STORIES FROM THE RABBIS

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649117765

Stories from the rabbis by Abram S. Isaacs

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd. Cover @ 2017

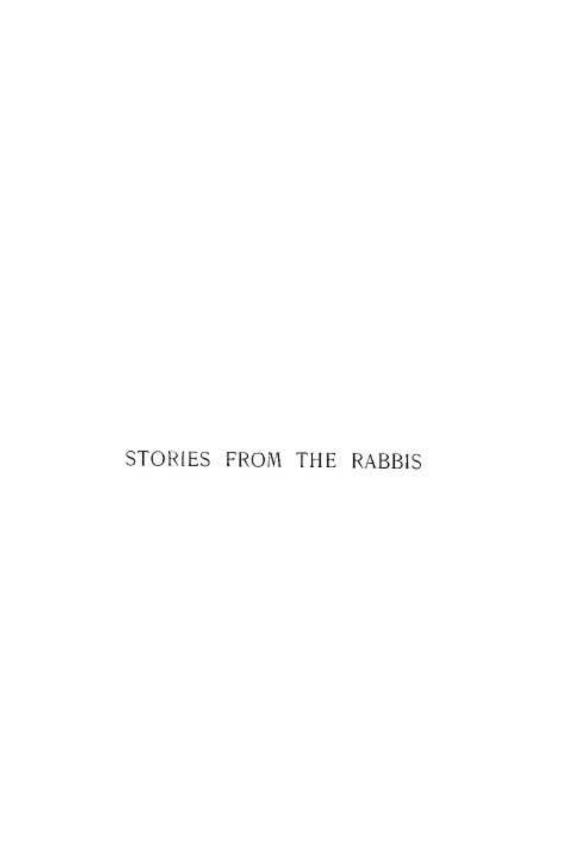
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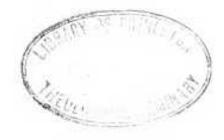






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STORIES FROM THE RABBIS



BY

ABRAM S. ISAACS, PH. D.

PROFESSOR OF GERMAN AND HERBEW IN THE UNIVERSITY OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK

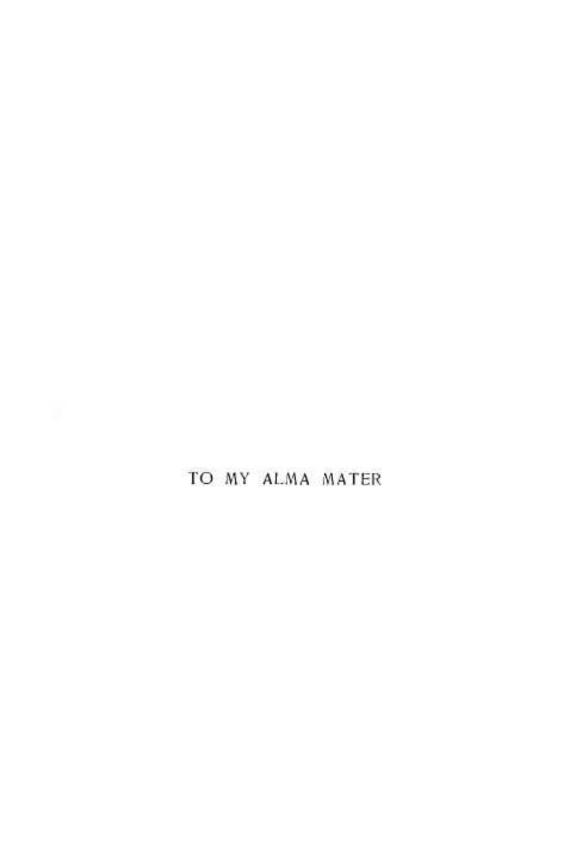


NEW YORK
CHARLES L. WEBSTER & COMPANY
1893

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PRESS OF JENKINS & McCOWAN, NEW YORK.





INTRODUCTION.

THE rabbis, whose sayings are recorded in the Talmud and Midrash-writings that stretch over about a thousand years - were admirable story-tellers. They were fond of the parable, the anecdote, the apt illustration, and their legends that have been transmitted to us, all aglow with the light and life of the Orient, possess perennial charm. The common impression that they were rabbinical Dryasdusts-mere dreamers, always buried in wearisome disputations, abstruse pedants dwelling in a solitary world of their own-is wholly unjust. They were more than ecclesiasticsthey were men; and their cheerful humanity forms the secret to their character. Their background was rather sombre-temple and nationality destroyed, a succession of foreign taskmasters, a series of wars and persecutions that would have annihilated any other race. But if the Roman drove his ploughshare over the site of Judaea's capital, the Hebrew spirit refused to submit to the yoke of any conqueror. In the storm and stress of centuries the rabbis preserved a certain buoyancy and even temper, which sprang from the fullness and sunniness of their faith. They thought and studied and debated; they worked and dreamt and cherished hope-

"Like a poet hidden
In the light of thought,
Singing songs unbidden
Till the world is wrought
To sympathy with hopes and fears it beeded not."