TRANSPLANTED
PEOPLE
ETTA BYER

PAINTINGS
SAMUEL BYER
The gift of Elaine & Allen Avner in memory of their parents Herman & Pearl Seltzer Sweital and Sim & Laura Moore Avner.

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

ILLINOIS HISTORICAL SURVEY
TRANSPLANTED
PEOPLE

By Yechaved
(etta byer)

Reproductions of Oil Paintings

By Samuel Byer

Published by

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Lider Organization of Chicago
DEDICATION

I dedicate this book to my beloved father, the scholar; to my devoted mother, to my beloved sister, Feigel; to my beloved brothers, Moishe and Nathan; and to my first husband, Joe.
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E. B.
INTRODUCTION

"Transplanted People" is the story of how one woman, always conscious of her origins in a small town in Russia, made her way in the world. It describes how she left a land where a tyrannical czar was the ruler to become "transplanted" in a democratic country. Late in the book Mrs. Byer rejoices at the good fortune of one of her sons, happily settled, and recalls:

We had been such little people in Lida, lower than grass. Now we were transplanted, branching out, growing as normal Americans. My heart was full of gratitude; it was a glorious feeling to 'belong' here . . . .

Written by a woman whose formal education ended before she was seven years old, the book will help second and third generation Jews in America to understand better their origins and to know themselves better, for the struggles of Mrs. Byer are similar to those of countless immigrants who made their way to America at the turn of the century. Having begun at six a career of work that has lasted all of her life, Mrs. Byer writes that she is sorry she did not study to be able to master the English language, and regrets that she cannot "express my thoughts and the experiences of my life well." Parts of this book may be rough and uneven — this is not the work of a professional writer. Yet there are parts that contain a beauty of phrase that makes certain passages unforgettable.

Mrs. Byer's story was originally intended for her children and grandchildren. "I feel I have lived two hundred or three hundred years," she has stated. "I wanted my children to know my story."
While her education was finished at six, "our house," Mrs. Byer has asserted, "was a house of books." In London, where she lived from her thirteenth to her eighteenth year, she learned her first English — at work, in a cigarette factory; at night school, which she was able to attend several weeks only; and at lectures. Mrs. Byer today is a working woman, a sewing machine operator in a leather goods manufacturing company in Chicago. She says her shop is her university.

I first met Mrs. Byer sitting one March evening in the office of the Wells Evening High School in Chicago. She was a small, plain-looking woman in a black winter coat. She had come early and the principal had asked her to wait to talk with me. When I arrived she told me that she wanted to take courses to give her a better background for writing English. She had a bound typescript copy of her autobiography with her. It had already been written — and she was looking forward to the day when it might be published.

Her enrollment was accomplished and she became a member of a class in American literature that was already four weeks into the semester. Her enthusiasm for writers like Whitman and Frost, Cather and Sinclair Lewis, was contagious, caused a stir, aroused debate. She was a full-fledged participant in class activity, by far the oldest member at the age of sixty-eight. In fourteen weeks of attendance every evening Monday through Thursday, through good weather and bad, she missed class only one time, and that for the purpose of making up her income tax return. To her, attending class was a privilege, almost a sacred rite.

At the end of the semester Mrs. Byer rose on the last day. "When I first came to school, I was frightened," she said to the class. "I didn't know if I would fit. You were so young, and I had never been to school in this country before. I want you to know that today
I love you. I have enjoyed every minute of school, and I have come to look upon you as my classmates and my young friends."

Away from class Mrs. Byer works at her "machine." With immense pride she will show the products of her work and demonstrate how she operates her machine. With gratitude toward her employer she has said, "The shop and the bosses taught me to work and made me economically independent. Every inch of my shop is to me dear." "To learn is always a pleasure," she once stated. School gave her "a spiritual pleasure," work "an economical pleasure."

Having worked all of her life thus far, Mrs. Byer has a strong desire to continue to work. She finds dignity, self-respect, a feeling of independence, and the thrill of accomplishment in her work, and when she speaks of it, a glow of pleasure exudes from her.

Her husband is Sam Byer, a Chicago artist whose paintings, particularly of Jewish subjects, have been widely exhibited in Chicago and other cities, and today are frequently reproduced. Mr. Byer’s paintings are to be found among the pages of the present volume.

Mrs. Byer’s home, a two-room apartment on Chicago’s near Northwest Side, is clean and neat, enlivened by more than a dozen green plants that fill one corner and decorate other parts of it. And on the walls are many of her husband’s paintings, that make of her home a permanent exhibition gallery of the most important of his canvasses.

Although Mrs. Byer’s autobiography contains "beautiful memories of a plain and simple people," it contains also accounts of restriction, persecution, and suffering. For Mrs. Byer and others of her generation who came to America, it is a miracle that they survived "the previous life" with its misery and could settle in the United States to raise their families and become "normal people." She has said: "I love this
country with all my heart and soul. I love the freedom, the value, the opportunity of it."

Her story tells of a person driven from place to place, but there is no ire, no anger, nor hate in her narrative. "I don't write with hatred towards people," she has said. "I write warm towards people."

At the close of her book Mrs. Byer says, "Now that I am old, I feel relieved. I think only of the past and of today. The doubt of tomorrow is off my shoulders, and I feel at ease. It is no tragedy to grow old."

How Mrs. Byer discovered a pursuit, which she calls "pearl-fishing," to fill in her last years is described in the last episode of her book. "Pearl-fishing" refers to the search for knowledge and truth, which Mrs. Byer has undertaken at a large city night school. She likens her school to a "holy temple," one whose "wide doors" are "open for all people, big and small, young and old, of all nations, colors, and creeds." Night school is, therefore, another manifestation of the democracy that she loves so much.

Freshness of spirit invigorates Mrs. Byer as a person; it also invests the pages of her book.

Bernard Apple
English teacher
Wells Evening High School
Chicago, Illinois
January 24, 1955
GRANDMOTHER GITL

My father's mother, Gitl, was a beautiful woman, and, for those years, very cultured. She could read. She was considered a wise person. But luck was against her. She had been married and widowed three times. The three husbands, although intellectually strong, were physically weak, and died at an early age.

Grandmother was left a widow with two children. The daughter, Hilda, was like her mother, beautiful and healthy. The son, Israel Joseph, was like his father, thin, round-shouldered, weak in body, but spiritually and mentally strong. He was a fine scholar.

Grandmother Gitl, tired of caring for sick men most of her life, loved her beautiful daughter, but neglected her son. He attended the Yeshivah, slept where he could, and ate at the tables of hospitable people. At the age of seventeen, he came to the small town of Lupz to study in the local Yeshivah. Most of the Yeshivah students came from poor families or were homeless orphans who depended on the hospitality of the community for their food. (This custom of feeding a poor student each day at a different house was called "eating days.")

It often happened that there were not enough hospitable homes to go around, and the unlucky student simply went hungry on his "short day." It was on such a short day, on a Friday night, when no one at the synagogue invited Israel Joseph for supper, Reb Shael, the shames (sexton), took the boy to his house for the Sabbath Day.

Reb Shael Shlame and his wife, Esther Libe, lived with their five daughters and an only son in a small
home. There was no dowry for any of the girls of marriageable age. The third daughter, Rachel, told the young man to come back in the middle of the week. Then she would wash and mend his clothes. Before long, Israel Joseph proposed to Rachel, and since no dowry was mentioned, Rachel’s father gave his blessing after the boy passed his scholastic test.

After the wedding, the young married couple came to Lida, where Israel Joseph’s mother and sister Hilda lived and supported themselves by selling flour, salt, and a few other articles of food. His mother and his sister were very angry at Israel Joseph because he had married before his older sister.

Grandmother Gitl, being in the flour business, put her daughter-in-law to baking bread and chaleh (white bread) to be sold in the market place. At least they would have something to eat.

The young couple’s first child, a baby girl whom they named Nechame, died in infancy because the undernourished Rachel had no milk for her baby.

After the baby’s death and the marriage of her older daughter Hilda, Gitl softened and opened a flour store together with her son and daughter-in-law, and they lived together in the same house.
SISTER FEIGEL

The second child of Israel Joseph and Rachel, my parents, was also a girl. They named her Feigel.

Their economic status had changed a little for the better. Rachel did the housekeeping while Grandmother Gitl, the businesswoman, worked with father in the store.

Mother Rachel nursed the baby girl. Feigel was blonde, the most beautiful and healthiest baby among the Jewish children of Lida. As she grew up, she was also the best in cheder. She was educated in Hebrew, Russian, and Yiddish. Feigel was very good-natured and loved to work. Everyone in Lida said that my parents were blessed with a wonderful daughter. She loved to read and was well-acquainted with fine Hebrew literature. She was the pride of our family, and everyone looked up to her.

At the age of twelve, she was hired to work in a wholesale grocery at an annual wage of twenty rubles. They praised her because she was a hard worker. She carried heavy bundles and boxes like a man and kept the stock in order. She also did a fine job of bookkeeping, for which she was much admired by the business people in Lida.

Father never touched her earnings, which she saved for her dowry.

When Feigel was about nineteen, a shadchen (marriage broker), was sent by the rich, aristocratic family Kamenov to my parents to propose the marriage of Feigel to their oldest son, Granum.

The Kamenovs were rich snobs, and considered themselves religious. They owned several properties and stores and also lent money on high interest to poor
people. They had several children. Two daughters and a son were fine, normal people. Granum, the oldest, and one girl, a freak, were below normal. Granum was short, unsociable, quiet, not good-looking, and of low mentality. The girl never walked nor talked. She lay in bed and squeaked. They were all glad when she died in her early twenties.

What a match for Feigel, the most wonderful girl in town! Father was pleased and happy as he rubbed his hands with joy at the prospect of having the Kamenovs for his in-laws. Mother complained that the young man could not talk as a normal person, and she was against the marriage of her Feigel to Granum.

I recall one Saturday night when the small children were asleep, strange men and women came to our house. Mother and Feigel covered the table with our best tablecloth and served them schnaps, wine, and tarts. The rabbi came, did some writing, and joyfully broke a dish. Then everybody cried loudly, “Mazel tov (good luck)! Feigel is engaged to Granum!” Her dowry, the fruit of her twelve years of labor, was six hundred rubles. His rich parents gave her a gift, a gold watch.

When I came to work the next morning at the cigarette factory, which belonged to Granum’s rich uncle, Samuel David Rubin, they all laughed at me, and I felt ashamed. I was almost ten years old, and had worked there for some time. They said, “Your father has sold his beautiful daughter to a nobody; he has pushed the most capable girl in Lida into a pile of mud.”

Mother was sad and begged Father to break the engagement. Better now than a divorce later. But Father said he was a man of his word and could not break it. Feigel did not like Granum, and was ashamed to walk with him, but she loved and obeyed her father.

A year later, just before the wedding, Father real-
ized his mistake and wanted to break the engagement, but Feigel refused. "It's too late now. I cannot shame him and his family. It is not his fault." So they were married, and Feigel moved in with her mother-in-law, a very fat woman by the name of Beile, and her father-in-law, who was called Isaac. They were rich but miserly.

Feigel had to plan how to make a living right after the wedding. Experienced in business, she opened a wholesale tobacco, notions, and stationery business in partnership with Uncle Rubin's wife. Feigel did all the work, while her husband's family, who considered themselves above her, did nothing.

A few weeks after the birth of her first boy (whom they named Shaye, after Beile's father), Feigel had to travel to Warsaw to buy merchandise for the store. They hired a wet nurse until her return. It was decided that Feigel should take with her a new-born dog to nurse, so that her milk would not dry up. She hid in a corner of the train, and nursed the little creature. Her fellow travelers wondered what was the matter with the beautiful young woman with the tiny dog. A few days later, she was arrested and had to explain in court why she carried the puppy with her. The people all roared with laughter when they heard the explanation. Feigel came back to Lida with lots of merchandise and was teased by many for the great idea. They said, "Israel Joseph's daughter, Feigel, has no time to lie in bed after childbirth."

Her first-born, Shaye, was a fine, healthy, normal boy. A few years later, she gave birth to another boy, whom they named Shael Shlame, after the grandfather from Luptz. Unfortunately, he was as stupid, homely, and subnormal as his father.

Feigel's life with Granum was a bitter one. She was the hardest-working, most warm-hearted, most educated woman in the Jewish community, and everybody
respected her; but she remained simple and humble.

Feigel and Granum lived together about seventeen years; then he became sick and died. Four months after his death, she gave birth to an exceptionally bright boy, whom she named Granum, after his father. She kept her word and never remarried.

At that time, Feigel began to be interested in Palestine and the Zionist movement, and gave money and jewelry to the cause. She said, "I don't understand how some Jewish people can be against Palestine as a Jewish state." When her husband died, she sent her oldest son, Shaye, to Palestine. Later, when the youngest boy, Granum, grew up, she sent him to his brother, who was working in Haifa, building homes with other pioneers. He was an active worker in the Histadruth. Granum became a lawyer. Now he has mastered seven languages. Both brothers are married. They went through all the struggles in Palestine for over a quarter of a century.

My beloved sister Feigel with her sick son remained in Lida and was slaughtered by the Nazis in 1942. Our father died a few years earlier, at the age of 86. Mother lived to be ninety and died a natural death two weeks before the Nazis came to Lida.

All of us will mourn forever our beloved, wonderful, and good sister Feigel Kaminov. (More about Feigel in later chapters.)
OUR OLDER BROTHERS

Father and Grandmother Gitl worked in the store. Mother was a good housewife, and the little family lived the normal life of a storekeeper in our town. Business was seldom good, but we always hoped God would help. A new red wooden cradle was bought for the new-born son, and Father was the happiest man in the world. Now God had given him a Kadish to secure a little bit of heaven for him after a hundred and twenty years. The new son was named Nosen, after Father’s father.

Nosen was strong and healthy, very good-looking, a quiet, good-natured, and peaceful boy. As he grew older, he studied in the cheder and Yeshivas outside of Lida, and ate “days,” as was the custom in those years. Later, he remained in Lida and helped our parents in the store after Grandma died. He had a gentle character, and was liked by everybody.

A few years later, another boy was born. Father was very proud to have another son. The red wooden cradle rocked again, and in it was a red-faced chubby baby. He was named Meyer, and became the strongest of all the children in the family. He was short and fat, stubborn, and altogether different in character. He had a brilliant mind, and a good appetite. He was always hungry. In cheder he was a very good scholar, but he used to beat up all the children and take away everything they had. There were always complaints about him, and he was nicknamed “the Devil.” He often created disturbances around the house and beat his brothers and sisters black and blue. My father used his leather strap on him very often, and he was finally sent out of town to the Yeshivas to study the Torah and to eat “days.”
Meyer was the problem child of our family, and our parents grieved that such a clever and brilliant boy had to be driven from home. Before Passover, or Rosh-ha-shonoh (the New Year), Father wrote him to come home. They bought him new clothes and told him to behave; but he did not change, and everyone in the house was glad when the holiday was over and he left.

Meyer left for the big city of Vilna, where he entered a trade school and became a locksmith. At the age of thirteen, he invented a special kind of lock. He read a lot and had a fine mind. He was well educated for his age. However, he was peculiar and not at all sociable; he could not get along with people.

Meyer always was very stingy and thought his sisters and brothers extravagant. He never married because he feared the responsibility.

He studied political economy, and how he knew the theories of figuring! He believed himself to be the most logical person in the world, and he figured out it surely would be more economical to remain a bachelor. In practice, however, it did not quite work out that way; he was the richest in the family, so he had to help raise many of the children of his sisters and brothers, who married without figuring or logic. They raised fine families, but what of Meyer? He became a clever bachelor—his logic failed him. In later chapters, we shall hear more about him.
MY BIRTH

I first saw the light of day in Lida in the month of October, 1884 or 1885. I was the fifth child born to a poor family, and, being a girl, was not too welcomed by my parents. Father looked at me and sighed, "Where will I get a dowry for such a creature?" I was named Yecheved.

They told me later that I was puny, sickly, and not good-looking. Everyone in the family said, "She is the fifth wheel on a heavily loaded wagon." Nevertheless, they said that I had the strongest character of all the children. Grandma Gitl said that the house and the table were too small for such a big family. Mother worried because I looked sickly, but later decided I would live because my eyes were bright. I now occupied the red wooden cradle.

I grew, but I was always small for my age. However, I was fast in running, jumping, and other things. I liked work of all kinds and soon became Mother's helper. She trusted me with peeling potatoes, warning me that the peelings should be thin. Mother had become an expert in baking; her chalehs and black heavy loaves of pumpernickel were the finest and best-tasting in Lida. When she had six big loaves of bread baking in the oven for the whole week, the house was warm and smelled deliciously of fresh bread.

Mother bought me a tiny thimble and we mended clothes or darned stockings. We polished the candlesticks for the Sabbath. Mother was pleased with my work. We sang together all kinds of folk-songs, spirituals, the lyrics of the rabbis and the Chasidim.

My education started when I was four and one-half years old, and finished at six. My father, that fine scholar, was my Hebrew and Yiddish teacher. He
taught me to pray, and read the Psalms and the Bible. He said that I could become a fine scholar if I were a boy — but I had enough education for a girl. I could study further by myself by reading books.

I began to work in the store of my sister Feigel and her partner. I had to put the stock in order, sweep the store, and deliver bundles of goods to storekeepers. It was a wholesale store, and on Monday market days, after the peasants left the market, I used to go collecting bills. The grown-ups asked me, “How is it you bring more money than the other collectors?” My answer was, “I don’t know why — they smile at me, so I smile at them, they pat me, and put money in my package.”

My sister’s partner was also the owner of a big cigarette factory, and I was often sent there for goods. As I watched the girls working and singing, I wanted to work there too. The foreman was a cousin of my father’s, and I begged him to let me work in the place, so he took me in. I became a good and fast worker. The foreman made me work in partnership with his own little girl, but she could not produce as much as I. We worked together for some time, until I refused and wanted to work for myself.

I read books of all kinds, novels and histories. I was much impressed by “The History of the Spanish Inquisition,” “Uncle Tom’s Cabin,” “Daniel Deronda,” Jules Verne’s “Around the World in Eighty Days,” and other books about faraway lands. I developed a great desire to travel, to leave home and family, and to establish my life in a free country.

On Saturdays, girls and women used to come to our house and listen to the stories I read to them. Mother smiled and was proud of me. Even at that early age, it hurt me deeply to think of the pain and suffering of the Jewish people, of their tragic past, their land and destroyed Temple, a people driven from
land to land, strangers everywhere. Oh! How I despised persecution and prejudice! How I deplored the poverty of the ghetto! Jewish children were not allowed to go to the forest or field, or to swim in the river, and often were beaten by non-Jewish children. We Jewish children understood. We were grown-ups at a very early age. Our childhood was short.
Our red wooden cradle was always rocking a new baby. After me came Rose, a very beautiful blonde baby girl. Within another few short years, two more boys occupied our famous cradle. There was no more happy excitement when a new baby came; four boys and three girls were more than enough for any family in Lida. Grandmother Gitl worried that the small store wouldn’t earn enough to support such a large family. When the work became too hard, Grandmother and Mother decided that they had to have help.

They hired a maid named Frumke. She was a fine, simple, and honest person. She became very devoted to our family, and loved the children dearly. It was easy for us to work with her. When Mother made both gefillte fish and tsimes (another delicacy) for the Sabbath, Frumke protested that we were too extravagant — one dish was enough.

One Thursday evening, Frumke was sent to the brewery for liquid yeast to prepare the chalehs for Sabbath. A big dog jumped at her; she fell, broke the bottle, and the glass cut her arm to the bone. She came home bleeding and pale as a ghost. We were horror-stricken, because all of us loved Frumke. Mother rushed her to the doctor, who bandaged her arm. Frumke’s arm was in a sling for a long time, and Mother did all the work.

On a beautiful summer day, Mother and Frumke carried a big basket of clothes to be rinsed in the river. They placed the basket on a big wooden stand. Some women were washing clothes nearby. The water was clean and deep there. Mother washed the clothes while Frumke helped her. Suddenly, Mother felt dizzy and fell into the river. Frumke jumped into the river, for-
getting all about her injured arm. She held on firmly to Mother until the women pulled them out of the river. The wound on Frumke's arm was bleeding and the stitches came open, but she was happy.

On the Sabbath, Father told us girls to take care of everything so that Frumke could rest. "She works all week," he said. When Mother got over the shock, she told everyone that Frumke's parents in heaven had saved her life.
A VILLAGE WEDDING

It was a very cold winter day. My father and sister Feigel were ready to go to a wedding. One of the five daughters of Uncle Artchick was going to be married.

Uncle Artchick was considered a rich man. He had a farm, cows, horses, and chickens. He was a healthy, middle-aged man with a reddish beard. Everyone thought he was very stingy, but I considered him pleasant. He sent a peasant with a sled to bring our family to the wedding. The peasant was drinking tea while Father and Feigel dressed. I asked Father to take me along because I loved weddings with the music and dancing. Father said, "No, you are too small. When Uncle Artchick marries off another daughter, I will take you. So, you had better grow fast."

I put on my coat and shawl and waited near the sled. I saw Father and Feigel get into the sled. The peasant whipped the horses, and they went away. I began to run after it. Mother called and begged me to come back, but I said if Feigel was going, I, too, should go, and continued to run after the sled. We were out of town. The road was covered with ice and snow, the wind was blowing, but I still followed them. Near the woods, they stopped and waited for me. They picked me up and took me in the sled. Father said, "You will pay for this when we get home."

In the evening, we arrived at the farm. The house was warm and clean. On the table there was fine chaleh (white bread), plenty of gefilte fish, wine, and schnaps. Musicians were playing. Jews and peasants danced together. I was the only child there, and everybody was good to me. Father told them how I ran
after the sled and how stubborn I was. "But," I said, "I love weddings and music, and I don't care if they whip me tomorrow." We slept there, and the next day we had a fine dinner. I told Uncle Artchick that he was the finest man and that his entire family was most friendly.

By the time we returned home, Father forgot about my punishment, and even praised my courage. I'll always remember the fun of running after the sled and being at that village wedding. How free and pleasant such a wedding was celebrated by the simple people of the farms!
THE HOLY SABBATH AND THE HOLIDAYS

Most of the Jewish people in Lida were poor as those in many other small towns in Russia and Poland. They eked out a living in small stores or on stands in the market place. On market days when the peasants came from the farms and villages to buy and sell, the storekeepers hoped for a good day which would provide a living for the whole week. On other days, the market place was almost empty and there were more stores than customers. It was quite normal in Lida to buy one-sixth of a herring, which came with a cup of herring brine and made a fine meal with a baked potato. When a storekeeper noticed a customer coming, he tried to pull him into the store, and the lucky one who made a deal was envied by his competitors. The people in Lida usually bought a small piece of butter for one kopek. Father used to say, "No matter what we do or do not eat, the stomach has no windows, no one can see or know about it. But we must not take things from other people, or even touch them. By all means, be honest." Nevertheless, the lives of these poor people were enriched by a profound faith that the Almighty God above would help and provide for them.

On Friday, by some miracle, the women managed to prepare a fine Sabbath dinner from one pound of meat and little else. Everyone seemed to live a whole week on the Sabbath meal. Friday was the busiest day for the women. They cleaned, cooked, and baked for Friday night and Saturday. All the children had their faces scrubbed, their hair washed, and were running around happily in their Sabbath clothes.

As the Holy Sabbath arrived with the sunset, all
workers left their work benches, the storekeepers closed their stores, and the market place became empty and forgotten. The village peddlers in their wagons rushed home for the Sabbath. They carried their stock of combs, matches, and other small items which they peddled in the villages; all week they slept in some barn and ate black bread and onions. If they were lucky enough to earn something, they had a happy Sabbath. If the week was bad they hoped that God, who provides even for a worm in the ground, would surely provide for them. So, everyone rushed home to greet Queen Sabbath.

The table was covered with a white tablecloth. The candles in their shiny brass holders burned with a bluish-red flame, and their flickering light threw shadows on the walls. Mother held her hands over those candles and prayed for her family every Friday evening. Every Jewish home seemed like a glorious castle, and the hearts of the Jewish men and women were filled with joy and holiness on the Sabbath Day. Sadness, troubles, and worries were forgotten until the new week.

People living normal lives in free countries do not seem to appreciate the spiritual beacon of the Sabbath. But to the families in small towns in Russia of that day, who had nothing but their eternal faith in the Almighty God, the Sabbath brought glory and comfort. They felt nearer to God on that great day of days. Often they brought home a guest, a homeless boy or man, to share with him the food, of which they had so little themselves.

On Saturday all people, dressed in their best, walked leisurely to the only place they had, the synagogue. They prayed, listened to the rabbi, and heard the cantor chant, in his beautiful voice, the holy prayers. Then they returned to their homes rested and at peace. They ate the meal that was cooked on Friday and
kept hot in a warming oven overnight. Then they slept or rested. Towards evening they went back to the synagogue to bid farewell to the Sabbath with a last prayer. All their daily worries returned with the end of the Sabbath at sunset. A new and sad week arrived. Mother stood praying near the darkened window from which shadows crept everywhere. Nothing was left of the Sabbath glory but the melted wax on the candlesticks and a few crumbs on the tablecloth as Father prayed over the big “Havdole” candle for a good week.
THE EPIDEMIC

I recall one very hot summer in Lida when an epidemic of typhoid fever and a mild form of cholera broke out. Many people and small children were sick with terrible cramps and vomiting. Everybody was frightened. The police ordered everyone to keep the town clean and to boil the water. In many homes, grown-ups and children died like flies. The synagogues were crowded with men reading the Psalms and the women standing near the opened Holy Ark. The smoke of the burning candles made the crowded room even more stifling. One funeral followed another to the cemeteries, and the mourners asked the dead to intercede for the living and stop the epidemic.

In our house the children were sick and Mother worked hard caring for them. We were fortunate; none died. However, the youngest, Chaim, was very sick with typhoid fever, and had a high temperature. The doctor lit a match and opened the boy’s eye, and when the pupil did not move, we thought he was dying. Although he recovered, he remained speechless for a long time.

During Chaim’s sickness, my parents put me on a covered wagon with many boxes of merchandise and sent me to my grandparents in Luptz. The old folks, whose home was overfilled with their other grandchildren, were not overjoyed at my arrival. My aunts looked at me crossly, as if to say, “What are you doing here?” I felt miserable. I longed for my baby brother, Chaim, and did not like Grandma’s cooking. Her noodles were dark; my mother’s were lighter and tasted better. I wanted to go home.

Through Luptz there flows a very wide and shallow river, the Nieimen, and everybody’s ducks, geese,
and little children swim or play in the water. The women wash their clothes in it. I found great joy in the river, and was always there. One day, a little girl took me to her home, where they gave me supper, and I fell asleep in a corner. When I was finally found, after my people hunted for me all night long, I got a good licking. The next day I was put on the same wagon that had brought me, and returned to Lida. I was happy to be home again and hold my favorite brother, Chaim, in my arms.
THE FIRE

In the early fall months come the Jewish holidays, Rosh-ha-shonoh, the New Year, and Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, when we fast for twenty-four hours. We also pray all day long in the synagogue to the Almighty God for forgiveness and a good year.

The sun shines bright, but the nights are cool. The trees in the orchard are heavily laden with ripe fruit; the gardens are filled with all sorts of vegetables to be stored in the basement for the long winter. Chickens and roosters are scratching in the dirt unaware of their destiny to be slaughtered on Yom Kippur as capores (sacrifice) for our sins. A mild wind blows the yellow, dry leaves about. Fear and sadness are in the air. Mother tells us that even the fish in the river shudder on the Day of Justice. Children, as well as adults, learn the significance of the holidays.

Mother baked the finest chalehs, shaped in the form of a ladder reaching to God. If a customer complained that the flour we sold was not very good, she showed them her delicious chalehs made of the same flour.

That year, Rosh-ha-shonoh and Yom Kippur passed pleasantly. Everybody hoped for a good year, and began to celebrate Succoth (the Feast of Tabernacles), an ancient Hebrew holiday on the order of Thanksgiving. They built small tabernacles covered with fir branches. It was fun to eat in a succo. The last holiday of the month is Simchas Torah (Rejoicing in the Law). In the synagogue, the men carried the sacred scrolls of the Torah, while the younger boys marched around the room with flags decorated with burning candles stuck into an apple or potato. Everyone was happy on that day.
Suddenly someone screamed, “Fire! Fire!” Russian hooligans had spilled kerosene in Jewish streets, and soon the entire town was in flames. The worshippers at the synagogue carried the Torah and holy books to safety across the river. Tailors carried their sewing machines, cobblers their benches and tools, women their children and house goods to safety, crying, “God has punished us for our sins.”

Mother had already put the smaller children to bed when she heard the cry of “Fire!” She looked out of the window and saw that the sky was red. A brisk wind was blowing the flaming tongues of fire in every direction. Quickly, she took baby Chaim into her arms. Sister Rose, Brother Moshe, and I were holding on to her skirt as we followed the people who were running across the river.

Two of Father’s customers, who were peasants from the village, came to our store with a wagon to help. They saved several sacks of flour, and also a copper pot with money, which they gave to Father. They invited him to come to them with his family, offering their help, although they were poor themselves.

We were sitting half-naked in the damp pasture, warmed by the heat of the flaming town. We children enjoyed the spectacle of the flaming reflections in the river, as we never had seen such a beautiful scene before.

The next day, the entire town was in ruins. “How will I ever start again?” Father cried bitterly. Nobody was insured. He arranged for Mother and the four small children to go to Luptz, to stay with Grandma Esther Libe and Grandfather Shael Shlame, a 24-hour journey.

First, we were taken to the home of our two good friends, the peasants Felka and Adamka. They lived in one big room with a dirt floor and built-in brick oven. It was lighted with pine splinters. The peasant
women baked potatoes and put them into a sack for our journey. Mother said, "It is all right to eat baked potatoes; they are kosher."

The boys Nosen and Meyer were sent by Father to other small towns to study Torah in the Yeshivas. Grandma Gitl, Feigel, and Father rented a room with a Jewish family near the Polish cemetery. Everyone who had a lot started to build a barracks, with the help of the Jewish people from other towns who sent food and clothes and helped rebuild our town.
LUPTZ AGAIN

The day after the big fire, Mother and we four small children arrived in Luptz, at the home of Mother's parents. What a terrible welcome we received! The weather was cold and damp, and we all had to sleep on the floor. Everyone was angry. My grandfather and grandmother, who now were old and tired, said, "It is better to lie in the grave. There, at least, it is peaceful and we can be alone." At that time, we did not understand the suffering of the old folks. They had around them three married daughters, with their hungry, half-naked children. It was a torture to see them.

Our grandparents lived in a house which had one big room. There was a brick oven built high to the ceiling, with a space like a small room or closet. Near the top was a big opening, the warmest spot in the house, and Mother put us up there. She cooked potato soup without butter or meat, but with an onion and pepper it tasted like fish. Two of my mother's sisters, with several small children, were also there. The youngest sister, Chashe Feige, was so young and wide she could hardly walk.

Grandpa was still a synagogue sexton, and he had to make arrangements for funerals. The dead in Luptz were carried on a stretcher, on people's shoulders. The body was covered with a black cloth. That frightened me, and no one explained things to me or consoled me. I was afraid of the shadows, and imagined that the Angel of Death was always passing our windows. I hated Luptz, and disobeyed Mother and everyone else. I cried and begged Mother to send me back to Lida, to Grandma Gitl. She told me we had no home there, but as soon as Father could find one we
would all go back. However, I could not wait.

One night late in November, when the weather was frosty and the moon shone bright into our windows, we heard Aunt Chashe screaming. There were two old women around her, and pots of water were boiling on the stove. The screaming went on for a long time and awakened the neighbors, but in the early morning, we heard the women exclaiming joyously, “Mazel Tov!” Twin girls had been born. My poor aunt brought many twins into the world. We saw blood all over, and the mother and her babies were lying in a wooden bed on a straw cover, woven like a rug. The babies were bundled up like little mummies, but they gave me a new interest in life. I occupied myself loving and patting them like dolls. Soon, all three sisters began to quarrel, each saying to the other, “You do not belong here.” The children were barefoot and hungry. They quarreled constantly. The old folks began to tell us to go back to our own towns and that they really were worse off than dead, having no peace or privacy.

