

Czar and Rabbi.

IT was in 1840. Czar Nicholas inspected the troops stationed in the Western provinces and in Poland, and on that occasion paid a visit to the city of Homel in the government of Mohilew. General Rodinger and Baron Offenberg were in command of the troops. The Czar was no friend of public demonstrations and did not care to have the civic authorities go to the expense of arranging great fetes. He usually remained two or three days in those cities where he held these inspections. At an early hour in the morning he could be seen at the head of his troops galloping to the parade ground, where he took command himself. When the day's labors were over he preferred to take a stroll outside of the city, clad in the uniform of a simple officer, without even being accompanied by the adjutant. He seemed to enjoy these promenades, indulging in deep reverie, he, the man feared by everybody, but unrecognized. Even in Warsaw, where the revolutionary spirit was ever rife, he disregarded all warnings and promenaded without protection or watch in the Lazenka Gardens, and even the police officers, who knew his habits, took care not to cross his steps. He followed this habit also during his stay at Homel. It was a hot summer day. The sun sent down his burning rays, the dust of the unpaved streets was hot as coals, men and beasts sought cover against the heat. All breathed freer when in the afternoon dark clouds appeared on the horizon, and a refreshingshower burst forth. A cool, delightful air pervaded the streets. Clad in a light spring cloak, a simple white military cap on his head, and carrying a cane, the Czar left the palace toward evening without any guard and took a walk toward the Linden Allee, on the outskirts of the city. The last rays of the setting sun mirrored in the gilt cupolas of the churches, then the purple-blue shadows of the evening came up, and the water of the lake to the right of the driving path trembled in pale-golden violet tints. Touched by the beautiful picture, the Czar stood there lost in worshipful admiration of the majesty of divine nature, when suddenly a slight noise arrested his attention. He listened and heard the sound of steps. Looking, he saw an aged Jew of venerable appearance approaching. For a few minutes the two men faced each other without averting their looks. At that the Emperor motioned to the Jew to approach. In measured steps the Jew drew near: "What is your pleasure?"

"Why do you not remove your hat?" answered the Czar in return, good-humoredly. "Do you not know who and what I am?" "And do you know," came the answer, "who and what I am?"

"Oh, to know that," said the Czar, bursting out in a laugh, "does not take much on first sight even. You are a 'Zyd!'"

"Zyd, Zyd," repeated the Jew patiently but some-

what indignantly. "Sir, if my eyes do not deceive me, you belong to the better classes, and for that reason I am surprised to hear you make use of such an insulting word. I take it for granted that you have read the five books of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms. Did you find in these books, which are acknowledged also by you as holy books, the word 'Zyd?' The Jews are loyal and true to their God and their Emperor, and do not deserve this outrageous appellation. As you, a man of better society, address me thus, my self-respect does not permit me to parley with you any longer. Adieu."

The Czar perceived that chance had led a man across his path who did not know that he stood before the mighty, feared, Emperor Nicholas. It amused him. He caught the Jew by the coat sleeve and said pacifyingly: "I beg your pardon, I had not the intention of insulting you. Are you an inhabitant of Homel?"

"No."

"You are here, then, on business?"

"No, neither."

"And what brought you here?"

"I came to see the Emperor."

"Oh! that is it. You have, I suppose, a petition to submit?"

"No! No! I am, thank God, satisfied with my lot, and have no other object in coming here than to behold, with my own eyes, our glorious Emperor, for whom we send up prayers to God every Sabbath, and then to give a benediction to God, which our holy religion commands us to pronounce at the sight of a king. It is the following prayer: Blessed be Thou, O Lord Eternal, our God, King of the world, who has imparted of Thy majesty to mortals."

"Have you never seen the Emperor, then?"

"No," replied the Jew, and in saying this he heaved a sigh.

"But why have you not taken the opportunity to see him this afternoon, when he entered the city at the head of his troops?"

"Because I reached here too late. How happy would I feel if I should succeed in seeing him to-morrow!"

"You are a merchant, then?"

"No, sir. I hold a position of honor in a Jewish congregation."

"Then you must be a rabbi?"

"Yes, sir. This time you have guessed right. I am a rabbi."

"In this congregation?"

"No, sir, in a much larger congregation."

"In Berditschew?"

"No, not in Berditschew, either; I am the rabbi of Sklow. Now you know who and what I am."

Sklow was at that time highly reputed for its many Jewish scholars and world-renowned rabbis. The Czar, who had probably heard of this city of Jewish scholars, smilingly lifted his hat and said: "Now, I understand why you did not take off your