

# THE WANDERING JEW.

BY EUGENE SUE.

## CHAPTER XVIII. DEBIT AND CREDIT.

For some seconds, Samuel and Bathsheba remained motionless, with their fixed in fear and uneasiness on the seven luminous points, which shown through the darkness of the night from the summit of the belvedere; while, on the horizon, behind the house, a pale, rosy hue announced the dawn of day.

Samuel was the first to break the silence, and said to his wife, as he drew his hand across his brow: "The grief caused by the remembrance of our poor child has prevented us from reflecting that, after all, there should be nothing to alarm us in what we see."

"How so, Samuel?"

"My father always told me that he, and my grandfather before him, had seen such lights at long intervals."

"Yes, Samuel—but without being able, any more than ourselves, to explain the cause."

"Like my father and grandfather, we can only suppose that some secret passage gives admittance to persons who, like us, have some mysterious duty to fulfill in this dwelling. Besides, my father warned me not to be uneasy at these appearances, foretold by him, and now visible for the second time in thirty years."

"No matter for that, Samuel, it does strike one as if it was something supernatural."

"The days of miracles are over," said the Jew, shaking his head sorrowfully; "many of the old houses in this quarter have subterranean communications with distant places—some extending even to the Seine and the Catacombs. Doubtless, this house is so situated, and the persons who make these rare visits enter by some such means."

"But that the belvedere should be thus lighted up?"

"According to the plan of the building, you know that the belvedere forms a kind of skylight to the apartment called the Great Hall of Mourning, situated on the upper story. As it is completely dark, in consequence of the closing of all the windows, they must use a light to visit this Hall of Mourning—a room which is said to contain some very strange and gloomy things," added the Jew with a shudder.

Bathsheba, as well as her husband, gazed attentively on the seven luminous points, which diminished in brightness as the daylight gradually increased.

"As you say, Samuel, the mystery may be thus explained," resumed the Hebrew's wife. "Besides the day is so important a one for the family of Rennepont, that this apparition ought not to astonish us under the circumstances."

"Only to think," remarked Samuel, "that these lights have appeared at several different times throughout a century and a half! There must, therefore, be another family that, like ours, has devoted itself, from generation to generation, to accomplish duty."

"But what is the duty? It will perhaps be explained today."

"Come, come, Bathsheba," suddenly exclaimed Samuel, as if roused from his reverie, and reproaching himself with idleness; "this is the day, and, before eight o'clock our cash account must be in order, and these titles to immense property arranged, so that they may be delivered to the rightful owners—and he pointed to the cedar-wood box."

"You are right, Samuel; this day does not belong to us. It is a solemn day—one that would have been sweet, oh! very sweet to you and me—if now any days could be sweet to us," said Bathsheba bitterly, for she was thinking of her son.

"Bathsheba," said Samuel mournfully, as he laid his hand on his wife's; "we shall at least have the stern satisfaction of having done our duty. An has not the Lord been very favourable to us, though He has thus severely tried us by the death of our son? Is it not thanks to His providence that three generations of my family have been able to commence, continue and finish this great work?"

"Yes, Samuel," said the Jewess affectionately, "and for you at least this satisfaction will be combined with calm and quietness, for on the stroke of noon you will be delivered from a very terrible responsibility."

So saying, Bathsheba pointed to the box.

"It is true," replied the old man; "I had rather these immense riches were in the hands of those to whom they belong, than in mine; but, today, I shall cease to be their trustee. Once more then I will check the account for the last time, and compare the register with the cash-book that you hold in your hand."

Bathsheba bowed her head affirm-

atively, and Samuel, taking up his pen, occupied himself once more with his calculations. His wife, in spite of herself, again yielded to the sad thoughts which that fatal date had awakened, by reminding her of the death of her son.

Let us now trace rapidly the history, in appearance so romantic and marvelous, in reality so simple, of the fifty thousand crowns, which (thanks to the law of accumulation, and to a prudent, intelligent and faithful investment, had naturally, and necessarily, been transformed, in the space of a century and a half, into a sum far more important than the forty millions estimated by Father d'Aigrigny—who, partially informed on this subject, and reckoning the disastrous accidents, losses, and bankruptcies which might have occurred during so long a period, believed that millions might well be considered enormous.

