Sincerely Walter Artzt

Ready, Willig and Abel

BY WALTER ARTZT

Drawings by Julius Kroll

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CLEVELAND AND NEW YORK

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MANUFACTURED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

TO ALL THE PEOPLE I HAVE EVER MET

AND WITH WHOM I HAVE BROKEN BREAD

OR TILTED A GLASS,

AND TO ALL THE PEOPLE IN WHOSE EYES

I HAVE SEEN REASON FOR HOPE

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READY, WILLIG AND ABEL

Home

LIFE REALLY BEGAN on the day Abel's letter arrived. It was spring in Dobromil and the fields about our house had begun to wave their wheat proudly. Abel had been gone a year. It was a lonesome time for me, for he was two years older than I and we were great friends.

He was blond, tall and the handsomest man for many provinces around. I was short, dark and not handsome. There were many men like me in all the provinces. It is not only natural then that I should have looked to Abel as the embodiment of everything I wanted to be. As you will see this caused me many difficulties.

The little town where I was born and spent my first sixteen years was little different from small-town America. It had its old crotchety mailman who knew all the town's secrets, its town idiot, its superstitions and its wonderful simple people who loved, fought, stole from and aided each other in the sad times of distress and the happy times of merriment.

Fear was the emotion of the hour. Everyone had his private fears but these were no match, deadly as they were, for the universal fear. This was the hideous possibil-

ity of being conscripted into the Kaiser's army. This terror ran through our youth. There were few things despairing mothers wouldn't do to keep their sons from the long years of service to the Kaiser. It was a common practice to bend forward an infant son's center finger on each hand until it touched the palm. Bandaged into place, after several years the two fingers would be useless and the lad unfit for military service. Or they would bind his right arm to a board so that it could not grow and would be a few inches shorter than the other. Kerosene injected into the veins would make legs swell. There were entire villages where, by training, one leg was made to appear shorter than the other and the youth of the town walked limping. Eye drops had been devised which would cause partial blindness.

Abel would do none of this. From the first he said he was too dignified and this would make him undignified. He was too beautiful to mar, and mother, loving him dearly, did not want to corrupt his perfection.

There was one place where he could be uncrippled and safe. That was America, the land of opportunity and safety.

It would have been easy to convince Abel had he been sane. I do not mean to imply that my brother was insane. He was in the first full flow of youthful love and the symptoms weren't too far removed from insanity. He didn't put his violin down during all this time. He serenaded his love from morning till night.

He was in love with the most beautiful girl in town. But all was not well with the match, my mother said. It has always amazed me how long a woman can cry once she

sets her mind to it. And mother cried with deep concentration. The girl was of humble origin. Her father was the town cobbler. Abel didn't listen to this lecturing. Since Father was dead, my uncles took it upon themselves to instruct him in the finer points of snobbery.

I think Mother would have permitted him to marry the girl, although her wishes for Abel were tied up with her desire to have him become a great musician. Abel was a self-taught violinist who showed great promise. In fact, he could play any instrument from a homemade flute to a French horn.

Mother wrote to her brother in America. She applied herself to this problem and managed, with heroic ability, to unravel the red tape that is usually wrapped around an aspiring American. Just how she saved one hundred dollars no one could say. But she did. Then patiently she waited for the right moment to chase my brother across the fields and waters to the new land.

He wouldn't work during the day. He often told me the day was too beautiful to waste working. He wooed his love from sunrise to sunset and then went to work.

In a village as small as ours, secrets are neon lights. It wasn't long before we discovered Abel was working for a fellow who took his horses to pasture at night. This was necessary because they didn't graze in their own fields, Abel's employer having no fields.

This was illegal naturally. You couldn't eat the other fellow's grass, not even in my home town. Incidentally, there was considerable argument as to where the horses were obtained in the first place.

One morning as Abel came home, my uncles fell upon

him with whatever was at hand. A chair isn't exactly a caressing object, and he was badly beaten. His licking came from two scores: he was working for a horse-thief, and he was making love to the most beautiful girl in town. To Abel her beauty didn't diminish because her father mended shoes. To my uncles something called family honor was at stake.

Abel rushed from the house, humiliated and hurt. Mother and I, who had tried to prevent our benefactors from beating him, ran after him into the night. We found him weeping in the cemetery.

Mother's sweet tenderness will always be with me. She was such a little woman then and my brother was such a big boy. She gathered him up in her arms, rocked him to and fro and convinced him to go to America.

"It is best, my son, it is best," she sighed. She told him he must promise to send for me in a year. Then we would save and she and sister could come the following year. And so it was decided.

Abel gathered up his fiddle and his few things. Six weeks later we received a cable. It said, "Violin and I safely arrived in United States. Will write soon."

Now it was a year and he had finally written. The letter was addressed to me. This was the first letter I ever received. It said:

Dear Brother:

I am in the greatest country in the world. Here wagons travel without horses. You push a button and get a light. You turn a knob and you cook with gas. You control heat by a little instrument on the wall.

Each day I go to the park and kiss the ground near the statue of Columbus. This takes considerable time and in America there is nothing more valuable than time, but I feel I owe it to him, so I do not mind. You must come here as quickly as possible. When you do, make sure that you bring only the cheapest kind of suit, old shoes, one shirt and one pair of socks. I will buy everything new for you. I am sending you $100.00. Far more than you need. I want you, instead of coming directly to America, to visit Constantinople, Budapest, Vienna, Berlin and London. I am also enclosing a small English Dictionary, so you may study the language, as your name will be 'Greenhorn' until you master your new language. Until I see you in the land of milk and honey. Love to you all.

Abel.

P.S. Please be sure to bring my beautiful English coat.

Mother ran all over town showing everybody the letter from America. The old men were rather skeptical about the whole thing. But there was the face of an official on a strange-looking stamp and the boy had been gone a year. They agreed it was time enough for him to have reached foreign shores. Once the letter was pronounced authentic by the elders, preparations went forward for my departure.

First of all, one dictum in the letter was completely ignored. The section devoted to my wardrobe met with unfavorable response. The town's dry goods merchant, learning of Abel's unflattering remarks, begged my

mother to take his best. At practically no cost. It was a suit and only a world war could have produced a state of mind in which this garment was considered fine. If I had dreamt of impersonating Don Quixote I couldn't have been more suitably attired. This suit was made of eighty percent paper and twenty percent cotton. It had an advantage over ordinary run-of-the-mill stuff. It didn't need to be pressed. Neither did I. I looked as if I had been dipped in starch. I was so uncomfortable I kept shaking my head from side to side. People thought I was saying "no" all the time. This was embarrassing.

My vast budget was appropriated as follows: My sister was rather short of having a suitable dowry. I gave her eighty dollars towards it. This would aid her in getting a better bargain in a marriage which was to be as skillfully arranged as the purchase of a sack of potatoes. She kissed me. That kiss cost me a look into the Byzantine wonders of the Near East. Considering the kind of men one could marry in our part of the world, I never thought I spent that money well. My wardrobe, plated armor and all, cost ten dollars.

Now we were confronted with what to do with the remaining ten dollars. Since my ticket was bought, it was decided I might take all that money to see me through to America.

The day of my departure, hundreds of people came to say goodbye. It seemed the fashion to cry and my townsfolk were a fashionable people. I had to respectfully request people to refrain from crying on my shoulder. I was short and not too robust. I couldn't stand up under the weight thrown around me. Furthermore, the tears were

wetting my starch suit. On my last day home I didn't want to become the town blotter. I was neither convinced nor reassured by the dry goods merchant's statement that "my suit could absorb the tears of the whole province."

It seemed the town had suddenly developed a passion to write to relatives in America. Every pocket of my suit was filled to overflowing with letters to relatives in such neighboring cities as New York, Los Angeles, Pittsburgh, San Francisco, Detroit and Chicago. I was warned not to trust these letters to the mails. I was admonished to deliver them personally.

Our front lawn was a picture of plenty. Food and wine were spread upon a table until it could barely stand. I am certain that a good part of sister's dowry went to convince everyone Abel was a millionaire. Mother felt it necessary to maintain her position as first lady of the town. At a single sitting the town gluttons ate Mother's food for the next three months.

