

most joyful tidings to her good man at home: Ned put in his claim for a share in the prophecy no less than Mrs. Abrahams; he had a kind of a something in his thoughts, when Goodison sat at his elbow, that did not quite amount to a discovery, and yet it was very like it; he had a sort of an impulse to give him a gird or two upon the character of *Sterling*, and he was very sure that what he threw out upon the occasion made him squeak, and that the discovery would never have come about if it had not been for him; he even advanced some learned remarks upon the good effects of stage-plays in giving touches to the conscience, though I do not pretend to say he had *Jersey Caster* in his thoughts at the time; in short, what between the Hebrew and the Christian there was little or nothing left for my share in the work, so that I contented myself with cautioning Constantia how she broke it to her mother, and recommended to Mrs. Abrahams to confine her discourse to her husband, and leave Constantia to undertake for Mrs. Goodison.

When we arrived at our journey's end we found the honest Jew alone, and surprised him before he expected us: Mrs. Goodison was gone to bed a little indisposed, Constantia hastened up to her without entering the parlour; Mrs. Abrahams let loose the clapper of joy and rang in the good news with so full a peal and so many changes, that there was no more to be done on my part but to correct a few trips in the performance of the nature of pleonasm, which were calculated to improve the tale in every particular but the truth of it. When she had fairly acquitted herself of the history, she began to recollect her head ach, and then left us very thoroughly disposed to have a fellow-feeling in the same complaint.

After a few natural reflections upon the event, soberly debated and patiently delivered, I believe we were all of one mind in wishing for a new subject, and a silence took place sufficiently preparatory for its introduction; when Abrahams, putting on a grave and serious look, in a more solemn tone of voice, than I had ever heard him assume, delivered himself as follows:

There is something, Gentlemen, presses on my mind, which seems a duty on my conscience to impart to you: I cannot reconcile myself to play the counterfeits in your company, and therefore if you will have patience to listen to a few particulars of a life, so unimportant as mine, I will not intrude long upon your attention, and at worst it may serve to fill up a few spare minutes before we are called to our meal.

I need not repeat what was said on our parts; Abrahams gave a sigh, hemmed twice or thrice, as if the words in rising to his throat had choaked him, and thus began:

I was born in Spain, the only son of a younger brother of an antient and noble house, which like many others of the same origin and persuasion had long been in the indispensable practice of conforming to the established religion, whilst secretly and under the most guarded concealment every member of it without exception hath adhered to those opinions, which have been the faith of our tribe from the earliest ages.

This I trust will account to you for my declining to expose my real name, and justify the discretion of my assuming the fictitious one, by which I am now known to you.

Till I had reached my twentieth year I knew myself for nothing but a Christian, if that may be called Christianity, which monkish superstition and idolatry have so adulterated and distorted from the moral purity of its scriptural guides, as to keep no traces even of rationality in its form and practice.

This period of life is the usual season for the parents of an adult to reveal to him the awful secret of their concealed religion: The circumstances, under which this tremendous discovery is confided to the youth, are so contrived as to imprint upon his heart the strongest seal of secrecy, and at the same time present to his choice, the alternative of parricide or conformity: With me there was no hesitation; none could be; for the yoke of Rome had galled my conscience till it festered, and I seized emancipation with the avidity of a ransomed slave, who escapes out of the hands of infidels.

Upon our great and solemn day of the Passover I was initiated into Judaism; my father conducted me to the interior chamber of a suite of apartments, locking every door, through which we passed, with great precaution, and not uttering a syllable by the way; in this secure retreat he purposed to celebrate that ancient rite, which our nation holds so sacred: He was at that time in an alarming decline; the agitating task he had been engaged in overpowered his spirits; whilst he was yet speaking to me, and my eyes were fixed upon his face, the hand of death smote him; I saw his eye-lids quiver; I heard him draw his last expiring sigh, and falling dead upon my neck as I was kneeling at his feet, he brought me backwards to the floor, where I lay panting under