The history of this fortune being closely connected with that of the Samuel family, by whom it had been managed for three generations, we shall give it again in a few words.

About the period 1670, some years before his death, Marius de Rennepont, then travelling in Portugal, had been enabled, by means of powerful interest, to save the life of an unfortunate Jew, condemned to be burnt alive by the Inquisition, because of his religion. This Jew was Isaac Samuel, grandfather of the present guardian of the house in the Rue Saint-Francois.

Generous men often attach themselves to those they have served, as much, at least, as the obliged parties are attached to their benefactors. Having ascertained that Isaac, who at that time carried on a petty broker's business at Lisbon, was industrious, honest, active, laborious and intelligent, M. de Rennepont, who then possessed large property in France, proposed to the Jew to accompany him, and undertake the management of his affairs. The same hatred and suspicion with which the Israelites have always been followed, was then at its height. Isaac was therefore doubly grateful for this mark of confidence on the part of M. de Rennepont. He accepted the offer, and promised from that day to devote his existence to the service of him who had first saved his life, and then trusted implicitly to his good faith and uprightness, although he was a Jew, and belonged to a race generally suspected and despised. M. de Rennepont, a man of great soul, endowed with a good spirit, was not deceived in his choice. Until he was deprived of his fortune, it prospered wonderfully in the hands of Isaac Samuel, who, gifted with an admirable aptitude for business, applied himself exclusively to advance the interests of his benefactor.

Then came the persecution and ruin of M. de Rennepont, whose property was confiscated and given up to the reverted fathers of the Company of Jesus only a few days before his death. Concealed in the retreat he had chosen, therein to put a violent end to his life, he sent secretly for Isaac Samuel, and delivered to him fifty thousand crowns in gold, the last remains of his fortune. This faithful servant was to invest the money to the best advantage, and, if he should have a son, transmit to him the same obligation; or, should he have no child, he was to seek out some relation worthy of continuing this trust, to which would moreover be annexed a fair reward. It was thus to be transmitted and perpetuated from relative to relative, until the expiration of a century and a half. M. de Rennepont also begged Isaac to take charge, during his life, of the house in the Rue Saint-Francois, where he would be lodged gratis, and to leave this function likewise to his descendants, if it were possible.

If even Isaac Samuel had not had children, the powerful bond of union which exists between certain Jewish families, would have rendered practicable the last will of De Rennepont. The relations of Isaac would have become partners in his gratitude to his benefactor, and they, and their succeeding generations, would have religiously accomplished the task imposed upon one of their race. But, several years after the death of De Rennepont, Isaac had a son.

This son, Levy Samuel, born in 1869, not having had any children by his first wife, married again at nearly sixty years of age, and, in 1760, he also had a son—David Samuel, the guardian of the house in the Rue Saint-Francois, who, in 1832 (the date of this narrative), was eighty-two years old, and seemed likely to live as long as his father, who had died at the age of ninety-three. Finally, Abel Samuel, the son whom Bathsheba so bitterly regretted, born in 1790,

had perished under the Russian knout, at the age of thirty-six.

Having established this humble genealogy, we easily understand how this successive longevity of three members of the Samuel family, all of whom had been guardians of the walled house, by uniting, as it were, the nineteenth with the seventeenth century, simplified and facilitated the execution of M. de Rennepont's will; the latter having declared his desire to the grandfather of the Samuels, that the capital should only be augmented by interest at five per cent.—so that the fortune might come to his descendants free from all taint of usurious speculation.