It was in the middle of that dreadful winter in Luptz that I got disgusted with everything and everybody. The future seemed gray and hopeless. I could not look at the sour faces. I was choked up with misery. Looking through the frosty windowpanes, I noticed a covered wagon with boxes and bundles. I heard the driver say that he was going to Lida. Quickly, I ran out of the house in my bare feet over the ice and snow and hid in the wagon between the boxes. My family had seen me and ran after me. I cried out to the driver, “Please take me along to Lida to Grandma Gitl!” The good driver covered me with an old sheepskin and some rags, and gave me a red apple. Mother tried to pull me out of the wagon, saying, “There is no room for you.” I replied, “The place where I love to be is with Grandma Gitl. I’ll sleep with her and will be
quiet as a kitten." Finally, Mother and the other members of my family went back into the house, and I knew my venture was successful. Tears of joy were flowing down my cheeks, and the kindly driver wiped them off and comforted me. The next day he brought me to my sweet Grandmother Gitl. How welcome I was! We had only one room, far away from the town, but it was quiet and peaceful. Sister Feigel said that I came like an angel from heaven, and just as unexpectedly. They put big shoes on my feet, and Grandma hastened to knit stockings for me. She cooked barley soup for me, and I was once more warm and happy.

Nearby was a Polish cemetery. Their dead were also carried into the church, but I was never afraid of the Christian dead, I don't know why. Perhaps because they were strangers to me. They had colorful processions and were always dressed nicely at the funerals. To my childish mind, it seemed more like a holiday; they ate and drank, and there was no sadness or crying amongst them. They believed their dead were going to heaven with their sins forgiven, so what was there to cry about? Later, I understood that all people mourn their dead, even at fine ceremonies. Tears are shed by all people everywhere, over the entire world, because of their losses.
THE GOOD POLISH PRIEST

Toward the end of that long winter, when the sun was high in the sky and the days grew longer and milder, my beloved Grandma Gitl bundled me up and took me to the store. She had a big fire-pot covered with ashes to keep the heat all day that kept us warm. Carpenters were working there to complete the roof.

We sold sacks of flour and other articles in our store. One day, a very tall, strong, handsome elderly man came in. He had a kind smile and silvery hair, and a closely cut beard. He wore a long, black cloak with little black buttons all the way down and a silk beaded rope around his waist. His head was covered with a black round silk cap. Around his neck was a white collar, and a gold cross was on his chest. He was a Polish priest. He bought a sack of flour, but did not bargain like the other customers. He told his servant to take it home, and remained to talk with Father.

The priest said, "Lida is in ruins, but I will try my best to influence rich people to supply money to rebuild the town nicer than before the fire. As long as I shall live, there shall not be any restrictions among the people. We are all God's children."

Behind his church the woods stretched for miles, and a deep river flowed through them. There were many swamps. His plan was to drain the swamps and build artificial lakes which all the people could bathe in in the summertime and skate on in winter. People could picnic there and enjoy the beauty of God's nature. My father listened to him and could not believe his ears. Never had he heard a priest talk like that to a poor Jew. The priest said also that he
would buy goods in all the stores in town and wanted to be friends with everyone.

In spring, the work of this great Polish priest actually began, and when the job was completed the area was a green paradise. Young and old came to the opening of the amusement place, which was called the Decansky Most. When the good priest saw the crowds coming, he was the happiest man in the world. The children kissed his hand, and he kissed them on the forehead. He gave us the fruits of his orchard.

Everyone in Lida loved him, and he was invited to Jewish affairs. He often discussed religion in a friendly spirit with Rabbi Isaac Jacob Raines. When the Russian Czar Nikolai the Second was crowned, there were great celebrations all over Russia. In Lida, also, candles were lighted in all the windows. School children, dressed in their best, marched to Decansky Most to celebrate. We all hoped reforms would come to Russia, making the people free. The rabbi and the priest rode together at that celebration.

Going to Decansky Most developed in me a great love for plants and flowers. Our big family lived, after the fire, in two small rooms in the back of the store. The rooms had been rebuilt with bad bricks, and the mortar never dried. In winter, there was frost on the walls and the double windows were tightly closed, but it was cold and damp inside. The small children were put on top of the oven near the ceiling. At the bottom of the oven, there was an opening for the chickens which Mother raised for Passover.

One day at the open window of a rich-looking house I saw a beautiful blooming plant. I could not resist; I climbed up and tore off a tiny branch. I replanted and cherished it. It grew nicely, but one of our chickens wanted to look out of the window and broke my precious little plant. I cried bitterly over my loss, and kicked the chicken with my foot. Father
caught hold of me and threw the flowerpot out into the cold. I swore that some day, when I was big, I would have plants growing in all my windows. Father explained, “We are raising chickens for the Passover. If you damage the chicken, it will not be kosher, and how can Mother make matzo balls without chicken fat or without eggs?” As I listened, he said, “Remember, the chicken is more important than the plant.”

An egg was a luxury, and we seldom ate one, even in the summer. Hot potatoes and herring were the usual nourishment of the family. We had a little meat on the Sabbath only. The Sabbath and the holidays were colorful. Father told us their significance and symbols. Passover was my favorite holiday; we drank wine and Mother prepared delicious meals. At the Seder table, Father and the children sang the beautiful old songs from the Agada, and Father and Mother seemed like king and queen to us. We children were happy that we had been freed from slavery in Egypt, and that the great liberator, Moses, had given Pharaoh what he deserved.
THE DEATH OF GRANDMA GITL

The following spring Mother returned to Lida for Pesach with the three small children. Father rented a few rooms from a dressmaker. The store was rebuilt, and Feigel worked in a store, while Mother was busy with the big family. Grandma Gitl was not the same any more. I slept with her and she often coughed. She was not as active as she used to be. She told Mother she ought to take more interest in the business because such a large family needed a lot. But it seems that Mother had never forgiven her for complaining that Father had married the “old maid from Luptz.” So Mother told Grandma that there was enough work to do at home and she was old enough to know what to do without being told by her mother-in-law. The two women now quarreled very often, and my father always took his mother’s part.

One day in the fall, on a Monday market day, when Grandma helped in the store, they quarreled again. Grandma came home sick with a high fever. The doctor said it was pneumonia and that her end was nearing. I sat quietly near her bed, and she patted my head and blessed me. She sent for a very pious woman to say the last prayers with her. The woman read aloud as Grandma murmured in a weak voice words that I shall always remember: “My mighty belief is that the Messiah will come. It may take a long time, but he will come. Dear God, forgive my sins. You built and I destroyed. You repaired and I broke”—and other words like that. With her fist on her heart, she pleaded for forgiveness. That night she died. They laid her gently on the floor, as was the custom, and covered her with a black cloth. Many candles were burning around her. I sat on the floor and was not
afraid of her, but my heart cried within me, "Why
do people have to die?" I began to think of the many
bad things that happen to people, and no one could
tell me why.

Sitting on the floor beside her, I understood my
great loss. Never again would Grandma Gitl wear her
beautiful bright-colored Turkish-designed shawl over
her brocaded, sparkling ornaments, and her big golden
earrings. She had resembled a beautiful and exotic
queen of the fairy tales. When she carried a big basket
with matzohs and wine for her Christian customers,
Grandma’s friends patted me and gave me colored
eggs.

After the funeral Mother had a very guilty con-
science. She said that if she had not quarreled with
her, perhaps Grandma would still be alive. Night
after night, Mother had terrible nightmares that Grand-
ma was choking her. She became pale and sickly,
frightened of her own shadow. The rabbi advised
her to measure Grandmother’s grave, and, according
to the measurements, light candles in the synagogue
every night for a whole week. It was done, and
Mother’s conscience tortured her no longer. Sister
Rose slept in Grandma’s place.

I have never forgotten Grandma Gitl’s stories that
the Messiah will come on a white horse to redeem us,
that Palestine will be a Jewish country with all the
Jewish people living there, and that even the dead will
crawl underground until they reach the Holy Land.
We will be free, sitting under the shade of the fig
tree, and have plenty of food in the land where milk
and honey flow.
I STUDY RUSSIAN

As soon as my Hebrew and Yiddish education with Father as my teacher was completed, my greatest desire was to be admitted to the Russian school, which was sponsored by the government. The schoolhouse was a small wooden building with two entrances, one for boys, the other for girls, and fine, small rooms for the teachers.

No Jewish boys and only a few Jewish girls were admitted to the government school. The richer Jewish children attended private Russian schools.

How I envied all the children who were going to the free school, carrying their school books and lunches, dressed in dark brown uniform dresses and black aprons, and in white pinafores on royal holidays.

One beautiful fall morning, at the beginning of the school year, I begged Father to take me to school. I combed and neatly braided my dark brown pigtails with red yarn. I put on nice fresh clothes. "Perhaps I'll be lucky enough to be admitted," I hoped. I looked at Father and noticed that he wore his old clothes. I asked him to put on his Sabbath clothes. In Lida, the Jewish people never wore holiday clothes in the middle of the week. "So," Father said, "flour comes from God. Mazel (luck) comes from God also. Maybe my floury clothes will be lucky for you." My young heart beat fast as we approached the school.

There was a big crowd of newcomers about my age at school. I was the smallest of them all. The children looked at me, laughing and remarking how small I was.

The teacher was a tall, blonde, beautiful young Russian woman, aristocratic in her manner, and kind and pleasant. She was a sister to the parish priest of Lida.
The priest was a tall, handsome old man. His eyes were cold and strict. Under his high, round cap, down the back of his head, fell long silver hair, reaching almost to his waistline. A short wide nose, big white eyebrows, and a heavy moustache and beard adorned his face. His cloak was wide, long, and black, and the sleeves were shaped like a cape. A cross on a golden chain hung on his chest.

The teacher looked at me, and our eyes met. She smiled at me in a friendly way, and admitted me to first grade. “Thank God,” I whispered to Father, “I, too, am a school girl.”

I danced all the way home, and for the first time in my young life, Father patted me on my bony cheek.

When Mother heard the good news, she rushed to a store and bought brown and black material for my uniform. Father bought me a secondhand textbook and an arithmetic book. Shortly after, I began to read and write. My papers were neat. Teacher was pleased and showed my handwriting to the other pupils.

Next to me sat a beautiful Polish girl who was my age. She was blonde, and twice as big as I was. She lived near us, with her old grandmother. Her name was Afanacia. We became friends, and she was often in our house.

We walked to school together, but as soon as she met non-Jewish children, she ran away from me. She used to tell me how beautiful their church was, and how poor our synagogue was, because all the beggars slept there. “It is true,” I told her, “but there is only one God and he is everywhere, and even beggars must have a place to sleep. They come and go to other towns, and we must be kind to strangers. Otherwise, God will punish us.”

The boys’ teacher was a refined Russian young man. He played the violin. He soon formed a choir of boys and girls. My friend Afanacia and I were
placed in the first row. My eyes filled with tears of joy and pride that I belonged to the school choir. The Russian school songs remained with me forever. Even my American-born children love them. I enjoyed the choir so much that I did not care even when the children in the back row pulled my pigtails.

Jewish girls were excused from religious lessons. We could stay in the corridor, but I loved to hear the music. Nothing could stop me from listening. I sang all the Russian religious songs, and at home my family sang them, even though they did not understand their meaning.

We were taught handiwork, such as knitting, crocheting, and embroidering small items like towels, stockings, gloves, and laces. I never could understand why Teacher gave me many colors of yarn to embroider roses all around a big bedspread by cross-stitching. It was a big job for a little girl.

I loved my beautiful, good teacher, and I tried my best to please her. I asked her to permit me to take my handiwork home. I promised to be careful and not to soil it. I wanted to finish it for the spring exhibition our teacher planned. So, as always, Teacher smiled at me and granted my request to work at home.

I developed a liking for poetry, and soon learned some poems by heart, poetry by Alexander Pushkin and Lermontov. Before going to bed, I would write the poems several times and read them in the middle of the night. Next morning, I knew them by heart. So did Afanacia. My whole family learned the poems from me. When visitors or directors came to school, Teacher called on Afanacia and me to recite.

That glorious winter passed quickly. All the girls had completed their handiwork. Many items were admired and sold, including my bedspread. This was a glorious achievement for me. Thank God for my mother, who taught me to sew with a needle, thimble,
and thread. All the children were happy with their work and accomplishment.

That spring, I recall, Easter and Passover came about the same time. My mother packed several matzohs in a white linen cloth, and a good bottle of wine. Mother and I dressed in our holiday clothes, and went to visit my beloved teacher. Mother bowed deeply and expressed her gratitude for Teacher’s kindness to me, and gave her a gift. Teacher was pleased, and told Mother to feed me up so that I would grow bigger.

At the end of the school season, Afanacia and I were promoted from the first to the third grade. “Thank God,” I said to myself.

Soon dark clouds gathered around me. A new law came, allowing only ten per cent of the girls to be admitted to school to be Jewish girls. After a hundred or so Christians were admitted without examination, there remained room for only ten of the fifty Jewish children. We were all frightened and nervous. I was so nervous during the examination that I could not talk. Soon I was outside crying with the others who were rejected. My hopes for a Russian education were shattered and finished at the age of seven.

My friend Afanacia remained in school.
THE MIRACLE

I recall distinctly it happened on a Monday market day before Easter and Passover. Many peasants and their families came to town to shop for Easter. The roads and the market place were slushy with the soft melting ice and snow and crowded with peasants returning to their villages.

My girl friend Afanacia and I were running home, happily, from school. We saw from afar a big crowd of people near my parents’ store. There were also several policemen. The peasants and their wives were shouting at my father. It seems that a peasant tried to carry away a sack of flour without paying for it. When Father tried to stop him some of the peasants hit him with their whips. The Jewish people came to Father’s defense. The police captain and several of his men tried to stop the riot. Father was ready to take an oath on the holy scroll that the man had not paid him, provided that the peasant and his wife took an oath on the holy cross.

The whole crowd, the police, and the peasant with the sack of flour on his shoulder marched to the rabbi. With tears in their eyes, my father and mother swore that they had not received payment. The police captain asked the peasant what kind of money he gave Father. The peasant scratched his head and replied that he paid Father with two ruble bills and received change. The captain looked into Father’s purse. There were no two paper rubles there. “Well,” the captain said, “let’s go to the priest.” So, the whole crowd marched to the priest. When they reached the bridge, the police captain unsheathed his sword and screamed at the peasant, “Remember, Ivan, if you swear falsely on the holy cross, I’ll cut you to pieces
with this sword and throw you into the river.’’ The peasant and his wife began to shiver. They bowed and kissed the captain’s boots, and confessed that they had not paid.

‘‘Rush to your village, you dirty dog,’’ the captain screamed, and kicked him with his boots. ‘‘Pay him now.’’ The peasant paid and ran away. It was obvious that pogroms could be stopped, as well as encouraged, by black forces. The whole town talked about the miracle and the fine gesture of a Russian police captain.
OUR NEIGHBORS

We moved in with a dressmaker who lived in an old house on a narrow dark back street. The street brightened up only when the candles shone through the windows on Friday nights.

Small and narrow stairs led to an attic, where two sisters, also dressmakers, lived. The oldest, Rebecca, who was about twenty, mothered her youngest sister, about twelve.

These girls came from a small village. Their parents sent them to live in our town to be among Jewish people for fear the girls would marry non-Jewish boys.

Both girls were beautiful. Everyone enjoyed their singing of peasant and Russian songs. Rebecca had a sweetheart, a Jewish soldier, who came from deep Russia. When he was off duty, he painted signs. He sketched the little houses, and tried to paint portraits. I sat near him on the floor and watched him work on canvas. This was my first acquaintance with art. I must have been a severe critic. I looked closely at the wet, painted canvas, and did not like the smearing. I did not believe he was an artist because his work was so rough. I loved the fine reproductions of good artists, but Rebecca encouraged him and was proud of his work. All the peasant women of her village gave her work. While working, she sang arias from "Faust," and a beautiful Russian song, "Carry My Soul to the Blue Horizon, and Place It among the Golden Rocks."

It so happened that a new-born baby was found drowned in the river, and a new song, "Under the Green Bridge," became popular. The words of the song expressed the suffering of a rich girl who was misled and gave birth to her baby on a stone under
the bridge. The sad melody and beautiful words broke our hearts.

The police also came to question Rebecca. She swore to the police that she never had a baby, and if she did, she would keep it.

Now I often wonder why, in our deserted corner of the town, there were no drunkards, thieves, or prostitutes, just poor, pious, God-loving people who were enriched by the faith that God would not forsake them.
SOME MORE NEIGHBORS

Next door to us lived Sarah, the cripple, and her family of five. Her husband, three boys from two to six, and another child on its way comprised the family.

Sarah, although a cripple, was a good wife and mother. Her knee was attached with a leather strap to a crutch. She was thin, good-looking, clever, and always in a good humor. Many peasant women brought her work. She mastered her sewing machine with one foot. She washed her clothes sitting on the floor, which was sprinkled with yellow sand. Green plants decorated her windows.

Sarah was a native intellect. She spoke natural philosophy and wisdom. She never complained about her hard luck.

Sarah’s husband was a shoemaker, but seldom worked at his bench. He was handsome and refined, but dreadfully sick, for he was a chronic epileptic. I often saw him lying on the floor in a fit of convulsions with glassy eyes, while Sarah sat beside him, wiping the foam off his mouth. When the spell passed, Sarah carried him to bed, wiping her tears.

Although both of them were handicapped, they were a happy family. They sang beautifully. Everyone loved them. My sister Feigel befriended them often. So, our narrow alley was a musical corner where everybody sang. Sarah’s proverb was: “I am not lonely, and possess great love for my family and friends.”

My parents wanted me to become an apprentice to Sarah. “Dressmaking is a good trade for a girl,” they said. My answer was: “I love to sew, to be able to make fine stitching by hand, and there is lots of fun in mastering a sewing machine, but I will never become a dressmaker.”
“Why not?” they wanted to know. My reply was: “All dressmakers work forever for their husbands and families, but there are no married women at the cigarette factory. I shall never work for a husband. It is enough to give him a dowry to marry me.” My answer was “No.” My choice to become a cigarette maker materialized, but it did not protect me from working after marriage. To work and to provide was a necessity for me, and I enjoyed being a good worker at cigarettes and cigars, and in later years as a sewing machine operator on leather goods. Self-supporting people are lucky. It is good to be useful in old age. My hopes are to continue to be useful as long as possible.

Across our narrow back street lived a shoe repair man who specialized in patching old shoes. He was a tired, stooped old man, and his grey, bushy eyebrows and beard almost covered his whole face.

On Saturday in the Synagogue, his place was near the door. He loved to sit at a big table while the people sang the Psalms. His eyes and face would light up with sheer delight when he was able to listen and pray among people who knew so much more than he did.

His wife was the homeliest woman in town. (She had been born noseless.) She was always screaming and cursing at her husband and neighbors. She was clever and ambitious, and the most tragic of mothers. Their only daughter of marriageable age was physically and mentally ill. This unfortunate mother said she would never stop searching for a cure until she found it. Her child must be cured.

No one knew how she managed to travel with her daughter through many big cities in Russia and visit the greatest clinics, where the doctors told her that her effort was in vain. She did not give up, and hoped
for a miracle from God. He would listen to her prayers. Again and again, she wandered with her daughter from town to town to many rabbis, and was blessed by many of them.

They gave her holy scripts and charms to remove the evil spirit of a sinning soul which might have entered the girl’s body. “A remedy must be found to drive it out,” they said. Mother and daughter came home exhausted, but without a cure. The girl was the same as before.

Later, the mother and daughter dragged themselves to witches, witch doctors, gypsies, magicians, and brought home several kinds of herbs. However, all their efforts were in vain. Finally, they gave up. The stubborn spirit would not leave the girl’s body. Perhaps God wanted it that way to punish them for their sins.

They hated all their neighbors and children. We pitied them. We were all accustomed to watch her lying in the mud in convulsive spells.

Epilepsy was considered a sort of an evil spirit of a sinning soul of an unknown ancestor. It was all surrounded with superstition, and mystic remedies were used. All were afraid of such a strange, weird human disease. They said it was caused by evil spirits carried by the wind.

Chaskel Long Legs, a very tall, middle-aged man, was also one of our neighbors. His cheekbones and pitiful eyes craved for sympathy, and everyone was always kind to him.

He had become the favorite infant in our town many years ago. He was an unclaimed foundling. One very cold winter night, several strangers who slept behind the oven at the synagogue heard a baby cry. Following the cry, they soon found a crying baby boy, who was about two weeks old.

A note, sewed on the rags, asked the finder to be
good to the child. It also said that he was a Jewish boy named Chaskel. Chaskel was circumcised.

The community got together in the middle of the night, and a wet nurse was called. She proposed that she be paid a year in advance. She was blessed with a quantity of milk, and God wanted her to have one more child. She would be a mother to the foundling. The community agreed with her, and accepted her proposition. They paid her a year’s wage in advance. Everyone was happy. Thus, Chaskel found a mother and a home.

A few weeks later the foster mother brought Chaskel back to the synagogue, explaining that she had found it impossible to nurse the boy because of his appetite. “He needs a couple of wet nurses. I cannot supply him with all the milk he needs. Get a cow. I cannot nurse him anymore.” So, the crowd demanded the money they had paid her. “The money,” she replied, “is gone. I am sorry, but we bought new shoes for all of us. You cannot use them.”

A special meeting was held, and a letter was sent to the highest court in St. Petersburg.

Many years passed. Chaskel became big and tall, and grew a beard. The whole town raised him. He studied at the Yeshivahs, eating “days.” He was famous for his long legs and big appetite. He often ate at our home on Fridays and Saturdays. Mother always tried to satisfy his demands for food.

Years later, a letter came from St. Petersburg. It was the answer with the decision from the highest court in the land. It ordered that the wet nurse continue to nurse Chaskel. It was a somewhat belated decision.

One of our outstanding neighbors was the widow Sheina Libe. She was well-known, and loved and respected by rich and poor. She was a cultured person, and had a shelf of books in her tiny room. She had
no family of her own. She used to say that the whole town was her family. It was true.

Sheina Libe was clean, straight, pleasant, kind, and always smiling. She often said that all the orphans were her children. "I shall care for them," she said, and she did.

She always carried a white linen bag, filled with food for the poor. She also collected coins in her white handkerchief, and delivered these to all the places where help was needed. She never told the names of the people to whom she brought relief. Everyone called her a saint. Her books were loaned out for one kopek a week. They were yellow and all worn out. I was one of her customers.

Once I asked her why she charged money for reading her books when she always got them back. She replied, "Tochterke (Little Daughter), for this kopek Sheina Libe drinks a little pot of chicory for breakfast." I began to understand the value of a kopek.

Sheina Libe also collected money and gifts for orphan brides, because marrying off poor girls was considered a great deed.

At their weddings, when they were coming home from the canopy, she danced all the way with the big wedding chaleh. There was music on the street, and everyone clapped to greet the great woman, to whom all doors were open. Sheina Libe is unforgettable to our country people.

It would be unfair to omit the family of our landlord, the family of my little friend, Ida, and her parents. Our landlord was a Hebrew teacher. Besides his many pupils, he also had half a dozen of his own children. The school, kitchen, bedrooms, and nursery were located in a few rooms. Reb Berl Joseph was a kind, middle-aged man, and a fine scholar. He and his family were loved and respected, even by his tenants.
In those years, rent in Lida was paid by the year, at the convenience of the tenants. No one was ever evicted for not paying rent.

Reb Berl Joseph's wife was a beautiful woman. She was handicapped by a lame arm, and Reb Berl always helped raise the children. Both possessed such natural wisdom that in later years their handsome sons and beautiful daughters never quarreled among themselves or with other people. We lived with them for almost seventeen years, and we will always remember the fun we had on Saturday nights, singing or playing lotto. Furthermore, we continued our friendship in this country, and our educated American sons and daughters call themselves country people of the vanished Lida. Most of our country people rest in peace in the cemeteries here. Just a few now remain.
A HOLY GIFT OF A MYSTERIOUS WOMAN

Our town, Lida, became famous on account of the fire, and started rebuilding through investments of wealthy merchants, who arrived from the large cities of Russia and Poland.

The entire community gathered at the ruins of the synagogue square to discuss plans for rebuilding. The merchants offered to loan money on liberal terms to those who owned lots, providing that only bricks and metal be used in the construction of the new homes, in order to prevent another catastrophe. The propositions were accepted with gratitude and enthusiasm. It was also decided to rebuild the synagogues first.

“'Our temples must be rebuilt first,' they cried. ‘With God's help, they will bring us all good luck.'” The meeting adjourned with prayers, blessings, and hope.

Very soon, at the synagogue square and all over town, carpenters installed high and low scaffolds. There appeared big piles of bricks of several colors, shallow boxes filled with mixed cement, frames for windows and doors, and boards for stairs and floors. Diggers pitted deep foundations for basements. Everyone hoped for a better future. Suddenly, people began to quarrel. Since there were no records of the sizes and extent of ownership of the properties, the people argued over the lots.

After the ruins were cleared, neighbors began to accuse each other of stealing land. Women with babies stood deep in the freshly dug ground shouting, “'We will stop the work! This is our lot!’” They all rushed to the rabbi. He was quite busy settling property disputes.

Walls were going up rapidly. How the children enjoyed climbing the scaffolds, making figures, houses,
and mud pies! This was enjoyment such as we had never known.

Everyone worked. The merchants enjoyed good business, and the town grew prosperous.

My father, the head of the Chasidim congregation, was appointed to watch over the workers and pay them their wages every Friday.

One Friday the community ran short of money just as the building of the small synagogue was almost completed. The workers gathered near our store demanding their pay.

Father pleaded with them to be patient, in hopes that the funds would arrive at any moment. "We cannot wait," the workers screamed angrily. "You know we must get paid today. We cannot come empty-handed to our wives for Sabbath." There was almost a riot. They threatened to beat up Father. "What kind of a manager are you?" they demanded. "It is your duty to prepare our pay beforehand," they cried. Many people came to help, and half of the needed money was raised. The workers departed peacefully to receive the Holy Sabbath.

As soon as the crowd left, a cab arrived at the market place. An elderly woman arrived with a trunk. She was well-dressed, and must have been a beauty in her youth.

The lady said she came from a big city. She was wealthy and wanted to help. She had been born here. Her parents moved away when she was still an infant. She heard about the fire. "Here I am," she said.

She did not mention a husband, family, her business, or how she earned her fortune, and refused to give her name or tell whence she came. Everyone was amazed and puzzled about her. She told the cab driver to take her to an inn near the railway station.

On Saturday evening she gave the community a large sum of money to complete the entire synagogue
square. There was no rejoicing. No one could explain why. The mysterious woman ordered a Holy Scroll of Law from the safer (a copyist of holy scrolls). A safer is considered holy, and his work sacred. He must immerse himself in the ritual-font (mikvah) daily before work. A scroll is written on parchment. It must be spotless and have no mistakes. At that time, scrolls were written with a pen made of a good feather.

The safer was isolated during his work, locked in an attic so as not to be disturbed. It took a long time to complete a scroll. Before the scroll was completed, the woman bought a beautiful dark-blue velvet mantel artistically brocaded with gold.

The four handles were made to order by an artist jeweler. I distinctly remember that summer night when we celebrated the completion of the big synagogue and the Holy Scroll. All lamps and candles were lit that night. Outside, there were several tables covered with white tablecloths, beautiful twisted chalehs, and all kinds of food: fruit, candies, schnaps, and wine. The strange lady bought and paid for everything. Never before had there been such a celebration in Lida.

Everyone was invited. Jew and Gentile, officer and soldier attended. The good Polish priest was also present.

The rabbi and the scholars received the honor of carrying the completed Holy Scroll from the safer’s attic. They walked slowly under a canopy which was held by four young men. Everyone carried lit candles. A copelia (music band) followed the procession, playing tunes for the rabbi and the Chasidim.

The mysterious lady, dressed in her best and wearing her beautiful jewels, carried a big twisted chaleh and salt. She called all the women and girls to join her. It was customary to bring bread and salt when enter-
ing a new building. It was also customary to greet distinguished people in the same manner. The rabbi placed the scroll in the Holy Ark with prayers and blessings, and the people bade each other "mazel tov" (good luck).

The people were served at tables. Groups of men greeted the new moon. Young men and women, big and small, danced in the moonlight. Such a fantastically realistic and beautiful celebration is unforgettable.

A vanished world of spiritual glory was created by a mysterious woman in our town long ago. I heard women whispering to each other, "Who is she?" Others asked, "Why is she veiled in secrecy?" Still others questioned, "How did she accumulate her wealth?" No one knew any of the answers.

The men quietly questioned each other, and wondered if a Holy Scroll coming from the unknown woman was kosher. No one could tell how her fortune was made.

"If her life, past or present, was questionable, we do not know whether to bless or condemn her. We must not judge the unknown," said one.

"She surrounded our town with glory. She said she was born here. Perhaps her grandparents lie in our cemetery. Why does she not speak?" asked another.

We are all sinners. Her sins did not quench her spark of faith and decency. She possessed a strong desire to bring happiness to the people of Lida.

That great celebration was followed by shadows of doubt. It seems good deeds cannot wipe out deep stains. Thoughts of suspicion lingered on. The people of our town could not solve the mystery. They sighed and gave her the benefit of the doubt.

The next day she bade everyone good-bye. The people were relieved. They never heard from her again.
Jewish students were not admitted to the universities of the big cities in Russia; they were not even allowed to live in the big cities. Only a tiny percentage could enter the universities, and they were the sons of very rich merchants who paid a certain amount of taxes every year. But a number of Jewish boys and girls lived in Jewish homes under cover. They were pursued by the police, who accepted graft to overlook them.

Since prostitutes were allowed to live in the university cities on a yellow ticket, many Jewish girl students bought yellow tickets from the police to be able to live and study in the big cities. Thus many Jewish girls managed to finish their studies and received diplomas to practice medicine, dentistry, or become midwives. They came home with their diplomas to the small towns, opened offices, established fine practices, and made good livings. This made them forget all about the ugly yellow ticket.

Here is a true story of what happened in Russia after a terrible pogrom in a small town. Many Jews had been beaten and killed by Russian black forces. A great Jewish lawyer sent a petition to the czar himself, describing the horrors that the Jewish people had to undergo. He pleaded with the czar to stop those terrible pogroms. The czar answered that he would come and investigate in person.

As soon as the officials heard that the czar was coming, they hurriedly ordered the people to clean up the town and repair the damaged houses. When the czar arrived, all was peaceful and quiet. He passed through the streets and did not see anything wrong. An old Jew was walking to the synagogue with his tallis.
(prayer shawl). "Who is he?" asked the czar. "This old Jew is going to pray," was the answer. The czar passed by a gutter and saw a man lying there drunk. "Who is this man?" asked the czar again. "Oh, he is a Russian drunkard," they replied. "Well, he lies on his own ground," said the czar. Thus ended the czar's investigation.
UNREST AND STRIKE IN LIDA

After the coronation of Nikolai the Second, czar of all the Russians, a revolutionary movement to make Russia a free country with a constitution, freedom of the press, freedom of speech, the right to organize labor, and to free all political prisoners began. As a result of the great unrest, strikes broke out all over the country.

Organizers from big towns came to Lida to help the strikers gain higher wages and better living conditions. The right to belong to unions was also demanded. A general strike all over Russia was to start at the same time. The workers in our factory were to meet in the woods of Decansky Most, early in the morning.

Rubin, the boss of the cigarette factory, who was my sister's partner, called me to the store on the evening before the strike. He had heard something about it and asked me what was going on. My co-workers knew that I was a relative of the boss and threatened me if I told the boss about their plans. So, I promised not to say a word. In the back of the store, the boss, the foreman, my sister Feigel, and Father asked me questions which I refused to answer. When they continued to question me, I said, "I don't know." They told me that I was lying. Father became angry and said I was stubborn and had no respect for grown-ups. He pointed his finger in anger at me, saying indignantly, "Such an undergrown creature wants to overthrow the Russian czar and change the system." Finally I said to them, shivering, "I will not be a moser (informer). If you people want to know what is going on in a big factory, go and work there and you will find out." They kicked me out.
Father always went to the synagogue early, but that morning he did not go; he watched me. All the workers of the town left for the woods. Father was home with me, but later he went away. The moment he was gone, I ran to the woods to find the crowds of workers. I searched for them all day, but in vain. At last, hopeless, I had to give up the search. I was lost. A peasant showed me the way to town, which I reached when it was dark. I was hungry, thirsty, and tired. Everyone was waiting for me when I got home. Father pulled me outside, called all the children to watch me, stripped me naked, and whipped me with his leather strao. Our landlady’s daughter, my friend Ida, took me in, washed me, and gave me something to eat. Then my tears began to flow.

Next day I was told, “Do not set your foot in the factory. Your job has been taken from you. No one will give you work in Lida.” My whole family abused me. That night my decision was made. I had saved one hundred and twenty rubles for my dowry. They should give me sixty rubles, and they could keep the rest. I would go to London, where I hoped to find work and be free. If I lived, that would be fine. If I didn’t, I would not care. A little girl could find some work in a big world. If they refused to give me my money, or tried to prevent my going away, I would go to the church for help. I wanted my money at once.

