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UPROOTED

By a Prominent Rabbi.

I have a friend—I don't know whether I can really call him a friend, the relationship is so one-sided and he may turn against me any moment—who illustrates very pointedly a group of psychological laws which it is very important for us Jews to comprehend and appreciate.

This friend, a gentleman by dint of social rearing and intellectual culture, is descended from an eminent family of Portuguese Jews, but, his father having become converted to Unitarianism, he himself has never been a Jew in faith. A European by birth and education, he has travelled in almost all continents, speaks with correct fluency a number of modern languages, but has become naturalized in this country, of which he is an ardent, though a rather critical admirer. He is an expert of rare competency in a certain branch of business; but he copes with increasing difficulties in finding employment, partly because he has high standards of honesty which frequently conflict with prevailing business practices, largely also because he is what people call conceited and overbearing which, in his case, means that he always knows better, delivers opinions with an air of final authority and becomes very bitter in his personal denunciations. Worst of all, by reviling and exposing the methods of past employers, he creates an impression of disloyalty and a fear of similar experience, so that people hesitate to take him into their employ; besides, very naturally, the influential enemies he has made are not backward in cautioning people against him. With all this he is the soul of honor, a clean, upright, independent man, brave and persevering in the presence of constant discouragement, grateful and appreciative for friendly offices. I have a constant fear that he will end in suicide, when once his last hope is cut off.

His attitude towards his coracial-

ists—that is all the Jews can be to him—forms an interesting, though not always a pleasant study. From his parental home he knows all the conversational Jewish phrases which, when with Jews, he uses lavishly and with gusto and is so thoroughly acquainted with Jewish customs that one would be inclined to doubt his native Christianity, if his truthfulness were not clearly above suspicion; he also seems to feel a special shame and indignation against Jewish vice and Jewish failings which really bespeaks an unconscious sense of responsibility and brotherhood; yet he has, at times, come very near to losing my friendship, when he has expressed open aversion to associating with Jews, and I have often felt that he is peculiarly disposed to blame the lapses of individual Jews on their Judaism; so much so that I have been made to understand better, how thin a wall really separates wounded Jewish pride from actual Antisemitism. When a man's Jewish vanity has been hurt innumerable times by the unrepresentativeness of unworthy Jewish brothers, he finally falls victim to a chronic disease, to that hatred and contempt of Jew for fellow-Jew, of the man of Jewish temperament and habit for all that flows from Jewish temperament and habit, a phenomenon which to me stands for the final tragedy of a people losing its own soul.

Despite all this he probably has no other father-confessor than me, the rabbi; Christian ministers have either been unsympathetic as to his many troubles or they have kept him at a distance by a cold air of reserve or they have been "too busy" to listen to his tales and trials. I have always felt, without telling him so, that I had before me an unhappy scion of Israel, a small facet of the infinite tragedy of dispersion, an adult waif that needed fathering, a drifted bit of human

wreckage on a shore of pathless desolation.

But as a student of the human soul and as a searcher into the inwardness of Jewish history and Jewish psychology I am profoundly interested in the impressive lessons conveyed by the sterility and defeat of this promising life. It is to me a most lucid illustration of the supreme need, for every full-blown spiritual unfoldment, of being rooted firmly and loyally in a definite soil. There is a certain justice in the contempt with which the present-day German philosophers, historians, economic and social writers regard the "cosmopolitan" and "cosmopolitanism," and it is just the futility, the homelessness, the disintegrating, critical temper of such a wanderer as my friend, which show the dangers of what I might call spiritual rootlessness, of that inhuman, unloyal detachment which suffers from having either no true fatherland or too many of them.

The "man without a country" is a pathetic moral cripple; but even a sadder figure is the man whose heart has cut itself loose from all rootage in its natural soil. "He says of his father and his mother I have not seen them; his brothers he does not recognize, his children he does not know." Compare him with the man who feels completely at home in the environment to which Providence has assigned him; such a man need not be uncritical of the shortcomings of his people, his country; but he accepts these faults as more or less inevitable, he has a certain forbearance, almost an affection for them, feeling them to be, in a sense, part and parcel of himself. Objectiveness and detachment will serve well enough in the realms of critical investigation and scientific research; they are disturbing and upsetting in the cozy atmosphere of home where one has a right, almost a duty to be his own, unconscious, uncritical self.

It has been claimed by various writers, Leo Reich, for instance, that the Jew, like all immigrants, aliens, wanderers, foreigners, has, in competitions of every sort, the advantage of the outsider, the observer, of the man with more than