The fellow men of the Samuel family, the first inventors of the bill of exchange, which served them in the Middle Ages to transport mysteriously considerable amounts from one end of the world to the other, to conceal their fortune, and to shield it from the rapacity of their enemies—the Jews, we say, having almost the monopoly of the trade in money and exchanges, until the end of the eighteenth century, aided the secret transactions and financial operations of this family, which, up to about 1820, placed their different securities, which had become progressively immense, in the hands of the principal Israelitish bankers and merchants of Europe. This sure and secret manner of acting had enabled the present guardian of the house in the Rue Saint-Francois, to effect enormous investments, unknown to all; and it was more especially during the period of his management, that the capital sum had acquired, by the mere fact of compound interest, an almost incalculable development. Compared with him, his father and grandfather had only small amounts to manage. Though it had only been necessary to find successively sure and immediate investments, so that the money might not remain as it were one day without bearing interest, it had acquired financial capacity to attain this result, when so many millions were in question. The last of the Samuels, brought up in the school of his father, had exhibited this capacity in a very high degree, as will be seen immediately by the results. Nothing could be more touching, noble and respectable, than the conduct of the members of this Jewish family, who, partners in the engagement of gratitude taken by their ancestor, devote themselves for long years, with as much disinterestedness as intelligence and honesty, to the slow acquisition of a kingly fortune, of which they expect no part themselves, but which, thanks to them, would come pure, as immense, to the hands of the descendants of their benefactor! Nor could anything be more honorable to him who made, and him who received this deposit, than the simple promise by word of mouth, unaccompanied by any security save mutual confidence and reciprocal esteem, when the result was only to be produced at the end of a century and a half!

After once more reading his inventory with attention, Samuel said to his wife: "I am certain of the correctness of my additions. Now please to compare with the account book in your hand the summary of the investments that I have just entered in the register. I will assure myself, at the same time, that the bonds and vouchers are properly arranged in this casket, that, on the opening of the will, they may be delivered in order to the notary."

"Begin, my dear, and I will check you," said Bathsheba.

Samuel read as follows, examining as he went on, the contents of his casket:—

Statement of the account of the heirs of M. de Rennepont, delivered by David Samuels.

DEBIT.

2,000,000 francs per annum, in the French 5 P. C., bought from 1825 to 1832, at an average price of 99f. 50c. 39,800,000

900,000 francs, ditto, in the French 3 P. C., bought during the same years, at an average of 74f. 25c. 22,275,000

5,000 shares in the Bank of France, bought at 1,900 - 9,500,000

3,000 shares in the Four Canals, in a certificate from the Company, bought at 1,115f. 3,345,000

125,000 ducats of Neapolitans, at an average of 82, 2,050,000 ducats, at 4f. 40c. 9,020,000

5,000 Austrian Metallics, of 1,000 florins, at 93—say 4,650,000 florins, at 2f. 50c. 11,625,000

75,000 pounds sterling per annum, English Consolidated 3 P. C., at 88%—say 42,218,750, at 25f. 55,468,750

1,200,000 florins, Dutch 2½ P. C., at 60—28,800,000 florins, at 2f. 100 - 60,606,000

Cash in bank notes, gold and silver - 535,000

Francs 212,175,000

Paris, 12th February, 1832.

CREDIT.

150,000 francs received from M. de Rennepont, in 1682, by Isaac Samuel, my grandfather; and invested by him, my father and myself, in different securities, at Five per Cent. Interest, with a settlement of ac-

count and investment of interest every six months, producing, as by annexed vouchers - 225,950,000

Less losses sustained by failures, expenses of commission and brokerage, and salary of three generations of trustees as per statement annexed - 13,775,000

212,175,000

Francs 212,175,000

"It is quite right," said Samuel, after examining the papers, contained in the cedar-wood box. "There remains in hand, at the absolute disposal of the heirs of the Rennepont family, the sum of two hundred and twelve millions, one hundred and seventy-five thousand francs." And the old man looked at his wife with an expression of legitimate pride.

"It is hardly credible!" cried Bathsheba, struck with surprise. "I knew that you had immense property in your hands; but I never could have believed that one hundred and fifty-thousand francs, left a century and a half ago, should be the only source of this immense fortune."

"It is even so, Bathsheba," answered the old man proudly. "Doubtless, my grandfather, my father and myself, have all been exact and faithful in the management of these funds; doubtless we have required some sagacity in the choice of investments, in times of revolution and commercial panics; but all this was easy to us, thanks to our relations, with our brethren in all countries—and never have I, or any of mine, made an usurious investment, or even taken the advantage of the legal rate of interest. Such were the positive demands of M. de Rennepont, given to my grandfather; nor is there in the world a fortune that has been obtained by purer means. Had it not been for this disinterestedness, we might have much augmented this two hundred and twelve millions, only by taking advantage of a few favorable circumstances."

"Dear me! is it possible?"