My father, Israel Joseph, had done his fatherly duty by punishing me for the crime of being disobedient, ignoring his commands and warning not to follow the crowds to the woods, not answering the questions about the strike planned in my employer’s cigarette factory, and refusing to be a moser (informer). Now my mother, Rachel, started on her motherly duty in the shrillest notes. “What do you mean?” she screamed at me in fear and anger. “You will go to the churches to ask for help? Are you planning to be
converted and become a Christian? Woe is me! You will become a shikse (non-Jew), and perhaps later on, you will marry a non-Jewish boy and our grandchildren will be Pogromshikses. Should such evil words be spoken of a decent Jewish girl? Never, never! You deserve to be scalded with boiling water, and you should become so helpless that even the churches will refuse to help or care for you. Is this my reward for struggling to raise such a tiny, ugly mouse? It might have been better if you had died in infancy instead of our first-born girl, Nechame!"

Poor Mother. The tears streamed down her cheeks and her motherly heart almost broke. How little she knew that I was with my people and my faith with all my heart and soul. I had been only a tiny grain of sand swept along in the hurricane of the Russian Revolution. How I missed my beloved Grandma Gitl! I felt like an orphan left alone in a fierce storm. But I was not helpless.

That night my little friend brought me my money which Sister Feigel had given her. I packed a small basket and put in some biscuits which my friend’s mother had baked for me. Very early the next morning I was on the train to Vilna, where my brother worked in a trade school. In Vilna there were also strikes and unrest. Meyer went with me to an agent who knew how to smuggle people across the border to Libau, where they could take a boat to London.

That same morning, in Lida, the people talked about how Israel Joseph’s daughter had been stripped and beaten by her own father in the middle of the street, how she was unable to face anyone, and had run away. Men and women berated my father, saying that all the young people had gone to the woods, that he had been wrong to beat me in the street. They told him to go and find me. "It is criminal," they said, "to drive away such a very young girl from her home."
The whole town was upset, and I became a martyr in their eyes.

Father came to Vilna that same day and found me with my brother. He cried, and he begged me to come home with him. I told him that I would not find work in Lida, and it was too late. Then he warned me to be careful and not to be misled, and I promised I would watch my step. I bade him Good-bye, and he left alone for Lida, as I left for London, England.

I did not write home for a whole year. I was embittered against my parents and sister, but more so against my boss, Rubin, himself the father of children and rolling in wealth, who had chased me out of his factory because I refused to tell him about the plans of the strikers. My parents wrote to all the people from Lida who lived in London to find me. They pleaded with me to write to them, which I finally did.

I heard from home that Czar Nikolai instead of granting reforms had crushed the revolution with pogroms. The prisons were filled with prisoners—men, women, and children. Many had been exiled to Siberia. The czar and his advisers started the pogroms of the Jews. The czar said the Jews were revolutionists, and the workers said the Jews were the bourgeoisie, and they all cried, "Beat the Jews and save Russia!" Later, my family wrote me that they were glad I was in London. Some of my girl friends had been arrested and sent to Siberia. I was free in London, and worked in a big cigarette factory.
MY JOURNEY TO LONDON

My brother Meyer, who lived in Vilna, arranged for my trip. A strange man picked up my basket and took me to a place where many other immigrants were waiting for a train to the port of Libau on the Baltic Sea. There we saw a great ship being loaded with boxes and bundles, getting ready to leave on the following day.

The immigrants were mostly Jewish men, women, and children. A woman with her two young daughters, who were traveling to London to their father, befriended me. The ship was crowded. Our quarters were in a dark corner, crowded with narrow beds, one on top of the other. We were on deck when the heavily loaded ship started off. For the first time in my young life, I saw the sea. The horizon seemed far off, and the unfriendly winds frightened me. It seemed to me that the ship was breathing heavily. It listed to the right and to the left. The steam whistled, and a heavy plume of smoke rose into the air. Green and white waves stretched and jumped as far as the eye could see. White sea gulls followed our ship. It all seemed like a colossal carousel. I began to feel sick.

The other people also felt sick. They looked pale and green, and most of them soon crawled into their beds. I was seasick the entire journey, and could not eat the potatoes and herring which were given to us.

After several days, cries arose: “Land! We see land! It is England. We are free!” It was early in the morning.

I had been given the address of a cousin, Alte, who worked in a shop as a buttonhole maker. She lived with her parents. Her father was a Hebrew teacher, and also a peddler who sold goods to people on the installment plan. They were very kind people. A man from a Jewish society, the Board of Guardians, first
took many of the immigrants to a place where we were given food. Then he took me to my cousin, telling me that if I needed help or advice I should come to him.

Everybody said that I was small for my age. I was thirteen then. "If the Londoners will be good to me," I told them, "perhaps I will grow taller." How I yearned to be tall! Alte took me to a store and bought me a red shirtwaist and a long skirt to make me look taller. She braided my dark brown hair with a fine ribbon. I was surprised and amused when they told me that I was very good-looking.

I went job hunting. I walk around and tried to read the names of the streets. I went into cigar and tobacco stores asking for work. Luck was with me. I found a job in a Jewish store, in a rough Cockney neighborhood, on Salmon Lane. This was a business street near the docks, and for the first time I saw people of a different color: Chinese, Japanese, and other races.

My boss, Mr. Wolfson, had a bench standing in his store window. He gave me a white apron, a big pile of yellow tobacco, and cigarette paper, and I began to work in the window. My fingers moved fast. Was I not an experienced old hand at cigarette-making from Russia? Big crowds of people gathered in front of the window. All day long they watched me work, and many people came in to buy the cigarettes I made. What a wonderful feeling it was to have found work in a strange country, especially in England!

At three o'clock in the afternoon, I was given strong tea with cream, and bread and jam. I felt right away that I was going to be big. My boss and his family were very good to me; they were Russian Jews from Ekaterinoslav. I have learned that there are fine and good people among all races and creeds in the world of free countries.
I worked during the day and attended school at night. I envied every little girl who could speak English. Slowly, I began to read children’s stories in the textbooks and to write neatly. My teacher took a great interest in me, introducing me to the other teachers and telling them that all my folks were in Russia and I was alone in London, praising my love for work and study.

On Saturday nights my cousin Alte took me to lectures or political debates. I met many revolutionists who had escaped from Russia. There was Count Peter Kropotkin, an exile from my homeland, and Rudolph Rocker, an exile from Germany. At the Wonderland, the biggest hall in London, at a protest meeting against the pogroms in Kishinev and other Russian cities, a very old woman spoke in French. They told me she was Louise Michel, and that she had taken part in the French Revolution. I frequently wondered whether she really had. On Sundays, in summer, we used to go to Hyde Park, where speakers and groups of people around them spoke freely, even criticizing the British government, while the police kept order.

The Salvation Army sang in Whitechapel, on one corner. At another corner spoke a socialist or anarchist, or perhaps a missionary. People listened, and went away peacefully.

I often wondered about the contrast in London. There were so many rich gentlemen in high hats, and beautifully dressed women. The department stores were overflowing with clothing of all kinds, but many people were lying near the churches, homeless and in rags. Women sold themselves for a roll and a kippered herring. I witnessed people carrying shoes and other small articles to the pawn shop. There were saloons on every corner where men, women, and children were drinking. Some women even nursed their
babies in those places. But rich and poor alike loved the king and queen.

The following year, my boss’s brother, a young boy, came from Russia. They asked me to teach him the trade and to find another job for myself. When he was able to take over, I found work at Aldgate, in a very big factory employing about five hundred workers. When I applied for the job, the foreman looked me over. “You are too little,” he said. “You look like a child.” I pleaded with him. “I am fourteen. I come from Russia. I am alone in London and need a job.” “But,” he exclaimed, “where shall I put you when an inspector comes—under the table?” “That’s good enough for me,” I said. So he took me in.

I was not afraid, because I knew that I could do the work. He put me at a table, gave me a pile of tobacco and paper cases, and put me to work. He was amazed at the speed of my thin fingers. “How long have you been working?” he wanted to know. “All my life,” I answered.

Each two cigarette makers had one cutter to cut off the edges, but I was so fast that the foreman had to give me a cutter all for myself. Whenever an inspector came, I dove under the table and hid until he was gone. By and by I grew a little taller. When visitors came to watch the people work, the foreman used to bring them over to me, and they watched my flying fingers make the cigarettes. Other workers raced with me to see who could make a “fifty” faster. I never lost a bet.

Many of the men workers came from Odessa, a big city in Russia near the Black Sea. They were tough, vulgar boys who tried to flirt with me. They nicknamed me “Mamotchka,” which means “little mother.” However, one of them warned me to beware of all these men. “They are dangerous. Watch your step,” he said. I thanked him for watching over me.
There was an older girl in the factory who befriended me. She was beautiful, well-educated, and refined. Everyone respected Celia. She lived with her old mother, and had a sweetheart who was sick with tuberculosis. I was proud and glad to have Celia for my friend. At lunchtime we formed a reading circle for half an hour. We read Victor Hugo, “The Count of Monte Cristo,” and “The Man Who Laughs.” We went together to see the works of art in the museums. How I loved to see the wonderful paintings of the great masters, Gainsborough, Reynolds, Rubens, Rembrandt, Leonardo da Vinci, and others! What treasures of art! I wished that I could sometime meet a living artist.

One event I especially remember was when the beloved Queen Victoria died of old age. All the buildings and streets of London were draped in lavender and black. The people all mourned the loss of their good and clever queen. In a free country, a queen is beloved like a devoted mother. Great masses of people crowded the sidewalks when the black-draped carriage and horses took the queen on her journey into eternity. I was reminded of Grandma Gitl, who had also closed her kind eyes and departed into eternity.

Then came the coronation of King Edward VII. I remember how enthusiastic the British people were as everyone danced in the street. They know how to celebrate.

When the London hospital built a new addition, the king and queen were at the opening. They were the first to unlock the door and step in. In spite of the hospital’s enormous size, there still were not enough beds, and only those who were dangerously ill could be admitted. I saw patients wheeled in pushcarts by their relatives to the hospitals, but there was no room for them. At the clinic or dispensary, patients had to
wait for treatment almost all day. They were served tea.

Missionaries lured Jewish patients to come to their hospital, but before treating them they made them listen to prayers and speeches about Christianity.

At night school I met a very fine chap about seventeen years old. He was tall and handsome and could play the accordion, although he had never taken a lesson. He was an apprentice in a cabinet factory and could make lovely things out of wood. His name was Morry, and he was his mother’s only son. He took me to see his parents and they liked me, but they remarked, “He is so tall and you are so short.” I was about two years younger than Morry, and even my high heels did not help. We went out together, but I was always worried that he might break off with me. How proud I was when he came to meet me and take me home from work!

It happened that my eyes became red and tired, and even closed, at school. The teacher advised me to go to a hospital and have them examined. The doctor gave me drops and said that I needed glasses. In those years only old folks wore glasses. When my boy friend’s mother saw the big glasses on my small face, I felt that my romance was shaky, and so it was.

Upstairs, in my boy friend’s house, there lived a widow with a beautiful daughter. She was tall, well-dressed, and spoke fine English. The two older women became very chummy, and the widow said to Morry’s mother, “What kind of a girl did your son pick? She is all skin and bones, and wears glasses.”

What chance did I have? True, my boy friend told me he loved me only, and that we would be married when he was about twenty. I was happy, because I loved him deeply.

It was fall, and the Jewish holidays came. I waited and waited, but my friend did not come. Two weeks
passed. I missed him terribly. Everything seemed empty and dark. I felt that if he had only told me, it would not hurt quite so much. When I could not bear it any longer, I went to knock at his door, and his mother came out.

"He will not go with any more," she said. "He is keeping company with a girl of his own size, the girl from upstairs."

Well, I wished her a Happy New Year, and went away. They teased me in the factory about my losing my boy friend. I became pale and thin, and I had a terrible feeling that everything was finished.

About that time I met a rabbi's daughter, who took me home with her. The rabbi saw I had a book about astronomy, and told me I should not read such a book.

"Why not?" I asked him. "God created the world, the moon, the planets, and the stars. Why should we not learn about them?"

He looked at me and borrowed the book. The whole family was very good to me. They asked me to be their guest at dinner every Friday and Saturday. By and by time cured the pain of my first love. I began to dress nicer and go out with girls and young men.

The factory where I worked was sold to some American company. Everyone said the work would be done with machines and not by hand. They said that we would have to find other lines of work. It was at that time that my older brother, Nathan, came to London, and we arranged to go to America together.

Shortly before our departure, Morry and his mother came to see me. They had heard that I was leaving for America. Morry brought me a beautiful bouquet of roses and asked me to forgive him.

"Stay in London, and we will be married," he begged.

"It is too late," I answered. "I do not trust you any more."
FRAME-UPS AGAINST THE JEWS

Those were evil days for the Jews in many countries of Europe. The slogan "Kill the Jew and save Russia" spread like wildfire to many Russian cities. A Christian boy was killed by someone in a Russian town, and a Jew named Mendel Balis was arrested for the crime. His trial caused a sensation and was the cause of pogroms in many parts of the country. The Jews in the United States protested, and President Theodore Roosevelt sent a strong note to the czar of Russia, who did nothing to stop those outrageous persecutions. Later, the United States even broke off relations with Russia. While the anti-Semites were proud of their success, the poor Jews became discouraged and almost helpless. Mendel Balis was later freed of all charges.

There was also antisemitism in France, a free country, the most cultured of all. Some military men falsely accused a Jewish army captain, Alfred Dreyfus, of giving away military secrets to Germany. His accusers prepared all kinds of proof and procured false witnesses, and Alfred Dreyfus was found guilty of treason and sent to Devil's Island, where only the worst criminals were sent. There was much bitterness and indignation among the Jews the world over. If a non-Jew commits a crime, the law punishes that one individual; but if a Jew commits a crime, his entire race is often punished with him.

And it happened that one day a famous writer, a non-Jew, looked into the matter and became aroused. He wrote a thunderous pamphlet, "I Accuse!" stating that Captain Alfred Dreyfus was innocent. The world shuddered and listened. He collected proof for his statement, and many honest and conscientious men
arose and demanded justice with him. The great writer was a Frenchman, Emile Zola. He exposed the fraud and dirty lies, and did not rest until Captain Dreyfus was freed and back from Devil’s Island, a broken, aged man. Dreyfus was given back his sword with all honors. Many of his enemies left France for other countries.

It would be wrong to say that the Jews lived happily ever after. Antisemitism is a cancer that seems to remain militant. To make the Jewish people scapegoats for their blunders and intrigues of dangerous demagogues.

In this hour of darkness there appeared a Jew of aristocratic appearance — tall, dark, and handsome, with a magnificent black beard. His name was Dr. Theodore Herzl, from Vienna. He had written a booklet, “The Jewish State,” in which he set forth his idea that the problem of the Jewish people could be solved only by their return to Palestine, their homeland of long ago. Many Jews were inspired by that idea; others had no faith in the Zionist movement and said Dr. Herzl was a dreamer. Nevertheless, many outstanding Jews from all over the world came to the first Zionist Congress, held in Basel, Switzerland. There the cornerstone of the Zionist movement was laid. Rabbi Isaac Jacob Raines, from Lida, was a delegate to the first Congress.

Zionism took roots and spread all over the world, for there were many who understood Dr. Herzl’s idea and had faith in his prophecy. Unfortunately, he died young, but such great leaders as Dr. Chaim Weitzmann, the scientist; Israel Zangwill, Max Nordau, and others took up his work. After almost fifty years of struggle, the dream became a reality and many lived to see the Jewish independent free state of Israel recognized by the United Nations. The bones of Dr. Herzl were brought to rest in Israel, the land of his dreams.
MY ARRIVAL IN CHICAGO

While I lived in England, many people in Lida had emigrated to America, among them some members of my family.

My father's sister, Hilda, had married a strong and healthy farmer, David, but both were disappointed in their marriage. David thought that Hilda, a city girl, would make a businessman out of him. Hilda thought that she would live on a farm, have plenty of everything, and nothing to worry about. She was the careless type, easygoing, and not too fond of work. Soon the babies started coming. But the couple quarreled constantly, and one fine day David left for America. Hilda was left behind with four girls and a boy. They came to Grandma Gitl and Israel Joseph, who had to provide for this family and scrape enough money together to send them to David in America.

David had become a peddler, and sold merchandise to farmers around Chicago. The family was reunited, but they were not happy together. Their life was not peaceful. The daughters grew up. The oldest, Bessie, became a dressmaker. Her younger sisters, Sophie and Rose, learned to be cigar makers. The smaller children went to school. When David came home for the Sabbath, he gave Hilda money to buy and prepare good food, and the girls also gave their wages to their mother. But Hilda put most of the money away for a rainy day. She was a poor housekeeper. On Sundays the girls had to do all the housework, which made them feel very disgusted. They complained bitterly that other families lived better than they. At least there was harmony and peace. When the three girls grew up David left home, and no one knew where he went. He just disappeared.
The three girls had to keep up the family. Their mother gave birth to another boy. When young men came to call on the girls, Hilda always found fault with them. Bessie had the finest character of all the children. She carried all the responsibilities, and made their clothes. Sophie, the beauty of the family, married an old bachelor who was a cigar maker. He was homely and shiftless, and after a while they left for San Francisco. Bessie and Rose rented a little flat, and they moved away, but they provided as before for the rest of the family.

My brother Meyer had also come to Chicago. He was a locksmith. When my brother Nathan and I came from London, our boat was five days late. Nobody came to meet us at the railway station in Chicago when we arrived in the middle of the night. I could speak English, so we took a streetcar to the address of Bessie and Rose. Although it was late, the house was lit up, and everyone was awake and upset. It happened that, the very same night, David had come to visit the family. Both sisters were bitter against him for unloading the responsibility of the family on their shoulders. Although our cousins had invited us to come, we received a cold welcome, and it was a sleepless night for all of us.

Next day, Brother Meyer came and told us bluntly, "Remember, you did not come to me. You came to America."

I told him that it was well understood, but his words fell like stones on my heart, and I was sad and sorry to have left London.

Had I made a mistake to leave so many friends behind in that wonderful city with the great art museums, the fine theaters, and the gorgeous West End? I wondered.

I would have been happy to go back to London that day.
I LEARN TO MAKE CIGARS

When Bessie and Rose left for work the next day, I remained alone in the house. It was the end of summer, about Labor Day, but the weather in Chicago was very hot. My cousins had left food on the table for me. There were butter, cheese, and fruit that I had never seen before. There also were bananas, which I did not know how to eat, and vegetables and milk. I cooked soup, scrubbed the floor, and washed the windows. After washing my clothes in the sink, I went out on the porch to hang them up, and locked myself out. There I was in my bare feet, with few clothes on. Finally a neighbor opened the door for me. I covered the table with a clean cloth and prepared a dainty supper for us all. Then I washed, dressed, and braided my hair nicely. When my cousins returned from work that evening, they were agreeably surprised to find everything nice and clean. They kissed me and said, “You are a fine girl. You will be all right in America.”

Then I no longer felt like a stranger. I was on solid ground, and happy to see smiling faces again.

After Labor Day, the workingman’s holiday, they found a little work for me in a tobacco store on Jefferson Street. I made cigarettes in the back of a store, where it was dark and dirty, and again I wished that I were back in London. At night my cousins explained that I would have to learn a new trade, making cigars. Cigarettes were now made by machine. They took me to a cigar factory, where many immigrants, men and girls, were learning the cigar trade. I had to pay fifteen dollars in addition to two months’ work without pay. They taught me to become a roller. It takes two people to make a cigar. The inside bunch
is made of dry scraps shaped in a good piece of leaf tobacco called "binder." Then it is put into a mold and pressed into a nice shape. The roller has to roll it in a fine leaf to complete the cigar. It looks simple—it is only a cigar. But it not easy, for it requires skill. Someone new, with clumsy fingers, may tear the leaf, which is the most expensive part of the tobacco. However, our boss had lots of patience and understanding, and many good cigar makers came out of his factory.

I tried my best; even in my dreams I struggled to make fine cigars. When my two months were up, the boss told me he was pleased with my work and my salary would be six dollars a week. He also promised higher pay because my work was so good. I was happy, not so much about the wage but because my work was satisfactory.

Next to me in the factory sat a young man named Joe. He was about five years older than I, and he happened to be a friend of my brother Meyer. He was pale, thin, and delicate-looking. The poor fellow could not catch on, and had a hard time there.

One day our boss came in with a big strong man and introduced him as our new foreman, Mr. Copel. Mr. Copel had the right to hire and fire, and we all felt like a herd of scared sheep. He looked at everyone’s work, made some remarks, and showed the workers how to do it. He said nothing when he looked at my work, but when he came to Joe his face got red and angry, and he said, "Your work is terrible. A horse could do better than that."

As I was sitting next to Joe, I began to show him how to improve the "bunches." He was a sickly, nervous young man, and the work was a strain on him. When his two months were over, he could not earn anything. His life was full of trouble. His older sister had come to him from Europe, and she tried to
learn to make buttonholes, but the work was too hard for her. So she reproached him continually for bringing her to the cursed land of Columbus.

Our romance started simply. At lunchtime I would give him delicious corned beef and salami sandwiches and dill pickles to strengthen his weak body. He in turn would supply me with good literature to strengthen my mind. Within a few weeks he had learned to make "bunches"; we made fine cigars together. My friendship for him made him very happy. Saturdays and Sundays we attended lectures at the Masonic Temple, or took walks in the cool moonlight and enjoyed the beautiful, glittering snow.

During my first year in Chicago I visited many of the people from Lida. One friend told me that he had just come from Pittsburgh, where he met a second cousin of mine, a fine young man who had done very well. He owned a building and a tailor shop, and employed a number of people. This cousin, Samuel, had been wanting to find me for years. He and his younger brother, Ruben, had been orphans from childhood and they worked as tailors. Every year on Purim they brought my father a gift of several bottles of beer and lemonade. Even then Samuel thought of marrying me. When I was in London he wrote for my address, but Father refused to give it to him because he thought America was too far away. He wanted me to stay in London.

My countryman asked me if I had a steady young man.

"No," I said.

Joe would never dream of marrying before his sister, and he had never proposed to me. We were just good friends.

The man wrote to Samuel in Pittsburgh and told him that he had found me, adding some complimentary remarks about me. When I told Joe about it, he told
me that he was very much in love with me. When we were alone he cried bitterly for fear of losing me. He said that he could not live or get along without me. He insisted that we should get married in court the following Saturday. I was about nineteen, and told him that we must wait, but he refused to take no for an answer.

So we were married on the following Saturday, secretly, in court. I remained with my cousins as before. On Sunday we worked half a day, and later Joe came to my house, where we ate together. Everyone had gone out, and we were alone trying to make plans for our married life. Someone knocked at the door.

"I bet it is your cousin Samuel from Pittsburgh," said Joe.

When I opened the door, there was my strange lover from Pittsburgh. I was friendly to him, and offered him coffee and a sandwich. He ate and looked at me.

"You have grown a little," he said. "You are a nice girl."

Then he looked at Joe. I winked at Joe to keep quiet. I put on a white organdy dress, with a white bow in my hair, and invited Samuel to go with me to Douglas Park.

It was a pleasant summer night, with gentle breezes and a bright romantic moon. Samuel told me he had always hoped to find me that he had loved me from early childhood, and that he was happy now.

"But who is that Joe?" he said.

I replied that Joe was a friend with whom I worked. Samuel said that he could stay in Chicago only one week. He would go to the department store with me the next day, buy me some pretty clothes and a diamond ring, and then I would go to Pittsburgh with him as his bride. He had a sister and other members of his family living there. Samuel was good-looking,
a very fine and honest man, a good, hard worker, not as brilliant as Joe, but he would make a good, simple husband.

I was in a terrible predicament. If he had only written me first before he came! I simply could not bring myself to say, "I am already married." So I told him I would give him my answer in a few days.

When my cousins came home from work on Monday, I had to tell them that Joe and I were married on Saturday, and that Samuel had come from Pittsburgh on Sunday and wanted to marry me. They just looked at me and said, "Such a greenhorn, and already two men want to marry her!"

They laughed at my English with the British accent.

Well, the whole family assembled, with Meyer and Nathan, Joe and Samuel, and I had to come out with the truth.

I said plainly, "Joe and I were good friends. He was in trouble, and just because I am stronger than he, I could not refuse him."

Samuel offered Joe five hundred dollars to divorce me.

Joe replied, "If she is worth five hundred dollars, I'll keep her. I hope Etta and I will not get lost in America."

The next day Samuel wished us good luck and a happy life, and left for Pittsburgh, alone. I remained with Bessie and Rose.
OUR MARRIED LIFE

Now everyone knew how we had married hastily, without any planning, and we were criticized by our family. In our minds we also blamed ourselves. We rented four old rooms near Maxwell Street for ten dollars a month. Both my brothers, Nathan and Meyer, came to live with us, saying that now it would cost us only four dollars a month. Nathan was also struggling as a bunch maker. We bought old furniture for thirty dollars, including a stove for the kitchen. When everything was straightened out, we bought a few plants, and it looked like a beautiful home to us in our new country. Food was so cheap that it cost us only fifty cents a day.

Joe and I worked together. When the stock was good, we made more money, but when the leaves were small or torn, I had to slow down and Joe bawled me out. We did piecework. Joe was inclined to be very jealous, and became angry even when I talked to women.

When I began to make arrangements to move away from my cousins, Bessie put me on her lap and hugged and kissed me. She cried bitterly, "You married Joe, and now I am left alone. I'll be so lonely when you leave me. I cannot go on this way."

She stopped going to work, stayed in bed all day, did not dress, and hardly ate. Poor Bessie became melancholy and depressed, and when she took a streetcar one day, she fell and was badly hurt. Finally the family sent her to her sister Sophie in San Francisco, and when Bessie did not improve she was placed in a mental institution. Sophie was unhappy with the husband she had married but did not like. She had a little
girl, and worked in a cigar factory until she contracted tuberculosis and had to go to a sanatorium.

Moshe, another brother of mine, came from Lida, and all three brothers lived with us. Quite a big family for such small quarters. Friends, cigar makers, and neighbors came in the evening, and the house was full of people and smoke. There was no privacy for a young married couple. Saturdays and Sundays I cooked, washed, and ironed clothes. My brothers prepared meals and left the dirty dishes on the stove and table. There were ashes all over the place. I began to cough, and had a pain in my chest. I told Joe I was overworked. They all laughed at me and said that I was crabby. The four men around me were great philosophers, talking about how to improve the world situation; but when a tired little woman asked them to help around the house, they paid no attention.
MY FIRST BABY BOY

In the month of October, when the weather was damp and the nights were cool, my first baby was born. For three days I suffered labor pains. The intern who carried me from the delivery room to the ward said that I was as light as a child myself, because I was so small and thin. My little boy weighed seven pounds, was normal, and had light golden hair and blue eyes. He resembled Joe. I was sickly and worn out when I left the hospital. Joe took me home to a filthy and cold house. There were newspapers, dirty dishes, and a rusty stove, which everyone was using but no one wiped off.

"Why isn't that stove warm?" I asked my husband. "And why is the house as dirty as a pigsty?"

His answer was that I complained too much.

I put my clean little baby on a dirty, cold bed in a dark bedroom, and asked Joe to go to the basement and bring up some coal to build a fire.

"Why should I go for coal to the basement?" he asked. "You have three brothers. Let them bring up the coal."

I begged them to get some coal because I was so tired and had to take care of the baby.

But they said, "We all pay you rent. It costs you only a dollar a month, so why should we bring up coal?"

So I took the pail and went myself. In the basement, big rats jumped at me. I screamed and fainted. When I was brought upstairs, I wished I were dead. How could I live with such logical brothers and such a smart husband, all lazy men? When people live together, they have a responsibility toward each other. They must help each other.

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My next door neighbor’s little boy, born about the same time as mine, was getting bigger and fatter each day. She nursed him. I could not nurse my child since I coughed a lot. I struggled with my work. The baby and I were getting thinner every day. One evening it dawned on me that we had made a terrible mistake in starting our married life, and I wondered how I could ever pull through. Several months later my baby got convulsions and died. Joe and I were miserable. It was easy for him to blame me, and I blamed myself for having taken such a foolish, impractical step. The baby and I did not get the care a cow would get when she brought a calf into the world. I looked with despair at the empty little bed and the baby buggy, and asked, “Why did it have to happen?”

Then trouble of a different sort came. My husband had developed an eye ulcer, and though he was in the hospital for a long time, it would not heal. Finally we were recommended to an eye specialist, Professor Zuker, and under his care Joe’s eyes began to improve. At last it healed, but it took several years.

Again I worked at making cigars and kept house for my three brothers. Spring came, the grass was green, and the trees began to bud. I said to Joe, “Let us move out by ourselves. It will be easier for me to take care of a small place. My brothers are earning money. They are healthy and will manage their own lives. Please let us live by ourselves!”

Joe laughed at me and said I was a mean woman because I could not stand my own brothers. When all my pleading was in vain, I told him, “You can live with my brothers and do your own housework. I’ll go to New York to work in a shop and be free.”

I packed my little suitcase and left for New York, alone.
MY CHILDHOOD FRIENDS IN NEW YORK

When I arrived in New York, I went to find my girl friend, Sarah Kelman, the daughter of a baker in Lida. In the daytime Sarah worked in a dress shop; at night she attended high school. She planned to study medicine. Her family lived in New Haven, so she lived by herself in two rooms on East Broadway. There were no windows in her bedroom. She received me in a most friendly manner, and asked me to live with her. Sarah advised me to forget my dead baby, and suggested that I go to school with her and study.

Sarah had a good friend, Sadie, a cigar maker, who was going to help me find a job. So the next day Sadie took me along to the cigar factory. I made a few cigars, and they hired me. A few days later they promoted me to making the best cigars.

I helped Sarah with the housekeeping. It was easy for me. It was springtime, and we thought that I would start school the following fall. When I was alone, my soul cried for my little boy. When I was on the street, I looked into every baby carriage. I thought that perhaps I would find at least one baby that looked like mine, but there was none.

I wrote to Joe and my brothers that I was all set with Sarah, and that I was doing no hard work and hoped my health would improve. A few weeks later, early one morning, Joe made his appearance. He had sold the furniture for a few dollars and wanted to live with me in New York. I knew that it meant the end to my rest and contentment. Joe promised that he would help me around the house. He said he was wiser now. There was one thing about Joe; he could talk beautifully, and there was a great charm about
him. People liked to listen to him. He was considered clever and intelligent.

I said to him, "From bad leaves, we must make good cigars, and from a bad marriage, we must make a good one. Should we not try, we might possibly regret it later on. We are in New York now, just you and I, with no brothers and no family. Perhaps it will work out."

He was happy, and I hoped for the best.

We rented three small rooms on the fifth floor of a house near Sarah. Again I bought secondhand furniture. We found a small stove in the flat, and I cleaned up the place nicely. Joe looked for a job but he could not find one, so we lived on my meager salary. The summer was very hot in New York. I had to prepare supper when I came home from work, and wash clothes on Sunday. Hard work was with me again. Joe was not very much help.

That year, 1907, a depression started in New York and all over the country. Many people were jobless. There were about three hundred people working in our factory, but many were laid off every week. As a newcomer in the shop I expected to be laid off, but instead the foreman told me to work on samples. When I asked him the reason he said, "Your work is not good either, but it is a little better than that of the others."

The summer passed. In the fall people hoped that there would be work for the Christmas season, but more factories closed.

One night Joe and I attended a lecture. We came home late, and it was cold. Joe had lost the key to our flat, so we sat all night in a vacant flat that had just been painted. In the morning a neighbor opened our door. The house was cold. I began to cough, and developed sharp pains in my chest. We had some coffee. I took my lunch, and Joe accompanied me to
work. It was cold and damp outside, and I started to cough again. Then I spat blood. I felt very sick. Instead of going to work, we went to a doctor. My weight was ninety-eight pounds, at least eighteen pounds underweight.

The doctor said, "You are sick. You should never work at making cigars."

He gave me medicine and an atomizer to inhale steam, and prescribed rest, fresh air, milk, and eggs. He also suggested that I go to a sanatorium.

"Well," said Joe, "you come from a consumptive family. You have consumption."

I was too tired to care. I only wanted to rest. When I came home I wrote a letter to my sister Feigel. I told her that I had saved for a ticket to come home, if they wanted me. Otherwise, I would go to Denver, Colorado. Should I get better I might find work there. If not, I would do what other sick people are doing. Joe wore his overcoat in the house, and made no attempt to build a fire in the stove. I realized then that my marriage could only exist as long as I was well and earned a living. But this was impossible in my condition.

I rested for a few days, and when I felt a little better I went back to work in the shop. I coughed a lot. Only seven people remained at work, four girls, two men, and the foreman. They knew that my husband was out of work and that I was sick.

One day there came a letter from Feigel.

"Come home at once," she wrote. "I have spoken to our doctor. Next summer we will send you to a pine forest and you will be all right. Just come."

