

**THE KING'S
JEWRY: A PLAY**

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The King's Jewry: A Play by Halcott Glover

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HALCOTT GLOVER

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JEWRY: A PLAY**

E. V. V. C. A. B.

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**A PLAY
BY HALCOTT CLOVER**

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AUTHOR'S NOTE.

The song introduced into the Prologue is the only complete survival of English music of this kind from the thirteenth century. It is taken from the work by Mr. Vincent Jackson published by Messrs. J. M. Dent and Sons, Ltd., to whom the customary acknowledgments are made for permission to re-print.

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THE KING'S JEWRY.

7th Brannen
S. Van-Backen-berg Hall
12-8-47



THE PROLOGUE

At the close of one of those days in early spring, when winter in a moment is forgotten, the King has chosen to take wine after dinner in a pavilion erected on a raised terrace at his house, looking towards the south. It is London, but a London small and undefiled by soot; the air the King breathes, and the sounds he hears, would to our senses seem those of the open country. The pavilion is square. One side of it is wide open: the side farthest from the audience, which thus looks, as it were, through the pavilion at the sunset sky beyond. The two walls of the pavilion right and left, and its roof, are of brightly painted canvas. The King, in a raised chair which supports his sword and shield, sits at the head of a table to spectator's right. Below him, in the rich costumes of their orders, are a Prelate, a Noble and a Court Functionary whom we call the Chancellor. These face the audience on the King's right. On his left, facing the King, so that he sits sideways at the table and is seen in profile, is a Monk. The Monk wears a coarse frock and sandals. The table is covered with a damask cloth, and is furnished with gold cups and piles of fruit. Behind the King, standing leaning on a white wand, is the Chamberlain. In the centre of the stage, separated from the royal table, is a Reader with an open book supported on a lectern. At the extreme left, facing the King, and seated or standing on a low platform covered with scarlet cloth are a group of instrumentalists and singers; these, as the King makes sign, play with pipe and string. The King is at ease; state ceremony is put away, and he is enjoying the spring air, his wine and amusements.

The King is one who shews but rarely in history, but constantly in popular tales. The first Edward is said to have come near in certain moments to being in this sense the exemplar of his rank, and he has lived in tradition as such. He is tall, a soldier; ageing, passionately autocratic, legal. His hand is horny from sword and spear; from his earliest manhood he has fought for what he conceives to be his right. His lineage, his marriage and the times which produced him

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have linked him closely with a thing wider than England—with Christendom; he has fought in the East against the Crescent. At the date when Edward took action upon the Jews Eleanor of Castile was yet living. That is no matter. Charing Cross commemorates a husband's sorrow, and Edward to us for all time is a widower. So, as he sits melancholy and hard at his wine this spring evening the King thinks through all his policy of the Queen he has lost. He is turning over in his mind the decision at which he has arrived; no thought of pity, no interested opposition can move him. In his desire to make an end of usury in his kingdom he will be beaten, and beaten in his own day; he knows already how he will be beaten. Yet, in so far as usury is identified with the Jew and with all the squalid misery which popular hatred imposes upon the Jew, he will fight that evil at least, and will prevail. The strength of his will gives an air of patience and gentleness to his utterances, but those who sit with him at wine and answer him boldly as it is his way to demand, know well what flash of his imperious eye is hidden under his drawn-down brows, and how sudden and resistless will be the word that issues at last from his mirthlessly smiling lips. At present he listens to a knightly romance which the Reader is finishing. His right hand supports his head, his left holds loosely a small roll of parchment.

THE READER: So came he at nightfall to the steading of his heart, and there awaited him his lady. And a great joy came upon him, for his labour was finished. Wife, quoth he, all my days I have worshipped you; after long trouble we have found content. The fire at evening, and your breast: these are my adventures now. (He closes the volume, bows, and withdraws).

THE KING: The fire at evening, and your breast. . . . A sad tale, the sadder for its love that death had not broken. Play boys: a merry tune, for this Eve of All Fools' Day. Drink, King's Companions. To-morrow we must be grave in council while our people laugh. To-night, help me to the wisdom of babes and of common men. Play. . . . (He sits silent while music is made, but soon stops it by lifting his hand). I am in the by-ways; the earth's smell is sweet. The King is labourer too: the sword or the hoe, of each

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the hard palm, the day well done. The King and his people . . . is there a firmer bond than this? I have forgotten tears, who have wept the last; but at the gathering of good men at their inn, the tears I have not make pain behind my eyes. Companions, what is a King?

THE NOBLE: The King is power. Chief among his peers, the King rules.

THE PRELATE: The King is a vessel of Holy Church, Anointed, the King rules.

THE CHANCELLOR: The Crown is of gold. The King rules.

THE KING (*looking from one to the other*): Noble, Prelate, Chancellor—peer, vessel and purse! Three titles of a King. Monk, you are silent. You are the peasant at my table; you have eaten the bread of labour. What is a King?

THE MONK: The King is Law.

THE KING: I like that title best. Peasant, drink from the King's cup. (*He hands his cup to the Chamberlain, who takes it to the Monk. The Monk, rising and bowing, drinks.*)

NOBLE: Law is the voice of Assemblies. The King proclaims.

PRELATE: Law is the gift of Rome. There is one Rome, there are many kings.

CHANCELLOR: By Law are done things needful. The King is Doer.

THE KING: Again silent, peasant. What is Law?

MONK: Law is the voice of God, heard in the heart. The King hears.

THE KING: The King hears. . . . There is another with us, deaf to that voice. (*He holds up the parchment*). It is the Jew.

NOBLE: Cancer of Christendom. Silent, unseen, the worm at the core.

PRELATE: The unbeliever, the taker of usury.

CHANCELLOR: Evil necessity—necessity.