We were a half hour's ride from the station. Fully two hours before train time, the hired horse and buggy stood before our door. Mother had polished it, not satisfied with its appearance. We started toward the station at a funereal pace. The town band seemed to be burying me instead of sending me off to the land of the living. I was depressed. The horse and carriage crept forward; sister sat at my left, Mother at my right. They all wept in tempo with the heroic music of our five piece band. I do not know to this day which was in pitch, the band or the weepers.

Behind us the townspeople stretched, marching Willig Halevy to the land of milk and honey. I was told to beware of beggars and thieves on the road. I was warned of

card sharks and prostitutes. And the wise men nudged me in the ribs and told me to be careful.

The train made its weekly stop at our station and I got on. As the train pulled out the mourners, wise in the ways of the world, accepted this as a signal to let out a huge sigh, which they did with great competence from long years of practice.

I cried a little.

En Route

EUROPE WAS A CONTINENT bulging at the seams. Despite the First World War in which so many of its people had been killed, the crowding, shoving mobs remained, and now they all headed for the coast. Their eyes were cast westward and they fought their way from city to city searching for the life they had lost. I splashed around in this human whirlpool, barely keeping from going under.

Finally, after days of poverty and the stench of terror, the sight of the overwhelmingly large ship was welcome. I had never seen anything but a little rowboat at home. No description I had ever heard prepared me for the gigantic hulk that seemed to rise from the water and to end some place in the heavens. On such a ship I, who held a ticket sent me by my American brother, would surely find comfort and warmth.

Yet when, after walking around and down into the endless caverns of the ship, I was shown to my rat-hole, I was startled. I tried to tell them my brother was a great American success and surely he had wanted me to travel better, but they assured me this was, my three bunk mates

included, exactly what my ticket called for. I decided to make the best of it.

So there I was on board at Le Havre without a cent in my pocket. It is one thing to be without money where there is nothing to buy, but on board there were so many kinds of candy my mouth watered at the expectant luxury of lining my mouth with sugar products. I had taken to smoking and I knew then of no price I wouldn't have given for a bit of tobacco.

Enough of this mooning I told myself. I decided I had to make a little money. As a monument to the greatness of European culture there were scores of old people on the ship who couldn't read or write their own language. I inquired about for a few hours and learned that the services of a letter-writer were required and the calling was not without some financial gain. I made thirty cents the first day and only wrote three letters. The candy was good, the tobacco enjoyable. I wandered around the ship with a smile for everyone and a general feeling of well-being in the pit of my stomach.

My fellow passengers appeared to have all kinds of strange methods of amusing themselves. I speak here of the "innocent" enjoyments. I was only sixteen at the time and knew little. Among these exotic pastimes was a game the men played. It was simple and the equipment was easily portable, consisting as it did of two cubes with black dots on them. These were juggled about in a closed fist to the accompaniment of strange noises and gyrations until the cubes were finally hurled to the floor with an entreating curse.

I was gratified to see that a man who put ten cents on

the floor soon picked up twenty. Was I so backward that I, too, couldn't recognize an adequate profit? I put my ten cents down. Soon I had forty cents and quickly that grew to a dollar. I played the game well, being instructed by a man who was a marvel of skill. Rather magically my skill left me and my money followed it shortly thereafter. I was broke once more.

I tried to get back to letter writing. I reduced my rate to five cents a letter. Letter-writers were a drug on the market. All the letters that needed writing were written. There were no more customers.

As compensation for my lack of skill and fortune in letter writing and the game with the cubes, there was that marvelously welcome time each day when we would be called to eat. We had Swiss cheese every day. I was very fond of Swiss cheese. This desire can be traced to the time the German army marched through our town during the First World War. A soldier finding me in the fields offered me a piece of his cheese in exchange for some bread I had. I had never eaten it before. In fact I had eaten nothing but bread for a week.

One of the things I looked forward to in America was Swiss cheese. Since there was plenty of everything in America, practically for the asking, I dreamt of eating nothing but cheese. Later, when food no longer tasted of bullets and I had more than bread to eat, I changed my mind.

There were all kinds of people on the ship. Some were friendly. Others were wrapped up in themselves and had little time for anyone else. It happened that one day there came into my life one of my first adventures in the cus-

toms of my new country. It was a rather gruesome business, now that I think of it, by which many of the upper class passengers came to visit in steerage. So many of them had come over as we were now, they must have got pleasure in seeing how far they had gone in a short time.

To my side this day came a heavily jowled gentleman who spoke to me in my native tongue. He was happy to find someone to converse with and we talked of many things. I plied him with questions. I was curious about my new country. Even then he appeared narrow and ill-informed but he was companionship of a sort. I was frightened and a little lonely.

He wanted to cheer me up. He gave me a package of American candy. The first I ever had. I told him how grateful I was. I grasped at the present so eagerly he must have suspected I had no money. He asked me if I needed money. Of course I did but I couldn't ask for it.

I put the candy in my mouth and started to chew it. The more I chewed the more difficult it became to swallow. The wad in my mouth swelled and when I finally did get it down it took the lining of my throat with it. As we talked I gulped one piece after the other. I was soon finished with the entire package. I hoped all American candy wasn't like this. All this time my friend seemed to be chewing on his first piece. I was ashamed I had eaten so quickly.

"What do you call this candy?" I asked.

Between the smash-smash of his up-and-down jaw movement, he said, "Chewing gum. You must chew it," he went on, "and not swallow it."

That was no longer my problem. I had swallowed it. I

felt a strange constriction in my middle and I could feel the blood drain from my face. My friend became alarmed and asked me what was the matter. I told him I had eaten his candy. He dragged me off to the ship's doctor immediately. The doctor gave me a drink of something I had never had before. Two hours later I felt my stomach sending messages in dots and dashes. It was the end of chewing gum for me. It had nearly been the end of me.

The next day as I rested pale and wan in my bunk, my chewing gum friend came to see me. I apologized for my behavior. For some reason he thought the thing funny. He gave me a huge cigar which I took apart and using toilet tissue made twenty cigarettes while I recuperated. I had solved my cigarette problem.

ONE HOT DAY, while sitting at the far end of the deck smoking and dreaming about America and how it would feel to set foot on its ground, a giant wave came along and covered me completely. The seat of my pants, made as they were of eighty percent paper, remained on the bench. Even after I stood up. I managed to save the pants legs. For a long moment I was panic-stricken. These were my only trousers. Then I remembered Abel's long English coat I was bringing for him. I pinned the pants legs to the inside of the coat. When finished the coat reached down to my ankles. The job was neat and no one could tell I had no pants on. I was a curious item. No one understood why a young man would wear so long a coat in July. I told everyone perspiration was good for me.

By afternoon I was convinced the American sun was

not the one that shone upon the European continent. If it was, I decided that since the earth is round New York must be on top of the world. The nearer we came to our goal the hotter it got. We all looked forward to the evening. But when it came, although the sun was down the fiery decks still burned. It was as if the air had disappeared and we were inhaling and exhaling the same humid gas all the time.

My two old bunk mates were melting down to a spot on the cabin floor. The sound of their breathing was louder than the ship's motors. After some minutes of trying, one of them gathered the strength and suggested that since the air was so close in our small cabin, it would be best if one of us slept on the deck. I was the youngest, so with great chivalry I volunteered. They blessed me and wished me well.

I went up on deck. A red fiery moon hung overhead. The decks were hot. But I was young and before long sound asleep.

During the night I was awakened by a crawling itching skin. I knew I was not lousy. I kept myself clean and bathed every day. Here we were almost at the end of our voyage and I was in trouble. I examined myself carefully and noted large welts raised all over me, obviously by some monster. I found I was bitten from head to foot by something I hadn't heard about in Europe.

The ship's doctor had been taken off at Sandy Hook. When morning came I wandered around scratching and moaning. My bunk mates consulted and called upon the women to cure me. Several of them got together to discuss my case.