I bought a second-class ticket. Rates were cheap on account of the hard times, and not many people traveled in the winter. Once more I packed my little suitcase, and Joe took me to the boat. But on the way there he began to quarrel with me.
He said, "You are going to Europe and will have a good time there. What will I do all alone in New York, without a job? I won't let you go. Let's take the ticket back to the office. Perhaps they will give us the money back."

I grabbed my suitcase from him and ran all the way to the boat. He was left on the street all by himself.
ON MY WAY TO EUROPE

I ran with my suitcase as fast as I could. I coughed blood, but I reached the boat. They placed me in a cabin with three other women. One was a Jewish-Hungarian cook who had earned a lot of money working in a restaurant; the second one had a rich husband and was on her way to visit her family; and the third one was a very gay woman of doubtful character.

The whistle blew, the smoke rose from the smoke-stack, and the boat got under way; but it seemed as if the docks and buildings were moving. How sad I felt to be leaving America and the Statue of Liberty for Russia! No good time could make up for the loss of the United States. I loved every inch of it, although I was sick and my husband was out of work.

I looked into the green waves, and felt a desire to jump and finish it all.

"I have nothing but hard luck," I thought. "I am no good to myself or anybody else. Why should I go home and bother other people? Others are able to bring presents, and I bring only sick lungs."

Sitting alone with my thoughts, I noticed how good the fresh air felt. I had stopped coughing and felt no more pain. In fact, I breathed deeply and something wonderful seemed to happen to me. When the bell rang for dinner I went in with the other passengers. There was plenty of good food on the tables, and I ate. I talked with the others, who were all smiling and friendly, and it seemed to me I would get well on the boat.

My journey was marvelous. No medicine, no sanatorium, nothing in the world could have done me more good than the fresh sea air, the rest, and the good food.
I stopped thinking of the yesterdays and tomorrows. I lived just for the moment, as I never had before. I felt newly born. I watched the sun, the wind, the sky, the clouds, and the sea gulls.

"Why," I asked myself, "do I have to carry such a heavy burden all my life, trying to make more cigarettes, more cigars than someone else? I don't understand how to live. Joe will not die if I am gone; perhaps it will be better for him if he has none to depend upon."

There were a lot of Jewish people on board, and we got together in the evening and sang folk songs. I did some reciting, and received compliments on my ability and good looks. What a change for me! I felt good during the entire journey. After leaving the ship, we went to Berlin, and from there to Yatkynin, on the German-Russian border.
AT THE GERMAN-RUSSIAN BORDER

We stopped in a crowded immigrant hotel in Yatkynin. On the following day we were supposed to cross the border from Germany into Russia, to the small border town of Worshbolov.

Everybody who went to Russia had to have a passport. Now my real trouble began. I had neither an American nor a Russian passport and could not travel without one. The innkeeper advised me to go to a certain banker in the town who knew many officials on both sides of the border. He was the only one who could help me.

The banker was a big red-faced man with a silvery white beard parted in the middle like Kaiser Franz Joseph of Austria’s. I told him that I wanted to go to Lida, Russia, and had no passport.

"I have a daughter living there who is married to Dr. Warshawski," he told me.

"I know them both," I said.

He asked me a number of questions, and I told him about the depression in America and that I was going home to improve my health.

"It is dangerous for young women to travel without a passport in Russia," he said. "They will throw you into prison. However, a young mother who took her sick child to Berlin left her passport with me. I may give it to you, and one of my men will pick it up after you have passed the border." He wrote down the name of Nechame Drapinner for me to learn and said that he would send a messenger in the evening, and if I still remembered that name, he would give me the passport.

All that day I repeated that name to myself and asked the other passengers to call me by the new
name. In the evening a neatly dressed woman called to take me to the banker’s house. I thought he lived with his family and because his daughter and her husband lived in my town he invited me as his guest. I never was more mistaken in my life.

The woman took me into a beautiful mansion, but it was very quiet there and I couldn’t see a soul. She left the house and I was all alone. My heart started to beat very fast. In came the red-faced banker, and he took me into another room, a richly furnished bedroom.

“I am finished,” I thought as he took me into his big strong arms.

“Give me that passport quick or I’ll scream,” I managed to say.

He merely laughed. “No one will hear,” he said. “You are a nice girl and I love you!”

While I struggled with him, my cough came to my rescue. I began to cough as never before. Blood began to flow from my mouth and nose, and fell on his beautiful rugs. In spite of it all, I was the stronger and he the weaker. He gave up.

“Here is your coat,” he said.

I took a big vase and slammed it through the window. Then I grabbed a heavy marble statue and screamed. “Give me that passport or I’ll die on your rug!”

My cough choked me. My face, my dress, the rug were all smeared with blood. He threw the passport at me and I ran outside.

It was a dry, frosty night. The snow was glittering. I did not know my way back. I felt miserable and sick again.

“How did I get so entangled that I have to be ashamed to tell anyone about it?” I thought.

I almost wished I could lie down in the snow and die, at the age of twenty-two. Just then, two people
passed and I asked them for directions to my hotel. They showed me the way and I walked there, although my knees buckled and I continued to cough. When I reached the hotel I was shivering and ill, but I clung to my passport all night. Kind people carried me to the border and told the officials that I had had a hemorrhage that night. They bought me a ticket to Lida, and I was put on the Russian train. After we had crossed the border, a man from the bank picked up my passport. I rested quietly, drank some hot tea, and felt better. Five hours later I was in Vilna.

It was cold in Russia. It was snowing when I stood on the station platform waiting for my train to Lida. Three men came up to me, two in uniform, and asked to see my passport. It came to my mind that I would have to smile, and I answered, “It is in my trunk at the border. The banker of Yatkynin is sending it to me by freight.”

“Where are you going?” they asked me.

“To Lida,” I answered.

One of them said, “Zemlichka (home town girl), and to whom do you belong?”

I picked the richest man in town, and answered smilingly, “The cigarette manufacturer, Rubin.”

They accepted my answer, and I said good-bye in Russian.

They replied, “Go with God.”

Soon I was on the train, well on my way to Lida.
A snowstorm covered the whole town when I arrived in Lida on a Thursday evening. The houses looked very small from a distance, crowded one on top of the other, and the soft light from their windows fell on the narrow streets. I hired a one-horse sled to take me to my parents' shop, and as I passed through the market place, men and women, heavily bundled up, came through the narrow doors of their shops to greet me. Some ran to notify my parents, who had not expected me so soon. I had a warm and noisy welcome.

"How did you come without a passport?" they asked. "Your clothes are not warm enough for our winter." So the conversation went.

My sister Feigel embraced me warmly, and I told her quietly that all I needed was a warm bed, my explanations would come the following day. My father's friend, Polacheck, had a nice spare room in his attic. They built a fire in the stove, prepared a clean bed, closed the windows, and everyone tried to make me comfortable. I was ashamed to tell them how sick I felt, and just begged them to go home.

I lay in bed. My head was pounding, my throat swollen, my chest sore, and my face burned with a high fever. The room spun around like a wheel, and I suddenly felt nauseated. I got out of bed to knock for help, and fell unconscious on the floor. The people downstairs heard the noise, ran up, and found that I had fainted. After they brought me back to consciousness, they called Dr. Renered, a German physician who practiced for many years in Lida. He said I had a severe case of bronchitis and a sore throat. Then he discovered that when the fire had been made, the
chimney and windows had been closed. The coal fumes had affected me, so the windows were opened.

After a week I recovered, and went to Dr. Renered’s office. He took down my history, and said that I was allergic to cigars and I should never work at that trade again. He gave me some kind of pills that worked wonders with me, and I improved rapidly.

I told my folks about my experiences in America; about the depression there, the jobless people; and I also told them about my experience with the banker. Father mentioned it to the banker’s son-in-law, Dr. Warshawski, who called the banker a rotten old rascal and asked us not to tell his wife, the banker’s daughter. Feigel bought me a new fur-lined coat. She also bought me boots.

Things had changed in Russia during the years I had been away. Outbreaks and revolutions had been suppressed; the leaders were in prison or in Siberia. The best seller among books was “Sanine” by Artsybashhev, which preached that everyone should take from life what he possibly could. The young people seemed to have lost their entire spirit to free Russia. They had become vulgar and sexy; the cakewalk and other dances had become popular. Singing and drinking covered the failure of the revolution.

I inquired about the good Polish priest, and was told that he had died a few years before. The whole town, Christians and Jews, attended his funeral. All cried, and vowed they would never forget him.

“How is Decansky Most now?” I asked.

“No more Decansky Most,” they said.

“What happened?” I wanted to know.

It seems that a young priest had come to take the old priest’s place, and told the people of his church that the old man had been wrong; that the Jewish people were swindlers, that they were getting rich off the Gentiles. The Polish people of the town held a
meeting and decided to open twelve stores filled with all kinds of merchandise, and the new priest preached in his church to patronize the Polish stores only. The stores were opened, clerks who received good salaries were hired, and they began to do big business.

The Jews were forbidden to go to Decansky Most, which was church property, and the little paradise was neglected and deserted. However, a few months later people stopped patronizing the church stores because the prices were too high, the quality of the goods poor, and each of the clerks was helping himself. So the stores were closed, and stood vacant, like haunted places.

My life had its ups and downs. Dr. Renered helped me a lot and my cough was checked. I often went to my sister's store, and since they were very busy, I was taken on as a salesgirl. I became familiar with the stock and prices and made many sales. Since I always quoted the lowest price possible, nobody tried to bargain with me. It was wonderful to have something to do, and I was happy to make myself useful. They paid me a salary, and we planned that I would live in the pine woods to improve my health.

One Saturday night a soldier came into the store, and I sold him a box of cigarette-paper cases. There were little prizes in the boxes; his prize happened to be a safety razor. He did not know what it was, and I explained it to him. The soldier left for the barracks; ten minutes later the store was filled with soldiers. Every box of cigarette papers was sold that night. They found all kinds of prizes and two more safety razors. After the soldiers came the officers, and they bought all sorts of articles. They all wanted me to wait on them. I tried to keep in the background, but when soldiers or other people came in, they asked for me.

It was flattering to know that so many people liked
me. However, my brother-in-law, Granum, complained because Feigel was always with me. I believe he hated me, and I felt that perhaps I was a troublemaker and ought to go back to my beloved America; but Feigel would not hear of my leaving so soon.

The depression in America had become worse, and my younger brother, Moshe, had also come from Chicago to Lida. Joe wrote a letter to my father that I was not a good wife, that I had broken up our home in Chicago and New York, and had left him alone. Father turned against me. When Moshe came home and saw that Feigel treated me as an only child, he confirmed what Joe had written, and the family started questioning me.

"Sunk again!" I thought, and then told them my side of the story:

"I married Joe in Chicago. He really forced me, saying that he loved me, and crying bitterly that I shouldn’t leave him. I befriended him when he could not work, had nothing to eat, and was ill. I was satisfied to marry him because we could work together, and I did not care that he made less money than I. I liked him, too.

"Then came into our lives, right after the wedding, my three big brothers, who lived with us in our tiny flat for the sake of economy. I worked in a cigar factory, and had to wash the clothes for everyone because I could not stand dirty clothes all over the place. I scrubbed the floors, washed the windows, cleaned the stove, and not one of those four men gave me a helping hand. When I asked for assistance, they laughed at me. When I came home from the hospital with my tiny baby. I found my home dirty and cold, and I had to get coal from the basement myself.

"Are these the ethics men learn in the Yeshivah? In the Holy Scripture is written, 'In the sweat of thy brow, thou shalt eat thy bread!' Yes, I was sweating
while they were eating. I had paid for all the household furniture. Why didn’t they write to me in New York and tell me to come back, that they would help me with the housework? What did they learn in the Yeshivah? They want women to work for them all their lives, to give birth to children mechanically, year after year. It is shameful how your sons were raised, lazy, and without understanding the need to help others so that everyone should be happier.

“I pleaded with Joe to move with me into two rooms that we might be by ourselves. He would not. He blamed me when the baby died. My educated brothers made my home a pigsty.”

For Father’s special benefit I added: “When Lida burned down, did you not send Mother and four of your children to her parents? And did not Grandpa Shael Shlame’s daughters come to him when they were sick and could not work to support their husbands and children? And why did Moshe forget to tell you that I was sick? Not every man is fortunate to marry a Feigel. I know my husband did not.”

I thought of Grandma Gitl and said bitterly, “I shall go and shed my tears on her grave, and the cold tombstone will feel and understand more than my father and brothers. The people who gave them ‘days’ to eat made a poor investment, for they did not learn much. Felka and Adamke, common peasants, had finer understanding than you will ever have. I am working for Feigel, like any stranger. At the end of the summer I will go home, but you men have made my vacation bitter.”

I added my hope that Moshe would find a good wife in Lida and that she would take better care of him than I did.

Mother and Feigel understood my explanation perfectly, and Feigel said to all of us: “I asked Etta to come, and she is welcome to me even though the
whole world should be against her. She has every right in the world to get well, and I shall try my best. I predict that when Joe hears she is better, he will regret his foolish letter and will beg her to come back to him. If Joe will cooperate, they may still build a happy home together."

Father and Mother had nothing to say. Feigel cared for me tenderly all that winter, and when spring came my health improved. I was often invited to people’s houses, and life began to smile again for me, which made Feigel happy.

Before Passover the community in Lida baked matzos for the poor. Every day, for several hours, I took part in rolling out the unleavened bread. We sang and worked together, and it was really fun. There were several young women working with me whose husbands were in America and wrote their wives about the hard times there and the scarcity of jobs. The women were sad and worried lest their men find other girls over there, so our songs often were sad but beautiful.

Whenever a letter from America came, the whole town knew about it, and everyone also knew that I did not get any mail.
SPRINGTIME IN LIDA

The snow in the fields had melted and the ground was soft. The wheat was ready to sprout. Puddles of icy water were all over, and the river was heavy with huge ice cakes. The nights were frosty, but the air was clear in the daytime. The sun shone brightly.

Passover, the festival of freedom for the Jews, was approaching. The women were scrubbing and cleaning their homes from attic to cellar in preparation for the holiday. Parents and children looked forward to days of feasting on delicious matzo balls, fish, chicken, and wine.

I had met in Lida a girl named Masha, who had come to her mother from New York, where she left her sweetheart. She was very beautiful; her long braids were wound around her head like a crown. Her mother lived in a small house near the pine forest. Masha and I planned to stay together at her mother's until the end of summer, and then return together to New York.

On Passover Masha and I were walking near the Russian church where several young men were standing. Suddenly one of them raised a big whip and struck us with it.

We fled from them, screaming, "Good Lord, what a country! Why must the people act like this? How can we expect this type of ignorant, stupid young men to rebel against the injustice of their government?"

We longed to be back in civilized America. At the end of the holiday I moved to the house of Masha's mother.

My baby brother, Chaim, had grown into a tall and handsome young man of seventeen. He went to school, and also helped Father in the store. He was my only
ambitious and hard-working brother. He was very fond of Feigel and wanted to become a businessman. He planned to go to America, but decided to wait because Father would have to pay the government three hundred rubles if Chaim failed to register for the draft at the time of his twenty-first birthday. In the meantime, Chaim worked for Feigel. Mother, Feigel, Chaim, and I were the best of friends. I told Chaim that in America he ought to go into the grocery and butcher business. He was very devoted to us, and he often came to see me in the country, bringing me delicacies from Feigel. My health was improving.

Spring had finally come. The trees were full of blossoms, the pastures were filled with yellow buttercups, the forest was fresh and green, the air was clean and mild, and the birds trilled love songs. The big wheel of the nearby mill was turning and the foamy, rushing white waters fell noisily into the shallow, wide river. Masha and I forgot all about America; we were surrounded by the great new magic world of nature. We neither worked, rushed, nor worried. We felt newly born, and seemed to be floating in the air with the white and rosy clouds.

One day, as we were swinging on a high swing, we saw a stooped young man approaching us. He had a small black beard, white teeth, and the most beautiful and kind dark eyes. He addressed us in Russian, inquiring about a family by the name of Milner, who lived about a mile from our place. He said his name was Abraham, and that Milner was his uncle; he came for a vacation, as he was not well. We came to the Milners’ house and went in with him. His uncle, aunt, and young cousin stared at the young man and seemed frightened. They stood as stiff as statues. Masha and I thought it wiser to leave. All the way home we wondered what mystery surrounded Abraham.

He came to see us the following day, clean-shaven
and young-looking, about twenty-five, but stoop-shouldered, as if he had trouble with his spine. Masha’s mother brought us fresh milk and biscuits, and we sat and talked. We were all eager to be friends, but we did not learn much more about Abraham. I thought he might tell us something.

“I’d like to tell you about myself,” he said, “but I cannot and must not.”

We assured him we would not pry into his affairs, but if he needed the help of a doctor, I recommended Dr. Renered, who had helped me so much. But he refused to go to see him. He asked permission to sleep in the attic of Masha’s house, and Masha’s mother arranged it for him.

Saturdays and Sundays we had many visitors. The people who used to go to Decansky Most now came to the pine woods instead.

The mill belonged to a cousin of Masha’s mother, and the elderly couple lived there with a very old mother and two young sons. Near the mill stood a small cabin, the home of a peasant and his family. The man brought grain to the mill and delivered the flour to town. His wife worked in the fields. She was young, tall, and sweet, and reminded me of the painting, “The Song of the Lark,” and of other peasant women in pictures of the French painter, Millet. She walked around barefoot, her dress shorter in front because she was in the last months of pregnancy. She had a two-year-old baby girl, a blond, blue-eyed child who resembled my own baby. She was called Dochenka. I brought her something to eat; she sat on my lap and we soon became close friends. She was constantly near me, and it made me very happy. Her mother told me how poor they were. Her husband earned so little that they did not even have bedding—just a sack filled with straw for a mattress. She had given birth to six babies, but five died at birth because
they were large and there was no doctor or midwife to assist her. So I told her to call me when the labor pains came and I would go to my doctor and ask him to help her. She kissed my hand and told her husband about my offer to help.

One morning a few weeks later I was told that the woman had given birth to a baby in the middle of the night and the old woman of the mill had assisted her. I ran to the cabin. The young mother lay in her bed and cried. In a wooden tub, wrapped in clean linen rags, lay a blue baby, the blood streaming from her tiny mouth.

"Quick," the mother cried to me, "wash and dress the baby and take it, with my husband, to the Polish priest to have it christened!"

I washed the baby and wanted to give it some milk. "No! The christening first!"

So I hurried, got the baby dressed, and the father took it in his wagon and raced to the priest.

Soon he came back. The baby had died before it reached the priest. Both parents wept bitterly because they could not bury the child in the Catholic Polish cemetery.

I put the little body back into the wooden tub and prepared some food for the mother. I tied up the mother's breasts so the milk would dry, and told the father to gather up some boards around the mill for a small coffin.

"Take a shovel," I told him, "and in the moonlight dig a tiny grave under the cemetery gates, push in the coffin, and cover it with soil. Then your baby will be in holy ground. A newborn infant has no sins. It is holy, and if you think you are sinning, may God punish me."

The dead child was by now as yellow as wax. It had lost all its blood. I put a little white dress on the poor creature, put her little fingers together, and put
a picture of Jesus and Mary in her hand. I cried, and the tears flowed down my cheeks, for I again lived through the agony of the death of my own child. The three of us were heartbroken. Later the father prepared the box and buried the child as I told him. Masha and I went around the next day to all the farmers in the neighborhood, and they gave us food to cheer up those poor people.
THE JEWESS WHO WAS CONVERTED

The village near the pine forest was called Maloykeshina, and the biggest and finest house there belonged to a prosperous family. The husband was Russian, his wife a converted Jewess. They were of middle age, and had several sons. House and garden were well taken care of, and some fine horses and cows were in the green pasture. None of the Jewish people ever talked to the woman.

When Masha and I went around to collect food for the mother of the dead baby, we thought we would drop in on these people and see what they were like. The woman was standing in the doorway. As we approached, we smiled and bade her good morning in Yiddish. She looked surprised. We showed her the basket with food for the poor people.

She asked, "How is it that you came to me, too?"
"You are a woman," I said, "why should we not come to you?"

She invited us in, told us to sit down, and packed the basket full of eggs, butter, salami, barley, and beans. We thanked her, and soon got into a conversation, telling her we had come from New York. One of her sons also lived in America, on a farm.

I became bold and asked whether I might put a few questions to her.

"Go ahead. Ask anything you want," she said.
"It is about twenty-five years since I have spoken to Jewish people."

"First," I said, "how did you happen to marry a Russian and become a Christian?"

"Well," she answered slowly, "I will tell you everything. It feels good to get something off my chest. My parents were very poor people. There were five
daughters, all good-looking, but without any dowry. One day my father brought home a silly-looking man whom I was supposed to marry. I was horrified.

"Not far from us lived a Russian family. Their oldest son was big, strong, and handsome, and always smiled at me. Finally he declared his love for me.

"'Marry me, you lovely Jewess,' he said. 'I'll be good to you and will never beat you or call you names as others do. I shall not bother you if you do not go to church. But a Russian cannot marry a Jewish girl unless she is converted.'

"He was always near me," she continued, "and I could not help returning his love, but it was a most difficult decision to make, and I couldn't ask anyone's advice. Finally I felt I would rather drown myself than live without him. My heart was heavy, for I knew I would shame my poor parents and sisters, but I was either very strong or very selfish. We went together to the priest, and he taught me a new religion, which I never understood, and we were married. My Russian in-laws said I was fine and beautiful. My husband and I loved each other dearly. He is a hard worker, fixes everything up to look nice, and he does not drink. So we live quietly by ourselves, with the horses, cows, chickens, and pigs."

"How does a Jewish girl feel toward pigs?" I wanted to know.

"You get used to them," she replied. "I want to cooperate with my husband, for he is the only one in the world for me. My previous world is lost. Sometimes certain two-legged pigs are worse than the real ones. A pig eats a lot, and when you kill him he gives you meat and fat; he does not hurt anyone. When the little pigs are born, they are as cute as other animals. Two-legged pigs sometimes talk of great things and high morals, but in their hearts and actions they are worse than the animals."
I was reminded of the banker and some others I knew.

"How do you feel when pogroms occur?" I asked.

"I hate it, and it hurts me terribly," she said, "but we are peaceful people."

"And how do you feel on Jewish holidays, such as Passover?" I continued.

"It still hurts," she said, "but I keep busy. No one has everything in life. I am lucky my marriage turned out so well."

"Tell us how you feel toward your family."

"Our bridges are burned," she said.

Masha and I shook hands with the woman and thanked her.

"A person is converted only on the outside," we said. "Inside you remain the same." We parted with a feeling of good will toward her.

There were two baskets full of food for our poor family, and we prepared a fine supper for them. Little Dohenka was with me every day.
ABRAHAM

Every day during that summer Masha, Abraham, and I went into the woods. Other summer guests came to spend their vacation in our neighborhood, but the three of us formed a closed circle which nobody could penetrate. Abraham often brought me fresh eggs and milk. I gained weight and felt fine, and began to count the weeks when I would be back in New York. But we were always puzzled about Abraham; whenever a stranger came near, he quietly disappeared.

It was the end of July. In the middle of the night we heard a noise and there was a knock on the door. When we opened it, there were several policemen with revolvers, who immediately began to search the house. We were terribly frightened when they climbed up the ladder to the attic where Abraham slept.

They came down without him, and asked us gruffly, "Where is he?"

"Who do you mean?" we asked innocently. They began to scream: "You know the man who sleeps here!"

"A number of people sleep here when they come from the city," we answered. "We came from America for a vacation. Why should you bother us?"

They raged, but finally had to leave without having found the one they sought.

We could not figure out how Abraham had disappeared. A few days later I received a letter from him. He had crossed the border, and was free in Paris.

Finally his uncle and aunt cleared up the entire mystery. The Milners lived in another city, where they owned a mill. Their two sons, Abraham and Berl, received an excellent education and were college grad-
uates. Berl went to America, but Abraham, the older, was one of the revolutionary leaders. There was an outbreak of strikes in Odessa, and a general was killed by the revolutionists. Some of the leaders were caught and sentenced to die. Abraham was among those convicted and sentenced, but his parents pleaded for him and the death penalty was commuted to a life sentence in Siberia. His sweetheart, Fialka, had also been involved, and was sent to Siberia with the famous Anna Spiridonova.

After Abraham had been in Siberia about a year and a half, some other revolutionists arranged for his escape by bribing the prison guards with money. While Abraham and his deliverers were racing in a horse-drawn sled, he was shot in the back. Somehow they managed to get him to a doctor, who removed the bullet from his spine. He wore a special brace, but the wound remained unhealed.

Abraham and his friends wrote me letters from Paris. He planned to go to America, and his friends were willing to provide him with money. They asked me to arrange for a place in a hospital in New York where he could be cured, and meet him at the boat. I told them that I would do my best. Time went on; Masha and I felt lonely without Abraham.

After the middle of August I went to town and told my sister Feigel all about Abraham, and also told her that I was ready to go back to America. My doctor examined me, declared me well, and gave me several boxes of pills in case I should need them. Masha was not ready to return, and remained in Lida. Feigel was happy that I had recovered. As she had predicted, there came another letter from Joe, saying that he loved me and was the best friend I had in the world, I should come to him, and together we would build a new home. Of course, soon the whole town learned about that.
In his letter Joe asked that I visit his people in Kiev. His grandparents had lived there a long time and had obtained special residential privileges. They had inherited a piece of land and an old house on a mountain because some ancestor of theirs served twenty-five years in the army of Czar Nikolai I.

I obtained a document from the police which permitted me to stay in Kiev three days. It was a long twenty-five-hour train ride from Lida to Kiev. I had written my in-laws that I was coming on Friday. The Russian trains of those days had seats which were hinged and opened up like boards on which to sleep. I had an "upper" cot. A small flame in a little lamp dimly lit the coach. Across from me lay a big Cossack who kept staring at me. He talked and smiled, but I was frightened and did not answer. He offered me some chocolate, but I refused to take it and turned away.

"Don’t be afraid of me," he said, and when we stopped at a station he ran for a pot of tea and offered it to me. Again I refused. All night he talked and whispered to me. I was unable to sleep, and wondered how I could get rid of his attention.

In Kiev he followed me out of the station. There were many policemen, but how could I complain in a big Russian city about a Cossack? He was very tall and handsome, with light-green eyes, blond hair, and a mustache. His boots were high and shiny. He wore red-striped trousers tucked into the boots, and a wide leather belt with a shining buckle encircled his gray long coat. He wore a tall fur hat, and his chest was covered with medals. As he picked up my suitcase, he said, "I will help you. Where are you going?"

I finally decided to speak to him, and said politely, "Please do not bother about me. I am an American-Jewish married woman who came to visit in-laws. What would they say if I came with a strange man—
a Cossack? Please go away!"

He bowed and said, "You could have told me that before. When you kept quiet, I believed it was all right to follow you."

He said good-bye, and went away. What a relief! It must have been quite a sight to see the short daughter of Israel Joseph walking alongside a tall Russian Cossack.

On the train to Fastov my mind was occupied with thoughts of Cossacks. I knew they came from the Caucasian Mountains and the River Don region, but we often saw them all over Russia. Cossacks are tall, strong, handsome blond young men, their hair cut close like a brush.

I also thought about my brothers who had been educated in the Yeshivahs. All the high morals and wisdom remained in the books, not in them.

I made a decision on that train. I should try not to argue, never try to improve other people, but myself. Admit my mistakes. I must try again to live with my poor Joe. I knew even then that Joe and I could not live peacefully together, but I realized we would not separate until death would us part.
KIEV — A RUSSIAN CITY

I took a cab to the house of my relatives. As we drove along, it seemed to me that Kiev was the cleanest and most beautiful city I had ever seen. It was surrounded by tall, green mountains, and there were parks, streets, and stores. What struck me most were the numerous high-domed churches. Standing on an enormous mountain and looking down at the city, it appeared full of churches. I thought that it must be wonderful to hear all those church bells ring together, as on Christmas and Easter. At the station I had seen a number of priests and nuns standing in a corner where a light burned over an icon. Religion appeared to be foremost in the city of Kiev. New York and Chicago looked so different and plain, but they were free and homelike.

Joe's parents lived in the town of Fastov, near Kiev, which was also surrounded by mountains but was old and poor-looking. My in-laws' little old house was on the top of a high mountain, which we had to climb until we reached the top. The walls of the house were clean and whitewashed. The floors were scrubbed and sprinkled with sand. There was a barrel of river water, but I could not drink the water.

Joe's mother was blind, and she was thin and small. Joe resembled her a lot. She kissed me and was happy to touch her son's wife. His father was a very pleasant old man. His sister Goldie, a young girl, looked very small for her age, and a younger brother, Israel, who was playing with a little goat, completed Joe's family. Both children asked me to take them to America, but I told them they must grow up first. How could I tell them that I myself had no home in America?

On Saturday they served wine and cake to the
many people who came to see me. The rabbi was among them. They liked the way I spoke Yiddish, for I am a Litvak. On the following day I took the train back to Lida.

I was getting tired of Europe and was anxious to return to America, which I considered my home. At the end of August I packed my belongings. My family and many people from Lida came to the station to see me off. I had come to Lida in the winter, sick and lonely; now I was healthy and chubby, sun-tanned, rosy-cheeked, and on my way to America and my husband.

Feigel was happy to see me well again, but also sad because we had to part and she loved my company. The peasant couple with little Duchenka was also there; I kissed the child, and she gave me a little white rabbitskin as a gift. I kissed everyone good-bye, men and women alike. Four people were glad to see me go: Father, Moshe, Granum, and myself. Mother wiped her tears, Feigel and Chaim cried bitterly. The train started moving, and I looked once more at Feigel, whose tears flowed down her cheeks like pearls.
BACK IN NEW YORK

The depression was coming to an end, and the working people had hopes for better times. The garment and other industries began to get busy again. A new neighborhood of beautiful steam-heated apartments was being built in the Bronx. Joe and I rented a four-room apartment there for thirty dollars a month, with three months' concession. It was like living in the country. The air was fresh, there was no smoke, the rooms were light and sunny with no dampness. There were varnished floors, kitchen cabinets, a sink and tubs of white enamel, bookcases in the living room: it was like paradise to us. We bought some furniture again, secondhand of course. We did not buy much, for we decided it would be easier that way.

There were about a hundred people working in my shop when I returned there, and Mr. Pink, the good old foreman, received me kindly and put me on samples at the first table among the best workers. Making samples is slow work, and when I complained a little, he promised to make fifty cigars per day for me. That man was kindness itself. He told me I looked the picture of health, and I laughingly told him not to give me "kinhonore" (a bad or evil eye).

Joe found a job in a small factory, making cheap cigars. For once we were happy. That winter we saved several hundred dollars and were looking around to buy a store. We found a fine cigar store in Harlem, where, at that time, white people of all nationalities lived. We watched the store and liked it. There were two living rooms in the back. Of course, we hated to give up our nice apartment in the Bronx, but business is business.

The store cost five hundred dollars, and we had only
three hundred, but my brothers let us borrow the balance. In the beginning the store was good; then the man who had sold it to us opened a new and modern store right across the street. Joe and I blamed each other. We should have put a restriction clause in the bill of sale.

"What's the use?" I told Joe. "Someone else would have opened it."

Just when our troubles started I received a letter from Abraham saying that he had arrived in New York and he and his brother were coming to see me. Joe did not like the idea of young men coming to visit me. It gave me a little secret satisfaction to see him a bit jealous. I begged him to be polite to the visitors, but he would not promise. I was quite stout then, as I was expecting a baby in about three months.

On Sunday I prepared a fine dinner for my guests. All through the dinner Joe complained about the many mistakes I made. I admitted freely that I had made mistakes through my life, and tears began to flow.

Abraham took my hand and said, in Russian: "Tschortufka" (little devil), which was the nickname he had given me in Lida, "you are going to have a little boy, so what are you crying for? The whole world makes mistakes. It is only normal. Joe loves you. He is nervous because life is hard, and he expresses it in complaints."

After that Joe became quite friendly with him. Abraham's brother, Berl Lapin, was a poet, and some of his poems had been published in magazines. We talked about literature. Joe invited them to come often.

Joe's eyes became inflamed again. Then the New York doctors advised him to go to Chicago to be treated by our previous doctor. So we sold our store, Joe left for Chicago, and I moved in with my friend,
Rose Leader, and her husband, Clarence. He was a tailor by day, and studied at night to become an engineer. They had a little girl, Pauline, who was three years old, and a little baby of five weeks. They were fine, friendly people. I helped with the housework, and it cost me only three dollars a week to live there. Joe had given me a hundred and fifty dollars before he left, and paid off my brothers. He was always honest.

I went to register in a lying-in hospital. Most of the patients there were unmarried girls. I entered the hospital a few days before my confinement, and they put me to work with the other girls. The labor pains came, and I had a hard time, but I finally delivered a fine, ten-pound boy. I was scared when I first saw my baby, for his head had been injured and his little face was black and blue. I was told that he had been hurt by the instruments but would be all right. Many of the girls did not even want to see their babies. They told the other patients how they had been misled by young men. I was happier than any of them, for I had a husband; and I was beginning to hope for better times, when I would be able to stay home and take care of my little boy.

