cunning he had laid his plans. And then, his rather Celtic cast of features served not to betray him. Step by step he had moved with caution and far-seeing possibilities. He could anticipate no possible chance of detection even where passports, spies, censorship of mail prevailed. He had forbidden letters from home. He sent no word.

With his masters he found immediate favor, for he had a keen desire for knowledge, and he studied with fine intelligence. He made his impressions, standing out, a commanding figure, from among many mediocres. His fellows sought his help. He was listened to respectfully, looked up to. He saw deep with an understanding smile for the frailties of humanity.

His teachers said of him: "He was born for something great!" His young companions loved him, turned to him. He kept his mind clear, tried to find truths. He saw boys of his own race kept back by individual prejudice. He, Nicolai Novikoff, was called upon to recite when another, the Jew, was kept in his seat, tingling with injustice, not allowed to give his lesson.

Nicolai went into another class and found the Jew equal in every way with the Gentile, because the master could in his breadth make no distinction except the mental distinction.

And he thought, studied, and learned a little and knew that intolerance was in the mass mind; not in the free soul.

He never lost his ardor to help his people within the pale. These people, full of smallness and nobility, shot through with the majestic tragedy of an old race panting for life. His soul remained on fire to help them, even though he knew quite well that all they could know of him was that he was an apostate. He had sworn his mother to secrecy as to his whereabouts (from his grandfather he extracted no oath). Yet he knew his mother could but go about with pain-filled eyes, for all to see; with lamentations for her long absent son.

He knew his people better because he was cut off from them. Callous they would be to his concealment of his identity were material benefit to come from that concealment; bitter would they be if they gained from eloquent silence that he was an apostate, and had forgotten his mother. So he understood them better, understood to what they had been driven and what reacting qualities had been bred into them.

On Good Friday he knelt for one long black hour while the minister in crawling intonation spoke of the black moments when Christ hung upon the cross. Piercing through the dimness came the words: "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?"

And Aaron stirred, and for the first time felt a great pity within him for that figure—a great pity and a marvelous admiration. He knew he heard the history of One set apart!

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The most wonderful day to Nicolai Novikoff was not the one on which he entered into the university. It was the day before he was to be graduated. In the afternoon he ran buoyantly up the

stairs to his dormitory. He paused at the sound of his name.

The master, he was told, wished to see him. He hastened to the big study, and was there cordially greeted by the white haired man at the desk near the window.

"I wished to say personally to you, Nicolai," said the master, "that you have been a good student. You came to us one out of hundreds with a purpose to make the best of the years you had to spend with us. You are valuable in your possibilities. I am proud of you. So, you will let me hear from you when you are out in the world putting your mark upon it?"

The boy did not answer. He was gazing with a peculiar searching expression at his master.

"I shall bestow your diploma upon you tomorrow," the master went on; "and shall rejoice in doing so."

Curiously while the man was speaking there came to the boy memory of the moment when he smashed the widow's lamp. Then he had let no sentiment deter him from his desire. But sharply he remembered the widow had died that night.

The time had come now. Out of his soul he knew the moment was at hand for revelation. He spoke in a ringing voice:

"Stanislav Alexandrovitch, I am a Jew!"

Alexandrovitch sat perfectly still, but he did not take his eyes from the boy's face. At last he spoke: "That is absolutely impossible. You could not have concealed such a thing!"

"It is true. And is it still true that you are proud of me? Oh, you cannot take back those words. You believed them." His voice deepened. He revered Stanislav Alexandrovitch. "You cannot change your opinions because you know my race. That is not fair, it is not just, it is not even honest!"

And when Alexandrovitch did not answer. "Oh, Stanislav Alexandrovitch, you are fair. You must be. And out of this your true knowledge of me, use your influence with those about you to be fair to the Jew."

Alexandrovitch moved then a little. It was a strange situation. And some new instinct pushed itself into action. He rose and faced the lad, while he held out his hand. "I shall always remember you, my boy, and be glad that I have known you. But I shall be compelled to tell the faculty."

The boy remained silent.

"Your name?"

"Aaron Polinsky."

"Aaron, I'm going to help you. And I shall remember what you have said to me. You shall have your diploma if I can manage it."

But the faculty would have none of excuse, palliation. Should the story crop out it would do great harm; they would be censured. Alexandrovitch, with the memory of that beseeching young face before him, spoke warmly, but he could not say too much. At length a decision was reached and a letter penned to Aaron.

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## Failings of the Short Story

THE short story, taken in the aggregate, is a collection of 6,000 words that tell how the hero happened to marry the girl. It seldom mentions the enormous number of girls that the hero has kissed prior to the affair in hand, nor does it bear heavily on the overwhelming number of summer evenings during which the girl has sat on the porch and allowed other young men to strain her passionately to their bosoms.

The short story would have us believe that the heroine is having her first fling at love. This state of affairs, however, is manifestly impossible, since Juliet was the last successful heroine to be wooed during her thirteenth year. The chief trouble with the short story is that it

fills the reading public with the idea that to be happy one needs only to be married.