There were many schools of thought. One, that of the people of North Europe, was strongly in favor of covering me with cobwebs. They were slowly but surely won over by a group from Roumania who maintained there was nothing like sheep manure for what ailed me. Meanwhile, I writhed about giving the conclave its proper musical accompaniment. Back and forth the plans of action were hurled.

One young woman, recently married, was finally given the floor. She was of a practical turn of mind. Where could they get either cobwebs or sheep drippings? They all agreed they couldn't get any. Then the young woman, drunk with her own persuasion, came forth with her prescription. This she swore was handed to her by great ancestral curers. The treatment was simplicity itself, the medicine right at hand, so to speak. I was to take my own urine and apply it over my body. This I must do all day. I was comforted and assured that by the time I reached Ellis Island for my physical examination, all the itching, all the red blotches would be gone.

To keep myself well supplied with medicine I drank water all day. I applied the cure religiously. By supper time I was the lonesomest man in the world. I had to sit in a corner to eat my dinner, which I must confess I had little appetite for.

It didn't take long for me to realize the medicine wouldn't do me any good. And it seemed as if the cure was worse than the ailment which was disappearing in several places. I washed in pure water and, adjusting my trouser legs under the long coat with all the pins and needles I could find, went off in a small boat for Ellis

Island. The doctor sniffed at me once or twice, said I had been bitten by mosquitoes and moved me on.

I handed an officer my papers. To my amazement, after a few minutes he gave me twenty-five dollars. My first taste of America. I was in the country twenty-five minutes and I had twenty-five dollars. What a way to welcome newcomers! Yet, after a moment I noticed not all the immigrants got twenty-five dollars. The interpreter explained that my brother had sent me a ship company check. I could have cashed this aboard if I had known I had it. All those days without cigarettes and candy and me with an unknown fortune.

It was just like Abel to deposit money for me and not tell me. He should have notified the purser. Maybe someone had slipped up. Perhaps it wasn't Abel's fault.

On the trip from Ellis Island to Manhattan I saw a vendor on the ferry. I bought almost his entire stock. Every pocket of my coat was filled with candy, fruit, cigarettes and cigars. My mouth was busily trying to make up for two weeks of privation. Soon I could eat no more and for the first time in my life I lit a cigar and blew smoke rings all the way to New York.

I Come Ashore

AMERICA WASN'T DIFFERENT. This was my first thought as I approached the dock on which my family waited to greet me. The people I saw, what they said, how they laughed and cried, it was little different from what had happened when I left home.

Of course there was one great difference. Abel had been absent from my farewell reception. But he was here. The full cast of my welcoming committee has never been successfully recorded by the family archivist, but as nearly as we can ascertain there were uncles, both maternal and paternal, their respective wives and no less than twenty-three cousins. These included cousins all the way to the fourth or almost blood-relative variety.

It was July 23, 1922, and a hotter day hadn't been devised up to that time. As the family, with tears and laughter, waited panting to grab me in wholesale welcome, Abel, his tremendous body holding them back, screamed, "Just a minute, impatient swine, just a minute." They threw up a lusty yell but finally were silenced.

My brother walked over to me all by himself. He had changed in the year since I had seen him. He had grown handsomer and more assured of himself. How this was

possible I don't know, but it was true. He stepped with more grace and his face had new tenderness in it.

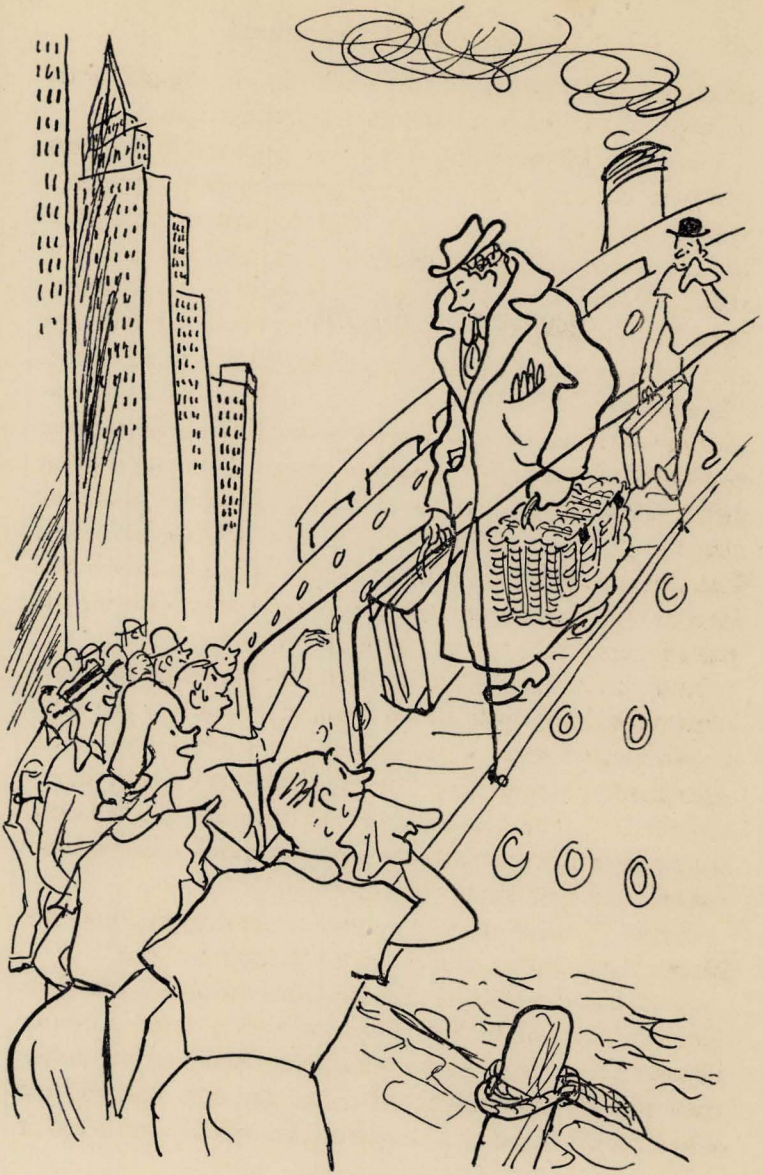
He didn't say anything to me. He took me in his arms and gave me a big hug. I couldn't trust myself to speak. I was so very glad to see him. The impatient wolf pack would not be restrained. Such a scene and no roles for them, no lines—they demanded to be part of the emotion. Abel held them back once more. Then in a voice like that of God speaking unto Moses on Mt. Sinai, he said to me, "Kiss it."

For a moment I didn't understand. Then Abel took out his handkerchief, and with a gesture befitting a great ballet artist he brushed the sidewalk clean and made me kiss the ground of the United States of America. As I kissed it, he leaned over me and said, "You are now in the land of milk and honey, kiss it and it shall kiss you for the rest of your life!" I solemnly kissed it again.

Everyone wanted to know what their friends and relatives were doing back home. Nobody could decide who was to speak first so by compromise they all spoke at once. This made hearing very difficult. For a time they overpowered Abel and, pressing me to the wall, Uncle Leon, one of my more successful relatives, wanted to know why I wore a coat on such a hot day.

"Hot?" I asked with the perspiration dripping into the North River and raising the tide, "I don't feel hot."

Abel was directed to take my coat off and wanting to quiet the bedlam, he did. There was little point in trying to stop him. They would never have believed me unless they saw for themselves. Abel had the coat halfway off when he glimpsed my tragedy. He quickly gathered it



about me and with a hurried "see you later," we departed at a gallop.

He raced me down the street to a department store where I was completely refitted. For one hundred dollars I got a high polish. I had an entirely new wardrobe. In fact I took so well to the new attire it was difficult to tell, if you could at all, who was the greenhorn, Abel or I.

"Now my brother," Abel said, speaking in the poetic Yiddish we loved so well, "I will show you a bit of this city of life."