During my pregnancy I had attended a series of lectures by Jacob Gordon, who had translated "King Lear," "Shylock," and other plays of William Shakespeare. He had also written a play on the Faust theme, named "God, Man, and the Devil." The play was a great success on the Yiddish stage. I was so inspired by the works of William Shakespeare that I named my boy William.

During the restful days in the hospital, I made up my mind that I would never break up with Joe again and that I would stick by him no matter what mistakes or misunderstandings might arise. It was a wonderful feeling to nurse a baby again. His bruises had healed,
and he was so handsome that everyone admired him. I noticed that one of his eyes was inflamed. I took him home to the Leaders and they all loved him. He never cried. A doctor circumcised him, and there were good wishes from all.

"Mazel tov! When he grows up, may we have a better world for all people!" I wrote to Feigel in Lida, and the whole family was glad that I had settled down.

Joe was in Chicago, and Dr. Zuker again took care of his eye, which was in pretty bad condition; but the doctor promised to do the best he could for him. Joe told him that I was in New York expecting a baby. He went to see my brothers, Meyer and Nathan, who were always on friendly terms with him. Nathan told him about his store in Oak Park; he had saved up some money and intended to go into a bigger business. Joe told Nathan that he was eager to get the Oak Park store as soon as I returned to Chicago. In the meantime, he found a part-time job making cigars, and he waited for me and the baby.
BACK TO CHICAGO

It was the year 1910, on a Passover night, when I arrived in Chicago. In one hand I carried my belongings; in the other I held my infant son, William, who was now six weeks old. Through some misunderstanding, no one came to meet me at the station; but I was not scared or bitter, nor did I feel any self-pity, for I had my boy and I was strong with confidence that we would find our place in life, earning a living and raising our precious child.

My husband, Joe, had a part-time job in a small cigar factory in Elgin, Illinois. It was better than no job at all. A kind stranger helped us to get on the train to Oak Park, where my brother had a small cigar store in an old shack. We planned to live in the back of the store. I was to do the housework and take care of the store when my brother was out.

It was early morning when we came to our destination, wet and shivering, for it was cold, rainy, and windy. I had a hard time rousing Nathan, who was sound asleep and did not expect us until the following day. Since he was not prepared for us, we had to walk to a Jewish neighbor, a Mr. Sam Schwade, a printer on an Oak Park newspaper. They were a wonderful family with many children. The youngest was a baby like mine. They were most hospitable, gave us a bedroom, kissed my baby, and said he would be the future husband of their baby girl. We were all happy and jolly. It was the beginning of a strong friendship which lasted for many years.

The next day my brother brought us a baby carriage and we went to his store. The back, where we were supposed to live, was filthy. The sky could be seen through the cracks, and there were many rats.
There came to my mind the old saying, "From bad stock we must make good cigars." I put the baby to sleep outside in the carriage and told Nathan, who was a very kind-hearted and simple man, that we had to clean up and make war on the rats. We covered their holes with cement. We also placed rat traps, baited with Roquefort cheese, around the place. We washed the windows and the walls, and the place took on a livable air. I arranged a small kitchen with shelves for the dishes, and rented an attic room nearby for sleeping.

Oak Park is one of the most beautiful suburbs of Chicago. There are many fine homes, huge trees along the streets, and well-kept yards with fine flowers. After I had cleaned up the store, I made an attractive window display, and felt proud and hopeful again.

My brother's landlady lived in a handsome house on the corner nearby, close to a terminal elevated station. Our location was valuable business property, and she would never give a lease, so as not to tie up the property. She was an old widow. Her children were wealthy, middle-aged people. Nathan made a good living in his store, but without a lease he was never quite sure how long it would last.

One day the landlady called me and the baby into her house. I told her about myself and my husband, and of our hope to start a new life together. The woman was nearly blind, and a very religious Protestant, with a heart full of kindness. She patted my cheek, said I was a beautiful young mother, and that she loved me and my baby.

When I came to the store the next morning, I found a big pitcher of cream and a pot filled with creamy oatmeal — a gift from the landlady, who had told my brother she would bring me this every day so I would be able to nurse my baby.

On Saturday Joe came to see me. How proud he
was of his son William and of me! Every Saturday morning Joe had to go to the clinic, where the doctor treated his eye. I had been worried about William’s eye, which was always a little inflamed and shed tears. So we took him to the clinic, too. Joe introduced us to the doctor who had treated him for several years. He examined the baby and told us that the tear sac was closed and the tears could not flow into the duct to the nose. The baby’s eye had to be carefully treated at least twice a week until he would be two years old. Then the doctor would try to open the canal with a silver needle, which might be sufficient. If this failed, he would operate when the child had grown to school age, and remove the sac entirely. The eye itself was not in danger, and the doctor assured me that the child was healthy and we should not worry. Thereafter, twice a week, in rain or shine, I traveled with the boy from Oak Park to the South Side of Chicago, where the clinic was located. We became well-acquainted. He often attended all the other patients first, leaving us to last and giving us a lot of his time. He praised our neatness and introduced us to the other doctors and nurses. He called me a good, old-fashioned girl, and often went to the elevated with us. We became very good friends.
WE GO TO LIVE IN ELGIN, ILLINOIS

Joe rented for us, in Elgin, a furnished room and a little kitchen which had an icebox. There was plenty of light and sunshine, and after I had put them in order, the rooms looked like the Garden of Eden to us. Joe worked and I stayed home with the baby, who was getting bigger and handsomer every day.

Before we left, I went to my brother’s landlady to say good-bye and express my gratitude for her kindness and the friendship she had shown a strange, lonely Jewish woman. She showed me a trunk she had prepared for me, and when she opened it, I was amazed to see all kinds of beautiful linen, towels, and everything a house needs; also, dishes, glassware, and pots. She said to me, “Etta, dear, take this to Elgin and be happy with your little family.” I kissed her hands and cried, “Why are you so good to me?” She said, “I am old and blind, you are young, and you shall help build a better world. There is only one thing I am sorry for,” she added, “that you are not a Christian and that you cannot understand the wonderful goodness of Our Lord, and when you die, you may not go to heaven.” I answered, “There are many rivers which flow to the same ocean; good people of all nations or races go to the same God. Do not worry about me. I am not lost in the world down here, and I hope I shall not be lost in the other world.”

We sent that trunk to Elgin. We lived there for about a year, until Joe lost his job, and that year was one of the happiest of our lives.

While we lived in Elgin, we were very economical; for we figured this would not last long, and we saved some money in case we had to move again.

Elgin is famous for its big watch and case factory.
We became acquainted with several business people and some Jewish watchmakers who came to see us often and became good friends with Joe. They brought all kinds of toys for the baby, who started to walk.

One day I went into a big store to buy something. The owner of the store was a very rich man who had several daughters. The oldest was a very clever and experienced businesswoman, with a dark complexion and very plain features. I went up to this proud and prosperous businessman and said to him in Hebrew, “Sholom aleichem” (peace be with you! He looked at me surprised, but answered kindly and said, “What do you want?” So I told him I lived with my husband in Elgin, that he was a cigar maker, that we came from Russia, and my family lived in Chicago. “All well and good,” he said, “but what do you want?” I came to the point. “You have several capable daughters and I have brothers — what about it?” I said. He laughed and replied, “You, little shrimp, have the nerve to come up and talk to me — I think you are all right.” He called over his oldest daughter and introduced her to me. I told her all about my brother Nathan. She said, “If your brother has some qualities like you, it might be all right.” Well, it was arranged that my brother should come to Elgin on a Sunday, and we were all invited to their house for supper.

My brother Nathan was good-looking and strong, but he was still a greenhorn, while she was an American girl. It worried me a little.

These people lived in a mansion, where everything was of the finest. They sent a carriage for us. The father carried my baby. Four daughters were there, all of marriageable age, and the oldest was the homeliest of them all. But she was very clever and intelligent, and I really like her — in her manners and business ability she reminded me of Feigel. Joe and Nathan were introduced, and the girls were disappointed,
for they thought Joe was the single man; he was handsome and interesting to talk with. We became good friends. The would-be couple wrote to each other and went out together several times, but it did not work out. Later, the girl married an American fellow, but she had a miserable life; for he ran after other women, and they were divorced. Some years later she wrote to me and came to see me; she was successful in business and had a wonderful home, but had no luck in married life.

When we had to leave Elgin, we were sad and our hearts were heavy. Everything had been wonderful. We had not quarreled and had been happy. Now we were homeless again and had to wander.
Traveling from Elgin to Chicago, we were depressed. We had no job and no home. But when we looked at our darling boy, we took heart that some day we would make good.

While we had been away from Chicago for several years, my cousin Bessie had come back from California, cured. She lived with her mother, Hilda, and her sister Fay. Her brother Jack had graduated from college and was a doctor of medicine, and George was a druggist. Both Hilda's sons supported her in style, which left her a lot of time for talking.

We came to their house on Roosevelt Road, and they loved our little boy; but Hilda said she could not understand why we were always moving. There were two vacant rooms in the attic of an old house nearby. We rented them for eight dollars a month, bought the most necessary furniture, and moved in. We had saved up two hundred dollars, and Joe was looking for a store again.

My brother Meyer, who owned a successful hardware store with a partner, lived in the neighborhood, and I called on him one day. He was not at home, but his landlady invited me in.

"I have two funny boarders," she told me. "Your brother can eat six eggs for breakfast, while the other draws on the tablecloth, on the walls, and everywhere else that is handy. He thinks that some day he will be an artist."

She made tea and served us cookies, while her own little boy played with William.

While she was talking about her husband, who was also a cigar maker, her boarder, the future artist, came
in. She introduced him to me, and I thought he looked very handsome and refined. Being a friend of my brother Meyer, he was very cordial and said he had heard about me, that I like to travel, was always on the go, and didn’t stick to anything.

I answered that he was quite correct, that I was the restless type. When I asked him to show me his drawings, he was delighted to do so. He was a sign painter by trade and had a small shop of his own. At night, and on Saturdays and Sundays, he studied art. He had taken a course in anatomy at the Art Institute and received good marks, and he studied at Hull House, founded by Jane Addams.

I looked at the drawings and said, “If my husband were interested in drawing and painting, I would encourage him. It is a dream worth striving for.”

He smiled and was pleased. Several months later, I met him on the street. He was carrying a box of candy and told me he was going to get married. I wished him luck.

Joe had been combing the city for a store, and finally located one on the South Side. It was a new corner cigar store. Its owner made a business of opening and selling stores, we heard. Joe took me there. It was summer, children were buying ice cream cones and pop, and business seemed to be good. There was a living room in the back. We borrowed a few hundred dollars from my brothers, bought the store, and moved in. We did pretty well during the summer.

Nearby was a Catholic church and school. It was an Irish neighborhood. One day some children started throwing bricks and bottles into our store. We were afraid to let our little boy go out, and were miserable at the thought that Chicago was another Lida.

“Christ killers!” they shouted. Our hearts were heavy.

I went to complain to the police.
“Lady,” they said, “you better move. They don’t want Jews here; we cannot stop that.”

Oh, how tired we were of that word “move.” Now we were in trouble again, but we would not move. This time we had to stick it out.

The summer passed. Another store opened near the school. None of the children came to us any more. As usual, Joe blamed me when things went wrong. We were both very nervous. He managed to find a part-time job in a small cigar factory, which helped a little. We bought a few sacks of coal, but the small stove did not give sufficient heat. We were cold and uncomfortable.

It was November. Winter had started early that year, with a near-zero temperature. An epidemic of diphtheria broke out in our neighborhood. There were quarantine signs on many doors. Our William took very sick, and I called my cousin, Dr. Jack. He advised us to have the child taken to the Isolation Hospital, as our place was too cold, and he said for us to get a good stove or we would all get sick. We called the health department, and they took our baby away. Joe and I were left alone in the cold, almost-empty store. At the hospital we could see William only through a window.

I said, “What are we going to do, Joe? What is the sense of sticking to a store to which no one comes? The Irish people among whom we live don’t like us.”

He asked me to have patience and at least stay over the winter. Summer might be better.

“No,” I replied. “Summer or winter, I cannot stay among enemies. They don’t like us, no matter what the season. I won’t live here.”

I went to the hospital every day. After three weeks, they gave me my pale little boy to take home. I wrapped him in blankets and brought him back home to the store. It was cold and damp in the back room,
and by evening the child ran a fever again. Desperately I wrapped him up again and took a street car to the Michael Reese Hospital. But in my distress, I took the wrong car and found myself in front of a cemetery. I thought I would go mad, but I took another car and finally arrived at the hospital. I told them that the child had been taken home from the Isolation Hospital that very day.

They called up the hospital and were told that his diphtheria was cured and there was no more room for him there on account of the epidemic. Well, they examined William and found that he had pneumonia. They promised that they would take care of him, and told me to go home.

I could not go home. I felt like dying. I hid in the washroom and stayed there all night. The next day I went to Bessie and my Aunt Hilda, and told them that everything was finished, that I had no home, no husband, and no child. I begged them to let me stay with them, that I would go to work in any cigar factory that would let me work, and that I would try to find a place to live with my baby as soon as he was well again.

The following Monday I got a job in a big factory, and I slept in my aunt’s house. Of course, Joe was angry because I did not come back to the store, but I told him to sell it. Once more we had failed.
WITHOUT A HOME

I found a woman who ran a private nursery. When William improved in health, I took him there. But he cried every time I came and would not let me go, so I decided to go to the Jewish Charities and ask for a job in their nursery. I wanted to be with my baby, who was about two years old then. They gave me a job. How happy I was! I had a separate room for myself, which was light and airy, and I received board and twenty-five dollars a month.

There were about eighty children in the nursery, ranging in years from one month to school age, and only two women to take care of them. My job was to take care of the little ones, of whom there were about twenty. Their mothers brought them in the morning and took them home at night. We bathed and dressed the children in our clothes; when the mothers came for them, they had to change the little ones into their own clothes. I gave the babies their bottles and diapered them, and was very busy all day. At night I took care of my own baby, and I became very tired and worn out. On Sundays Joe and my brothers came to see me.

I hoped that the job would last a long time, but, alas, it did not. The matron, or supervisor, of the nursery told me that she came from a very fine and rich family in the South. They had eighteen servants and she had never done work of any kind, but she knew the heads of the Jewish Charities, and they had given her the position. I had noticed that she sometimes called in a peddler and sold the clothes which had been brought in for the poor children, and kept the money. So I considered her a dishonest person. One Sunday she ordered me to clean her room. Since we had a
regular cleaning woman, I told her that I was hired to take care of the babies. She rudely told me that if I did not do as she wanted, she would find someone else. There was a lump in my throat, and I knew my job was very shaky.

The woman told the board of directors that I was a person of doubtful character, that I had run away from my husband and received men on Sunday when I was alone, as people told her. I was questioned about it. Several weeks later I began to cough, became very sick, and was taken to a hospital. My baby remained in the nursery, and at night the janitor’s wife took him home. One day the janitor visited me at the hospital and told me that they had another woman in my place and had put my belongings in the basement. He also told me that my boy was dirty and his eye was inflamed again, with no one to take care of him. Although I was running a temperature, I asked the hospital for my clothes and went to the janitor’s place. So here we were, sick and in need of a home.

The janitor’s wife sent us to a poor family, who gave me a room. I took proper care of my baby, treated his eye with drops, and rested a few days. Then I went back to the cigar factory. The woman took care of William, and sometimes took him to the nursery and home again at night. They were very kind to me.

Summer came and we were both much better. One evening I took him to a movie with me, and when we came out I bought some cherries. We were walking along, eating the cherries, when we met two matrons from the nursery. One of them said, “So, you are walking around eating cherries. I wonder what you are doing for a living!”

I told her that I was working in a cigar factory, but she said she did not believe me.

“Well, come to the shop and convince yourself,” I told her, and gave her the address.
The next day I informed my boss and my fellow workers that two old maids would come to investigate me. Sure enough, a few days later they came to the shop and asked the boss about me. He told them that he had known me a long time, that I was a good cigar maker, but could not work steady because of my cough.

When I took William to the eye specialist, I told him about our troubles; that I was coughing, and had to work at making cigars. He advised me to go to a charity organization which sent women and children to the country for two weeks.

I gave them all the details about the baby and myself, and they suggested that I go to the Jewish Charities.

"They will do nothing for me," I told them. "I worked for them, and they do not like me."

Nevertheless, insisting that we were in need of the country, the case worker called up the Jewish Charities, and when she mentioned my name, they refused.

"All right," she said. "You go with us."

We were sent to their doctor to be examined. I passed, but not the child. It seemed he always walked around with a temperature of a hundred and two or three. Again I took William to the Michael Reese Hospital, and was told, after a few days, that he was a sick child who needed a home, fresh air, and good food, or I might lose him.

Joe had sold the store and taken a loss. He came to see me, gave me money, and together we went to see our boy. He kissed and hugged us and begged us to take him home.
At long last, Brother Nathan decided to sell his store to us. Without a lease, no one else would have it. I went to have a talk with the kind landlady, told her we were still wandering around without a home, and that we wanted to buy the store. She was doubtful whether we could make a living there for the three of us, but I promised her we would pay the rent a day before it was due, for we needed a roof over our heads; and she consented. So we bought the store from Nathan, and Joe and I were happy, even though the chances of making a good living were poor; and we swore that we would never part again, no matter what happened.

At Chaim’s wedding Nathan met a nice girl named Jenny, who came of a fine family. Nathan made a nice appearance and had saved up some money. The wedding was arranged, and invitations went out to the family.

Now a succession of tragedies deeply shocked our family. It seemed that Cousin Bessie had been in love with Nathan right along, and had been hoping to marry him. When she received the wedding invitation, she turned on the gas and killed herself. About the same time, her sister Sophie, in San Francisco, committed suicide by drinking poison. Their brother, George, died suddenly in an elevated station. Under these circumstances, no one from Chicago came to the wedding.

Nathan had his money invested in some loan association which unexpectedly went bankrupt, and he discovered he had lost his savings. The newly-married couple started their life together with plenty of trouble. Aunt Hilda went to live with her youngest daugh-
ter, Fay, and she was well provided for. Although Hilda had a tubercular father, she lived to a very old age, almost ninety. She never used the money she had saved for a rainy day. Others of her family are doing the very same thing.

In our store we found a slot machine which had been there for a couple of years. The income from that machine paid for our rent. I kept the shack clean and warm, and Joe used to go to town to bring kosher food for us. We paid the rent promptly, as I had promised, and obtained credit at the wholesale store. We paid our bills on time. Many friends and neighbors came to the store, for Joe was a good talker and people liked to engage him in conversation. He often went to the eye doctor, where I also took William.

One day the Oak Park police came, took away our slot machine, and told us to appear in court. When we appeared there, we found many other storekeepers in court. Each one of us was fined nine dollars for having kept a gambling device on the premises. Our income was out.

The husband of Meyer's landlady was a cigar maker, hardly able to make a living. Joe and he got together and planned to buy a newsstand. Joe was to work there in the morning, and his partner the rest of the day. Joe was to go all over Chicago to look for a favorable location. He tried hard, but the stands he saw cost more money than both of them had. However, after six weeks Joe found a suitable stand. His partner watched the stand for a few days and liked it. Then he went and bought it with his cousins, and all of Joe's efforts went for nothing. The cigar maker came to our store in a happy mood and said he was short fifty dollars and asked for a loan.

Joe exploded. "I ran around to find a stand. You didn't even spend a nickel for carfare, and now I should lend you money!"
The man stood there with his hands in his pockets and said, "Well, everyone does what is best for him. My cousin is a better partner for me than you would be. You have a store. How many businesses do you want?"

Joe told him to get out.

A few weeks later the man came to our store again, crying. We asked him what had happened. He told us that his cousin had decided to keep the stand for himself, so the cousin made life miserable for the man and his wife, and they were forced to leave.

"We told our cousin that it was not fair. We have become enemies with you, and now he came when everything was ready and took it away from us," he told us.

His cousin had replied, "As you took it from Joe, so can I take it away from you."

When we had heard the story, we told the man not to bother us any more. We wanted to have nothing to do with people of his kind.
OUR NEW SON, ALBERT

The winter passed, and we paid Nathan the balance we owed for the store. Our landlady and her family were very kind to us. We were expecting another child. That spring was pleasant and peaceful in Oak Park. The trees and flowers were in full bloom when, on Memorial Day, my second son was born. He was a healthy and handsome boy, and looked like Joe. We were very happy when I came home with him. Our landlady had taken care of William. People came to see my new baby, and brought us gifts. Our landlady's wealthy daughter, who lived in a mansion in Winnetka, came to see us, too. She expressed her liking and respect for me, and said she wanted to do something for us to improve our home.

"Thank you," I said. "I hope I deserve your kindness. I would like to have you open a door into your big back yard and build for us a screened porch. Our store is near a corner where there is a streetcar line and the elevated, and I am afraid to let Willie play outside while I am busy. I'd be very grateful to you."

She said, "All right," and left. The carpenters came the very next day and built a fine screened porch, and fenced off space in the yard for us, where the lady's gardener planted many beautiful flowers.

World War I started that summer. There were no radios in those days, and people came for the newspapers we sold in the store. They also bought cigars and tobacco. Everyone was worried, and in the course of time our country entered the war, too. The women knitted sweaters and socks for the soldiers, and everyone who was able bought Liberty Bonds. Flour for bread was scarce, so we used rice flour. We burned candles to save electricity, and we also were saving on
coal. We did all we could to help achieve victory for our allies. At the beginning of the war we were against Russia; but later, when Germany became so strong and all of Europe was bleeding and the free world was in great danger, Russia became our ally.

During that time Joe became a citizen, and I with him. It was a wonderful feeling to belong to the United States of America.

We always had some worry. Our landlady was now blind and very old. She had become very thin. Inflation was on, and people bought and sold property and made large profits. We were afraid the good woman would die and we would lose the store, and what would we do with two children, without a home and no means of making a living? Joe started out again to find a newsstand.

One day he came home all excited. He had found a morning stand to work from six until ten. The owner had told him that the stand sold four hundred papers during that time, which would mean over twenty dollars a week profit. The selling price was four hundred dollars. I asked Joe whether he had counted the papers correctly, and he said, "I counted four hundred, and by ten o'clock they were all gone." I asked whether he had counted the money, but he had not been able to do that.

Joe paid the man two hundred dollars in cash, and we both signed judgment notes for the balance of two hundred dollars. When Joe worked at the stand the following day, two hundred papers were left over, and we knew that we had been gypped. He inquired of the drivers of all the newspapers just what had happened, and finally a Jewish driver told him that the standkeeper had paid them each ten dollars to dump the unsold papers for him.

We were both terribly upset and miserable about the matter. I went to the courthouse and spoke to the
judge, the same one who had fined us for having a slot machine. I told him how we had been swindled, because for two hundred papers it did not even pay to go there. The judge understood perfectly and gave me his card, instructing me to tell the standkeeper to return the judgment notes.

"If the man will not return the notes," the judge said, "a lawyer who is a friend of mine will bring him to the Oak Park court. Go home and do not worry."

The man did not return the notes, and our lawyer took him to court. The man's case of enforcing payment was dismissed, and the notes became worthless.

During the many struggles of our lives, we found that there were also good people who were willing to listen, give advice, and help. That judge was a perfect stranger to us, but how sincerely kind and helpful he was to take such an interest in our troubles.

Later, we sold the stand to an old man in the neighborhood, for two hundred dollars.
OUR LIFE IN CHICAGO DURING WORLD WAR I

Dark clouds of war hovered over our country and over the entire world. We could not get any mail from our family in Europe, and were entirely cut off from them. American boys were sent across both oceans.

Our little family in the Oak Park store had its ups and downs. William often caught colds with a croupy cough, but little Albert was healthy and strong and never had a cold, even when he ran around barefooted. He was a good-natured child and ate everything. Both boys filled our hearts with hope and made life sweet.

William knew many poems and songs, and he could also read, for I helped him study the primer every day. He was to start kindergarten, so Dr. Zucker, the eye specialist, operated on the child's tear sac, and he had his tonsils removed at about the same time. In a few weeks William's eye was much better. It was the greatest joy of my life to start William in school the day after Labor Day, when the weather was beautiful and the whole world smiled at me.

At school Willie's teacher soon found out how nicely he could read, so she put him in the first grade. One wintry morning when Oak Park was covered with snow, I took him to school. On the way I spoke to him about honesty, truth, and the need for advice, and I warned him never to steal or take things away from anybody. As we walked along we found a lady's pocketbook in the snow.

"Mother," he said, "whatever are you going to do about it?"

"Let's open it; maybe we will find a card inside," I answered.
There were a card, eye glasses, keys, and change purse with some money in it. We went to the address given on the card and rang the bell. The lady was happy to get the pocketbook, and she gave Willie the change.

“Isn’t it a fine feeling to be honest?” I asked my boy.

A week later he went to a movie and found a man’s wallet on his seat. When he came out of the theater, he examined the wallet and found a bankbook and some money inside. He took it over to the bank.

Time dragged on, the war was still on, fierce battles were raging, many ships were sunk, and peace was nowhere in sight. Every night our store was packed with people eager to get the latest war news.

In the spring of 1917 someone told Joe that there was a very good newsstand for sale in an elevated station. It was on the North Side. Joe went to see it and saw it was very busy. The owner was sick, his two sons who had been helping him had been taken to the army, and he had to sell.

Joe went to my brother Meyer. Both looked at the place and liked it. The price was three thousand dollars. They agreed that Meyer should buy it in his name and receive one-third interest. We were to pay off everything within two years. They put it all in writing and bought that big stand.

On Saturday Joe and Meyer went to take over the stand. I remained with the children at the store. We had no telephone. I waited for Joe all night, but he did not come home because he sold Sunday papers until three o’clock in the morning. Finally he came home on Sunday, at three o’clock in the afternoon with a big bundle.

Eagerly I asked, “Well, what happened? How is it?”

He answered, “No good; we have been cheated again.”
I fainted. He hastened to revive me, and said, “I was only kidding. We struck a gold mine there. Tomorrow you come with me; there is work for three or four people. We will get a flat in the neighborhood.”

I told our landlady that we had bought a wonderful business in an elevated station, selling newspapers and magazines, cigars, and cigarettes.

She said, “Please remember. Do not make newsboys out of your sons. They must go to school.”

I promised. The blind woman touched me, wished me luck, and said she was sorry to see us leave.

Albany Park was a new neighborhood at that time. Our newsstand was in the elevated terminal, one of the finest stands in Chicago. Many new apartment buildings were vacant, and the landlords gave three months’ concessions to new tenants. I rented four beautiful, light rooms on the second floor, with closets, cabinets, steam heat, and a fireplace. We did not have enough furniture for such a fine place, but we wanted to pay for the stand first and buy furniture later. One week passed in great happiness; then trouble started brewing again.

Suddenly the newspaper drivers started swamping us with papers. In those years the newspaper companies used to fight over circulation. The more papers they sold, the more money they received for advertisements. The man at the newsstand paid a certain amount of money for the permit to sell papers at a particular corner, but the newspapers were the real bosses. The drivers and the division men were real sluggers. If a newsstand man did not know how to get along with them, he could not remain at his stand; and they put someone else in his place or refused to give him papers. There was a lot of graft and bribing involved in running as big a stand as ours. The driver made us take seventy-five copies of an unpopular paper and told us to put away the unsold copies in
the basement. They called it "basement circulation." He often threatened with a knife. Otherwise, he would show us a sharp knife and tell us to behave. Even the largest newspapers had questionable arrangements and sluggers. They even made us take several hundred extra copies of the better selling papers.

When we pleaded with the drivers and the division men, they told us that we didn't know how to sell papers. These things made our lives miserable.

One morning a woman ticket agent at the next station overheard some fellows say that they were "feeding us with plenty of papers." She advised Joe to talk plainly with the division man.

When Joe asked him, "How much?" he slapped him on the back and said, "Now you are learning to sell papers!" It cost us four hundred dollars, which the drivers divided among themselves, and we started receiving a normal amount of papers.

Joe got up at four o'clock in the morning. I came to help him at six-thirty. Several months later the building where we lived was entirely rented, and twenty-three tenants signed a petition to get us out; they did not want Jewish people in the building. We had to go, so we rented a stove-heated flat in an old house which was near the school. The landlord was almost blind. His wife did the housework, and we got along fine. When I was busy, I arranged with the landlady to dress the children and give them their meals. The school was across the street. I paid the woman, and she was a great help to me.
ALBERT IS HURT

On hot summer days I liked to take my boys to the beach. We dressed neatly, took the street car to reach our destination, and there we had to put our clean clothes in a dirty locker. It was a good feeling to lead a woman's life, have two fine youngsters, carry a picnic basket with good food, but somehow I could never quite forget how, by force of circumstance, we had been driven from place to place; and there was always a fear in me that our luck would change again, that it simply could not last long.

One evening when we came back from the beach it was dark, and Joe was putting his papers together, ready to close up the stand. I had noticed that Mary Pickford was playing in a nearby movie, and I loved her pictures. So I asked Joe to take the boys home, give them their supper, and put them to bed.

He said, "All right. Go to the show!"

I used to get up early in the morning to help Joe in the business. I did my housework, and when I came home from the beach I was very tired. It was restful to sit in the show, but while I was watching the picture, somebody came up to me and whispered that one of my boys had had an accident. I ran to the stand. Little Albert had been run over by a car. He was taken to a hospital, and they found that he had been injured quite badly. It took him six weeks to recover. The owner of the car was insured, and a man from the insurance company came to investigate.

Someone from our temple recommended a lawyer to us, Mr. William Levine, a very fine and honest man who in later years became our best friend and adviser. The case of little Albert had to go through the Probate Court, where Henry Horner was presiding judge at that
time. We told Mr. Levine to settle with the insurance company. When we all came to court, our boy, looking so sweet and clean, made quite a hit with everyone, including the judge, who was a bachelor. He told Albert to walk, run, and do some exercises, saying, "If the child is not well, I will not settle this case."

But the boy was all right, and the case was settled. Judge Henry Horner later became governor of the State of Illinois, one of the best our state ever had.

Since coming to the United States, I had always read the Jewish Daily Forward. I noticed an article in it about a great man who had taken an important part in the Russian Revolution and eventually gave his life to help Russia become a free country. This hero had been sentenced to Katorge, Siberia, and during his escape had been shot in the spine. He had come to America, become paralyzed, and lay helpless for years in Bellevue Hospital in New York. Now he had died, and everyone who had ever known this hero would never forget him. It was our dear friend, Abraham; but we did not know that he had suffered for so many years. Later, when the war was over, my sister wrote that Abraham’s father and mother had been shot by the Germans, that the woods where we spent that beautiful summer had been cut down. Our paradise had been destroyed.
WE BUY OUR OWN HOME

Business was good, and we enjoyed our good fortune. The entire neighborhood passed through the “L” station where our stand was, and we became acquainted with many of the people. When we were approached to join some charity organizations, we were glad to do so. We joined a great many of them, and did not mind the five or ten dollars it cost in membership fees. We were happy to be able to give money away; only we did not have time to attend the meetings. The Jewish Consumptives Aid Society was organized at that time by Bessie Hershberg, an old-time cigar maker. Many workers in that trade were afflicted with tuberculosis. I took a particular interest in that society, and became very active in its auxiliary. We became known as a fine family, and were the first Jewish family to settle in that neighborhood. Later a great many Jews from the West Side moved to Albany Park, and they kept the kosher butcher shops and grocery stores busy.

We had arranged with Brother Meyer to pay off the money due him for the stand within two years. However, business was so good that we were able to pay off in eighteen months, but he was not at all anxious to sign over the permit in our name.

"Why are you in such a hurry? Don’t you trust me?" he asked. "If it were not for me, you would not make so much money."

He wanted the stand and the money, and to have us work for him. However, we stood firm. The newspapers knew that he had just loaned us the money. He did not like it, but we made him sign; and it was a relief to know that the stand was ours.

Someone told Joe that there was a good lot for sale near the station, which was very valuable business
property. Joe told Meyer about it, and Meyer gave Joe five hundred dollars to put down as a deposit, and then he bought the lot. Three months later Joe sold it for him, and Meyer made almost five thousand dollars. Joe's commission was two hundred dollars. Meyer noticed that Joe knew many people and received all sorts of information from them. A real estate boom started about that time. Joe asked Meyer for a loan to buy a two-flat building near the station, right next to the building from which we had been compelled to move because we were Jews. Meyer let him have the money on the same conditions as the stand. So we bought our first home, a lovely place with modern plumbing, fine woodwork, and a sun parlor.

