RAILWAY-SERIES No. 4.

I. G. B.

by

J. LUB.

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INDEX.

TRAPPED.

Walking from the Johannesburg Market Square along the tram line, past the post office, you first of all pass a lot of fine building and shops that anyone might well go and have a look at. There are boot shops, and outfitters, and big hotels, and bars; and everything looks first-rate. But if you continue, you will notice the street getting worse and worse. The buildings on either side of you will suggest that you have got into another street altogether. And yet, that is not the case. You are still in Market Street. Iron shanties seem to prop up old hovels, built of stone, but now showing a desire to collapse. Foul, little lanes, leading on to dirty, vacant stands, where people have deposited their empty tins and rubbish generally, intersect the rows of tumble-down houses. You will see Coolies talking in front of their doors in long, white shirts. Many-coloured blankets are displayed outside the shops, and on the sidewalk yellow, tin trunks for the kaffir trade form a row. Raw natives can be fitted out here with second-hand clothes and boots by Russian Jews and Coolies.

Hereabouts money will buy anything; and everything is second-rate. You will find jewellers'

"shoppies," where you can get a watch for the modest sum of half-a-crown—on the instalment system. You pay two shillings weekly, until you have spent altogether £1.10.0 on an article which, as likely as not, has been stolen. Coats, jackets and frock-coats, as well as sundry wearing-apparel can be had here. You can get a shave from a coolie with a long, shabby shirt, and you can buy a whole handful of sweets for a tickey. Coolies who do carpentering and can mend your boots live here. You can have anything in the wide world done, for the second-hand stores are legion.

There are terrible, little dwelling-houses with miniature windows, and you wonder how a human being can live in a place like that. Occasionally you will notice a decent place, but most of them are unfit to live in. Walking about of a night, one does well to have a look round and be on one's guard, because the whole neighbourhood makes one think of thieves and rogues. The streets are badly lit, and, looking through the curtains and the chinks of the doors you will see Coolies and Chinamen lolling about on the merchandise they display outside in the daytime. Only the fruit shops are still doing business. In several of them fruit is sold by women who, during the day, follow other occupations.

It will be evident that the cross-streets in this neighbourhood are not exactly spick-and-span, and that millionaires do not hive hard by. The houses are small, grimy and brown with accumulated dust. The verandahs look grey with the tailings that have been blown on to them. Many a house is empty, with windows in which not a single pane has managed to survive. The doors are open, because there is no chance of letting the houses. Thieves, rascals, and people without a roof over their heads congregate there at night, under the cover of darkness. The police make themselves scarce, because they know that opportunities for receiving a knife-thrust or a blow with a sandbag abound.

Not lang ago a man by the name of Pieter Duvenhage lived in one of these cross-streets. He was a mason by trade, and had always been able to knock out a living for himself and his family. There was his son Jannie, a boy of fourteen, and his two little daughters, one five and the other three years old. His wife has been dead these two years and a half, and his eldest daughter got married soon after to a gent who worked on the City and Suburban. She had a son who was also called Pieter, of whom his grandfather, of course, was exceedingly proud.

Pieter Duvenhage had learnt his trade properly

after the war. When he was a farmer he had built his own house, however, and a substantial little house it was. But when the war was finished, Duvenhage was finished, too. His few head of cattle had been taken, his house destroyed. The small piece of ground he had to sell, so as to feed and clothe his family. On the advice of his brother-in-law he came to live in Johannesburg. They packed up all that was left, and went to town. Sixpence, the little Bushman, accompanied them. Duvenhage acquired the boy from his mother, when he was but eight years old, and he grew up with the elder children. They played together, fought together, shot clay out of tubes together and made toys of knuckle-bones together. Sixpence was an excruciatingly funny bit of a Bushman. He was an expert liar, and could laugh with the best of them, but he was very fond of the missus and the kids. Of Baas Pieter he was a little bit scared, because Baas had given him a good drubbing one day. The police found out about the existence of Sixpence when the family moved into town, and he had to be registered. There was a lot of trouble about the thing, but the boss got matters put straight, and Sixpence could stay on. After a while he asked for leave to attend Sunday school in the afternoon, and the missus saw no harm in it. Oom Pieter

didn't exactly like it, but he said nothing. Shortly afterwards, Sixpence came home with a little book, and by candle-light he would pore over his English "a-b, ab." He would study night after night, and twice a week he went to school with the kaffir clergyman. He was 'cute enough, and it was not long before he applied for a special pass. Very soon after that he had a talk to the missus about his wages. He considered that his valuable services would fetch more elsewhere, and when the woman told him that they had brought him up, always treating him well, he answered that he was quite aware of that, but that he was not a slave; the missus knew he would like to be obedient (for the cleggyman had taught him the virtue of obedience!) but it wasn't good enough, for all that. Ten bob a month wasn't wages; he was sixteen by now, and could make his £2 with other people.

Another three weeks and Sixpence was gone. It was no good trying to get him back. They owed him £1, and Duvenhage found work scarce.

Altogether, the history of Duvenhage's career as a worker in town was not a brilliant one. His wife sickened, and six months after she was dead. His married daughter looked after the baby a bit in the daytime, and the other children went to school. He tramped and tramped along the mines, asking

for a job—asking here and asking there, but everywhere in vain. From time to time he would get a small job, but in a few days, or at most in a week's time, he would be out of work again. His brother-in-law joined the unemployed, and was also without work for some considerable time. Things were beginning to look very black.

