

The Debt

(Continued from last week)

The other three women made rapid calculations in their heads. One of them, a little thin woman, stood unhappily for a few seconds, perplexed. Then furtively examined the heels on her shoes. Yes, she decided that after all they could wait for a week or so. She took two shillings and sixpence out of her purse, and placed it on the counter beside the five shillings. The other two women added their half-crowns. Rebecca eyed the money wistfully. "If I could collect five pounds for Chayer it would be beautiful. Five pounds! It would come like a lump of health to her." She picked the money up and wrapped it in her handkerchief. "Chayer must not know, or she will hide her head in shame. I will give it to her as a loan—and tell her I have just had it from a rich uncle." The women were unanimous in their approval. "Nu, of course," said Sarah. "Do we want to shame Chayer? God should do the same to us if we did. You must collect the money quickly, that is all. And may God give us all a sweet year."

Rebecca departed quickly. In two hours she was returning, transferring the money from her heavily laden

purse to her pocket, and counting it carefully in the process. She had collected five pounds and fourpence. Sunday it was easier than any other time. The men were at home in the morning, so together, man and wife could share the responsibility of the sacrifice. Not that there was any talk of sacrifice here—however poor, they gave gladly when asked. Somebody was in greater need than themselves—there was just no question of not giving.

At the corner of Greenfield St. a lame man was turning a hurdy-gurdy, from whose diseased interior, miserable, nerve-racking sounds were emitted. Rebecca, the five pounds and fourpence in her pocket, stood near him, the music seemed to her heavenly. He should have the fourpence—she could not very well give the odd coppers to Chayer. Then, in the act of removing the coppers from her pocket she paused. Fourpence in one go to a hurdy-gurdy man was unheard of generosity—perhaps he should have a penny, and she could give the remaining threepence to the School, and ask them to burn candles for Chayer. Yes, that would be best. But this arrangement though wise, made Rebecca feel uncomfortable. She felt that she was robbing the musician of threepence. After all, she had intended originally to give him fourpence. She stood for a moment, perplexed. The hurdy-gurdy man urged her to quick decision. "Give alms to a poor man. God will bless you and your children." He looked at her beseechingly; Rebecca decided to compromise. She turned aside and furtively extracted the coppers from a handful of silver she took from her pocket, so that the eyes of the beggar should not become round with the sight of so much wealth, then finally selected two pennies and thrust them in his hands.

Rebecca left the money with Chayer and turned to go. At the door, wiping her eyes, she said: "And if you worry about paying the money back before the children are all working, I will be insulted. I swear this by everything that is dear to me."

Chayer nodded miserably. Already she was wondering when and how she would be able to pay the money. Yet her heart was glad. She would redeem her things from the pawnshop—that would be two-pounds-five; for the rest she could now add a few shillings to the pension she received from the Widows' Society each week so that perhaps she would not have to pawn her festal candlesticks any more. Five pounds! When had she possessed that? The little furniture she had had been purchased on the hire system at a payment of two shillings a week stretching over countless years.

For a few weeks Chayer was happy. Thursday could come and there was no need to look round for pawnable objects—no need to dread the derision

of the pawn broker. The humiliating contempt with which he handled objects dear to her! And she could afford to drink a little milk every day. Each day she was getting weaker and weaker; as soon as Isaac left school and earned money she told herself she would be able to afford a woman in the house to look after the children. Then she would go to a convalescent home and live to have Nachus from her children. But immediately after these thoughts she would remember the debt to Rebecca and bitterness would creep into her heart. Rebecca called to see her less and

less frequently. For every time she came Chayer immediately spoke about the five pounds—she would return them as soon as she could. Rebecca grew tired of assuring her that she was not waiting for it and did not need it. This life! It was a laughable business. Rebecca did not blame Chayer, but simply the bitterness of life. To think how much money was squandered by the rich and here was a loan so-called of five pounds making the two women wretched, estranged.

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Random Thoughts

By Charles H. Joseph

Tale of a "Dumb" Advertisement

The following letter was sent to the editor of the Philadelphia "Jewish Times," and, in justice to Sears, Roebuck & Co., it should appear in this column. It was sent by R. E. Wood, president, from the executive offices of the company in Chicago:

"Dear Sir,—My attention has been called to an article that appeared in your issue of April 4, under 'Random Thoughts,' by Charles H. Joseph.

"It is, of course, unnecessary to state that there are no racial discriminations in this company, of which the largest individual stockholder is Mr. Julius Rosenwald, who is not only one of the leading Jews of the country, but one of its foremost citizens.

"The soda water fountains in our retail stores are not operated by Sears, Roebuck & Co., but by a lessee, the Interstate Co. of Chicago. No employee of Sears, Roebuck Co. could be so dumb as to insert such an advertisement, although I rather concur with Mr. Joseph that anyone so dumb should be placed even in a minor fountain. The advertisement has been called to the attention of the officers of the lessee company and will not recur.

"Very truly yours,
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further delay. Now while I am on the subject let me repeat to you a recent occurrence in Chicago which proves the need of continuing your views on the Arab-Jewish question.

"Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver spoke here a few days ago at a big mass meeting in behalf of the Jewish National Fund. And it is not necessary for me to say that his appeal to our people to help rehabilitate our ancient homeland was very effective. He spoke with his characteristic warmth of Palestine and its needs without once mentioning the Arabs. On the other hand, our local Zionist leaders, who followed the gifted rabbi on the programme, did not follow his example, but instead quarrelled with our cousins, the Sons of Ishmael—thus pouring oil on an already all-too-dangerous fire.

"The curse of chauvinism, to the great sorrow of many of us, has contaminated the true spirit of Zionism in some of our nationalists. They forget that in dealing with the Arabs we are dealing with a living power stronger than we are, and that forced relationship brought about through the influence of the British Government

will carry with it everlasting resentment and bitterness."

Missionary Work
I have received a letter concerning the old subject of missionaries to the Jews. My views are rather well known. It has always been a mat-

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