Joe, the one who could not make a good cigar and had been a "shlemiel" (inefficient person) for so many years, and I suddenly became clever business people to whom everyone looked up and came for advice. But deep in my heart I had a feeling that it could not last long. I was sad about the war and because we had heard nothing from home.

Meyer and Joe became partners in the real estate business. Meyer had become a rich man; he had a wholesale mail-order house, and did big business on a cash basis. He left all the real estate business to Joe. They bought and sold property, with only a verbal agreement entitling Joe to half of the profits.

We moved into our beautiful six-room apartment, and it was like a dream to me. I wrote a letter to my landlady's daughter, who was in the insurance business. She came, and I showed her around. She could not believe her own eyes.

"Is it possible," she asked, "that you paid for that stand and bought this fine house besides?"

I told her it was true, but that God only knew how long our good luck would last. I was always afraid of the tomorrow. When she brought the insurance
policies which I asked for, a few days later, she asked me to visit her mother.

When I came to Oak Park, our dear old friend touched me and wished me luck. She said she hoped I would not get spoiled, and I told her some people thought I had always been spoiled.

"Some people think I am fine, and others think I am bad. You who are sightless think I am good, and I'll try to live up to your expectations."

A few years later her daughter told over the telephone that her mother had died, and that her mother's last words were that I should be called to the funeral.

I sent a lovely wreath, and went to their home, where my old friend lay in a costly casket, pale and thin; but it seemed as though she were smiling at me. There was a large crowd of rich-looking people. I was asked to say a few words. My talk was simple and short:

"This pure little lady was a true Christian, and practised real Christianity in her life. I, a Jewish woman, beaten and driven by many people, both here and in the old country, was despised for being Jewish, as if it were some kind of crime. But Mrs. June befriended me and my family, as if I had been her sister or daughter. In her heart there was only love, instead of hatred and prejudice. How seldom do we meet such a wonderful person with such fine understanding! She lived the good life, and to follow in her steps is to walk in the right path to real humanity."

The priest and many other people there shook hands with me, and I rode to the cemetery in her oldest son's car.
Meyer and Joe were doing business together, and everyone knew that Joe had a rich man as his silent partner. Dealers in real estate came to see Joe at the stand about all kinds of deals, and Joe gave deposits on lots right and left, sold the contracts overnight, and both made profits. Mr. Levine represented both men, and also took care of the bookkeeping. This went on for several years. Some of our friends came to borrow money from us, and we gave them loans, as friends should, without interest.

Came the year 1918, when the Kaiser and his Junkers were beaten by the Allied armies. How well I remember November 11, when the Armistice was signed! Crowds of men, women, and children were waiting at the station for the papers. The people grabbed the papers from the trucks. It was an unforgettable night. People, big and small, were on the streets, marching with pots, pans, and washtubs, banging away on anything that made a noise. Boys and girls of all ages jumped and danced. Even strangers kissed each other and cried, “The war is over!” But few realized that we lost the peace.

A few nights later Joe came home with two men and a contract all prepared and ready for my signature. They had offered him a fine profit for the house we lived in, but I protested violently.

“I will not give up my beautiful house. This has been a lucky home, and I’ll stay here!” I exclaimed.

I wanted to tear up the contract, but Joe said to me, “Listen, if you will not sign, this home will not be lucky any more. I am in the real estate business. I buy and sell, and you are going to do what I say.”

Now I knew my happiness was not for long. I had
to give in to keep peace in the house. My home was sold, and they bought a six-flat building, into which I moved. I was expecting another baby.

After Armistice Day the weather was very mild. A terrible epidemic of what was called Spanish influenza started. In some homes entire families were sick, and so many people died that the undertakers were hard pressed to take care of them all.

Just at that time Joe's father, his little sister, Goldie, and his baby brother, Israel, came to America. The mother had died. Joe's sister had married a widower with many children. She had never forgiven Joe for marrying before her, and she quarreled with everyone around her. She never came to us, and we never went to her house. Her father had brought some money with him; she borrowed it, and never tried to return it. Everyone in her house was sick, and they sent for Joe, saying that his father was dying. The old man, who was nearly seventy, had pneumonia, and the doctor could do nothing for him. When Joe and I came to the house, the old man had a high fever and was delirious. He jumped out of bed. The next day he passed the crisis, his temperature dropped, and, to everyone's surprise, he was better.

One day Joe came home very sick. William also fell ill with a headache, sore throat, and a high temperature. Meyer happened to come to our house, and exclaimed, "Quick, get a specialist! William is burning up with fever!"

One of our drivers told me about Doctor Ross, a little Irishman, who attended many flu patients successfully. I called Dr. Ross in a hurry. He told me the boy was in very serious condition, instructed me to wrap him in wet, ice-cold bed sheets or blankets, and give him medicine. We put ice into the bathtub. I worked over him all night, and fever was reduced a little. Albert had also become sick, and there I was
with three patients; but I attended the stand Saturday and Sunday. Dr. Ross came to the station and said that I, too, ought to be in bed.

"If I lie down," I said, "I am afraid I won't be able to get up." He took my temperature. It was a hundred and three, and I had the chills. Sunday afternoon I lay down, but I could not get up.

There was no one in either of our families to take care of Joe's father. They asked the County Hospital to take him in, but hospital authorities said to take him to Oak Forest. A cab was hired to take him to Oak Forest. There was a collision, and the poor old man was killed instantly. We could not even go to his funeral.

Dr. Ross procured a practical nurse for us. The woman took such wonderful care of us that we all recovered. Meyer helped out a little, but most of the time the money and the papers were lying around, and everyone helped himself.

Joe developed complications from the flu; he had pus in his lungs. I was sick all winter, and had to be operated on my nose and throat while I was expecting the baby. Toward the middle of summer a girl was born to us, and we named her Esther Chana, after Joe's mother. She was a beautiful baby, with golden hair and blue eyes. She reminded me of little Dochanka, in the woods near Lida, and I called her by that name.
MEYER AND JOE BUY A BUILDING IN LIDA

Our baby girl brought happiness to the entire family. We had our own home, made a good living at the newsstand, and Meyer and Joe did big business in real estate. Joe bought a beautiful playpen for the baby, and we placed it in the sun parlor. William did very well in school, and Albert was to start school soon. Both boys sometimes helped out at the stand. One day Joe took me to a fur store to buy me a mink coat.

"Why do you want me to have a mink coat?" I asked.

"You deserve it," was his answer. "You worked with me shoulder to shoulder, and you earned it."

In that case, I thought it was time to repay my debt to Feigel and my parents in Lida.

Since the end of the war we had received mail from my family; there were eleven of them left. Poland had become an independent country, but not a democracy. The Jews there were treated worse than in the times of the czar. They were thrown off trains, their beards were torn. The new officials and police in uniforms covered with gold buttons paid no attention to Jewish complaints. Yesterday it was the Russians who mistreated the Jews, now it was the Poles.

They told the Jews, "Go back to Palestine where you belong. We don't want you in Poland."

So we wrote to our people to sell what they could and we would send them the money to come to America. We told them that we had a good business and would work together. But Feigel answered that Father and Mother were old and could not travel, and her sick son could not enter America. Instead of bringing them here we should send them the money for which they could buy the finest court building in
Lida. They could buy it for five thousand dollars, but its real value was fifty thousand. Both Meyer and Joe were against buying property in Poland, but my opinion was that if our family wanted it, we should not refuse.

"Perhaps they might come here and could not adjust themselves," I said. "Remember how many years we suffered and could not adjust ourselves? Didn't Meyer loan you money, Joe? Now, when Feigel needs it, you refuse. Remember, yesterday you wanted to buy me an expensive fur coat; you said I worked with you and earned it. Give me what I earned and I'll send it to Feigel. I have not forgotten my bitter life. My answer will be, 'Yes.'"

Meyer liked my attitude, and told Joe that I was right. Meyer sat down and wrote out a check, had it certified, and sent it by registered mail; and the building in Lida was bought. There were many apartments and stores in it; it had a swimming pool, and only aristocrats could afford to live in such a grand house. There was also an orchard, with apple, pear, and cherry trees. It was obvious that sometimes from crumbs comes a sandwich.

My brother Nathan could not make a living in Boston, and our family had to help him out. I wrote him that Joe was not well and that he should come to Chicago and work at our stand, and I sent him train fare. He came, but he did not like to get up early and work long hours. Nathan wanted to sell merchandise to the stores as Meyer did, and he wanted to work up a route. We did not want to send him back to Boston empty-handed, so Meyer bought him a truck, filled it with merchandise, and Nathan started in business for himself. He rented a flat, and his wife, Jenny, and their little girls came to Chicago. Nathan did not earn enough, and they struggled. Meyer was angry, and afraid that his merchandise might be lost.
Joe's oldest sister had married a rich widower and never cared to see us. Now she heard that we were getting along well and had a new baby girl, so she sent friends to hint that we ought to invite her.

Joe said, "She was always mean and made trouble for the family. They called her 'the witch.' No, I do not want her."

Other people spoke up for her, and I finally said, "If any of the family want to come and behave, I shall not close the door to a sister, good or bad."

But I made a terrible mistake. She came with her husband and children. They were unreliable, mean people, who were always fighting. We would not have minded had they come only once in a while, but they bothered us all the time. Not so long ago we had been poor and had no place to live. Now we had entire families in our house and no privacy for ourselves. Lots of people came for favors and loans. A cousin, a shyster lawyer, came and asked that we give him the legal work connected with our real estate, but we knew that we could not trust him. We discovered that having money had its disadvantages. We could not please everybody, and we acquired enemies whom we had never wronged.

Our house was open to all comers. For the holidays I cooked a lot of food for guests. Many of my friends from Lida came to see us often. We joined the Lida Organization to send relief to our countrymen abroad.

My other attempt to marry off Meyer occurred at the same time. He asked me to speak to our attorney's secretary, a very fine, intellectual girl of marriageable age. I knew her and her family. I told her that Meyer was very much interested in her and he wanted to date her. She was well-pleased. We made a date for the following week.

I said to him, "Now listen to me, Meyer. Take with you about two hundred dollars in cash and we
will go downtown. You must buy three fine suits, shoes, shirts, and an overcoat. Go to the barber, get a haircut, and everything will be fine. You are a prosperous man. It is time you got married and raised a family."

Meyer listened, and obeyed me like a little lamb. We bought everything, and hoped we would have a wedding shortly.

Two days before the date he called the girl on the phone and told her that he had changed his mind.

"Why, what happened?" she asked.

"Nothing happened," he said. "Only I think that you are too fine and too good for me. You will not love me, divorce me, and then I will have to pay you alimony. No, I'll remain a bachelor. That is final."

When I heard this story, my question was, "What will you do with your clothes?"

"Well," he said, "I was too hasty to spend so much money. You persuaded me to do it. I'll never listen to you again."

About a year later, a girl arrived from Poland to a family he knew well. The girl looked strong and healthy. Her cheeks were rosy. Meyer figured that this girl from Poland, who had suffered years of poverty, would really be good for him. She would be satisfied to live modestly. So Meyer proposed to her in the following manner:

"Do you know, Becky, that you are a nice girl? Would you care to marry a fellow like me?"

"Perhaps I would," she said. "I was told you are a wealthy man. You are a smart businessman. Why not?"

Her answer pleased him, and he spoke again: "Tell me, Becky, why are the people in Europe healthy and have pink cheeks, although they live in poverty, while in America the people are pale, the girls and women use rouge?"
"That is simple," she said. "American people work hard for themselves, and also to help their families in Europe. But the people over there do not have to work and worry about their families in America."

Meyer liked her explanation, and complimented her on her cleverness.

"Are your cheeks naturally pink?" he questioned again. He wanted to be sure.

"Take a wet towel and try to wipe them," she said. Meyer tried, and the more he wiped, the redder the cheeks got. He smiled. "Fine," he said. "Now answer me a couple of questions. Would you be willing to wear gingham or cotton dresses? Would you be satisfied with cotton stockings? And, if we marry, would you accept secondhand furniture and a coal stove without nickel? Nickel on a stove is a nuisance, and you have to spend money for polish and work hard to make it shine."

Becky looked at him and said, "Before I answer your questions, I will ask you one. If I should marry you, will you let me send some money to my poor parents in Poland? You see, Meyer, should I marry a poor fellow, I will go to work to help my husband and my family."

Meyer's answer came quickly. "I did not say that you won't work for me."

"I am glad," she said. "I don't have to answer your questions. It is all settled. 'No' is my answer," she said, and Meyer's romance came to an end.

Becky married a poor fellow, and worked two months after her marriage. She died after she was operated on for a mastoid.
JOE'S ILLNESS — WILLIAM'S GRADUATION

A few years passed. Joe was a very sick man. His body often swelled up, and he sometimes had to remain in the hospital for several weeks. Some doctors advised an operation, but our Dr. Ross was against it. He told me that Joe would not pull through. Whenever Joe planned to go ahead with the operation, I tried to put him off.

"Wait till next month, perhaps you will feel better; or try a sanitarium where they will keep you on a strict diet, you might get cured without an operation," I said.

Often he had sleepless nights and suffered dreadfully, so when I tried to stop him from being operated on, he accused me of not wanting to spend the money for recovering his health. He was going to the hospital to make arrangements for his operation when I begged him to wait until William's graduation in the spring.

In order to ease the strain of work, we decided to run the stand only from five until ten in the morning. We could manage to live on less if necessary. Since we could not work at the stand all day, we rented it out to Joe's sister and her husband. They earned more than we did, for there were four of them and they worked longer hours.

In the spring Joe and I went to William's public school graduation. We both cried because Joe was very sick. Even his eyes were inflamed, and we felt that this was perhaps the last important event in his life.

When Joe was well, he used to take the boys to lectures by such prominent men as Scott Nearing, Clarence Darrow, Eugene V. Debs, and others. He also visited the Art Institute and the museums with them.
A company of Shakespearean players sometimes came to Chicago. They were wonderful, and we attended their performances as often as possible.

That spring Joe said to me, “Dress the boys nicely. We are going to the theatre to see the Shakespearean players in ‘Julius Caesar.’”

He bought the best tickets. We watched the interesting play, and both shed tears. When Caesar was attacked by his enemies and saw among them his best friend with a knife in his hand and exclaimed, “You too, Brutus?” we felt that the knife went straight into our own hearts. We both knew Joe’s end was coming.

During the summer Joe was building stores in two places. He wanted to learn how to become a builder. I told Meyer not to let him build because he was very sick, but Meyer said, “Don’t mix into our business. Joe knows what to do.”

Toward the end of the summer, when Joe got worse, he called Meyer to our lawyer Levine’s office and demanded a written record that he, Joe, was entitled to half profits on thirty-two parcels of real estate in which they were dealing, and he also wanted the books straightened, according to their verbal agreement. He felt he should not wait any longer.

But Meyer said, “Don’t you trust me?”

Joe began to cry, “I am a dying man. Do it right away.”

Meyer signed a paper that Joe was entitled to half of the profits on all the deals, and Joe was relieved.

The next day Joe said, “Dress the boys, the baby, and yourself. We are all going to be photographed.”

We were all photographed, but Joe never saw those pictures. Then we bought a fine outfit for him to take to the hospital.

That night, at home, he felt depressed and said to me, “I’d like to buy a bungalow for you so that you would have a nice home for the children. We must
buy it quickly, just for ourselves, not in partnership with Meyer, just a home so we won’t have to move around any more."

I answered him, "Joe, it is good to have a bungalow when people are well, but now I would prefer to buy a store and flat building in a business block. If we or the children should need it for a living, we could use it. No partnership, just us."

The next day the real estate agent found a two-flat building in a good block. We did not even see the inside, but we bought it; and it was nicer than we expected. Joe wanted to have it decorated, but I said, "Let’s move in. We will decorate when you come back. I hope you will get well, and we will arrange a big party for your homecoming."

He was pleased with the idea. Then he said, "There is one more thing. Let’s go to a music store and buy the best Victrola, with many good opera records."

In the same store he bought a violin and a trombone for the boys, and he took them to music teachers. He was such a devoted father.

At night Meyer came, and Joe told him he had bought a home for us. Meyer became angry.

"You mean you are buying that property yourselves? Nothing doing!"

He thought we had gotten a bargain and wanted to keep it to ourselves. We explained that we had paid a high price, but he insisted on a partnership, as before. Well, he was the stronger, and it was done the way he wanted it done.

I took Joe to the hospital.
THE LAST NIGHT WITH JOE

Joe himself had picked the surgeon, and several physicians who had attended him before. He said he wanted to see whatever was going to be removed from his body, and they promised to show it to him after the operation. Joe was in the hospital several days before the operation and saw many patients who were operated on and recovered.

Joe had a private room and a nurse. While the operation went on, I was waiting in the hall. The doctors worked a long time on him, and finally he was brought back to his bed. I could not tell him anything because the doctor was too busy to talk to me. I felt that things were very bad with Joe. He was very sick, but his mind was clear to the very end. After a few days I called in several doctors, the best in the city, for a consultation. They told me that Joe's entire system was infected, and advised against an operation. It was just as Dr. Ross had told me. But neither can one live with infection in the body. Joe said he had known it, but was willing to take a chance.

Saturday night Joe said to me, "Etta, stay with me. Don't go home. Lie down near me, and let us talk things over quietly, just by ourselves. I don't want anybody else to hear," and he told the nurse not to admit anyone to his room.

Then he said to me, "Do you remember when we went to the lectures at the Masonic Temple on a winter night, and how the snow glittered like diamonds in the moonlight?"

"Yes, Joe, I remember," I answered.

He continued, "When we worked in the shop, you brought me delicious sandwiches every day, when I did not earn money enough to buy lunch. Why did you do it?"
I answered simply, "Joe, we worked together and I knew you were hungry. Remember, I was sitting next to you. I was stronger, and I had a feeling that I must take care of you."

After a short pause, he said, "You know, Etta, you weren't pretty, but there was something about you that many people liked. Although I quarreled with you for many years, I want you to know that I loved you, only you."

"Joe," I said, "if I had not loved you, I would not have come back to you. I know I have been a foolish and stubborn woman all my life. I was guilty of all the trouble we ever had."

"Oh, no," he said, "you are as honest and pure as a white dove."

Then he called in the nurse and some doctors and said to them, "I want all of you to hear that I lived with my wife for seventeen years. She is the most honest person in the world. She is like a white dove. I always loved her dearly, and will love her until my last moment."

Afterwards he said, "Tomorrow is Sunday. Call up the house, tell them to dress the children nicely, and bring them here. Nathan should also bring our little Esther. The world is not coming to an end yet."

I was with him all that night, and I knew the end was coming. I telephoned for the family to hurry. It was November, and raining hard. The whole family, both mine and his, many of our friends, and our lawyer were all with him in the room. Joe looked long at our boys, told them they looked like little men, and then he said to them, "William and Albert, remember to be good in school and to mind your mother." He looked at our little girl, who was two years old, and said, "Oh, Esther darling, what a pretty pink sweater you have!"

His sister came with her family. She stood near Joe
for a long time while I was in the hall. When she tried to fix his pillow, he recognized her and began to call, "Etta, where are you?"

I came in and he said to her, "Please leave me. I want my wife near me."

Sunday evening he talked to our lawyer. "Please, Mr. Levine, you are our best friend," he said. "Protect my wife and children."

The lawyer told him not to worry. Then Joe's heart failed and he died. Yes, my world had come to an end. They took me home to the house he had just bought and in which he had lived only two weeks. All was dark and empty. I had always been the sick one, but he had died and I had to carry on. I would have liked to rest with him in peace. He was only forty-two years old.
AFTER THE FUNERAL

There were obituaries about Joe in the newspapers which said he was a brilliant and intellectual man. He was the first one to buy “The Book of Knowledge” for the children, and the “History of the Jews,” by Gratz, in English. Rabbi Mendelsohn of the temple said he never met a man who mastered the Hebrew language as Joe had. In his coffin Joe looked pale, thin, and handsome, as he did on the first day I met him in the cigar factory. I really envied him. He was through, but my troubles were beginning. Mr. Levine said to me at the hospital right after Joe died, “You see this crowd of relations? I am afraid they will give you plenty of trouble soon.”

It did not seem to matter. I felt like retreating from everything.

I spent the week of mourning at home. Joe’s sister and brother-in-law told everyone that Joe had told them on his dying bed that the stand is theirs. They added, “Joe left you plenty; the stand is ours.”

I had the permit, and I got in touch with my lawyer. He told me to advertise and sell the stand.

“It is beyond your strength to fight with a bunch like that,” he said.

I was all broken up and had a big lump in my throat. Several buyers came during the next few days, but Joe’s sister stood there with a bottle threatening to break it over the head of anybody who would try to take the stand away from her. My lawyer approached the newspapers and told them about this holdup of a widow and her children. The newspaper companies said they would sign the permit over to the new buyer, all but one big afternoon paper, which said one of its drivers had told them Joe had said to him before going to the hospital that he would leave the stand to his
sister. When things could not be arranged otherwise, some prominent people on the street got together and we gave our worthy relations two thousand dollars. The stand was sold.

A few days later that driver came to me and said, “You know that I am a dirty dog. You should spit in my face.”

I told him to have someone else do that and not to bother me.

He said, “Don’t you know what this is all about?” I told him I wasn’t interested. Whatever it was, it was too late.

Then he said, “Joe’s sister had promised me three hundred dollars to say that I had heard Joe promise the stand to her.”

They had not given him anything, and he had done his dirty work for nothing. I told him that Jesus was sold for money and Judas was sorry afterwards. I told him I was not sorry for him. If he had received payment for his crime, he would not even think of his crime. I told him to get someone else to spit in his face. I wasn’t in the mood for such things.

Our cousin, the shyster lawyer, went to Meyer and said, “Joe was an honest man, but now he is gone. Mr. Levine is an expensive lawyer. I will do all your legal work at a more reasonable rate.”

He advised Meyer to file partition suits for the real estate since some of Joe’s heirs were minors, and my kingdom began to shatter. Even the house that had been bought for a home was to be sold at auction. When I protested, Joe’s and my own relations called me crooked. I had only one friend, our lawyer, Mr. Levine, who protected us in every way he could. In order to save the home, I had to give Meyer a big profit for his half share. The shyster lawyer became the big boss over Joe’s and Meyer’s real estate affairs.

One day, Meyer’s bookkeeper, who knew about all
the transactions, came to me and said, "I cannot keep quiet any longer. Your cousin is using all the tricks of the trade to rob you. I am sure he will swindle your brother and embezzle his money later on, too. I advise you to go to your brother and talk to him. Perhaps he will listen to you."

I answered, "I know what you say is the truth, but my brother will never listen to me. But I'll go to him. No one can say I didn't try."

Of course, Meyer said right away, "Don't think I'll let a woman run my business!"

I said, "I want you to run it. You are my father's and mother's son and will do me justice. I'll agree with whatever you do, but send that shyster away and let our old friend, Mr. Levine, take care of the business. If you wish to sell, I'll agree to everything."

Meyer softened and called up the cousin, told him that I was in his office, that he had made up with me, and that our former lawyer was going to be in charge again. But our cousin was a smooth talker and told Meyer that I was a tricky person and that Meyer was foolish to listen to me; so my brother changed his mind again, told me to get out, and that he never wanted to see me again. Had I been considered poor, I might at least have gotten some sympathy. As a rich widow, I received none. My riches, however, were only on paper, and my lawyer said that I would have to try to do something to make a living for my family.

After the funeral I paid the bills for the hospital, doctors, nurses, gave to charity organizations, and donated a hospital bed in Joe's name. It all amounted to about two thousand dollars. After I had paid Joe's sister a similar amount, there was very little left in cash. It distressed me to think that perhaps I had not managed right, and thinking over the problem, I remembered the words of my old landlady in Oak Park. not to make newsboys out of my children. I decided

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to talk the matter over with William, who was going to high school, and Albert, who was in grammar school; both were very bright. I spoke to them as I would to grownups.

"Sons, now you have to take Father's place and advise me what to do. Do you want a newsstand and have plenty of money, or do you want to go to college and choose any profession you like? I would not want you to blame me in later years that I stopped you from having your way. If you are not in the newspaper or any other business, you will be free to study. Make your decision now, like men."

They understood, and said, "Mother, if someone is educated, nobody can take it away from him. We want to go to school."

I invested the rest of the money I had received for the stand in an old frame house near a theater. There was a big store and a little popcorn store. In case of need, I could run the little store.

We tried to adjust ourselves to a lower standard of living. We seemed isolated. No one came to visit us, and we were not invited anywhere. The children had their friends, schoolmates, and their bicycles. A widow lives in the shadows of the memories of the past. On holidays, when I was particularly depressed, I played over and over again the records Joe had bought: Enrico Caruso singing the last aria from "La Tosca" and Schubert's "Serenade," John McCormack's "I Hear You Calling Me," and many others.

The Probate Court settled the estate and straightened things out with Meyer. The children and I received our part of the profits. The real estate and bonds began to fall, and no investment was safe. Everything in the country was shaky. As the administratrix for my minor children, I bought for them bonds of a big temple, figuring that the Jewish community would always pay the interest and would not allow foreclosure on a temple.
My judgment was good, because when the stock market dropped and the real estate boom collapsed, this investment remained good.

During vacation time the following year we took a basket of food and went to the cemetery every other day. We sat on the lot, near the white granite stone I had bought for Joe. We sat there and imagined that Joe was pleased with our visits. He was also lonely.

One day that summer, Joe's sister called up and said she and her sister wanted to see the children. I told her they would be waiting for her outside. She took the boys downtown, where they met Meyer. Meyer and Joe's sisters told the boys that they, the boys, were rich and William should go to New York to live with the sisters. The boys came home late, and William said, "My aunt wants me to retire right now," and Albert added, "Don't worry, Mum. She can go by herself!"

When she called up again, I told her not to bother my boys. No one was going to take my children away from me.

Mr. Levine had been right. The families caused us plenty of trouble.
That first summer of my widowhood, with no business to take care of, I attended the house and the children, but I was very lonely. Both boys used their bicycles often, and I worried that they might get hurt. I often thought of my sister Feigel, who was also a widow. My family in Lida cried over our bad luck, and they all were very grateful that we had bought the building for them.

One summer day when I was out walking with my little girl, we met Meyer’s old friend, Sam, who had lived in the same house with him and dreamed of becoming an artist some day. I told him that I had lost my husband and sold my business.

“Can you imagine me doing nothing?” I asked him. He told me that his wife had died and that he was lonely, too. He still had his small sign shop, and made a living working there. Saturdays and Sundays he painted, but he had not advanced very much.

The following Sunday morning Samuel came to visit. After I had given the children their lunch, I put my little girl in her buggy, and we went for a walk. Sam told me, in plain and simple language, that he wanted to marry me, that he thought I would inspire him in his painting, and that he had liked me the first time he met me.

Sam and I were about the same age. He was good-looking, the kindest man I knew, and he had lived very happily with his first wife. I told him to find a single girl.

“Why do you want a woman with three children?” I asked. “You don’t realize the noise they can make and what a responsibility you would be taking on.”

Sam answered, “George Washington married Mar-
tha, and she had children. I am also an orphan, no mother, no wife. Adopt me like a son, and you will have four children."

After that, he came as often as he could. He promised not to interfere, that I could manage things the way I wanted to. I went with him to my dear friend, Mr. Levine, who formed a very good opinion of him. I told my sons that Sam wanted to marry me, and that it was up to them. They agreed that he was a quiet and peaceful man and it might be nice to have him around.

One day Sam met Meyer on the streetcar. "You know I am interested in your sister," Sam told him. "We are planning to get married some day."

"Don’t do that," Meyer warned him. "She is a mean and nervous woman; when she gets angry, she breaks dishes over your head."

The next day Sam told me what Meyer had said. I remarked, "Meyer is right. It’s true. That’s the kind of woman I am. I made plenty of trouble for Joe, and I would be more dangerous for you."

"I am not afraid," said Sam. "I’ll never give you an opportunity to break dishes over my head. How could you? I’ll wash them myself."

I exclaimed, "I would never have believed that you, such a plain little fellow, could be so brave! So, you are not afraid to marry a mean woman with three children. Perhaps you need a psychiatrist! Don’t say that I did not warn you. We have plenty of time; you have a lot of thinking to do. Remember, you are a free, single man, with no obligations."

However, he kept coming, brought some delicacies or flowers every Friday night. He helped me with the dishes. My children became used to him, and he became like one of the family.

Sam promised to sign a paper renouncing all claims to anything I possessed. And I said, "If I
marry you, you will work in the shop during the day for a living and study art at night so you will advance?” I promised that he would have the freedom to go sketching and to paint at the studios to which he belonged, and I would be happy to see him realize his dream.

He said, “Yes, I know with you I’ll work, and I hope to please you and myself.”

The following year we were married.

Sam took me to the Academy of Fine Arts, where he was a member; also to Hull House, where he studied painting under the fine teacher, Miss Benedict. He introduced me to all the artists he knew. They told me that he was talented and a fine colorist but he never completed his canvases. But now he really started to work with enthusiasm, and began to exhibit small subjects. Whenever I came to the opening of an exhibition with him, I told him how happy I was to see even a small thing painted by him, and I hoped that in time it would get better.

He studied for nine years. Sometimes he painted in the house until morning. We visited many exhibitions, and both enjoyed the world of art. We saw many a “Madonna and Child” by great masters, and Sam said, “I want to create different madonnas, not heavenly but earthly ones. Jewish madonas. In heaven, they will rate only a footstool to their husbands, the scholars, but on earth they deserve the same rights as the men. His first successful Jewish madonna was “A Letter to Mother.” All the artists admired that painting. Sam had been inspired by the famous Rubinoff, who had played on his violin a popular Jewish folk song, “A Letter to Mother.” I was the model for that painting. Sam painted simple characters, women doing all kinds of work. His pictures were accepted for the Art Institute’s and other prominent exhibits. He became well-known in the world of art. His work ap-
peared in magazines, newspapers, and he was mentioned in many editions of "Who's Who in American Jewry." But Sam remained a peaceful, honest person, and easy to get along with.

A couple of years later a son was born to us, whom we named Fred. Sam was the happiest father in the world. He did not differentiate between his and Joe's children. Later on the older sons, William and Albert, adopted his name. We wanted to be all one family.
WILLIAM AND ALBERT HAPPILY MARRIED

Our married life was better than we might have expected. We were satisfied to live a simple life. When our little boy was born, Sam helped with everything around the house, and even took care of the baby at night.

William and Albert were good students and started university at an early age. They played chess for recreation, and ushered in a theater during vacation time. They grew tall and handsome, and they were absolutely honest. I talked to them openly about the dangers of life and they promised that they were going to find nice girls and marry young. I asked them to remember that a wife is the most precious partner in life and they should help her in every way so that she would always be well, beautiful, and in good humor. And I reminded them to be tidy.

At the university William met his first girl, Sadie Kaplan, the daughter of a very fine family. They were married while they still attended school at Champaign, Illinois. One winter evening I received a telephone call from my son and new daughter-in-law that they had just been married. I congratulated them and told William to be sure and be a good husband. But the young woman was afraid to call her own parents; instead, she gave me their telephone number.

I called Sadie's parents and said, "Mazel tov! Your daughter just married my son in Champaign."

They were frightened because the children were only nineteen years old, and the depression of 1929 had started. I invited the Kaplans to come over. The table was set with wine and other good things to eat and drink. There were many oil paintings and beautiful plants in our home. I made the Kaplans welcome,
and told them we hoped that our children would have good luck and that we would all try to help them until they could find work. Long before our guests left, we had become good friends and were not afraid any more. Both parents continued to send the young people their weekly allowance as before. When they graduated, we were all present at the ceremonies.

When the stock market crashed, the real estate boom came to an end, factories closed, and many business people went bankrupt. President Hoover said that prosperity was around the corner. But the depression became worse. William, who had majored in chemistry, could find no job in his line and finally took a job in a factory at twelve dollars a week. Sadie found a position as a cashier. Six months went by. The young couple lived with her parents, and William was very discouraged. One morning I received a telephone call from a consulting chemist that there was a job for William in a food canning plant. William could hardly believe his ears when I told him about it. He had handed in an application to the American Chemical Society, and this chemist picked his name from among all the applicants. Later on William asked him, “How did you happen to pick me from so many applicants?”

His employer answered, “You are Jewish and so am I. I know how hard it is for a Jew to get a start.”

William started on his new job, and when he came home to me, he said, “Mother, I am not experienced. It is just like climbing a high mountain.”

“Yes, my son,” I answered, “life is always hard; but the one who has the courage to climb will succeed, and I think you will.”

He worked in the place for many years and eventually became buyer and manager. Sadie became a schoolteacher, and both of them continued their education by taking courses in school.

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My second son, Albert, followed in the footsteps of his brother. He met his girl, Barbara, in high school and married her during his second year at the university. Both of her parents were dead. Barbara was a beautiful and capable girl. She started to work for a lawyer. The young couple lived with us and it was a pleasure to have them. They promised that Albert would continue his studies. He worked half a day at an advertising agency and continued his studies at the University of Chicago. When he graduated he kept his job and taught chemistry at night school. Later he worked for the government in the Wild Life Department and spent two years in Chile, the Philippines, and other places.