About two months ago, Oom Pieter left his house one morning with a very heavy heart indeed. His daughter had spoken to him about all her troubles, and had asked him for money. Her husband could not go on like that, she thought, providing for all the children. Pa had to "make a plan," Sannie said, because her husband was hard up as well. Pa said "Ay," and started his tramping about once more. He went along the street, and just as he was turning the corner he noticed a native brushing past him. When he looked a little more closely, he noticed that the native was dressed better than he himself was, sporting a starched collar, a fine jacket and trousers, and solid, tan boots. He had no sooner taken in these things than the native looked at him, too, saying:

"Morning, master."

Pieter looked at him in astonishment, for he had not noticed that this was Sixpence.

"My, gracious, Sixpence," he said, "is that you?

Why, you do look a toff! What are you doing now?"

"Boss," the boy said, "you mustn't call me Sixpence now. My new name is Johannes; they baptised me by that name when I was confirmed."

"I see," Duvenhage replied, moving away.

But all of a sudden the boy put his hand over his stomach, crying out "O, o, o." Duvenhage turned round, and there the boy was, looking as if he were suffering fearful torture. Oom Pieter was a compassionate soul, so he asked: "What's the matter wi' you?"

"O, my boss," the native said, groaning horribly, "I've got the cramps. O, when I get that, I'm mad with pain. O, my boss."

"But what can I do?" Oom Pieter asked.

"O, my boss, can't you get me a tot?" the boy answered, and he looked fit to drop with agony.

"No, my boy, I haven't any money, so what am I to do?"

Sixpence managed to sit down on the kerbstone, and groaned some more.

"Ach, my boss," he cried, "I've got money enough," and he produced two florins and a shilling-piece. "If boss will just buy a small bottle of dop for me, it will soon be over. O, do, my boss, do please buy me the dop."

Duvenhage had often heard about illicit liquor selling, but he took the prohibition to apply only to a regular, remunerative retail trade. And as he saw the poor creature in pain, he was reminded of the old days, when his late wife was very fond of the boy—and why shouldn't he help the poor fellow? The native kept up his groaning and moaning, and Petrus went into the bottle-store, buying a pint of liquor for four shillings. Passing it on to the boy, he returned the shilling change but Sixpence told him he could keep that for his trouble. At first he did not care to, but, thinking of his children, he fingered it once or twice. By this time the pain seemed to have grown less. Sixpence got up, and, walking stealthily alongside of him, asked him for a match when they got to the corner, because he wanted to light a cigarette. Oom Pieter had no matches, so the boy fetched some out himself, took a cigarette from a small box and began to smoke. The pain appeared to be considerably less. As soon as Sixpence started smoking, a man with a Panama hat aproached them from the cross-street, walked straight up to Oom Pieter, and told him he was his prisoner.

The poor man hardly knew what it all meant, and was almost scared to death. He was going to speak, but the other man told him to take care,

and to follow along to the charge office. The boy said nothing, but came on behind. At the charge office the marked shilling was produced, and Sixpence showed his pint-bottle.

The next morning Duvenhage was taken to court from the Fort, and the magistrate gave him "six months hard" for selling liquor to natives. He pleaded very hard, the poor fellow, and everybody could see he wasn't a rogue, but that didn't mend matters. The magistrate was a soft-spoken gentleman, and said he was very sorry, but he couldn't help it: that was the law!

Sannie refused to go and see her father. He had known all about what he was doing, she opined.

Pieter Duvenhage is a wreck of a man. His only consolation is that his conscience proclaims him an honest man still, and that his wife did not live to witness the disgrace. The eldest boy, who works in an office, says it is not his father they caught—it is one of the other Duvenhage's—no relation at all. Sannie and her husband went away to escape the disgrace. The two little daughters she gave to a poor woman who was sorry for them, a widow

who has to work hard for a living; but she says: "the Lord will provide for the little mites." She treats them as if they were her own children. You get a few genuine people about town occasionally.

Sixpence was elected a deacon in the native church, this last Sunday. He's a regular, good, religious boy—so they say.

I. G. B.

CHAPTER I.

PODAWSKY.

Behind the large, dirty window sits Podawsky, "Practical Shoemaker, saddler and dealer in all kinds of leather", as the board above the door indicates. You require to look at it well if you wish to ascertain his qualifications, for his friend Mr. Lewis, who calls himself "Practical Painter," has written it thereon with shoe-blacking, and rubbed a little oil over it to counteract the effect of the rain. Podawsky has adopted the name "Goldfriend" because it is customary with his people, but he answers to both names when you address him. He also answers to the name "Old Jew,"—it's all the same to him.

Podawsky sits stooping with bent back on a condensed-milk box. He is a small mannikin with high shoulders, whiskers, and heavy, dark eyebrows. His head is covered with a little black skull-cap, and his eyes are hidden by a pair of blue spectacles. His greasy beard nearly touches the heel of the old shoe, which he is working at, and whenever he has stuck the awl in, he automatically gives a lick

at the horsehair at the point of the thread, and then thrusts it in, and with a big swing draws the thread through, this being the only motion that opens his old chest a bit. When he has finished working with the needle he holds the little bit of iron in the flame of the piece of candle, and then he hunts for another candle-end amongst all the tools on the little table, wherewith to make the thread smooth.