Very leisurely we walked from Lower Manhattan. We pushed our heads back as Abel explained how and why these huge structures were erected. My brother reasoned that Americans are greatly influenced by Indians and wished to get as close to the sun, which their ancestors worshiped, as possible. It sounded logical to me, although even at the time I had begun to doubt that Indians still killed people on the streets in broad daylight.

We had plenty of time, Abel said, so we walked slowly. We had promised to be in Philadelphia at eight o'clock for a party in my honor. Several times during the stroll we stopped for cold drinks. At one point in our tour Abel met a girl he knew. We stood chatting with her for a few minutes. When we had about five minutes to make the train Abel dashed up to a cab driver and told him we must make a train to get him to his concert in Philadelphia.

Looking into the intent face of Abel Halevy the virtuoso, the cab driver was properly impressed. He almost killed half of New York getting to the station. The violinist of international renown tipped the lowly cabbie handsomely. The cabbie removed his cap.

We ran through the station knocking bags from the hands of travelers not nearly as important as we. He gave my light bag to one porter. He hailed another to carry his fiddle. Now we were four, charging through the station. Abel, having learned to be rude and noisy, shoved and shouted, "Please, people, I'll miss my concert." I barely kept up with him. After all, I was just off the boat and I wasn't a New Yorker. I hadn't learned to walk a mile on someone's bunion. As the conductor was closing the gate, we slid through. The train was moving as we pantingly leaped on it. Abel looked at me with a merry smile on his lips and said, "In America it's speed that counts." If I could have spoken I would have said something. But I didn't catch my breath till we got to Newark.

By then Abel, having sat still for fifteen minutes, was looking for something to amuse himself with. His eye caught my straw suitcase, inside of which were the best products of my home town. These were the garments my mother and sister had so lovingly worked on.

Abel opened the suitcase. I expected him to comment with approval on the fine workmanship. He only stared at the interior of the suitcase where rested my material wealth. Then he opened the window and, taking one piece at a time, slowly and deliberately he threw them all away.

"European garbage," he called my things. "We will keep the case to use on picnics," he said with finality.

He unpacked the recent purchases and filled the case with them. Then, without a word he slid down in his seat and fell asleep. His snoring was loud and got everyone's attention.

My First American Party

LOOKING THE HERRING IN THE EYE, I felt almost at home. Abel and I had got to Uncle Leon's on time. This feat was attributed to my influence. Everyone was certain that my coming would be a godsend in holding my brother to the ground. "Willig," Uncle Leon told me earnestly, "that is the first time Abel has been on time in his life."

Abel laughed with the rest. Frankly I couldn't see why being on time was so important. But they did, so I decided time here was something different than time was at home.

Then there was the herring and it made me feel good. It was resting on a couch of pickled onions, surrounded by fields of as many leafy vegetables as could decently be laid down together. A herring was a kind of symbol to me. If we had a family crest at that time, I am sure a herring would have figured prominently in it. Very often, to us a herring represented the difference between eating and not eating. The number of things you can do with it are amazing. Fried with onion, pickled, smoked—the varieties are endless and each tastes better than the last.

Flanking the herring sat my family, all thirty of them.

Few looked as interesting as the fish. Some were lean, some were fat, but all were hungry. Everyone commented on Abel's good taste in dressing me. Uncle Leon the cynic was pleased. He looked at me and told everyone I was his favorite nephew. Then he looked at Abel and scowled. We sat down and after a few merry toasts got to work on the food. It was a labor of love. A locust plague would have been ashamed of its lethargy.

I had been very young the last time I had seen most of my relatives. I looked around at them again, fixing their faces in my memory. Uncle Henry was our oldest uncle. You might suspect this would afford him the respect due the patriarch in a family whose religion is based on the patriarchal. Unfortunately, in America as elsewhere, the patriarchate fell to the gentleman in the family who had best feathered his nest. This was not Uncle Henry. It was Uncle Leon who wore the mantle of success. Wore it is no word for it. He carried it like an emperor's scepter and smote his opponents three times daily whether they needed it or not. So that when Uncle Henry took the floor at my banquet it was no small surprise. Everyone expected Leon would speak first.

Uncle Henry said, "I'd like to say a few words."

"Hire a hall!" Uncle Leon ridiculed.

"Leon," Uncle Henry asked, "what kind of talk?"

"He's drunk," Uncle Leon addressed everyone. "No sooner he passes a few drinks down his throat he's speechifying."

"Drunk!" Uncle Henry was angry. "You will excuse me, on that seltzer?"

Aunt Rachel was Uncle Henry's wife. She was the most beautiful woman in the family and, success or failure, she loved her Henry and would always come to his defense. She took Uncle Leon's sleeve firmly in hand and almost tugged it from the shoulder.

"Let him talk, you hear, let him talk," she said.

During this byplay Uncle Henry stood and looked at the ceiling. Now, as if he had finally received the answer to his thoughts, he began, "Greenhorn and relatives . . ."

Uncle Leon leaped to his feet. "Some commencement. Thirty years here and can't even make with a rotten English. His fat tongue even falls over itself in Yiddish."

"I speak as good an English as I can afford," Uncle Henry mumbled. "Who sweated in the shop you should be able to be so smart with everybody?"

He paused for a moment. Then, as if recalling something, he pointed his finger at me and shouted, "Prince Charming, no doubt your mother sent you to us with a musical instrument. No doubt you will accompany your illustrious brother in his many world-shaking concerts?"

I shook my head. "No."

"Praise to God then," he went on, "with you we start better. You'll find more time for business."

This was too much for Uncle Leon. After all, he wanted a little of the limelight, too. He was also a person, wasn't he? So in a stage whisper he shouted, "He's got him in business already."

"You Willig," Uncle Henry said, ignoring his brother, "must be a success. You must learn what a head is for. A head is not," he turned to Abel, "something with a chin

on the bottom which you rest on a fiddle. A head is made with a brain inside, in some cases. A head is made to think. From thinking comes money."

"And trouble," Abel put in.

"With your trouble," Uncle Henry answered, "you are here a year, what are you? Are you Snellenburg, Lit Brothers, Gimbel Brothers?"

Abel picked up his violin and began to tune it. "Beloved Uncle Henry," he said, "I have been here one year and I am nothing to you. You have been here thirty years and what are you?"

Like a returning cannon-ball shot, Uncle Henry let go, "Don't look at me. I am a failure. . . ."

Almost unnoticeably Aunt Rachel moved her hand over Uncle Henry's. He paused for a minute to smile at her, and then as his eyes filled with tears he went on. "A failure," he said, "is not a title with as much respect in it as success which Uncle Leon wears so proudly, but it is true that it is my title. Partially my failure is his fault."

Uncle Leon sat quietly for once and said nothing.

Henry continued, "My brother with the big mouth gets silent all at once. I don't know why, but I want to talk about it now. We have welcomed a new member to our old family in a new country. It doesn't hurt he should know that gold is thicker than blood. . . . " He turned to me. "You want to see how the world moves around the sun, my boy?"

The intensity of Uncle Henry's eyes and the sudden stillness in the room frightened me. I nodded my head.

"A long time ago," Uncle Henry said, "when we were

young and life was simple, when I still believed that there was honor and love among people I suggested to my brother, to my favorite brother, Uncle Leon, we make a 'tonic.' It would be a good thing. Hair would smell good, and if it didn't grow it was good to the nose to breathe the odor. I told him how to make it. How much alcohol, just what kind is better, how you fix it up, what oil to use, and everything that is in front and behind of the business I gave him from my brain. He listened and he went and he made it. But not with me. Did I have a patent? Does an Uncle Henry sue his brother? Am I dirt? He went and he made it with strangers he didn't look down his nose to. People who had gold he gave the fruit of my brain. Now he's got money and me, I'm poor."

He stopped for a moment. There was a deep silence in the room. I thought he was finished, but after a long pause he laughed and cast away his sadness. He reached over and kissed me on the cheek.

"Willig," he said, "remember this, I sleep better than him. I am happier than him. I don't have to worry whose hair is falling out from that stuff he sells—"

"You should have so many good years how that grows hair, and how many hairs it will grow," Uncle Leon shouted.