During the depression my husband lost his house and I lost mine. Houses were not even worth the first mortgage, and whatever we had paid in for so many years was lost. We moved into an old, stove-heated frame house. After paying the movers, we were left with thirty-five cents in cash. Sam worked all night in a restaurant making signs. He brought home fifty cents and a sandwich. We were lucky the children's inheritance was well-invested and not lost. Sam and I realized that after seven fat years had come the lean years.

As times got harder the city arranged one summer to have an outdoor exhibition for the suffering artists. Many benches were installed in Grant Park for the artists to display their works. The hot sun beat down all day, but many people came to the grounds. However, not all artists were lucky enough to sell. There was no social security nor unemployment benefits in those days. Artists had to struggle as never before.

Our display of paintings made a hit. Sam was well-known at that time. He painted underprivileged characters: a poor man with a cart, a broom peddler, several canvases of simple Jewish women. Many people
wanted to buy his pictures, but for very low prices. About fifty people wanted to buy the painting, "A Letter to Mother," offering fifty dollars or more for it. It was a lot of money for an artist, but we refused to sell the painting. We reasoned that if everyone wanted it, perhaps someone would help us to make reproductions. We sold still lifes, landscapes, nudes, and other pictures, which the dealers bought for little money. It is very encouraging for an artist when his work finds a market.

We went to see our friends, the B. Bregers, whose son, Dave Breger, has become a well-known cartoonist. They arranged for several of Sam's paintings to be copyrighted and reproduced. My husband used me as the model for his paintings of simple women. We were invited to exhibit in galleries and churches. We had colored slides made to be used in lectures, and sold some reproductions. We had a beautiful exhibition every year. We contributed our share toward placing art into many Jewish homes.

About that time several of my friends decided to organize a Pioneer Women's Club to help the upbuilding of Palestine. Our first meeting was held at Dr. Celia Jurbin's office. We named the club Chanita. Among the organizers were Z. Breger, Celia Youssim, Sarah Blau, and myself. I was recording secretary. Sweetin, one of the Pioneer women, always encouraged me to write. We raffled off many paintings to raise money for Palestine.

There were other organizations among the Jewish women in Chicago, and they all belonged to a council. Circles to read history and other good literature were formed. We also had book reviews and lectures.

The Jewish Women's Art Club introduced art and literature, and sold paintings, and books, for the artists and authors.
THE STORY OF AN OIL BURNER

My son Albert had been, from childhood on, the handy man around the house and my best helper. He was able to repair things, and even the neighbors called him for small repairs. One day Albert and Barbara surprised me with an oil burner to make my work easier. A salesman at Albert's place had told him that the burner worked fine and would cost less than coal. They paid one hundred dollars down and signed notes for the balance, to be paid in monthly installments. I appreciated their thoughtfulness, but secretly I did not believe that the burner was a good one. A real good one would have cost twice as much.

When cold weather set in, we burnt oil, which cost four times as much as coal; but we were still freezing. So we went back to coal. I told the dear children not to worry, we all make mistakes, and we called the company to take their burner back. We did not mind losing the hundred dollars. But the firm replied that we would still have to pay the balance on the notes.

Shortly thereafter, they took Albert to court to collect the money. Our young couple were not even of age. When we came to court, I noticed that the lawyer for the company was a very sympathetic Jewish man. I went up to him and told him I wanted to have a talk with him, and he said, "All right. Let's go outside."

I said to him, "My boy is a student and does not earn much, but he wanted to surprise me with this burner. You know, my good boy, that the burner is no good. Please have it taken away, give me back the notes, and we'll all be happy."

He smiled, and answered, "Come to my office and we will see about it."

At the office he took the notes from his safe and
handed them to me. When he saw the astonishment on my face, he said, "You look like my mother, you talk like my mother, and you are as fine as my mother. How can I refuse you?" Then he kissed me, and we parted the best of friends.

I ran to Barbara's lawyer with the notes. Barbara and her lawyer — with other lawyers who were in the office — looked at me and said, "Where did you disappear to?"

I told them what had happened, but the lawyer did not believe me, and said, "Tell me the truth. How much did you give him for the notes?"

I said, "I swear, he gave me the notes for nothing, and kissed me besides."

Barbara's lawyer was astonished, and said, "I never heard of such a thing. We'll put in a desk for you, and you can practice law."
In the thirties, the time of the Great Depression, when I was nearing middle age, I became very ill and Sam had to take me to a hospital to be operated on. In those days, people bartered when they lacked the cash. Some paid with merchandise for medical and dental services. We offered our paintings to the hospital, told them to come to our home and take whatever they wanted. I was admitted to the finest hospital, and they put me in a beautiful private room.

I begged to be placed in a ward, saying, "I am a simple woman, of common people, and like to be treated as one." But I was told I deserved the best of everything. I was in bad shape when I entered, and the best surgeon was to operate on me. I told him, "When a doctor makes a mistake, the earth covers it up and it is finished; but when an artist makes a mistake, it remains."

I felt that I had lived such a long time, and I was not afraid to die. I was strong in that way. I was very ill after my operation, and the doctors and nurses had a hard time with me. When my family brought me flowers, I insisted that Sam use them as models for still life pictures, right there in the hospital, so he sat there and painted and we gave the pictures to the doctors. Every night, during visiting hours, people came to my room and we had conversations about art and literature. When I returned home, I felt fine and I renewed my activities in the clubs to which I belonged. But I gradually lost strength again, and became very sick with sciatica. Only people afflicted with this disease can understand what it is really like. I was crippled and in great pain for many months. As
a result of taking drugs to ease this pain, I became a
drug addict for a short time. The doctors in a big
hospital could do no more for me and gave up. How I
wanted to die! But death does not come when you
call it. I was taken some place for baths. I fainted in
the first bath after a few minutes. Gradually I stayed
a little longer each day. I had electric treatments and
a miracle happened — I began to feel better. The first
thing I thought of was to stop the drugs. I had a hard
struggle, but I won.

Some time after my return home, Albert had to go
to Buffalo for his company. He said, "Mother, come
with me. It will do you good." Sam, 1, our girl Esther,
and our youngest son, Fred, started out with him on a
beautiful summer day, looking forward to a short va-
cation. On our way, we ran into a rainstorm. I had
a premonition that something bad was going to hap-
pen, but I said nothing. Early the next morning, in
bright weather, we started out to complete our trip;
and we had a terrible accident. My son’s machine was
smashed. Esther was frightfully injured; her arm was
broken in two places, and her face, nose, and lips
needed many stitches. She remained unconscious for
many days. My heartbroken family went back to
Chicago. I remained with Esther at the hospital in
a small town in Ohio. In the waiting room there, I
picked up a Bible and began to read the story of Job.
Never before had my heart been so close to God as
when I read Job’s lamentations.

Esther had to have plastic surgery performed on her
face no less than four times. As time went by, she
developed a very fine personality, which made one
forget the defect resulting from her accident; she
became a secretary in an office and made a living.

When World War II started with all its horrors, and
our son Fred had been sent to Europe with his regi-
ment, I became restless and depressed. Elderly people
could find work in those days, so I took a job in a factory. That was about ten years ago, and I have learned to be a good sewing machine operator. I still work there, and find, in my old age, satisfaction in being busy.
Our country entered World War II, and the factories worked day and night. Fred was past seventeen and expected to be inducted at eighteen. We had tried to give all our other children music lessons, but they would not practice. Since they were not interested in music, we gave up trying. By the time Fred was of school age, the depression came along and we did not even think of giving him music lessons, but there was a piano in the house. Fred wanted to learn to play it and told his teacher about it. The teacher arranged for him to have lessons at twenty-five cents a week. He began to play nicely, and practiced without being told. Everyone said he was talented. He kept on playing for years and his teachers were glad to teach him free of charge. When he graduated from high school, he was chosen to play at the graduation exercises. He played Rachmaninoff's "Prelude," and he played it beautifully. He received tremendous applause and congratulations on his fine performance.

His high school education finished and his induction into the Army very near, Fred went to work. He and I worked in the same factory, manufacturing pocket books. The Army took him early in the fall of 1942. I saw him go with his friends of the same age. They had been to kindergarten together; now they were soldiers who had to learn how to dig foxholes, carry guns, rifles, and other weapons, and how to kill or be killed. I thought to myself, "This is the little baby whom I used to weigh on the scale every day and watch gain by ounces." I smiled at him, although my heart, knowing of the danger, was full of fear. For what seemed an eternity from then on, I listened to reports of war and battles on the radio.
Fred was sent to Europe and fought with many outfits. He was in Berlin during the final battles. After the Germans and their Fuehrer had lost the war, Fred played the piano with Army bands in many cities of Germany. A year later he came home, big and strong, but saddened because he hated war. He still plays the piano, and studies commercial art.

When will peace return again to this earth? There can be no real happiness as long as our country and the rest of the free world are threatened by powerful enemies.
Several years after World War II, Albert’s eye was hurt by a baseball bat and we went to the clinic to see our old friend, Dr. Zuker. During the war he had been requested by the government to go to France, although he was a man in his fifties. I had not seen him since and looked forward to the meeting. The doctor examined the eye and said, “What a lucky boy! That accident might have been very dangerous!”

Dr. Zuker had aged a lot; his face was deeply lined, and he seemed faded and grouchy, not the man I used to know. When he did not say anything, I, as a woman, began to talk.

“My dear doctor, what is the matter with you? You have changed; you look strange. I am older now. Perhaps I will understand.” I told him that my first husband had died and that I had remarried, and life goes on. I felt sad to look at him; his face had become thin and grayish, his eyes lay deep in their sockets. “Come with me,” he said, “into the next room and you will find small square glasses, like white inkwells. Each one of these squares contains the eye of some person.” It frightened me. “Are you scared?” He continued, “These are reminders of the war. The Germans destroyed with shrapnel the eyes of many boys in our armies. I treated those eyes, but many of them had to be removed. Day and night we worked at the hospitals and tried to repair the damage done to the poor crippled boys. Now I am a sick man myself; my professional knowledge, my ambitions are all fading away.”

The horrors of war had wrecked the spirit of this great man. He had once been to a convention of eye specialists in Holland, and there received great honors.
and recognition. His entire life had been devoted to saving the eyesight of young and old, but here he had a grisly collection of hundreds of dead eyes he had tried to save. I understood his tortured question, "Why?" but I was unable to answer.

I saw him several times after that meeting. He bought some tickets for my organizations from me and told me that he was to be operated on shortly. It was not long afterwards that I read in the paper of his death. Anyone who knew this fine man will never forget him. He, too, was a victim of the war.

Another well-known personality in Chicago was George Harding, a real estate tax collector for many years. He was a millionaire. We knew him as a lover of art. He used to go to Europe and bring back many art treasures and antiques. He lived in a big mansion on the South Side. As a member of the Pallet and Chisel Club and the Academy of Fine Arts, Sam was invited to see the art treasures brought from abroad.

We were at Mr. Harding's place several times. He was a short man, with silvery white hair and rosy cheeks. He was plain, simple, and friendly. Although he had many servants, he served us himself. He had a great respect for artists, and we always had a wonderful time.

We all went down to his cellars and what we saw there made us forget that we lived in Chicago. It took us back to the Dark Ages. There were torture devices of all kinds, coats of armor, knives and swords, old-time weapons for killing, torturing, and destroying. There was nothing that preached to love, to be good, and to obey the Ten Commandments. All objects spoke of war and destruction, and we were glad to go upstairs again. Mr. Harding showed us a large collection of musical instruments, creations of centuries. I remember a walking cane out of which sprang a tiny violin. He touched everything with love and care. In
many big rooms the walls were covered with paintings. There was a canvas of fishermen struggling with huge waves trying to get ashore. His collection of war paintings was also very impressive. There were battlefields covered with dead horses, wagons, and soldiers in torn uniforms, without glamor, carrying wounded young buddies to some hospital, or a dead comrade to rest. Other war pictures showed sick boys who needed a mother or wife to help nurse them back to health. Harding understood a great deal about art. Another canvas I recall was called “A Soup Line,” by Larve, showing hungry people with bony faces and torn clothes holding small tin cans, waiting in line for soup. Still another great painting, by the same artist, was that of a gypsy lying on the sand in the sunlight, nursing naked twins, and we could just feel the milk streaming into their rosy little lips. Harding’s wonderful collection, I am sure, was worth many millions of dollars.

One day we went to attend the celebration of the 75th anniversary of the advancement of the colored people at the Coliseum. They showed all kinds of machinery, agricultural implements, inventions, sculpture, painting, and literature. It was great to see what the colored people had accomplished, the fine works of art created by free men and women who had been slaves or children of slaves, bought and sold like cattle. An orchestra played the finest of music and people came from everywhere to see, admire, and inspire the Negroes to create and advance, to produce things worthwhile, and to work shoulder to shoulder with the other people who strive to achieve a free world for all men, regardless of color, religion, or creed.

The artists of Chicago had a costume ball in one of the biggest hotels. I made a costume which attracted a great deal of attention. It was during the World’s Fair, about 1934, and it was at the time when the
Germans burnt the works of the most famous writers in huge bonfires. My husband painted the head of a big wolf, his sharp red tongue hanging out and his pointed teeth showing. I gathered the photographs of many of those writers and pasted them on my dress, with bright red flaming swastikas burning their books. People crowded around me singing, "Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf?" No prizes were awarded at that ball, but later I won first prize at the "Forwards" ball for my costume.
LABOR LEADERS

Emma Goldman was a dressmaker from Kovno, Russia. She was a very energetic and intellectual girl, and it was due to her inspiration that the needle industry was organized. She was a marvelous speaker. In later years she became the editor of "Mother Earth," a magazine for the working people. She also wrote a book of her life.

She left for Russia after the Bolsheviki came into power. She was disgusted with living in the unjust capitalistic world and went to Uncle Joseph Stalin's paradise. But after living there for some time, she was very disappointed and wanted to return. However, she could not re-enter the United States; she had lost her citizenship and become a woman without a country. Finally, she married an English miner and came to Canada. Before she died, she told her friends her last wish was to be buried in the United States, in the same cemetery with the victims of the Haymarket tragedy. So her body was brought from Canada to the United States, and she now rests peacefully near Lucy Parson, wife of one of the victims. We were asked to the dedication of her stone, and to bring the portraits of Lucy Parson and Ben Reitman. The few remaining comrades who came to the dedication were old, just a small remnant of the once-powerful men and women fighting for real freedom in this country. They wrote a glorious chapter in the history of the working class the world over.

Emma Goldman lived for many years in free union with Ben Reitman, a native American. He was tall, dark, and handsome. He always wore his hair long, and affected a big cowboy-like hat and a black bow tie. He was a fine speaker. In later years he became
a doctor of medicine. People used to call him "Mr. Goldman," but he wanted to be someone in his own right.

Ben Reitman lived the life of a hobo for many years. Many of his friends were in prison; he befriended them and was loved by the underprivileged. He was named the "King of the Hoboes." He visited places of prostitution in the red-light district, studying the lives of the men, or pimps, who together with certain politicians made fortunes out of unfortunate women and girls. He specialized in the dreadful venereal diseases, and when his patients had no money to pay him, he treated them free. He studied and prepared statistics about these diseases.

Dr. Reitman was the author of two books. The first one was called, "The Second Oldest Profession"; his later book was "Sisters of the Road." He was a colorful figure, and lived a Bohemian life. We used to meet him in the artists' colonies and at exhibitions. He often spoke in Bughouse Square, near the Newberry Library, and at the Dill Pickle Club in Chicago, and on summer Sundays in Washington Park. We met him at the Outdoors Art Fair, and became good friends. He used to help us with carrying the paintings, and we rode in his car many times. We also had dinner at his mother's house. He owned many books and works of art. When Dr. Reitman was about sixty years old, he became a diabetic.

Dr. Reitman had a son by his second wife. This son was also tall and handsome, and studied medicine. During World War II, he became a flier and was stationed in Detroit, Michigan.

When Ben Reitman was about sixty-three, he lived with his wife and babies in his mother's cottage on the South Side. One day he felt sick; he laid his big head on his old mother's knees like a child, and passed on forever. He left a few hundred dollars to
observe his death with a good dinner. We were invited to his wife's and mother's home for dinner; and his handsome son, with his young wife, was also present.

Ben Reitman was an interesting, paintable character and Sam asked him to pose for a picture, and he agreed. Sam's portrait of Dr. Reitman was outstanding; a tired wanderer resting some place among the rocks, with his bushy hair, and his famous hat and cane beside him. The painting was a remarkable success in many exhibits, and prints of it appeared in many newspapers and magazines.

A few weeks after Dr. Reitman's death, his son took part in maneuvers in the air over Detroit. He was way up in the clouds when he became sick with spinal meningitis. He brought the plane down to safety, was picked up unconscious, and died that same night. His father had been lucky to die before his beloved son. How could he have survived that loss?

S. Younovsky was for years the editor of the weekly Yiddish newspaper, "The Frie Arbeter Shtime." He was brilliant in his writing and speaking, and he devoted all his life to the betterment of the working class. He came to Chicago once in a while, and was well-known among the radicals. During one of his visits to Chicago he had a very bad attack of arthritis. He could not walk and I was called to spend a day with him. I knew him from my early years in New York. When they called me, I had just come home from the hospital after an operation, and I was thin and puny. While I was with him, our friends brought a tray with good things to eat and drink. Mr. Younovsky put his hands on my shoulders and said to me, "I did not see you for a quarter of a century. Now you are grown up. You learned a lot; you are an interesting woman now."

I replied, "I am sorry, Comrade Younovsky, I cannot return the compliment. You remained the same; you did not grow."
He laughed, and understood that I was joking.

At that time my husband had a one-man exhibit of his paintings. My son, William, came and took us there. Mr. Younovsky liked Sam's work and had Sam paint his portrait. He left for California, where his daughter lived, and shortly afterwards I read that he died of cancer.

Morris Siskind, Lithuanian-born, was a soapbox speaker for the Jewish working people in his younger days. Morris is a plain man, not much on looks, but he possesses such charm that everyone loves him. He was with the "Jewish Daily Forward" for more than half a century, and for years was their Chicago labor editor. Although Morris Siskind is a great grandfather now, he is young in spirit and busy at his desk every day. During his early years in this country, he was a cigar maker. Sam also painted his portrait. We have quite a collection of portraits of people who were active in movements for the betterment of the working people and the progress of society.
EUGENE V. DEBS

When I was learning the cigar trade, Joe and I attended many mass meetings. Samuel Gompers, who organized the Cigar Makers Union, was a brilliant and sincere man. He later became the leader of the American Federation of Labor.

We also heard John Most, a German speaker whose voice erupted like a volcano against the terrors of the capitalistic system. He had only one shirt, we heard, and always had to wait until his wife washed and ironed it.

Whenever the famous Emma Goldman spoke, there were many policemen in the hall, and she was arrested many times. We also attended a meeting at which Alexander Berkman spoke. He had served time for a murder he did not commit.

I always loved to listen to Eugene V. Debs, several times a candidate for the Presidency of the United States on the Socialist Party ticket. In his fine and clear voice, he explained the evils of capitalistic intolerance, and the capitalists' efforts to break the unions and blackmail the workers who belonged to the unions. Debs' thin face and kind, sparkling eyes warmed and inspired his listeners. He was loved by many people as an honest man devoted to his ideals to unite the working people. Later, President Franklin D. Roosevelt spoke almost like Debs and succeeded in achieving many reforms for the working people. Debs was convicted and thrown into prison for demanding many reforms for what have become laws by now. During the First World War, he was in prison for being a pacifist. After World War I, Eugene V. Debs was freed from prison walls, and his devoted friends and followers arranged a celebration and banquet at the Labor
Lyceum. He was then seventy years young (as he said); his kind face was thin and wrinkled, but his smile was young and sweet. The tables were decorated beautifully with flowers; there was a big crowd, all happy to meet again the great friend of labor and the Socialist Party candidate for President. It was a happy evening for many of us. Mr. Debs came around to all of us and kissed us as a dear father. I always felt he was the kindest man who ever lived. A very short time later he died, but the people who knew him could never forget him. As a speaker, a leader, and a friend, in his charm, he was equal to Franklin D. Roosevelt.

But even this great man was shortsighted and could not foresee that a more horrible evil might come out of the ranks of the working people. The leaders in Russia twisted the minds of the working people and brought about a giant dictatorship, headed by gangsters whose methods are so cruel that the capitalistic and democratic countries became as innocent lambs compared to them. Now the capitalistic democracies have to teach the world the blessings of liberty and democracy, freedom of the press and speech, freedom of organized labor, and the right to vote.

Theories of great idealists are wonderful, but in practice they sometimes become tools for unholy, false, and power-hungry leaders who seek power only for themselves and destroy the real ideals. Communism today threatens the entire free world. It dims the thoughts of the people and tolerates shameful crimes to reach the desired goal.

The founder of the real communistic ideal was Michael Bakunin, a Russian anarchist. However, his idea did not materialize in practice. The word “communism” is now meaningless, the fancy words of those ideals have lost their sense; communistic phrases are bluffs and have nothing to do with ideals. It is a perfectly healthy urge to want to improve the lot of people
in all countries, but the communists of today perverted that urge to strengthen the dictator of Russia. It is impossible to understand such logic. Those masses must be crazy, neurotic human beings. As the Germans believed in Hitler as their Messiah, the communists believed in Russia and Uncle Joe Stalin as their Messiah. What a hard task it is to make crazy people think straight!
MEMORIES OF LUCY PARSON

A tragedy, known as the "Haymarket Riot," occurred in Chicago in the year 1886, and the memory of that shameful event can never be wiped out. There was a strike at the Harvester plant; a bomb was thrown and seven policemen were killed. Four innocent men, union leaders, were accused, prosecuted without a fair trial, and hanged. In later years, honest Governor Altgeld reopened the case and it was proved that the four executed men were innocent.

I knew Lucy Parson, the wife of one of those victims. Mr. Parson was white, Lucy was dark. She said she was an Indian, others said she was colored. I knew her as an intellectual and brave human being. She was a fine speaker. When she had grown very old and nearly blind, she lived in a cottage near the tracks on the North Side of Chicago.

Half a century after the tragedy, many old-timers went to the German cemetery in Waldheim to visit the graves of those martyrs. My husband and I thought it a good idea to paint Lucy's portrait, with the grave and the monument in the background, and call the painting, "The Memories of Lucy Parson."

On a very cold Sunday in December, my husband took canvas and paints with him, and we knocked at Lucy's door. Her friend, Mike, opened, and we explained what we wanted. Lucy came to the door, a very unfriendly old woman, and she would not let us in.

"Everybody comes to me for something they want," she complained, "but they are not interested in my life, my loneliness, or poverty. No, you cannot come in"; and she closed the door.

There we stood in the cold wind, disappointed. I
decided to knock again. When the old woman opened, I said, "Lucy, you have a right to be bitter, but it is so cold outside. I am a woman, too. Let us come in to warm ourselves. If you don't want to be painted, we cannot force you, but we came a long way and it is wrong to chase us out into the cold. Please let us in."

I put my cold hand on her cheek. She softened, opened the door, and let us in.

"I am half blind," she said. "I see a little. There is something in you that I like, I'll do what you propose."

I answered, "I have suffered a lot, too. I want to be your friend, and you be mine."

She sat in a rocking chair and Sam made a quick sketch of her. She looked at it closely and liked it.

"All right, I will cooperate. Do you think when I die that my picture will hang some place in some union headquarters, near Eugene V. Debs'? And don't paint me dark."

I told her I would talk to her comrades of the Free Society, and would try to do as she wished.

Lucy told her devoted friend Mike to make tea for her guests; she took out her best dishes and served us. Every Sunday for two months we went to her; and Sam painted a wonderful picture, which was exhibited and highly praised by critics and the press. Each time, we brought her delicious kosher corned beef and salami sandwiches. When the painting was done, she gave us a book about the trial and a letter of appreciation for the painting. When we said good-bye, she cried bitterly and begged us to come often and visit her, and to tell her comrades to do the same.

The poor woman's end was tragic. The following spring, on the first of May, several communists called for her and took her along in their car to march with them in the May Day parade. After that, her old friends left her and no one came to see her any more. The communists had used her for propaganda pur-
poses. Shortly after that, a fire started in the Parson cottage during Mike's absence and Lucy was burned to death. We have her painting, "The Memories of Lucy Parson."
MODERN GREAT MEN
AND MODERN DICTATORS

When in 1905 the revolution in Russia by organized revolutionists and strikes failed to reform that country, there appeared at the court of the czar and czarina, a big, tall man. He looked like a mystic and declared that he could perform great miracles. He also promised to cure their sick young son, the czarevitch. The czar, the father of all Russia, trusted this man, and soon he had the confidence of the czar's entire family and of the Russian people. His influence was so strong that he became the boss of Russia. His name was Rasputin; he said he was a priest, and he became the guide and adviser of Nikolai the Second.

Russia had been defeated in her war with Japan, and there were frequent revolutionary outbreaks. Rasputin and his “Black Hundred,” as they were called, made use of the popular slogan, “Death to the Jews and Save Russia.” People who were disgusted with the government listened to Rasputin's command and made horrible pogroms on the Jewish people. Thus, by killing and robbing the Jews, Rasputin diverted attention from other evils and suppressed further revolutions.

World War I started. Bandits of all kinds routed the Jews everywhere in Russia. Kerensky's government, which tried to make Russia a free republic, was crushed by the Bolsheviks under the leadership of Lenin, Trotsky and Stalin. Rasputin and the czar's entire family were killed. Later. Lenin died a natural death, they said. Trotsky escaped to Mexico, where he was later murdered. The resting place of Lenin's body became a holy shrine in the Kremlin.

After Germany lost the First World War, a rather funny-looking man with a little black mustache, a lock of hair over his forehead, and eyes like sharp points of
steel appeared in that country. His name was Adolph Hitler. When he spoke, his whole body twitched with emotion. While in prison for political activities, he wrote a book, "Mein Kampf." No one took the book seriously, but the book became the bible for millions of Germans who believed that they were a super race destined to conquer the world. Hitler told them to destroy and burn all the books of the best modern writers with their nonsense of morals and laws. He used the slogan Rasputin had used, "Kill the Jews and Save Germany!"

The German Fuehrer, who wanted to become an artist without sweat or talent, became a black magic artist. Instead of brushes, he used rifles and swords and fire and smoke for paints. Instead of creating, he destroyed, and became a wholesale killer; his canvas was all of Europe.

Through his assistant, Von Ribbentrop, the black magic master artist signed a treaty in Russia with Molotov, assistant to the Russian dictator, Stalin. There was a great celebration; they walked on red plush carpets and drank vodka. That unholy deal strengthened the hand of Hitler and started a full scale new war. World War II. First they blasted Poland with airplanes; it was a colossal picture painted with blood and tears; in the foreground and background, there were great masses of homeless and dying people.

England tried to appease those maniacs. But Hitler arranged to have a fifth column in every country, which spread lies and false propaganda. The Germans were victorious in every country into which they marched. They had taken Czechoslovakia, destroyed Poland; their armies marched into France. Through the French fifth column they were soon in Paris. It was easy for them. for the fifth column Frenchmen opened the gates for the Nazis and the Fuehrer of Germany danced at Napoleon's grave.

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The super race built gas chambers, crematories, and concentration camps, and in their constantly operating huge ovens, millions of Jews and other people perished. The Germans listened to their Fuehrer and destroyed justice and God. Books of the best and most famous writers were piled into large heaps, and fiery flaming tongues changed them into ashes.

Then the victorious Germans, drunk and strong with confidence, marched and goose-stepped with their iron heels into the land of their partner, Joseph Stalin. Many Russian cities were burnt and destroyed; many people were killed or made homeless. Russia became an ally of the free democracies; all the armies fought together, equipped mostly with American ammunition, clothes, and food. Years of fighting brought the destruction of Germany and the black magic artist Hitler, who died of poison which he himself took in his underground quarters. What a rat!

All the countries who were in on the struggle, although victorious, failed to win the peace. Most of the countries of the world organized the United Nations to be protected from aggressors in the future. But they have not succeeded as yet to bring peace to the world. Hitler's former partner, Joseph Stalin, double-crossed his allies, the free countries, and war is still going on.

Mussolini, the "Duce" of Italy, was short, strong, and of dark complexion. He had a big forehead and a wide chin; his voice was strong with confidence in himself. In his speeches, he used such terms as "liberator" and "socialist," but in reality he was the Fascist dictator of the Italian Black Shirts. The Italians are peace-loving and hard-working people who believe in God. There was no hatred in Italy; even the Jews had equal rights, and Italians never persecuted other people. Hitler was at first a pupil of il Duce, but later, when Hitler became victorious, Mussolini became his
pupil and began to walk in his footsteps. Il Duce covered his broad chest with glittering medals, and with his Black Shirt army marched into France, already bleeding under Hitler. Hitler demanded of Mussolini that he destroy the Jews in Italy, but the Duce did not dare do that, even during the war. The Italian people were good to the Jews.

Mussolini's son, a flier, said it was a wonderful sight and a beautiful scene to see the destruction of cities and people below. This son was killed, and Mussolini himself was butchered by his own people, who even spat on his dead body.

The Arabian mufti, who was always befriended by dictators and also by some leaders of the free countries, intrigued and schemed to betray his own people. He made a deal in oil, a valuable commodity for all the world. The crooked mufti made plans to destroy the Jews of Palestine. He gathered his bandits, who came with weapons and ammunition to kill and rob the Jews and chase them into the sea. He used the same old slogan, "Kill the Jews and Save Arabia!" What kind of magic is there in that slogan that people understand it in many languages? Doctrines of destruction are cruel and false and dangerous for the entire world. For many years, the mufti was appeased. Thank God, the Israeli army defeated the foxy mufti!

Japanese warlords attacked the United States; we had to battle for years, and many of our young men lost their lives in World War II.

Franklin D. Roosevelt was a good man. He came of an aristocratic family but he understood the problems of the working class and the poor. He pulled our country out of a terrible depression. He was foresighted, and aroused the world with his glorious voice of wisdom and courage: "We have nothing to fear but fear itself": "the more men will earn, the more they will buy"; "more will be produced and we will secure
prosperity.” His words encouraged all freedom-loving people the world over. He was crippled, wore steel braces on his legs, could not walk very well by himself, but he was a giant, a thinker, a leader in the struggle to crush the military machine of Germany and Japan. Like a brave captain, he brought his ship to the shore and died.

Winston Churchill of Great Britain also came from an aristocratic family. He is blessed with wisdom and intelligence, a great orator and writer. During World War II, when London, Coventry, and other cities were blasted by German airplanes and the people of Britain were fighting for their lives, Winston Churchill’s voice spoke of “blood, sweat, and tears.” “We will fight on the beaches, in the streets, and in the homes to free the world,” he stated, and he inspired the people of Britain and other free countries. He lived to enjoy the victory of the war, but not yet the victory of peace.

I wonder why the voice of Churchill was still in 1933, when Hitler so brutally attacked the Jews in Germany.

Dr. Theodore Herzl was the son of a fine Jewish family in Vienna. He was foresighted enough to see that the Jewish problem could be solved only by having the Jews return to their old homeland in Palestine. Dr. Herzl was the founder of the modern Zionist movement, which took roots and sprouted all over the world. This Jewish prophet died young, but his dream came true after fifty years. His bones were brought to rest in the free Jewish state of Israel. His prophecy was right; Israel was the last stop for the European Jews.

How often have the cries of the Jewish people been like an echo in the desert! All the great men of the world were still when the mufti organized pogroms on the Jewish colonists in Palestine in 1929. Five hundred Jews were killed then, but the free countries practiced appeasement and dealt with the mufti, and arranged
for his escape. He started a war on Israel, and free countries supplied him with ammunition. How the world needed another Emile Zola to cry out, “J’accuse!”

Millions of people in Russia are slave laborers in Siberia. People there are compelled to sign confessions of crimes, treason, or spying they did not commit. All the opponents of Stalin were killed off long ago.

Mahatma Gandhi was also one of the great men of our times. He was small in size, nourished on goat’s milk, and his linen clothes were woven by himself. He was born of an aristocratic family in the great country of India, which was then a colony of Great Britain. Although Gandhi was small and toothless, he was a man of great wisdom and led his country of hundreds of millions of people to victory. It became an independent country without fighting or bloodshed. What a wonderful achievement!

But the voice of this great man also was still when Hitler openly spoke of his plans of destruction and of conquering the world for Germany. Emile Zola aroused the world to clear one Jew. But there was no one to speak for millions of people in terrible danger.
LEADERS OF THE ZIONIST MOVEMENT
IN CHICAGO

Dr. David Rebelsky, who was one of the leaders of the Histadruth Labor Organization for Palestine, was the most capable organizer of the Jewish people. He worked for many years toward the upbuilding of the state of Israel. In all kinds of weather, he went to all organizations to explain the necessity for the Zionist movement.