It is now nearly dark, and Podawsky has now and then to hold the thread against the light, to see if the point is still on it. Alongside of him in the corner of the room stands a paraffin stove, with a little kettle on it, and a tin plate and cup by it. Those are his only kitchen utensils, for he has lost his old spoon by melting gold with it.

On the wall, to his right, a bracket has been put up, and on it there stand a couple of pairs of boots, whilst below hangs the tail-coat which he wears on "Shabbes." A few feet behind him is suspended a chintz curtain, which protects his bedroom from the eyes of passers-by. There stands the old stretcher, on which he sleeps, and under which he hides his food, because a kaffir had once stolen his tin of jam from the bracket, when he was away at the back.

Podawsky still keeps working, but he can scarcely

see any longer. For a moment he ceases working and looks out. It is fearful weather! He only sees the dirty gray mist of sand, which is still blowing about in great clouds in the narrow street in which he lives. The dust blinds the people, and they run hard to get home, but the wind stops them and turns them round with its gusts that make them rub their eyes, just like children who have had a caning.

Podawsky listens and, to be able to do so, places his fingers in his ears, for otherwise he cannot hear well, because the battery-stamps make so much noise, and then he only hears a sound like that of the great ocean across which he came not a year ago; but now he listens attentively, for he has found that this is the best way to enable one to hear.

It is still now, still for a long time. But when he uncovers his ears again, the stamps roar worse than ever and with redoubled noise, and for a while he listens to the sound. He knows what it means.

It is "gold, pure gold" that they are roaring. Before he had been a month in the country they had told him how the great masses of rock are taken out of the earth and ground to powder, and that gold, pure gold, comes out of them. Then he used to stand in the evenings looking at the big wheel as it began to revolve, and hearing the rock fall into the trollies which seemed

to run of their own accord. Then he would go home, and think, and think till his head ached. He, Podawsky, was dwelling in the midst of the gold. It was under him, and around him, and alongside of him, and yet he had none, and later on he heard of the gold still contained in the big heaps of debris, and so he thought out a plan to try and get some more gold out of them.

Then he had spoilt his soup-spoon and had nearly burnt off both his hands, and so he had given up the idea of contriving other methods of making gold. But it never left his thoughts. He was living in the midst of gold, and he had none!

When a newcomer in the land, he had gone about buying and selling old clothes, and had made a few shillings, with which he had hired a small shop, but business was slack and money scarce. There for a week past had stood a pair of shoes, and the owner did not come to fetch them, because he had no money. So he sits and thinks and gropes around for the matches, for he has put out the candle in order to light the old lamp, which hangs above the table.

He has just done this, when the door opens and his friend Lewis, *alias* Kagan, cautiously enters. Podawsky lights a fire under the little kettle, but does not say a word. Lewis, likewise, says nothing, but

lays hold of an empty paraffin case, sits down upon it, takes a dirty handkerchief out of his pocket and wipes his eyes.

By the time he had performed this operation, his friend had taken up a shoe, and begun working as if there were nobody present, but suddenly he says "*No was haist.*" (Well, what's the matter?)

"*Man magt a leben.*" (One makes a living). "*Wen man magt a leben sol man sein zufrieden*" (If one makes a living he must be satisfied), Podawsky replies without looking up.

"*Ja, aber wen man magt kein lêben, kein leben, sol man sein zufrieden?*" ("Yes, but if one does not make a living at all, must he still be satisfied?".....)

All the time Lewis has never lifted his eyes from his friend, and now that the old fellow begins to complain of all his troubles and all his cares, it is as if some thought had struck him about a matter which has not yet been discussed between them.

"Yes," he says, "that is true. One can't make a living, and things are hard for us poor people, who are persecuted all our lives-long and never get any rest."

Lewis had first been—as has been said—a "Practical Painter," which means that he walked the streets with a big pane of glass on his back calling out in broken English: "Windows to paint." Later on he

had entered the "Soft-goods trade," and at that he still works.

He is a "traveller," and travels afoot. He visits all the small "shoppies" in the town, where his people sit working from early morning till late at night, bent double over old machines, at less pay than a Kaffir can earn. There he has to find purchasers for the goods of the firm of Lankowitz, which goods are then transformed into "Paris fashion" for the great firm "Berlin." The pay which Lewis receives for "travelling" is but small, and this goes against his grain. As a child he had been sent to a big school in his fatherland, but after two years' schooling his father had taken his whole family to England, to leave that free-land again as soon as possible, because he found that food was not "free" there. With that modicum of civilization Lewis had come hither, and had as a youth of eighteen started in trade as a painter. Now he is still in business and he does not like it. The trouble is that you can't be a socialist here. It doesn't pay. There in Russia it was all right. There you just took an oath to kill and destroy all rulers, and then the newspapers dilated on the oppressed Jews and the cruel Russians. But he has been bitterly disappointed in all his expectations both in England and in this country. There was nobody there to come and greet him as a martyr, and his

own people had only given him a few shillings wherewith to begin the "old clothes" business.