"What you did with my formula, wish me something better," Uncle Henry said, sitting down.

"I want Willig to be a success," Uncle Leon said in defense and exasperation, "I want he should marry rich and live easy. Anything wrong with that?"

"I didn't know why Uncle Leon had sought to defend

himself by throwing me into the ring, but the battle was soon cast off to the clouds by the arrival of more guests. With a flurry of black satin and golden fleece my mother's fifth cousin entered. She was accompanied by her daughter.

The girl must have been about my age although from the way her face wandered off in all directions and the manner in which she moved her mouth in and around her teeth, I couldn't tell her exact age at all. Since we were, theoretically, in the same age group and her sex rumored to be different from mine, it took just Uncle Leon's type of imagination and ingenuity to decide this is the girl I must marry.

My uncle was particularly charmed by the fact that her late father had left her mother a sizable business and enough insurance for the Prudential to open another branch office in a far western town. While this may have been considered a good thing, contributing toward opening the west for commerce, I didn't think it fair for my poor fifth cousin to have died so young. The sacrifice was too great. Yet, as I looked at his wife and daughter, I realized our dead cousin had made a wise choice in leaving permanently.

Uncle Leon took me aside and, digging his nails into my arms in friendly fashion, instructed me to be nice to cousin. (Her name, by a strange skip of fate, escapes me. It was either Shirley or Lucille. To avoid any libel suit, we'll call her Harriet.) Uncle Leon whispered something to me about a "good marriage." Of course it was still early to talk of marriage. We were both so young. But, it says

in the Bible, an early marriage was what I needed. Or so he interpreted the Holy Word for me.

Harriet sat and looked at me. She was what they called a "flapper." Her eyes were half closed and she parted her lips when not beating her gums eating or talking, trying desperately, I learned later, to look like Theda Bara. To please my uncle and to be polite, I sat down beside her and spoke to her a little. I looked over at Abel who was oblivious to everything. He was tuning his violin.

Uncle Leon, a rapid fellow in closing a deal, came over after a little while and asked me how I liked my "girl." Since the "girl" was there I just nodded and smiled. Harriet put her moist paw under the table and squeezed my hand. I thought I would faint. I had never had my hand held.

I was happy when Uncle Leon put a record on the victrola and we all danced. We did the dances of our native village and it was like home. As we spread ourselves around the room panting happily, Uncle Leon was in great conversation with Harriet's mother. The woman, all three hundred pounds, had not yet finished her snack. She was shoveling food into her mouth with both hands and nodding vigorously. It appeared she found me pleasing. Uncle Leon, a smile creasing his face from ear to ear, rushed from one group to another. I only caught a word here and there. The gist of it all seemed to be that we made a good-looking couple. Everything seemed set. They were either drunk or dishonest. More probably both.

Cousin Harriet, having become overheated from the dancing, wanted to get washed. She asked me to go up

with her to show her where she could "freshen up." I told her I didn't know any more about it than she. I don't know who was the champion wrestler at the time, but Harriet could have had the title for the asking. She gently took my arm and before I knew what had thrown me, I was upstairs with her.

If there was anyone to wash she decided it would be me. It wasn't in the bathroom she decided to work either. She threw me upon the largest bed in the house and started to kiss every pore of my face. She was a noisy little thing. The sounds she made reminded me vaguely of the French locomotive that had taken me, only a short time before, from Paris to Le Havre. The train had a more sonorous and surely a more sensual sound.

There were more things than English and American customs that I was a greenhorn about at sixteen, and I didn't know what it was she wanted. Struggle as I did, I couldn't prevent her from throwing herself upon me. Her hair became untidy and her dress unfastened. I don't know how long we fought, but when she had tired a little I gathered strength and lifted her from me. No sooner was I on my feet than she grabbed me and, catching me off balance, dragged me down upon her. When I was thus clutched in her death grip, she started to holler for help. I felt myself being lifted by several pairs of strong arms. Uncles Leon and Henry, finally united in a project unprofitable but co-operative, were dragging me from her.

Harriet, her skirt hastily pulled up to her neck, turned her head to the wall and wept. I later learned this was a stock Hollywood scene. Sinking to the floor her mother

let out a yell familiarly known as the "Great Shriek of Strawberry Mansions."

Uncle Leon jammed me into a corner. "Are you my sister's son?" he trumpeted.

"Uncle Henry sat upon the bed shaking his head. "And such a nice looking boy . . ."

With great deliberation Uncle Leon rose to his full height and said, "It is simple, he has despoiled a maiden. He'll have to marry her."

This was the balm that stopped the pain and tears. With superhuman energy, Harriet lowered her skirt. Her mother permitted herself to be raised from the floor and peace was once more restored.

We all sat down in the bedroom and began to discuss what had happened. No one would listen to me. Already the lechers were fondling the event in their minds. Suddenly we were aware of columns of smoke rising to the upstairs bedroom. From far below in the house came the hoarse shouts of "Fire! Run for your lives. Fire!" There was a mad scramble as Harriet and her little mother clawed their way to the staircase.

Abel, ever the gentleman, stood at the foot of the stairs, opened the door and, taking mother and daughter by the arm, raced them down the street and out of sight. Whether in all honesty I can say the three-hundred-pound globule raced anywhere I don't know, but at the moment it looked as if she did.

We ran down to investigate the fire. Finally we located its source in the cellar. A blaze had been carefully set in an ash can. It was easily extinguished.

By this time Abel was back unaccompanied by the women. He took his fiddle and began tuning it. While Uncle Leon sputtered and swore, my brother said little. After the pitch of the fiddle suited him, he turned and faced my irate uncle. "Next time, dear Uncle," he said, "you try to marry off my little brother, I'll burn the *whole* house down."

Atlantic City

IT WAS THE SUMMER and Philadelphia boiled in its own juice. One morning, after a particularly sleepless night, Abel said to Uncle Leon, "Atlantic City, that's for him. After all, he's been here three weeks and he isn't Americanized yet. He'll be the laughing stock of the city."

"Let them laugh," Uncle Leon said.

"At my brother, let them laugh?" Abel went on, "Have you gone mad?"

"And why, my smart one, do you think you can Americanize him in Atlantic City?"

"Uncle Leon, sometimes it pains me," Abel said, "do you have confidence in me, or don't you?"

"And if I don't," Uncle Leon answered, "I know better than to argue with you. . . ."

IT WAS USELESS to ask my brother if he had ever been to Atlantic City, the glories of which were to transfer me in one day from an illiterate greenhorn to a Yankee Doodle dandy. Naturally, Abel didn't have to be in Atlantic City to know this. He just breathed the sea air from sixty miles

away and it all passed before him, every house, every block, each charging wave. All this he confessed to me, his brother whom he loved.

I didn't have a bathing suit. Uncle Leon again came to the rescue and gave me a suit he had in the cellar.

"Take it, take it," he said, "your mother, bless her, will she ever forgive me. Willig, my dearest nephew, you will be careful and not listen to that man of letters, that doctor of music, that sociological misfit."

"Uncle Leon, rest easy," was all I could say. Abel collected his things and tucked his fiddle case under his arm, and we left.

It is important to understand Abel. For he is a man born into a wrong age. I don't honestly know what age would have suited him better. He is a man who lives in a world of spun gold, fairy godmothers and constant laughter. To Abel there is nothing unknown: he is the discoverer and the discovered at the same time. It is always spring on his planet. And no one has ever been known to see his feet actually touching the ground. He is just a suspended Christmas ball floating through the complexities of life.

In the old country a river was a sweet flowing stream which gurgled its way from the mountains to make our crop grow. Here Abel and I approached a foul-smelling river, the scum of industry sticking to it and the odor still with me when I take a deep breath. My guide was talking: "And this is the Delaware River where a great American rowed across to free the country!"