Dr. Mordechai Dolnick, one of the leaders of the Paole Zion and the National Workers’ Alliance organizations, inspired men and women with his teaching at the Seminar about the prophets.

Dr. Rubin Hurvitz was also a teacher at the Seminar. He taught literature and was an active leader in the Paole Zion group.

Chicago was fortunate to have a man of great wisdom in its midst who was an orator equal to the prophets of the ancient times. I refer to the rabbi of Anshe Emet Synagogue, Dr. Solomon Goldman, who died recently. He had been a leader and inspiration to the Zionists for many years. He was a middle-sized man, with silvery white hair and a sincere, kind face. His golden voice had inspired great masses of people who learned from him and enjoyed his teachings. Year after year, young and old came and listened eagerly to this great rabbi’s speeches. He was acclaimed by members of all religions, as well as by radicals. Jews and Christians looked up to him for hope of a better world.

We had listened to Dr. Goldman for many years, always finding him new and interesting, but humble and simple. In our protest marches against the horrors
of Hitlerism and later, against England for supplying weapons to the Arabs against the Jews in Palestine, he marched with all of us plain little women and men of Jewish faith, protesting with us against the schemes of our enemies to destroy our people.
When the reproductions of Sam's painting, "A Letter to Mother," were completed, we celebrated by going to the opera. Madame Rosa Raisa sang magnificently the role of "The Jewess," by Halevi. How we enjoyed her singing! We wrote her a letter expressing our pleasure at her beautiful singing and sent her a reproduction as a gift. Sam wrote that she inspired him and that he would love to paint her in the role of "The Jewess."

Rosa Raisa answered, saying that she loved his gift, "A Letter to Mother," and when she had time, she would pose for him wearing the same costume she wore in the opera.

Several months later she called for Sam to come. He and I came to the hotel where she lived, and while Sam worked several days for short periods, I read to Madame Raisa in Yiddish. She was friendly, plain, and simple with us. She is also a Russian-Jewish woman, very sweet and intelligent. She told us that her father sang beautifully. She complimented me, a simple little working woman, on my great love for music, literature, and art.

I told her, "We are supposed to understand the voice of God. Music is the language of the angels which streams through the souls of mortal human beings."

Sam made a painting of "The Jewess," and it was shown at many exhibits.

Madame Rosa Raisa once said, "When an artist, like a painter or sculptor, creates a work of art, it lives a long time, perhaps for ages; but when a singer's popularity fades away, she is quickly forgotten."

She treated us once with tickets to the opera and invited us into her taxi. I carried her flowers.
WHAT A THRILL TO MEET ALBERT AND FAMILY!

Albert was born when we lived in the shack in back of our little store in Oak Park. Through the cracks in the boards we could see the sky, but little Albert was strong and healthy, and a sturdy child. The work in school was easy for him; he was nicknamed the "Science Shark." Now he is near middle age, tall and handsome, honest and reliable, a university graduate, with a degree of master of science, very well qualified to be the assistant supervisor of the laboratories in a chemical plant in New York City.

I had started my journey around Christmas time, which comes about the same time as the Jewish holiday, Chanukah. It was also Albert and Barbara's twentieth wedding anniversary. They live in Rockville Center, in their own home.

I was overwhelmed with joy when they met me at the station. The whole world suddenly smiled at me. I felt shrunken and faded, and thought I'd better just listen and learn from them. I was in the front seat with Albert; Barbara had stayed at home to prepare a good dinner. We drove through New York City, Long Island, along many highways, until we reached their home. It was a white house, with clinging vines and surrounded by bushes, with a large maple tree in the yard. The house is equipped with all modern conveniences to make a happy home complete.

After dinner I took out the Chanukah, Christmas, and anniversary gifts. The biggest surprise was for Barbara. I had been wanting for twenty years to give her a fine gift; now I presented her with a diamond ring. She was delighted. I had a lump in my throat.
and tears in my eyes. I was so happy that I could finally afford it. It was worth all the years of struggle to see the joy that surrounded me. Somehow, I thought of "The Book of Knowledge" which we had bought when our children were small. It was well-worn, a sign that it had been well used. This book was the first open door to wisdom for our new generation.

On Christmas Eve, Iris and Alice, my granddaughters, danced beautifully and read short poems which they had written as schoolwork. When they retired upstairs to their own bedrooms and bade us good night, I wiped away a tear of sheer happiness. Barbara, Albert, and I sat near the flaming logs of the fireplace. Albert put on his glasses and opened a thick book of great poems. He read some poems of Byron, Oscar Wilde, Gray, and others, and I wished the evening would never end.

But while I was listening, I thought bitterly, deep down in my heart, "Why can't civilized people, who have the blessings of education, art, music, and industry, achieve what we desire so much all over the world, a life of peace?"

It seemed that instead of being able to enjoy what nature and science offer, intelligent people are compelled to dig foxholes into which they crawl, sometimes to die there like rats. They have to study how to be master killers in the water, on the ground, and in the air; learn how to destroy human life, countries, and cities, and make other human beings homeless. It all seems like the work of Satan. Our eternal desire for peace remains forever unfulfilled. Recently, a war was raging in Korea, and the hope for peace is like a tiny spark in the faraway distance.
I GO VISITING, FIRST TO SISTER ROSE

More than forty years had passed and I was seized with a great desire to visit my young sister Rose and get acquainted with her family. They lived in Boston. I left behind my shop and the routine housework, and my husband Sam. I took with me only a small suitcase, as I did so many years ago, but what a difference! Now I had my own dear family and a home which I had struggled so many years to achieve. Although advanced in age, I felt at ease and lighthearted, looking forward to a wonderful holiday, a well-deserved vacation. My journey started around Christmas time, and I would have felt perfectly happy had not the sadness about the war in Korea clouded my mood.

All the women in my sister's family worked for the Red Cross and did everything possible to help achieve victory. They all understood the great struggle of the Jews and the necessity of a homeland in Israel. How happy I was to be among this family who treated me with so much love and respect! My soul was filled with joy at the thought how my sister had come to this country, married, raised children; and all of them were now good and fortunate American Jews.

My beloved brother Chaim had established himself in the small town of Taunton, Mass. He had become a butcher, true to my prediction in Lida, and he made good on the first job he found in America. His ambition and spirit of enterprise were like those of my sister Feigel; aside from his good looks, he was capable and willing, and always a hard worker. The daughter of his boss was of the same type; they married, worked together, and became the most prosperous in the family. But they remained simple and kindhearted. In
that way, too, Chaim and his wife Becky followed in our sister Feigel’s footsteps. Their two daughters, Frances and Beverly, are college graduates. Frances is married to Philip Silver, an engineer and businessman; Beverly to Eddie Kuperstein, a lawyer. There are three grandchildren. Albert, their only son, was an officer in the Army, and is a university graduate and a doctor of music from Columbia University.

Chaim, an American citizen for many years, is thankful and proud to live in the United States, where he received everything in the fullest measure. He is president of the Zionist movement in Taunton, an active member in the B’nai B’rith and other organizations. He came here from Russia empty-handed, and progressed in the years that followed; he and his wife express their gratitude by working for and giving to the Red Cross and numerous other welfare organizations. They give with their hearts, souls, and wide open pocketbook.

Strange as it seems, my baby brother was now a man of over sixty, and he had achieved all his heart could desire. Not long before, Chaim and his wife had come home from a visit to Israel, the new independent Jewish state, where they had visited the other members of our family. As is his custom, Chaim had been most generous with gifts to his relatives in Israel. I saw the colored movies he brought home from his trip. My heart rejoiced at his good fortune. We had been such little people in Lida, lower than grass. Now we were transplanted, branching out, growing as normal Americans. My heart was full of gratitude. It was a glorious feeling to “belong” here, and, in my mind, I kissed the soil of the United States.

Feigel’s older son, Shaye Komenov, and his wife and two daughters are living happily in Haifa, Israel. He devoted almost all of his life to the development of his new country; he worked as a builder, and also
in the Histadruth (Zionist labor movement). The older daughter, about seventeen, a very brilliant girl, is an officer in the Israeli army. His wife works with him, side by side.

His younger brother, Granum, is highly educated, a lawyer by profession. He speaks seven languages. They have a boy, Godian, and a baby girl Zipporah, named after her grandmother, Feigel. Zipporah is the Hebrew word for "bird," while Feigel is the Yiddish word.

Our brother Moshe and his two children were killed with millions of other Jews. His wife, Deborah, and daughters Kale and Esther were in Siberia, and wandered for seven years until they came to the island of Cyprus. Finally they reached Israel. During their wandering the girls met nice young men, whom they married. They have little children and are happy to live in a free Jewish homeland. All are working. When Chaim and Becky came to visit them, my good brother equipped the homes of his relations with electric refrigerators, washing machines, and many other useful and necessary articles.
Christmas Day in New York was beautiful. The snow fell on trees, bushes, and rooftops. Everything was covered with a mantle of white, and the highways were ribbons of white. Albert drove me to New York to visit my childhood friend, Rose Leader, from Lida, a lovely woman of my own age. I remembered the time I lived with her and her husband, Clarence, in their little home. My son William was born at that time. It was a rather sad visit, because I found her seriously ill in the hospital. Her golden hair had changed to white, her face was faded and pale; but her smile was warmer and sweeter than ever before.

Her husband was attending and watching her at Montefiore Hospital. My pen is too weak to describe our meeting at the hospital. Her daughter had told her of my coming, and she was impatient and fearful that I might not come after all. But when she saw me, she became full of sunshine and hope. Several other friends from Lida came to her hospital room, all old folks now, but we pushed aside the memories of many troubled years and had a happy reunion right there near a very sick person. We gave her hope and courage to look for a speedy recovery.

The next day Barbara, Iris, and Alice went to New York with me to visit another childhood friend, Dr. Sarah Kellman. When her father had left Lida for the United States, her mother had to support her many children by herself. They lived in a big house which, luckily, had a big, built-in oven. Mrs. Kellman started to bake rye bread, chaleh, and pumpernickel, the most delicious bread in all Lida. At night she baked; in the daytime she had a stand in the market place and sold her goods to support her family. On Friday all her
customers brought their Sabbath food, cooked on Friday, to keep hot in her oven.

This brave handsome blond woman wanted her children to be educated. So she sent them to cheder to learn Hebrew, Yiddish, and Russian. When Sarah, the oldest, was fifteen, the whole family came to the United States to their husband and father.

Sarah started working in a dress shop and attended night school. Later she attended high school and university. She has been famous for many years as a good doctor of medicine and a psychiatrist. Her office has the most modern equipment, and her extensive library has everything of interest to doctor and patient. She owns a lovely, old-fashioned place, and her dwelling upstairs has beautiful things of artistic and antique value. Sarah’s maid prepared blintzes and other delicious food for us. Dr. Kellman achieved her outstanding success by hard work. She is planning to visit the state of Israel in the near future.
THE SPIRITS OF THE MADONNAS

At night my weary head rests on my trousseau pillow, which I have always cherished, and in my peaceful slumbers I often seem to feel the gentle touch of my devoted mother's soft hands. Her fingers plucked the feathers for these pillows night after night, year after year, to produce a most important item for the daughters: feather beds and feather pillows for their trousseaux. The job was faithfully and well done by our three simple women of three generations: Grandma Gitl, Mother Rachel, and Sister Feigel.

To me they are unforgettable. Perhaps their souls are now whiter than snow, crystallized and "koshered," washed in blood and tears, but their spirits remained with me forever. The dreams of my childhood materialized, and I traveled far into the big free world. It was a rough, long journey, but my heart and soul remained with my simple little women of the past.

Often I see them distinctly sitting at the big round table during the long and cold winter night, knitting stockings with colorful yarns or plucking feathers with quickly moving fingers for the girls' trousseaux. Through the frosty bluish windowpanes of our home, one could see millions of stars in the deep blue sky, the Milky Way, the moonlight, and the snowy rooftops trimmed with pale, soft lights and shadows.

While our women were working on the future trousseaux, they told us stories and legends from the Bible about Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, and Jacob and Rachel.

In order to marry Rachel, Jacob worked for her father, Lavan, for seven years; but his father-in-law
tricked Jacob, veiled his older daughter Leah, and had Jacob marry her instead of Rachel. But Jacob did not give up; he worked for another seven years and finally married his sweetheart, Rachel. She bore him two sons, Joseph and Benjamin. Rachel died young while on a journey, and Jacob buried her on a lonely road. Her tombstone still stands in Israel, for many centuries a holy shrine for the Jewish people. Rachel is considered by the Jews a holy mother, or madonna. For ages, pilgrims of the Jewish faith have been praying and shedding tears at her lonely grave.

When Joseph, the son of Jacob and Rachel, disappeared, Jacob mourned for him until he miraculously found him again in Egypt.

We children were always thrilled when we heard the story of Joseph and his brethren; how the jealous brothers threw Joseph into a pit and later sold him as a slave to some wandering Egyptians; how, during the years of famine, the brothers came to Egypt to buy food; how Joseph recognized them and helped them, although they had been so cruel to him; and how he was finally united with his father and made the whole family happy.

We also enjoyed the brilliant, true story of the king of Persia and his queen, Esther, and her Uncle Mordecai. King Ahasuerus had a high official, Haman, an evil man, who planned to destroy all the Jews. But Queen Esther and Mordecai opened the king’s eyes so he understood the evil that was menacing his country. Haman was like Hitler and the mufti of our times, but instead of destroying the Jews, Haman and all his sons were hanged on the gallows. Our gayest holiday, Purim, commemorates this event for the Jews.

Grandmother and Sister Feigel worked all night to bake delicious Haman taschen and other good things to celebrate the great Purim festival, as did the Jews the
world over. Everybody gives and receives gifts. In the synagogue the children slug Haman every Purim with special toys for this occasion. Grandma said when the Messiah came to redeem the Jews, other holidays might be forgotten, but Purim would remain forever.

We were sad when we heard the tragic story of Samson and Delilah. Samson was a big, handsome and very powerful man. The source of his mighty strength lay in his long hair. It was easy for him to battle even the lion. But the giant Samson was tricked by his pretty Philistine sweetheart, who discovered the secret of his strength. While he lay asleep, she cut his locks and he lost his strength. The Philistines gouged out his eyes and threw him into prison. Later, when they brought Samson to their temple to make fun of him, his strength returned and he knocked down the pillars with his bare hands and brought down the big structure, killing himself and many of the assembled Philistines. Of all the stories, this one made us shiver and gave us goose pimples; but it sounded interesting and beautiful when Grandma told it to us.

How we loved the story of David and Goliath! Goliath was a giant warrior, and he and his gang wanted to destroy the Jews and conquer their land. In Judea, there lived a young shepherd boy, David. He was very musical; the legend says that he invented the harp. But he also was very brave and clever, and killed the giant Goliath with a small stone from his slingshot. David grew to manhood and was well liked in Judea, and finally became king.

David loved his neighbor's wife, Bathsheba, and when her husband, through some scheme of David's, was killed in the war, the king married the widow. Their first born son died, and they were terribly distressed because they knew God had punished them for their sin. David was deeply repentant, and created songs of sadness in the Psalms, the most beautiful
songs ever written. Their second son was Solomon, who later became king.

How eager we were to learn about the wisdom of the Jewish King Solomon — especially his wise decision in a quarrel between two women over a baby! Each of the women claimed to be the real mother of the child. When the wise king ordered the baby to be cut in half, one of the women screamed loudly, "Stop, don’t cut my baby! Give it to her. Let her have it. Let the baby live!" King Solomon said, "The screaming woman is the real mother; the baby belongs to her!" Grandma Gitl and Mother Rachel shed tears over such a clever decision. But they could not understand why a wise man like King Solomon had to marry a thousand wives before he found out that it is hard to find a good one. Weren’t the first few examples enough for him to find out? Our single women were puzzled about that.

The same flame of the kerosene lamp lit up the faces above the fleecy white piles of goose feathers, and the smiles of three beloved women of my family still linger in my memory. I still hear them singing love songs of long ago, until the flame becomes dimmer, smaller, and finally dies completely. Those women were the real earthly and heavenly madonnas, who taught us decency, purity, and culture, warned us of the temptations of youth, and not to sneer at principles. They enriched our lives with the value of music, literature, and art, and taught us to seek the company of cultured people.
THE URGE TO WRITE

Two brothers of mine possessed an urge for writing. Brother Meyer, a retired businessman, read a lot and he tried to write. Several short stories of his were published in the Jewish Daily Forward of New York City. One of his short stories received a prize.

My younger brother, Moshe, in Lida, wrote for the local newspaper before Hitler came into power.

During the struggles of my long life, reading was a necessity to me, and the urge to write also came to me. My first published article was about the unholy Stalin-Hitler pact, and during the bloody years of war, when the black magic artist spread evil and destruction over Europe, a poem and articles of mine were published in several Jewish papers.
A MOTHER'S MESSAGE

My dream boy came to me in Springtime,
When floating clouds through rainbows spray;
Together with him came faith and sunshine,
Fulfilled my songs with love and prayer.

Again my soul fluttered with gladness,
Tender and peaceful breezes waved the air.
It's different now — a time of bloodshed, madness;
We're compelled to slaughter in despair.

Today — souls are trembling in fear and sorrow,
Chained, bleeding masses, innocent as you and me.
No sacrifice too great to achieve a better tomorrow,
To restore safety and freedom on land and sea.
ISRAEL AND SATAN

Again the Holy Land in flames, besieged by Satan’s kingdom,
Where evils are spreading death and fear.
But God has gifted Israel;
  prophets’ commandments and wisdom
Perhaps will achieve and formulate thoughts to clear.
The evil shall vanish in bloodstreams that flows
And Prophets’ predictions — swords shall melt into plows!
Always Israel’s in battle to restore civilization anew.
Only the purest of mankind protect the land and life of the Jew.
THE REQUEST OF A JEWESS

When I am lonely, depressed, and speechless,
Eagerly awaiting my journey's end,
Although our world is tragic, cruel, and heartless,
I still have you, my son and friend.

My gift for you is eternal, throughout the ages treasured;
It contains most precious gems for you;
Our Prophets' teachings, pure-scaled and measured,
You are trustworthy—cherish them as a conscientious Jew.

USELESS

Food is useless to those who lack a stomach,
Loveless hearts still when others break.
Minds are useless if false and thoughtless thinking;
Souls unconscientious are deep in dreggels sinking.
A seeing eye is blind for one who sheds no tear;
Wicked, such strong and mighty — cowardly in fear.
The seasons of my life passed, and the end of my years may not be far off. My journey was hard, uncertain, and long, but I always looked toward the far-distant horizon. Now, being an old woman, my mind wanders back to the past of long ago. When youth is blazing bright, we are full of illusions. We dream of faraway lands which are fascinating. We hustle to provide for the present and the future. We follow our natural instincts to love. We thrill to be mated and build a human nest. How deeply satisfying it is for a woman to give birth to little ones, our own flesh and blood, to rock the cradle! By and by we learn that life is full of hardships, struggles, and dangers, the uncertainties of the tomorrow, and war; but when you are young, your body and spirit are buoyant and you feel able to leap the hurdles in your way. To me, the birth of a child was so sweet and divine an event that I was able to push aside the heavy bundle of sickness and insecurity and to carry on with courage.

Now that I am old, I feel relieved. I think only of the past and of today; the doubt of tomorrow is off my shoulders, and I feel at ease. It is no tragedy to become old. I am glad my goal is reached, and I am prepared to meet whatever will come. I merely wish to be strong enough to face it. My job is done. What is the balance of my achievements?

Forty years have passed since I came to Chicago from New York on a rainy Passover night, standing alone in the railway station with my precious six-week-old baby, William, in my arms.

William is now a handsome, middle-aged man, hon-
est and reliable, with a master of science degree. He is the manager of a plant and a successful man. His charming wife, Sadie, is a schoolteacher, a fine woman, good to everybody, and all like her. They have their own house, with car and garage, and their yard is full of flowers, blooming bushes, and trees. Their rooms are handsomely furnished; there is nourishment for body and soul in their house. Their only daughter, Judy, is beautiful, well-mannered, with an excellent record in school. She was valedictorian at her grammar school graduation.

Our only daughter, Esther, and her husband, Wally, are fine and friendly people. They are working and enjoying the blessings of our country. They have a sweet baby girl named Deborah Jo.

Our son Fred is a talented boy who studied commercial art and the piano, served our country during World War II, and is making his way in the world.

When I came back from my trip to my home with its green plants, to my husband, sons, daughter, and granddaughter, they all received me with love. How happy I was to be back in my home town, Chicago!

Sam is getting old, but he still works and is busy with his painting. Our walls are covered with pictures created by him. Some of their reproductions hang in public libraries and many institutions. We will always remember the thrill when his work was accepted by juries for prominent exhibitions. How greatly our life has been enriched by art! We enjoy having the portraits of our many friends who posed for Sam; some have left this tragic world, but on canvas they are still with us.

How I love our beautiful Chicago, the blue waters of Lake Michigan, and our many fine parks! Chicago has museums and public libraries, and monuments to great people. It has Buckingham Fountain and the band shell in Grant Park near the lake, where the
finest of concerts are presented in the summertime. What treasures are housed in the Chicago Art Institute, the Museum of Natural History, the Museum of Science and Industry, and the Planetarium and the zoos! There are also many great medical centers and universities.

Everyone in the United States can travel all over the country without being asked for a passport. We are not afraid of the police. No one will knock at our door in the middle of the night and take us away to disappear forever.

Election Day is like a holiday. Our whole family votes, and we go to the polls knowing and choosing our representatives. When we become dissatisfied with our officials, we change them at the following election. We can say what we want, and tell our representatives what we need. Every individual is entitled to justice. Our constitution is a holy document, written by some of the wisest men who ever lived.

On the Fourth of July, Independence Day, people of all races and colors go picnicking in the parks with their families. It is a peaceful sort of celebration.

How we love Thanksgiving, the traditional holiday when families and friends enjoy the turkey dinner and remember the trials of the pilgrims.

On Memorial Day we visit the graves of our beloved dead. They are gone, but not forgotten, and we place flowers on their graves. But we will never know the graves of our dear ones in Europe, who were killed by black-hearted scoundrels. Our family there has vanished, but here we are able to live and prosper.

There is no place in all the world where the people celebrate Christmas and New Year as they do here, with gifts for everyone. Americans are lavish and generous in their giving.

We have strong labor unions, and union representatives in Washington. All of us are paying taxes to
preserve our liberties and to safeguard our homeland from brutal dictators.

Throughout all the seasons of the year, I love Chicago, even the smoke belching from the chimneys of its factories, and the noise of its trains; its bridges, skyscrapers; the wind, rain, and snow; but above all, I love our freedom.

We, the Jews of the United States and all over the world, will always remember that the United States, headed by President Harry S. Truman, was the first country to recognize the new Jewish state of Israel, and to sponsor its admittance to the United Nations. Joseph Stalin also agreed to give Israel recognition. Deep is my love for our country, America. I shall never understand how anybody can live here without cherishing it. It must be a lack of common sense, or a lack of education. When Dr. Chaim Weizmann, the well-known scientist and president of Israel, and his wife, Dr. Vera, were guests at the White House, and the blue and white flag with the Star of David was waving in Washington, our hearts were overflowing with gratitude for all the things the United States had done for us. We felt a joy almost as if the Messiah had arrived. A few short years later, it seems Stalin and his gang were disappointed because the small state of Israel was a democracy, and the Jewish people know well the evils of a dictatorship. Where there is no freedom, there is persecution and darkness surrounded by an iron curtain and slavery. So the Russians’ intrigues are like the Nazis’, or fascists’, and the world is tangled in war to defend democracy and freedom against the horrible dictators whose plans are destruction of free countries. Little Israel struggles now with such strong enemies, together with great democratic countries such as the United States.

I am working in a shop with a silent but noisy partner, my sewing machine; and the working people, the
foreman, the bosses are my friends, whom I love. The
noise of the machine does not stop me from singing
and thinking.

When I reach the last stop of my journey, I hope to
be strong in spite of bodily weakness; strong enough
not to be frightened, but to welcome and trust the
mysterious visitor, the prompt and experienced mes-
senger from Father Time, who, under his wings, will
carry away the little body of Yecheved, the fifth child
of Israel Joseph and Rachel from Lida and Luptz, and
who will place her tenderly in the care of our eternally
faithful, good, and gentle Mother Earth, to rest in
peaceful slumber. Even then my soul will sing forever-
more “Hatikvah,” the song of hope, to Israel, and to
my deeply beloved adopted country, “the land of the
free and the home of the brave,” a song of gratitude.
PEARL-FISHING

I became jobless at the age of sixty-eight, not because my speed slowed down, my work was no longer satisfactory, or my employers disliked me. Our shop was packed with beautiful merchandise, but even our experienced salesmen could not sell it.

I began to work at my job when my two bosses, partners, opened their factory and I happened to be their first worker.

Both of my bosses, the foreman, and the working people have been my friends for many years. I enjoyed working there; I considered the shop as my second home.

I cherished my silent, noisy partner, my machine, which I could take apart to clean and oil every morning.

I was happy and proud of my honest check every week, and with the bonus and party at Christmas. I knew that sometime a change would come; I was ready to face it, but when it happened I could not take it.

All of a sudden our rent and telephone bills were raised; instead of a nickel a call to pay, a silver dime. The streetcars and busses raised their fare. Dentistry, medical care, food, and clothing went way up in their cost. The working people demanded more pay to be able to reach the high prices.

Even with their higher wages, their buying power stopped. The storekeepers' stocks remained on the shelves, and the store owners stopped buying goods from the factories. Naturally, workers were laid off, first the old folks, and I among them.

I was the same woman as before, yet not the same. Everything about my routine changed. Something whispered in me, "Never again will you rush with your lunch to the bus early in the morning. Take it easy; sleep late; it's time for you to rest."
My knees wobbled when I came for my last check. Politely, one of my employers told me to take a vacation, which I deserved, he said. His eyes were sad. My bosses remembered the many thousands of pieces of leather merchandise they had sold from the samples that I had made.

He nodded his head and said, "A recession, you know." My boss tried to make it easier for me, and he promised to call me as soon as any orders for goods would come in. How well I remembered previous recessions and depressions!

Long days, weeks, and months passed as I waited patiently for a hopeful, precious phone call, but none came yet. I got tired of reading, was bored with listening to the vulgar, silly love songs on the radio. I was disgusted with the political graft scandals, and the meaningless phrases of the diplomats at the conferences about achieving a simple peace for our sick and tired world.

At an old age, to lose a job gives a person a feeling of being unwelcome and useless to everybody, including oneself. Retreat, pessimism, escorted by funeral marches, is the goal.

What next? Only empty dreams of long ago. During sleepless daydreaming, I was in the depths of the ocean away on the bottom, swimming through wonderful plants, leaves, and natural gadgets of marvelous designs that I was meeting for the first time during my long life.

I saw that I was one of the pearl-fishers, searching for artistic substances; just like millions of stars in the endless universe, there were so many varieties of fish in the depths of the ocean. I imagined that the big, monstrous fish were luring, chasing, and swallowing the small ones, just like the people on the surface of the earth.

Fish are also smart and logical. They understand
their struggle for existence. They are free creatures without bills or recessions. Why should they know about depressions? Lucky fish.

My mind cleared immediately — just the job for me, to work, to become a pearl-fisher, at the age of sixty-eight. Just the right age.

When I told my friends about my new job, I found they laughed at me. Perhaps they thought my mind was feeble, but I knew my thoughts had never before been more sane.

My impulse chased me out of my house on a cold winter morning, the sidewalks and roof-tops covered with glittering snow. Sunlight and shadows beautified the streets, and I entered the nearest school for children.

"What do you wish, little lady?" asked the principal of the school.

"Dear sir," I replied, "will you please advise me where I can find the right place for pearl-fishing?"

To my surprise, he understood perfectly what I meant. Smilingly, he called in a few teachers to his chamber. They all decided the Wells Evening High School was the best place for me to learn pearl-fishing.

I came to that beautiful structure. Its big windows were lit, day and evening, and its wide doors were open for all people, big and small, young and old, of all nations, colors, and creeds.

They all looked happy and friendly there. Many of them came from ignorant, suppressed countries, lands of superstition, from ghettos of stone walls and fences, and from behind modern iron curtains. I was refreshed immediately. My heartstrings grew stronger, and what a miracle happened! I forgot completely about retreating pessimism and funeral marches. Youth surrounded me again.

Surely, I understood that precious treasures in full measures could be found here.

It seemed to me that I entered a holy temple, with
the wide corridors, with the reddish glossy brick walls, dignified with oil paintings created also by pearl-fishers. My feet walked on solid holy ground. The school building was permeated with the knowledge and wisdom of real people.

Those pearl-fishers had made this colossal achievement possible for many generations to come. A fantastic and real palace, it seemed to be, and not costly at all, allowing one to search for the genuine gems of the most precious, transparent jewels of eternity.

There were to be found pearls of the graves of Egypt, and from everywhere; of our entire world, and from the endless universe; from the millions of stars, rainbows, clouds, and storms; among the secrets of nature, of the beasts and insects of the jungle, of the colorful flowers and forests; in the melodies of the birds, reflections in the rivers and lakes, and among the waves and the ships of the ocean.

There were and are pearl-fishers among the dead and wounded in the foxholes, on the battlefields, at the hospitals and the graveyards, in the elegies of the musical pearl-fishers, among the first cries of newborn infants, in the heavenly divine young mothers who brought the most precious pearls into such a tragic world.

A young boy took my wrinkled, aged hand. He led me and showed me glittering jewels.

I find pearls in the slums, among prostitutes and drunkards, among widows and orphans. In the midst of human slaughter, you will find pearl-fishing everywhere you go — at the public library, at the museums of art, science, and industry, in the seasons of the year.

There are wonderful, exotic pearls in the good, old Bible, which signify our holy days. They are created also in bodies, souls, and in spirit.

Gracious pearls abound in befriending strangers, in feeding the hungry, clothing the naked (I don’t mean
those of the movies), in curing the sick, helpless, and jobless.

Seeing eyes are blinded through selfishness, narrow-mindedness, laziness, or mental deficiency. To such, pearl-fishing is meaningless, zero. For me, it strengthened me physically and spiritually.

My sleepless dream became a reality. Even the few pearls I'll find will be the greatest, most valuable treasure for me.

My present job keeps me busy. That is sufficient, as I seek my own pearl-fishing, an achievement at my age of sixty-eight — young in spirit.
OUR WILL

My beloved husband, Sam, and I will equally divide our humble gifts to all our children, grandchildren, nieces, and nephews, and to all our friends who love such works of art. We will be glad that people at large will enjoy the dreams of our hearts and souls, our paintings, which were created in our humble home, and which we enjoyed seeing displayed at exhibitions in many art centers, homes, and cities, and reproduced in newspapers and magazines.

We did not lock them into safety vaults, nor did we hire lawyers to protect them.

Our gifts have been viewed by many people during our life, and will continue to be seen after our death. They will be valued by cultured people. We hope to be remembered with love and appreciation. Our paintings will always speak for themselves, a language of tones, color, and form; arrangements of still life, portraits, animals, and landscapes. Our long and hard journey was not in vain.

— Sam and Yecheved
PAINTINGS

By

SAMUEL BYER
Samuel Byer, a graduate of the Art Institute in 1911.

Dear Mr. Byer:

I am enclosing herewith a statement regarding your work, which I hope will be of use to you in connection with your wife’s book.

Sincerely yours,

PATRICK T. MALONE
Assistant Curator of Painting and Sculpture
INTRODUCTION

Mr. Sam Byer was born in Warsaw, Poland, in 1886. He came to Chicago when he was twenty years old, and studied at Hull House Art School under Enella Benedict for many years. Mr. Byer was also a student at the Chicago Art Institute and the Chicago Academy of Fine Arts. In 1930, he was awarded the Worcester prize in an exhibit with a group of the Chicago Etching Society. His paintings have been represented in many exhibits, including the Chicago shows at the Chicago Art Institute. Many of his works are Hebraic in theme, attributed to his early childhood education in Hebrew school. Such titles as “The End of the Sabbath,” “A Lesson in Talmud,” and “Capores,” bring to mind those cherished stories of Biblical days. His portrait of “La Jeuf” (The Jewess) was posed by the operatic star, Rosa Raisa.

Although Mr. Byer has painted in several media, he seems to derive more satisfaction from oil painting. His greatest achievements have been in his portraits and illustrated Biblical stories.

Perhaps the most outstanding characteristics of his work are his ability in the handling of color, and his feeling for line and form. One cannot help find sincerity and emotional appeal in his paintings.

Michael Gamboney, Head
Hull House Art School
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