This had made him think, but those thoughts had carried him back to the anarchists of Russia, and again he came to the conclusion that this would not pay, and.... money he must make. So he has made a plan with some other people, but that is still a secret, and now it suddenly strikes him that he can make use of old Podawsky to carry out his scheme.

The old chap, he thinks, is "*masjoege*" (simple) and still cherishes foolish thoughts about Jerusalem and the Promised Land.

"Moshes," so he begins, "it is no use thinking that men like you and me can ever make a penny in this land of '*slemiels*' (heathens). It is no use to think of it."

"Noo ja," is all that Podawsky answers as he holds the bit of iron in the candle to make the sole shine.

"Look here," continues Lewis, "I have long wanted to speak to you about a matter, that will be good for both you and me. I have friends who will help us, but don't forget that you are an old man, and can do but little, but for all that you can share in the profits which will come from the 'business'."

"*Und was sol ich machen*—(what must I do?) I can....

"You must do nothing. You must just keep quiet," and he stamps on the floor, and when it sounds hollow, he goes a little further and says: "This old room of yours is just first-class."

Podawsky, who can only speak Yiddish, looks at him in surprise, and says, "First-class, *noo was?*"

"Look here, Moshes, all you'll have to do is to keep dark. One of these days you'll get a lump of gold in this here room of yours, that'll weigh a couple of hundred pounds, but you are to know nothing of it—you understand?"

Podawsky doesn't quite grasp his meaning, and asks: "Am I to sell it, and what am I to get for it?"

He has now put down the shoe, and listens with all his might, for is not this something unusual—a hundred-weight of gold!

"All you have to do," says Kagan, "is to keep mum, dead-mum, do you hear? You must keep quiet if we come here at night, and saw a hole in the floor."

"You must behave as if you were deaf and blind and understood nothing of it. You are not to say a word, nor ask a question."

The old fellow listens, but is not yet satisfied, and says: "I am to keep quiet when you break up my floor here and who is to pay me the damage?"

"You old fool," Lewis interrupts him, "don't you understand then, that you will share in the gold, that the money you will get is worth more than your ugly old shanty, and more than two such old things."

"Now listen well. We—I and a couple of friends of mine—have discovered a way of making gold, gold, mind you, real gold," he repeats, as he sees the eyes of his friend glitter, "but the government won't allow it. They say we must dig for it and not make it. Now we have already made a thousand pounds' worth, and we are looking for a place to hide it, and that's what we want your room for."

Kagan has now quite resumed the Jewish manner of arguing with frantic gestures of his hands. Moshes sits still and says: "*Noo ja*".....

Angrily Kagan interrupts him and exclaims: "*Noo ja, noo ja, was haist; wilst du nicht machen de gelt, werd ich fragen ein ander, sol er machen de messomme.*" (Very well—very well, what matters; if you don't want to make money, I'll ask some one else, and he'll get the coin.)

Podawsky cannot let the chance go by and says: "All right—you can come."

"Well, then drop your work, and come along with me," says Lewis, "but mind what I said to you, you are not to say a word and to make as if you were deaf, you understand."

The old fellow gets into his jacket, puts on his old round hard hat, and leaves the little street to catch the tram which runs from Turffontein to town. The weather is fine now, the stars are shining and Podawsky is sunk in deep thought; there is something that makes him uneasy, but he dares not say what it is, for Kagan is a smart chap and his own experience of things in this country is as yet but small. The old man gazes in the direction of Turffontein, and sees how the connecting pole of the tram emits little sparks against the wire, and how now and then small lights appear between the trees.

The old fellow is still thinking, and suddenly he grasps the arm of his companion and says:

"*Voo, was werd ihr machen?* You are surely not going to do something wrong? You shall not do so! you may not use me for such work."

Lewis gets angry and says in English: "Shut up, you old fool—come, there's the tram, just you come along, there's no danger."

They jump on, and the tram hums townwards, but Podawsky sits and half-closes his eyes against the light. He is lost in thought, and says not a word.

CHAPTER II.

JAN.

A yard opens upon a little back street, which is built all round with small rooms, in some of which lights are still shining through the grimy curtains or the dirty sheets that serve as curtains. The boards of the narrow verandah are rotten, and there are many holes in them, but the children of that neighbourhood know them, and play hide-and-seek in them. The verandah posts are old and stand trembling, if one ventures to touch them, and in some places old pieces of guttering hang down, which not a soul has ever taken the trouble to repair. There is not a single little "stoep" that is not damaged and the people have just collected some stones here and there, or put down an old paraffin tin, filled with sand to patch up the holes.

In the middle of the yard stands an old round tank that leaks a good deal when it is half full, and which is really meant for emptying slops into, but the people there have long ago grown tired of that affair, and prefer "chucking" their dirty water into the yard or on to the little back-street, as is evidenced by the small furrows, which have their sources at every little stoep and empty themselves into a large furrow, that issues at the back gate,

and where, even yet, the bluish water shines in the moonlight. The full moon illuminates half of the yard, and in the shadow of the old tank crouches a big black cat, which is being attacked by a lot of dogs that make a fearful noise. From one of the little windows there comes the soft tinkle of a guitar, with abrupt intervals, as if from some one who is still a learner.

The middle door on the shady side is ajar, and a narrow ray of light falls obliquely across the darkness.