The word "free" fascinated me. And all the way to Atlantic City Abel lectured me on "free, freedom, free." He called my attention to the car advertisements, proudly

pointing to those which begged one to take their products "free." Abel beamed, he smiled, he hugged his little brother. Look at that he said and nodded toward a sign. I couldn't read English and therefore couldn't make head or tail out of it. Abel, stepping over several people, stood on a seat and using his fiddle case, pointed to each word. He read it aloud: "You pay only one admission to the million dollar pier. *Movies and side show free.*"

Abel's voice was round and resonant. It rang from wall to wall. He was proud of his ability to read English. He figured it wouldn't hurt if everyone in the car knew he could speak and read English. Abel's voice hit the rafters, and many a baritone at the Metropolitan would have been happy to have been heard so well from car to car.

Children peacefully sleeping on their mothers' laps awoke and howled. Men seated facing each other playing cards were disturbed and ordered Abel to "Shad up . . . shad up. . . ." This was followed by several words, the full meaning of which I didn't grasp at the time. Abel paid no attention to the commotion. He went on: "Bernard's lockers one price and swimming pool free."

"St. Regal Hotel–Free Parking." Men and women drousing blissfully yelled at Abel, "Shad up . . . shad up. . . ."

A young American gentleman of about seven climbed on my seat and, while calling to Abel as his elders had done, spit in my face. I was thunderstruck. The entire car was screaming with one voice: "Shad up!" Everyone was facing Abel, threatening to kill him. His voice went right on reading, louder than all the rest. He seemed so alone. Alarmed as I was, I got on the seat too and yelled as

loudly as I could. Of course, knowing no English, in the excitement I found I was reciting the Jewish prayer for the dead. Abel patted me on the back and in a thunder-like bellow howled, "A fine thing, a fine thing. I'm taking my young brother who just comes from darkest Europe to show him the beauties of our glorious America and you won't let me."

The lofty pronouncement was greeted by more catcalls, and the little boy of seven, nobly reared and since, I hope, confined for life to Alcatraz, climbed on the seat and spat in Abel's face. He lifted the child by the hair, tenderly kissed him roundly on both cheeks and then slowly lowered him to the floor. Holding him firmly by the hair for fear the child would fall and break every bone in his body, Abel carried him the length of the car. The child's mother, a great and distinguished lady who was simultaneously engaged in the process of feeding an infant by the breast, beating a slightly older child with a copy of *True Story* magazine and eating a thing called an Eskimo pie, barely looked up. Abel complimented the lady on having raised such a gentleman in only seven years. The mother beamed and pretended not to observe as the child took a healthy bite out of Abel's thigh.

Abel returned to our seat limping slightly and went on to explain "Competition and freedom" in an explosive whisper so well delivered that I didn't have to wait to get to the sea to bathe.

"In this country, my little blossom," he concluded, "competition is free and whoever is strongest wins the battle."

I didn't like the prospect of fighting with everyone but

I couldn't say it. He made it all sound so heroic. I had seen too much fighting in the old country. I knew it was a bloody business.

Abel put his arm around my shoulders and told me how well he liked me for shouting at the others. I had passed my first test of the day. My brother was convinced that by sundown I would be an Americanized-American.

As we looked out of the window a train whizzed by. "You see," Abel said with joy, "we are on the Reading Railroad, that train is the Pennsylvania. They want to prove they give better service. Next time we go with them. See, competition, the pepper of our existence."

It was all a mystery to me.

UPON ARRIVING, we went to "Bernard's Lockers one price . . . free . . ." Yet Abel had to pay. I decided to say nothing. I would listen, learn and absorb.

The locker room was a strange place. The floor was stone and damp. An odor of unclean things filled the air. Men of all shapes and in all conditions of undress were fighting for the little available floor space. Were one so inclined, it would have been easy to step on a face or dig a hole in a kidney. As we walked toward the "lockers" we passed a room from which mountains of steam escaped. At somewhat regular intervals creatures no longer completely human would fly out of the doors. Gasping for air, skin a deep maroon, with smoke rising from their puckered, tortured flesh, they would plunge themselves under a shower of ice water. Instead of being ordered to go through this rigorous schedule by Cossacks seeking sport,

I shortly discovered they enjoyed it, and the torture was self-inflicted. For as the steamed creature stood beneath the icy blast, with great effort and from between tightly clutched teeth, I'm sure I heard him say, "Ah . . . good! Ah . . . good!"

I raised my eyes to Abel. Was I expected to do this too? He understood and patted me on the head. I was saved.

As we undressed two gentlemen passed us in the narrow aisle. Perhaps that is an exaggeration. They didn't really pass us. The aisle was narrow and they were, shall we say, on the stout side. Abel moved one way, I another, and then with great heaving and puffing we were plastered against the lockers. With a final heave, during which I heard my ribs crack, the gentlemen got through. During the travail they noticed Abel's violin case. "Must be a big-shot fiddler," one whispered to the other.

They turned back to look at him respectfully. Abel pretended to notice nothing. I could see he was pleased. The two men went to the end of the aisle. Then they turned and stood watching Abel who undressed with the elaborate care befitting a musician of note. He opened his violin case and, passing his fingers over the string, listened to the tone. Then saying it partly to himself, he sighed the single word, "Superb." He stood completely naked except for his hat which he decided to keep on to the last moment and repeated, "Superb." The two stout gentlemen, believing Abel was about to play, descended upon us.

"Where are you boys having dinner tonight?" the stout one asked.

"Haven't consulted my book yet," my brother haughtily informed him.

"Care to join us, friend, we're going to Hackney's for the best?" the second one contributed.

The first one rushed in, "As our guest completely, of course. . . ."

Abel pretended to be thinking. He opened his locker and took a little black book out of his jacket pocket. Deep in thought he moved the blank pages this way and that. Finally he said, "I see I am disengaged for this evening. . . . My brother and I will be happy to go. Gentlemen," he said with a long sweep of his graceful arm, "allow me to present my young brother, just arrived from darkest Europe. . . ."

Both of them grabbed me at once. One took hold of my shoulders and started to knead them affectionately, as if I were a choice Sunday morning roll. The other pumped my arm up and down till I was faint from the blood leaving my head and rushing to the rescue of my crushed fingers.

"Mister," the first one said, "you'll play something for us?"

"A little beauty can't hurt," the second one pleaded.

"Of course," Abel said, "my manager would positively kill me, if he knew I performed in Bernard's baths . . ."

"Abel," I tugged at his arm, "what manager?"

"Enough said, my boy, the one who has booked me into the Academy. But let us not bore these gentlemen with further details."

Soon the two naked gentlemen spilled themselves all

over the bench listening to the throbbing tones of Abel's sentimental song. It was not long before the aisle was filled with men of every shape and size all listening to the concert. Abel played on and on and didn't seem able to stop.

Business stopped in the locker room. No one was leav-

ing. People standing in the raging sun waiting for lockers couldn't get in. The "rubbers" weren't rubbing the hide off anyone. They too joined the audience. All of Mr. Bernard's helpers were standing about, not passing out towels or checking valuables or arguing with each other as to who would share in the stolen weekend loot. Mr. Bernard,

perched behind a cigar which contributed more than its share to the odor of his magnificent Roman baths, came trotting up to Abel.

"Please, what gives here, gentlemen, what gives?" he demanded.

"Quiet, ox!" one shouted.

"Kill the noisy dog," another yelled.

"Go to hell," Bernard answered them all at once.

Abel played on undisturbed.

"Boils will grow on your neck, fat pig, quiet!" a toothless man screamed.

"Go to hell," Bernard told them.

As he leaned his head against the wall unable to do anything, he noticed me.

"You," he called and motioned me to come to him.

"Yes, mister?" I asked.

"You came with him?" He pointed to the naked violinist.

"My brother," I said.

"Can you get him to stop playing?"

I shrugged.

"Look, bright young man. I'll give you money to make him stop."

I shrugged again.

He took a five-dollar bill from his pocket and pressed it into my hand.

Abel had played enough anyhow.

It wasn't for nothing that I had played King Lear in my native village at the age of fifteen. I suddenly developed cramps all over my body. With a great moan I threw my-

self on the floor, I kicked my heels about and screamed like hell. Abel stopped, bent over me, although not until he placed his fiddle back in its case.