He read it later, while he was sitting on the edge of his bed. It ran: We are sorry that you have practiced such deceit. And we cannot, even though the master has spoken for you, award you your diploma. Nor may you take part in the exercises tomorrow. The master will add a further word to you.

The master did. The faculty, he said, wishing to prevent leakage of the deception, suggested that Aaron Polinsky remain for a while Nicolai Novikoff. Aaron gave his answer in writing to the master.

The faculty, one by one, read the letter. It said:

You hold contempt for me for what I have done. Yet you are asking me to continue the way you deplore, so you may be spared. You are asking me to do that which you condemn in Peter who denied Christ, the Jew. I am a Jew, yet here I have been well liked. The traits I have in part inherited from my fathers—patience, sympathy, imagination—have been called upon by my teachers and my fellows. Are these traits less valuable because now 'tis known they dwelt within a Jew?

The education I have you cannot take from me, nor can it fail to put itself to good use.

I have found among you fine souls, and I see the problem lies with the individual. Each one to think for himself! To think not in terms of race, the Jew, the non-Jew, but in terms of man and man. And I know this. That my having been here in the way I have been will result sooner or later in broader privileges for my people. You must make it so!

And that letter was filed away, inadvertently, and later read by a man of breadth and understanding, and some of the ban lifted from the Jew, some of the restrictions torn away.

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THERE was no one to meet Aaron when he arrived at his home station. The walk to his mother's place was a long one, but he desired the walk. It was morning, so he believed his grandfather might be at the Beth Hamadrash. An hour's brisk walk and he was at the end of the lane where the house of learning stood. He went down the narrow path and up the stairs leading to the old, worn door.

He looked within. Yes, there was his grandfather, dominant by his fine presence. He wore the Twillem,\* the straps around his arm. There were straps, too, about his head, holding firmly upon his forehead, incased in a small leather cube, the writings of the ten commandments.

Aaron called: "Grandfather!" The old man turned, went a little pale, and then moved forward without taking off his Twillem.

"Shall I take you home, grandfather?" Aaron began with tender love. "I am here to stay now."

"Aye, and if thou wilt."

The others stood staring. A certain

\*Commandments.

coldness in their demeanor struck heavily upon Aaron's heart. At the gate of the Beth Hamadrash a small boy, seeing the two, darted off with his tongue primed.

So it was that as the man and the boy went down the lane women and children and a few men awaited them. At last, having passed a dozen, and no word of greeting having been given, Aaron stopped at a gate where a man, two women, one old and the other young, stood and stared coldly at him—though from his childhood had they known him.

"Why stare you all so malignly?" he asked straight.

It was the old woman who answered. "Wouldst expect warmth and a welcome, apostate?" she cried.

Others approached; a small crowd stood before the young man. He spoke, his face white and set.

"Wilt tell me what I have done that you rise up against me; pronounce me so glibly an apostate?"

One answered: "We know thy mother hath sat in sorrow. And thou wert always an alien in spirit to thy people. As a boy thou disobeyest often the law."

Aaron's head sank. "Alien to thy people!" rang itself in his heart. But he felt the steadying pressure of his grandfather's hand upon his arm, and his head raised itself. "And does it never occur to you that you look beneath to find the motive?" He paused. "What is it, then, the Talmud in satire says: 'Tis better to have ten inches to stand upon than a hundred yards to fall.'"

"So all of you stand square and afraid upon these mere ten inches." He beat his breast. "The ten inches pruned and scraped, hedged in by your forefathers." He fell into his grandfather's way of speech, even though he was young and most of his listeners old. "Thou wouldst not adventure from it, lest thou fall a hundred yards. You are cowards, all of you!"

He stopped. A voice rose: "Thou hast fallen thy hundred yards and then come back to thy home dishonored and discredited; the son who went away for years and left his mother repining. And he sent no word."

Aaron winced. "Yes, 'tis I who leaped the hundred yards into the alien's country. 'Tis I who had the curiosity to go to him, and not stay isolated and curse him. And I shall put to fine uses the knowledge I have brought from him. Narrow, prejudiced he may be, still I have learned from him."

"Thou art good at thine own interpretations, and always were," cried a woman; "but what thy father Selig knew and what thy learned grandfather knows should be good enough for thee."

He turned to her gently. "And thou art good at blindness," he answered. "Thou puttest thy finger on one commandment and winked at another. 'Tis also written, 'Do not confine your children to your own learning, for they were born in another time.'"

A long silence greeted this saying. Then into its void the boy's voice thrust itself with passion. "To mine own people have I returned, as always I meant to return. To them I come armed with understandings of them and of their needs. You are all of one humanity! This I will show you."

"You need me, my people. Utter no word more, but seek me in that little house of the widow whose lantern ever hung burning for her wandering son."

"I shall relight her lamp!"

"Seek me there, I say, where my abode shall be. For 'tis understood I am to be thine advocate, thy friend. For years I have dwelt away from thee, from thy teachings and thy customs, and I return like a fresh wind."

So he ended. His grandfather, with mighty pride and great love, looked upon him. "Come, my son!" he cried.

And the people, strangely tongue-tied, parted and made a clear path for the old man and the young one to walk in.

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