At a small table sit a man and a woman, both leaning their arms upon its edge and resting their chins upon clenched fists. The small glass paraffin lamp shines upon their faces, the one pale and hollow-cheeked, the other regular and red, hardened by toil and weatherbeaten, but also marked with the signs of many troubles.

The big shadow falls on the old wall-paper behind him, the monotony of which is only broken by the sombre portrait of a woman in a black frame. From the corner of the chamber comes weak though regular breathing, and a few tears trickle through the fingers of the mother. Both rise for a moment, and stand bending over their sleeping little daughter.

The cheeks are still hollow, the little forehead

still somewhat wrinkled, and the tiny fingers very thin, but the danger is now past.

They sit down again; and across the table the man grasps the hand of his wife and whispers hoarsely: "Now, don't cry any more, the doctor says the crisis is past. Don't cry, my dear."

"Yes, I know, but there is something worse that troubles me! You know what I mean. About the child I am not uneasy any more, but I am about you, Jannie. You tell me nothing, but I suspect that there are wrong things going on, that ought not to be. You are in bad company, Jan! For I know you! You do things that are not right. Say now whether it is true or not?

"When I have been sitting up at nights with the poor little thing, and you were trying to sleep, you couldn't manage.

"You kept rolling about and getting up and my anxiety about the child was sometimes not so great as about yourself. I know you are not one of that class of Johannesburgers, who are too lazy to work; but I have noticed that the yearning to make money has laid hold on you too. Were we not very happy together with the crust of bread, which you earned honestly? Tell me, what is it! Tell me, cannot I perhaps help you? I had hoped that the illness of our little one might have turned you to better

things, but how I have deceived myself! The child is now barely out of danger, and there you go again without telling me what it is that drives you from home. This evening you came back tired and worn out, and I perceive that your troubles are perhaps greater than before. Are you not grateful then, that the child is getting better?"

All the time the man sat, looking straight before him without speaking a word, but now he raises his head and says: "Yes, I am glad, but what's the use? What good is it to us that the child lives and we have no food to give it, and if we are to see the child grow up and get big and then later on she just has to work like any Kaffir I think that perhaps it would have been better had she died. What's the use of living and having no money?"

The poor woman first looks at him in surprise, but when she sees that he is in earnest, she lets her head sink upon her arms and sobs aloud. He lets her weep without saying anything, and gazes before him with a sombre stare. Then he fetches some water and gives it to her. She drinks mechanically and returns the cup without looking at him. He stoops over her, and kisses her on her forehead, but she remains motionless. It is now nearly eleven o'clock. "Come," he says, "it is getting late, let us stop talking; it will be allright. You must'nt go and make

yourself ill. I have work to do which I can't tell you of, but you'll very soon hear all about it, and you will be satisfied. I must be off, there are some friends waiting for me."

She is used to it that her husband sometimes goes out late at night, and so she now shows no surprise, but sighs deeply as the tears stream down her cheeks.

He just looks at the child again for a moment, takes leave of her with a "so-long" and walks out of the little room and off the stoep, and by a path at the back enters the street, where the moon is now casting long shadows. He keeps to the dark side and walks along quickly in the direction of the city. In the next street the trams are rattling, but he keeps to the street which runs parallel to the broader one till he gets near to the market-square just as the post-office clock is striking half-past eleven. At the corner of the big building stand two men, who seem to be waiting. Jan first takes a careful look, and sees that they are his friends. One of them is a tall youth, and the other is no one else but our friend Podawsky escorted by Lewis. They stand there side by side without saying a word. As soon as Lewis sees Jan, he steps up to him and says: "Have you been waiting long?"

"No", replies Jan, "but who is that little fellow with you there?"—"Oh, why that is the old chap

who is to help us. Speak a little low, for I don't know what's the matter with him. It looks to me as if he isn't 'all there' to-night."

Podawsky now joins them, and they cross over to the other side of the market. Lewis talks in whispers to Jan, whilst Podawsky shuffles along after them.

Lewis informs Jan that they have been to Parktown to see the 'gentleman', who is taking part in their business, and that he wanted first to see Podawsky, because he had not yet met him and didn't know whether he could be trusted, but—says Lewis—as soon as he saw him, he just began laughing and said: "He'll do!"

Jan has listened attentively to Lewis' rapid talk, and is just waiting for a chance to have a say also. At last Lewis pauses and Jan says: "Yes, look here, you have now talked a lot, but how do matters stand now? What have I to do, and what must the old man behind us here do? And where does the profit come in? I don't like the look of things at all."

Lewis suddenly interrupts him and replies:

"See here, I thought you knew all about it. This evening, you know," he adds with a smile, "we are going to fetch the gold."

"When we have loaded it on to the cart you are

to go with a couple of kaffirs to the house of the old fellow behind us here, and you will take some iron-piping and some tools with you, to look as if you were going to repair a broken waterpipe. I shall go on ahead to tell the old man that the gold is coming, We unload the stuff at Podawsky's and you quickly make a hole in his floor, and the thing is done. To-morrow, or the day after, the fellow will come with his cheque and takes it away and we share the money. That's all!" Jan walks along lost in thought, and says nothing.

"I see," he says at last. "I take the gold with the kaffirs, and you go on ahead. If they catch me, then you are off, and that gent from Parktown is safe, for of course, he knows nothing about it, and then I and the poor old soul walking behind us here will get into trouble, isn't that so? I don't like it, I tell you. You are too clever a lot, but I don't want to get into prison for you and the other rogue, even though he does live in a grand house."