"Willig, Willig," he cried, "what is it?"

"Sick. Sick," was all I could say. Bernard came rushing up.

"Give the boy air . . . air," he ran about yelling.

I TRIED to get into my bathing suit. It swam on all sides of me.

"Abel," I said, "this suit doesn't fit."

Without turning around, he said, "You look beautiful, simply beautiful."

"But it's big," I insisted. "Uncle Leon is three times bigger than me."

"Nonsense, my brother," he declared, "in our Declaration of Independence it says all men are created equal. In America everyone is equal. Throw your chest out and it'll fit you."

"Abel, please," I pleaded with him.

He paid no attention and dragging me by the hand pulled me to the beach. Fortunately, by using my free arm I was able to hold up the bathing suit.

Nothing bothered me as much as the American sun. Not a cloud blotted the sky. The light blue was beautiful and the red ball burned fiercely. In and out of the water Abel pushed me. We were no sooner in than he wanted to go out. When we were out he wouldn't rest till we were in the water again.

"My beloved brother," I implored, "must we dash about so madly?"

"Hustle, bustle," he said.

"What is this hustle, bustle?"

"Ignorant you never were in the old country. Did you leave your brains at home with your old pants?"

"You make me out to be an idiot," I said.

"Please, little one," Abel rushed to assure me, "I don't mean to hurt your feelings."

"Very well, my feelings are repaired," I told him.

"Hustle, bustle, is America . . . everything must be done quickly. If somebody can eat three pancakes in three minutes you must learn to do it in two."

"You mean there is no time to eat here?" I asked.

"There is no time for anything here . . . absolutely nothing," he told me.

"If that's the case, how does anything ever get finished?"

"Why should it get finished," Abel stressed, "if by the time it is half done someone else has a better idea?"

"And what do you call this?" I wanted to know.

"Hustle, bustle . . ."

Despite his rush rush, Abel was tired, and he turned over to broil himself in the sun. Since I wasn't quite as Americanized as he, I welcomed the opportunity to race out of the inferno to the cool and quiet of the shade under the boardwalk. Two hours later Abel awakened and decided I was hungry.

We went to a food stand. Expertly he called, "Two hot dogs."

"Dogs?" I asked.

"Two hot dogs," he repeated.

"Brother, please, I will eat anything but dogs. . . ." I was disgusted.

"Shh, green one, quiet," he begged.

"Abel, who can eat dogs? I never ate horse meat in Europe. Did I have to come to America to eat dogs?"

"They're good," he insisted.

"Abel, sweet one, I will eat anything but not dogs, especially hot dogs!"

He looked at me sympathetically and I thought I would get something good. My contentment was short-lived. Abel ordered, "Two fish cakes."

What madness was this? I was seized by a great loneliness for the simple foods of my native land.

"Fish cakes?" I screamed. "I'll eat pretzels."

He went on, "Fish cakes, two fish cakes for my little brother."

"Abel," I said, "by the love we bear our dear mother, no cakes of fish and no meat of dogs."

Abel was patient, I must say that for him. He took me aside and told me what hot dogs and fish cakes were. Trusting in him and his superior judgment, although I must confess I prayed a little under my breath, I tasted a hot dog. I liked it.

When I ordered another one, Abel kissed me.

"Now," he said, "I am beginning to get a little pleasure out of you!"

By the time I had ordered a third American hot dog Abel was the happiest man in the world.

I also had two bottles of soda. These bubbled in my stomach for three hours reminding me I had dogs in my stomach swimming around in colored water.

I BEGAN TO DEVELOP a strange soreness across my shoulders. My stomach was rolling and I wanted to lie down in the shade. Abel would have none of this. Pleasure was a thing you took in indigestible doses, and if you died in the attempt it was a good death.

MY BROTHER WAS, among a few other minor accomplishments, the greatest swimmer alive. Today he was going to exhibit this to me.

We ran into the water, and he ordered me to stay in the shallow part with the dunking old ones. These obese creatures bathed by submerging themselves to the rim of their middles, sighing in oriental incantation and throwing water upon their ponderous breasts. Then, as I proudly watched him, Abel dove into a wave and swam away. I enjoyed watching him. Before I knew it a large roller lifted me off my feet, hurled me upon the floor of the ocean, scooped me up again and dragged me out over my head. I was drowning.

What thoughts raced through my head as I faced death I won't bore you with. Fortunately I was rescued by two lifeguards who first thought it necessary to show the girls on the beach how quickly they could beat me into insensibility. I was eager to go along. But each time I tried to

thank them for getting to me on time, they lifted me by the hair and smashed me in the face. They were quite fair about it though. First one hit me and then the other. As well as I can remember they didn't cheat each other and only stopped when they each had hit me an equal number of times. Then, handling me very gently, they hauled me into the boat. Evidently suspecting I was lifeless and couldn't breathe, although I had spoken to them, they pounded me on my stomach, leaped upon my back and, pressing their palms into my kidneys, continued to force air from my mouth. They wouldn't be content till I had bled a little for them, so to oblige I bled from my mouth, my eyes and then as a great feat I even bled from my ears. Now, I thought as I lay in the bottom of the lifeguard boat, my time had come.

Tired from their labors and convinced that though broken in body and spirit I would live, the guards rested. Suddenly there was a great shout. Another rescue was under way. My lifeguards forgot all about me and raced to save another man, who I knew would be better off if left to rot on the floor of the sea.

They dove into the water and brought up their next victim. Blue and with a puffed face, arms dangling loosely, water belching from his mouth was that great channel swimmer, the swimming champion of Europe and America . . . my dear brother. As soon as he could breathe he started to yell.

"Leave off, loafers, leave off. Trying to hog all the glory. I was trying to save my brother."

"Shad up," they beseeched him.

"Hit me on the head with an oar," Abel screamed, "that's what they did, brother. I could swim to France if I had to. No doubt if I had a boat I would have got to you first."

They ignored Abel and rowed to the beach. I cringed in the bottom of the boat suddenly discovering I had lost my bathing suit. The guards noticed it too and after a hurried consultation gave me a sand-covered towel.

A visit from the Czar to Kiev never attracted so huge a crowd as I saw awaiting my return to the living. So many people interested in whether or not I lived or died? Amazing. I was flattered and despite the fact that my body was sore, my skin aflame and the sand on the towel filed my body, I was cheered.

Abel and I walked through the crowd, being slapped on the back. It was nice knowing so many strangers cared but tell me, did they have to show it so plainly?

All this time I hadn't looked at my brother. When we got to the locker I glanced at him. The day in the sun had done him good. The city pallor was gone. He was a bright healthy pink.

"Even the best swimmers get in a little trouble," he began.

"Who doesn't know that?" I comforted him.

"You're a smart boy," he said, relaxing.

We were to meet the stout gentlemen. As we were dressing Bernard came in and told us they had left.

"Bluffers," Abel frowned.

I told him not to worry. I would take him to dinner.

"And what will you feed me, groats?" he asked.

I didn't argue. I took out the five dollars Bernard had

given me. I explained how I got it. Abel told me I would be a great success some day. I didn't argue about that either.

ABEL TOOK ME to a fancy restaurant all the way at the end of the boardwalk. We were handed long cards on which were countless dishes. I could read none of it. Abel, good faithful Abel, came to my rescue. "I will order for you, little one," he said.

"Thank you, loving brother," I said.

He ordered our dinner.

The waiter arrived and set before me a large round dish, the bottom of which was covered with ice. Resting on shells embedded in the ice were six gray organisms. They reminded me of the snails that crawled in our garden at home.

"Abel," I meekly said.

"And now what?" he glowered at me.

"Snails?"

"No, oysters. Eat them," he ordered.

"I can't."

"Do you want to be an American?" he asked me.

"What else?"

"Americans eat oysters, right?"

"Yes," I answered, on the verge of tears.

Fearful of getting ill all over the tablecloth I didn't open my mouth.

Abel called the waiter.

"Will you please take these away and bring my brother a dozen fried!"

"You ordered these," he said, pointing to the oysters.

"I did."

"You'll have to pay for them."

