

Jew Süss

Lion Feuchtwanger

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"The Book; yes, their Book. They had no state, holding them together, no country, no soil, no king, no form of life in common. If, in spite of this, they were one, more one than all the other peoples of the world, it was the Book that sweated them into unity. Brown, white, black, yellow Jews, large and small, splendid and in rags, godless and pious, they might crouch and dream all their lives in a quiet room, or fare splendidly in a radiant, golden whirlwind over the earth, but sunk deep in all of them was the lesson of the Book. Manifold is the world, but it is vain and fleeting as wind; but one and only is the God of Israel, the everlasting, the infinite, the Jehovah." -Jud Süss, 1925. When Feuchtwanger's two best known novels "Jew Süss" ("Power") and "Ugly Duchess" were first translated into English in the 1920s, they caused a tremendous sensation in England and then in America. The critics all hailed Feuchtwanger as the master of the historical novel—the peer of Dumas and Scott but written with the psychology of our own day. "Jew Süss," set in the 18th century Germany (at the time consisting of numerous fragmented independent states), deals with an identity crisis: in order to gain social power, the novel's protagonist attempts to forsake his Jewish heritage and becomes assimilated into the mainstream of German culture. More than that, Süss finds himself being in the position of potential kingmaker. Brilliant, attractive and with an insatiable lust for power, he practically ruled the Duke and his court, pandering to the vices of dissolute nobility, mounting through his intrigues to dizzying heights of power. Süss's only vulnerable spot, however, is his precious, exquisite, gentle daughter, Naomi. When her beauty became exposed to the beastliness of the Duke, tragedy came swiftly after.



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