Lewis was evidently startled at Jan's argument, but he immediately recovered himself:

"You don't want to get into prison, don't you? You want to desert us at the last moment, and perhaps betray us?"

Jan places himself right before him saying: "You cursed Jew, you think that I, who fought to the last for

my country, will betray any one? I'll knock your brains out, if you say that again! I know that want has driven me to this miserable business, but I'll sooner twist your neck than suffer you to call me a traitor. Look at this poor old chap behind us here, you are betraying him. He knows of nothing and you are of his people, you rascal."

Lewis perceives that he has made a mistake, and that he must go on another tack.—"Look here," he says, "you mustn't take it so seriously. I didn't say, that you must do this. I only just talked! but you must be sensible. You talk of going to prison, and that is what will happen if you leave us in the lurch now. I know that you run no danger at all of getting into trouble, and that the risk here is but small. But otherwise you make sure of going to gaol. You know that the man who gave us that "tip" has helped you. How will you be able to repay him that money? That twenty pounds with the interest that has been long running? You'll never be able to pay that back. I know him well. He will not hesitate to throw you into a debtor's prison for a year.

"He'll just have you arrested, and how then? Where will your wife and child be then?"

The matter begins to look very black to Jan now. His wife and child, yes, that was it. Because he had

wanted to help them, was the reason why he had fallen into the hands of this crew, and in bitterness he exclaims: Yes, I wish the child had sooner died; then perhaps I would never have had need of you scoundrels.

Lewis says nothing, for he knows that he is sure of his man. The tram comes up and they are carried in the direction of Turffontein. No one utters a word, and soon they reach the spot where they are to get down.

Lewis walks ahead, and Jan and the old man follow him. At Podawsky's house they stop, and the old man opens the door, and lights the lamp. Lewis shows Jan where he is to make the hole in the floor. It must be under the table, and he gives further instructions how to act. Jan listens in silence, whilst the old man stands looking on, with half closed eyes. It is now near twelve, and Lewis says to Podawsky: "You mustn't go to sleep now, do you hear, we shall be here in about an hour, you understand?"

The old man says not a word, but nods his head. Lewis and Jan go off into the dark little street, and Podawsky is alone. Mechanically he takes up the shoe again, but he cannot work. From a little box alongside the table he takes a book with Hebrew print. He runs his dirty fingers along the letters

and reads as his lips move. He has replaced the black skull-cap on his head, and his grey hairs shine white along the rim. There are deep furrows on his forehead, and his lean hand trembles. He gazes into the light of the lamp and thinks. Then the whole affair seems to pass in review before him. The talk with Lewis, the visit to the fine house at Parktown, and the behaviour of that 'gent' there, who had not recognized him as a father in Israel, but had laughed at him, though he tried to conceal this under the pretence of laughing at Lewis. But Podawsky had felt it. Yes the great man with whom they had been, would surely be able to explain the whole thing to him, but he had been unable to understand him. What was the good? He feels that there is something wrong, but what can he do? What is it that's wrong? The old man lays his book aside, and stares into the yellow light of the lamp.

How long he sat thus he knew not, but he was startled by the sound of cartwheels grinding heavily over the pebbles. He listens and it comes nearer, and halts before his door. He does not change his seat but suddenly the door is opened and Lewis enters.

"What," he says, "are you asleep already? Look sharp, we must be quick, there is no time to lose.

Come, push the table aside. Why do you look at me?"

Podawsky says: "But there is no danger, is there?" Lewis flings a savage curse at the old man as he remains standing in the middle of the room. Of a sudden he hears strange voices, and people running hard. He sees how the kaffirs rush past his door, and at the same moment a stranger enters, seizes him by the arm and makes a sign to him to accompany him. By the light of the lantern he sees Jan standing there handcuffed, and that behind him squat a couple of kaffirs also with handcuffs on their wrists. Jan looks at him and says, "Poor old man!"

Of Lewis there is nothing to be seen. He had perceived in time that there was trouble coming, and had escaped round the back of the house.

CHAPTER III.

THE PRISON.

It was "Visitors' day" at the gaol, which means that the family of prisoners, awaiting trial, may come and see their relatives. Jan's wife had gone for her permit three days before, and now she will be able to speak to him.

What she has endured during that time, is plain from her hollow cheeks and her large eyes red with weeping. With his little one on her arm the woman is now standing before the heavy door of the fort, and she crumples up the slip of paper in her hand, before nervously lifting the knocker. The door is opened after the warder has peeped through the little shutter. She shows him the permit, and he takes it as he explains to her that another permit is not necessary, but that she has come to the wrong place. He shows her that she has to be behind the large stone wall, and she seeks until she finds the right place. Crossing a large square she comes to a door where she has again to show her permit. The warder points out where she has to go, and there, opposite her in the corner of a

large open space, she sees a place just like a big bird-cage. Inside stands a man between two warders, and in front of the grating someone is talking to him. Going up to them, she sees that there are some more people waiting. After a few minutes one of the warders calls out "time is up" and one man is sent away immediately, whilst another takes his place within the narrow space.