"Nothing is more simple, Bathsheba. Every one knows, that in fourteen years a capital will be doubled, by the mere accumulation of interest and compound interest at five per cent. Now reflect, that in a century and a half there are ten times fourteen years, and that these one hundred and fifty thousand francs have thus been doubled and redoubled, over and over again. All that astonishes you will appear plain enough. In 1682, M. de Rennepont entrusted my grandfather with a hundred and fifty thousand francs; this sum, invested as I have told you, would have produced in 1696, fourteen years after, three hundred thousand francs. These last, doubled in 1710, would produce six hundred thousand. On the death of my grandfather in 1719, the amount was already near a million; in 1724, it would be twelve hundred thousand francs; in 1738, two millions four hundred thousand; in 1752, about two years after my birth, four millions eight hundred thousand; in 1766, nine millions six hundred thousand; in 1780, nineteen millions two hundred thousand; in 1794, twelve years after the death of my father, thirty-eight millions four hundred thousand; in 1808, seventy-six millions eight hundred thousand; in 1822, one hundred and fifty-three millions six hundred thousand; and, at this time, taking the compound interest for ten years, it should be at least two hundred and twenty-five millions. But losses and inevitable charges, of which the account has been strictly kept, have reduced the sum to two hundred and twelve millions one hundred and seventy-five thousand francs, the securities for which are in this box."

"I now understand you, my dear," answered Bathsheba, thoughtfully; "but how wonderful is this power of accumulation! and what admirable provision may be made for the future, with the smallest present resources!"

"Such, no doubt, was the idea of M. de Rennepont; for my father has often told me, and he derived it from his father, that M. de Rennepont was one of the soundest intellects of his time," said Samuel, as he closed the cedar-box.

"God grant his descendants may be worthy of this kingly fortune, and make a noble use of it!" said Bathsheba, rising.

It was now broad day, and the clock had just struck seven.

"The masons will soon be here," said Samuel, as he replaced the cedar-box in the iron safe, concealed behind the antique press. "Like you, Bathsheba, I am curious and anxious to know, what descendants of M. de Rennepont will now present themselves."

Two or three loud knocks on the outer gate resounded through the house. The barking of the watch-dogs responded to this summons.

Samuel said to his wife: "It is no doubt the masons, whom the notary has sent with his clerk. Tie all the keys and their labels together; I will come back and fetch them."

So saying, Samuel went down to the door, with much nimbleness, considering his age, prudently opened a small

wicket, and saw three workmen, in the garb of masons, accompanied by a young man dressed in black.

"What may you want, gentlemen?" said the Jew, before opening the door, as he wished first to make sure of the identity of the personages.

"I am sent by M. Dumesnil, the notary," answered the clerk, "to be present at the unwalling of a door. Here is a letter from my master, addressed to M. Samuel, guardian of the house."

"I am he, sir," said the Jew; "please to put the letter through the slide, and I will take it."

The clerk did as Samuel desired, but shrugged his shoulders at what he considered the ridiculous precautions of a suspicious old man. The housekeeper opened the box, took the letter, went to the end of the vaulted passage in order to read it, and carefully compared the signature with that of another letter which he drew from the pocket of his long coat; then, after all these precautions, he chained up his dogs, and returned to open the gate to the clerks and masons.

"What the devil, my good man!" said the clerk, as he entered; "there would not be more formalities in opening the gates of a fortress!"

The Jew bowed, but without answering.

"Are you deaf, my good fellow?" cried the clerk, close to his ears.

"No, sir," said Samuel, with a quiet smile, as he advanced several steps beyond the passage. Then pointing to the old house, he added: "That, sir, is the door which you will have to open; you will also have to remove the lead and iron from the second window to the right."

"Why not open all the windows?" asked the clerk.

"Because, sir, as guardian of this house, I have received particular orders on the subject."—"Who gave you these orders?"

"My father, sir, who received them from his father, who transmitted them from the master of this house. When I cease to have the care of it, the new proprietor will do as he pleases."

"Oh! very well," said the clerk, not a little surprised. Then, addressing himself to the masons, he added: "This is your business, my fine fellows; you are to unwall the door, and remove the iron frame-work of the second window to the right."

Whilst the masons set to work, under the inspection of the notary's clerk, a coach stopped before the outer gate, and Rodin, accompanied by Gabriel, entered the house in the Rue Saint-Francois.

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