The poor woman stands sorrowfully looking on at this. Another man enters from within, and before the grating stands a woman with a baby on her arm just the same size as her own, with two more children holding on to her gown. She looks at the man and heaves an involuntary sigh of relief, as she mutters: "Fortunately this is not my Jan." She looks upon this man with that careless smile upon his lips, as a monument of degradation. She hears the harsh words of the woman, which pierce her like a knife, and at last when the time comes for the woman to leave, the tears spring into her eyes, when she hears the children crying for their father. The man's wife, angrily and with hurried footsteps, leaves the place, and she trembles at the thought that her turn is about to come. Oh, she had so longed for this hour, but now she dreads seeing her Jan again. When the day-before-yesterday she had received the note telling her that her husband was

there, she had nearly fainted, but she is resolved to be firm now and not to reproach him. She knows, that he is there because he had wanted to provide for her better than he was able to do. No, she would be brave now, and prove that she did not wish to cause him more sorrow. With trembling fingers she hands over the note, and hears them call her husband's name. Her heart beats, for she knows not what he will say; one thing is certain, she will be calm, for she knows that it is no use now making reproaches. She clasps the little one closer and gazes at the door with strained eyes. Yes, there he is! She wants to go to him, but there is the grating and on the other side her husband so greatly changed.

His figure is bent forward, his hair has turned gray at the temples, and he stares around with a startled air. "Jannie," she cries, "Jan, don't you know me then." He glances at her, but is about to turn away when the little one calls "papa." Like a man roused from a deep sleep, he raises himself.

They are not words of grief that he utters, nor words of harshness, but, just as if he had been considering the matter constantly, he at once starts telling her all that has occurred. He tells how that fellow

Lewis had cheated him; how he had first met him in town and how he brought him to a man from whom he could borrow some money; that he had signed a promissory note, and then could not help taking part in the plot: that on the night on which he was caught a couple of kaffirs with a small cart had waited on the main-road, that Lewis had completely disappeared at the house of the old man, and that he and the old Jew who were quite innocent would now have to suffer for the rascality of those other fellows. "But," he added, "perhaps it will not be unjust to punish me, because I ought first to have enquired what the whole of that affair meant; but the old man is purely the victim of those two rogues."

His wife had listened in silence, and when he ceased speaking, she said: "Baby has got better nicely, Jan." He just glances up for a moment and replies: "Yes." The tears start to her eyes, when she notices that he is thinking of quite other matters.

"And what can I do for you?"—"What you can do for me?" he asks. "What? Nothing, nothing at all; what can you do?" The poor woman is now utterly at a loss what to say or do, and when the warder calls out: "Only five minutes more," she collects her thoughts. She hands the little basket,

containing food and a couple of shirts, to the warder and makes ready to leave. Her husband is distracted. Suddenly he calls her back. "Maria," he exclaims, "can you ever forgive me for what I have done? I swear that I never knew what this thing meant, but now I am in this trouble through my own carelessness. I would not listen to you, and now you mustn't trouble about me any more."

At first the woman says nothing, but now she asks: "When will it be heard?"

"On Monday," is all he replies, for "time is up," the warder declares. They give the signal for Jan to retire behind the door, and the wife is left staring dazed as if in a trance. When she recovered herself, someone else was standing where her husband had stood.

She walks away unable to realize all this. What is the matter with him? What is this? He would have died for his child, and to her also he had always been a kind husband. What is this? She cannot weep any more, nor does she understand why this is so. She must do something, that is certain. That same evening she brings her child to a neighbour and dresses herself. Then she steps across to the house of Jan's brother, a fine house, which she had

never before entered. She knew that this brother had parted from Jan, because he had married her and she had been but a poor girl. The brothers had never again associated with each other, and she would certainly never have gone to this place to ask for any favour for herself, but this was for her Jan, and for his sake she could brave anything.

What took place in that big house is not known to anyone. When after half an hour she came out again, her eyes were red from weeping, and she sobbed so that she had to wait a long time before she could fetch her child, for she did not wish her neighbour to know what had happened there.

Next day a gentleman came, who introduced himself as a law-agent who had been sent by her brother-in law. He informed her that he had been sent by him to watch the case; not, he emphatically added, because he deserved it, but because it would damage the reputation of the brother-in-law, if people heard that there was nobody to defend him. She takes no notice ot this, and listens to him in silence. The only thing that occupies her thoughts is the sad plight of her husband, and it matters little to her whether or not this help is offered for the purpose of saving the reputation of her brother-in-law.

All that she cares for, is that he will now receive help. For a long time still, with her little one upon her arm she sits lost in thought over all that has happened, but now there is a ray of hope in the darkness.

Two days later she visits the attorney and learns that her husband's case will be heard next week. She obtains another permit, but leaves her child with her neighbour. Jan is very reticent, and when she tells him that someone will appear in his defence he is, at first, very angry when he learns that his brother is doing this. For the rest he makes no enquiry, and seems hardly to know her. This was the last chance there was of her speaking to him before the trial, but beg and pray as she might that he would confide in her, he keeps silence and it seems to her that he is glad when the warder announces that time is up.

The morning of the day on which the trial is to take place has come.

Jan's wife had not slept the whole night and had called on the attorney twice on the previous day. He could tell her nothing particular, but yet it had been some consolation to her to know, that that man would appear on her Jan's behalf. She is aware now that her Jan had been concerned in illicit trading

in gold, but the particulars are unknown to her. At the big government-buildings there is always a great deal doing of a morning between nine and ten. People, who are to give evidence, are gathered there, always much too early, and sometimes quite needlessly. On the stoep there sit the kaffirs who will have to come inside on that day to give their evidence.

There are the law-agents hurrying to and fro with big bundles of papers. There are the smart-looking policemen who have to keep order, and Cape servant-girls in gowns of many colours, each calculating the chances of her "boy" who has been taken up and confined three weeks ago for liquor selling, and whose case will 'come on' to-day. In the offices themselves a couple of clerks sit talking over their cases or cracking jokes, without giving a thought to that unfortunate lot, who may soon be sentenced there for many months.

The nearer to 10 o'clock the more crowded the court-room becomes, and when at last the Magistrate enters, the policeman shouts with a loud voice: "silence," and all are silent.

Jan's wife had walked up and down the building looking about for him for half an hour, although she knew that it was hopeless. He was to come from

the fort, out of the big black wagon, that ugly "Black Maria." At last it arrives with the policeman high-up above there, with another alongside of him, and at the back still another holding on to the strap right in front of the door. She is unwilling to look, but yet she looks. She goes round the corner of the building and then gazes straight before her. The thing stops and then the poor creatures come out of it. First of all three men, then two women, and finally Jan and also Podawsky, about whom she has already heard so much. Jan walks erect, but the poor little old Jew stoops as he walks, and looks to those who know him even smaller than he actually is.

It is but for a moment that she sees them, for between the row of policemen they quickly disappear through the passage leading to the yard.

Then she goes inside, and when at last the policeman cries "Silence," she waits with trembling lips for the coming of her husband. It seems to her as if it lasts for hours, so slowly does the time pass. Eventually his case is called. Jan seemingly dives up out of the ground and behind him follows the old man. The attorney informs the Magistrate that he appears to defend Jan; but the old man has no one to plead for him. A Jewish interpreter comes and helps him to give his name, and to translate what he has to say. There are not many people in

the Court this morning, and Maria can hear everything well, though her husband is unable to see her.

Now she hears the account of how it all happened. Yes, she had known well enough that he was innocent. The Magistrate can hear this for himself now. He had known nothing about the gold. They had asked *him* if he wanted a job, and he had taken it.

He had had *no* idea that it was wrong. He had had no suspicion that he would have to come at night. He had thought that this had to be done because the people had told him that it was a matter which the police knew about and that they did not wish to have it done publicly. To the question of the attorney, whether he did not think it strange that they should bring the gold or whatever it was to the house of a poor shoemaker, in order to trap thieves, he replies with a calm voice.

Now his wife is quite sure, that he is innocent, "for everybody could hear this for themselves!"

When Jan's examination was concluded old Podawsky's declaration was interpreted. At first they were going to send Jan away, but the public prosecutor said that this was unnecessary since he did not understand a word of English. The old man is the image of misery. His body is more bent than ever and his hair has grown much greyer. His gestures

are no longer so spasmodic as was his way when he he was talking. He speaks as if in a dream. He declares, that he had been asked by a man named Lewis to store some gold in his little dwelling. He says that he had known Lewis for a long time, but not otherwise than as a 'traveller.'

Where Lewis lives and where he is, is unknown to him. On that night he had accompanied him on a tram to see a gentleman who knew about the matter, but he had not spoken to him. Nor does he know by which tram, nor where that person lived. There is in the simple tale the old man tells so much apparent truthfulness that the Magistrate listens to him with attention. He can see that the man is speaking without premeditation, and simply because he cannot do otherwise. He enquires about Podawsky's trade, and the detective testifies that the people in his neighbourhood know nothing against him. He is a most inoffensive man and never left his home. He has no friends, and is only absent on Saturdays to church. All who know him, speak well of him and refuse to believe that he could ever have anything to do with the police.

Jan's wife still stands listening there all the time. She fancies that all will now soon be over, and is only waiting for the Magistrate to speak. Nor has she much longer to wait now. She sees how he

arranges all his papers and begins to speak. At first she does not hear clearly, but every now and then she hears her husband's name mentioned. It is clear to the Magistrate that the old man has been the tool of a couple of rogues. He believes his statement and says that he will discharge him, but warns him through the interpreter never again to have to do with such people, and tells him that if he ever appears there again, he will not be let off so easily.

A policeman takes old Podawsky by the arm and leads him outside, where he first remains standing as if distracted, until he realizes that he is now actually free, and, with halting steps, he makes his way homeward.

The Magistrate continues to speak for some time longer, and at last pronounces sentence—"Six months' imprisonment for Jan, whose innocence the Court is unable to believe in."

Jan hears this unmoved. To the question whether he has anything further to say, he gives no reply. His wife has gone out, and falls down on the stoep in a faint, from which she awakes in the hospital, and from which she is carried to the grave a week later. Her little one is in the Asylum for neglected children.

* * *

A couple of weeks later an old man with a few

old vests and pairs of trousers on his arm is walking near the Fort. He stands still as the long row of prisoners file by him. Then he cries out with a tremulous voice "O, Clo!" One of the men in the long file looks up, and Jan and Podawsky recognize each other.