"And did I say I wouldn't?" Abel was getting angry.

"I didn't say you wouldn't, I only wanted you to know," the waiter went on.

"When I ask you something you will please remember to tell me you don't know," Abel exploded. With a flourish he let the waiter know the conversation was at an end.

The fried oysters were done in true Atlantic City style. The oyster was placed upon a layer of bread crumbs at least twice as thick as the oyster and then fried. I ate the fried bread crumbs, only occasionally aware that something was sandwiched in between. I still didn't like the taste but by quickly dousing the entire business with hot coffee, and holding my mouth tightly shut after each bite, I lived through the meal.

Abel looked across the table at a man wrestling with a red animal and ordered one of "those." He cracked three rear teeth breaking into it, soiled his suit, tie and shirt trying to extract a bit of flesh of the beast. Then, as hungry as he was when he came in, he told me how full he was and how much he had enjoyed it. It seemed to me three rolls and butter and three cups of coffee aren't the kind of dessert to eat after a full meal. But Abel knew. He was an American. I was still a greenhorn.

While he struggled with the lobster he kept nagging me to taste some. I promised him I would as soon as I became an American citizen.

When he had finished eating the waiter brought over two finger bowls. Abel drank his and, following suit, I

drank mine and remarked that it tasted just like water. Abel informed me there was some kind of tasteless chemical in it that would make us strong and healthy.

THE SUN WAS SETTING after its hard day of cooking the world. We walked out on the boardwalk. Abel had a little difficulty walking. He was constantly lifting his jacket from his shoulders. He explained he had grown during the day's enjoyment. He didn't think his clothes fit him any longer.

"You like Atlantic City, little one?" he asked.

"Yes. But there are many things I don't understand."

"For instance?"

"For instance, how can a city be so close to the water and not be washed away?" I wanted to know.

"And smart one, who says it wasn't ever washed away," he answered.

"How many times?"

"Many times—in fact, doubtful one, on the way home I will show you there is water on both sides of Atlantic City. There was a time when there was no Atlantic City. But aren't we in America the greatest engineers? We wanted a place like this so we moved the water back five hundred feet, filled it in with a little sand and built ourselves these huge palaces. Nothing stops us here."

"And," I asked, "how do those piers stand up in water?"

"All with air pressure," he said.

"What is this air pressure?"

"You mean to tell me you're sixteen and you don't know what air pressure is?" he asked.

"I'm sorry, clever brother, but I must be backward. I confess I don't know what air pressure is."

"Well, you see, air pressure is made of two things. Air and pressure, you understand?"

"No."

"You are after all only sixteen. Too young to bother with such complicated engineering details. When you are older you mustn't forget to come to me and I'll enlighten you further."

"But I want to know now."

"When you are Americanized this, like many other mysteries will be clear to you, in fact," he continued, "you have behaved so nicely, learned a few English words and even got used to some of our food and customs you are partly ready."

"For what?"

"I feel you are partly ready now to take out your first citizenship papers."

"Thank you, my clever wonderful brother. . . ."

"So," Abel said, "we will go tomorrow at nine o'clock to get your first citizenship papers. But you must have your mouth shut!" Although I did not answer, I could not understand how I could ever become a citizen and keep my mouth shut at the same time!

The trip home was comparatively uneventful. Abel left me at my door, hurriedly explained he had to see one of his many girls and disappeared before I could properly thank him for the fine day. It was strange and I thought he fidgeted a good deal. His face was very red. He looked very healthy.

WHEN I AWOKE my aunt told me Uncle Leon had received an emergency call. Abel was in the hospital.

I ran all the way. After great difficulty I was admitted to a room with many beds, in the center of which lay a figure completely covered with bandages. Here was my Americanized brother.

"Abel, beloved, what have they done to you?" I asked.

The visible parts of his body, a few specks about his eyes, were a bright brick red.

"Abel, that lobster." I was beside myself with worry.

Uncle Leon was seated at one side of the bed with his head in his hands, slowly swaying from side to side.

"Uncle Leon," I cried, "it was the lobster."

To Abel I said, "What is it, please tell me?"

"It is nothing," he answered, in a voice delivered with pain from a great distance. "It is nothing," he repeated.

"Sweet one, you look broiled," I said.

"Already two specialists were here," Abel whispered, "I have first degree burns."

First degree burns I said to myself. That brother of mine, in everything he comes in first.

I Work with My Back

ONE MORNING I got up feeling listless and dull. I was tired of being taken places and treated as an oddity. I also wanted to pay my way. There was some point at which I must start to build for my future. Knowing the chaos the simplest discussion would evoke in my family, I decided to look for work without announcing it.

While walking in my uncle's neighborhood, I noticed new houses being built. I saw a man giving directions to the others. I walked up to him. By sign language, which included flexing my practically non-existent muscles and other gestures, I conveyed the idea to him that I wanted work. He looked me up and down with an appraisal I'd like to translate for you as joy—it was probably nearer disgust. He asked me what I could do. I understood that and told him I could paint.

The foreman called another man over and told him to put me to work. He took me to the second floor, gave me a paint brush, showed me where the paint was and pointed to a section of the wall. All this without a word.

I set to work. I took off my jacket, reversed my trousers and rolled up my sleeves. I climbed the ladder and started

to paint. When my back was all but broken and my arms were encased in lead, I had finished the wall. I stepped back to admire my work. I looked at the bucket of paint. It *seemed* to be all one color. Yet my wall was a smallpox. One section was heavily covered, another barely at all. There were rivulets that ran from the ceiling to the floor and marked with great accuracy every time I dipped the brush and brought it fresh and heavy to the wall. It was a surrealist mural.

The foreman apparently was a man of considerable humor. I thought he was laughing. He asked me my name. I told him. He kept his lips tightly compressed and the veins stood out on his forehead. When he spoke I thought his eyes would pop. The language was new to me. It was only after he started to wave his arms and I thought of the windmill I had seen in a book that I understood. I was discharged. I was not disheartened. There was work for everyone in America. I knew that.

Next morning I walked one block past my first job and found another building boom. I told the foreman I was a painter. He placed me next to another painter and told him to put me to work.

When the foreman left I looked at the painter carefully and decided to take a chance. I greeted him in my native tongue. He understood. I told him I had a wife and three children to support. I didn't have to tell him I was no painter. He could see by the way I held the brush. I told him I would try to do a job if he would please help me.

"My boy, we will lick this deal," he assured me.

"Thank you, my good friend," I answered.

"You," he said, "will paint the undercoat. Just slap it

on. And for God sakes don't worry, look how the sun shines. Who am I to tell how the sun shines? A man with your youth and three children already."

I did as I was told and despite an aching body finished the day's work. At quitting time, a man came over and asked me if I worked there.

"Yes," I said.

He was tall and very well dressed.

"I am the President . . ." he said.

But I would not let him go on. I cried out, "Legal . . . legal . . . came in legal!"

I had spoken so quickly he was startled into silence. During that moment of quiet I couldn't get myself to understand how the President could take time to speak to me personally. This was wonderful. I was only in the country a month and I had not only seen the President but had spoken to him. In the old country not a person in our village had ever seen the Kaiser. There was an old man who claimed to have seen him at a great distance, but we knew he lied.

The President was not long in recovering himself from my blast and softly approaching me with tact, diplomacy and an understanding of my limited English asked me if I was a member of the union. My friend, the painter, explained this to me. He told me also who this president was. Up to this point, except for my definitive statement on my entrance into the country I had said nothing, largely because I didn't know what was expected of me.

"Either you join the union or you cannot work at this trade anywhere in America," the president said.

Patiently the painter translated. He told me the benefits of belonging to the union.

"How much?" I asked.

"Fifty dollars."

"That is a lot of money for me. But if you give me a chance to work, I will pay it a little at a time."

The president agreed. The pay clerk came over and gave me five dollars in cash for the day's work. This certificate was testimony to my first day's labor in the new world. I turned it over in my hands several times. If I worked only five days a week, I would have twenty-five dollars. This was more money than city officials got in my home town in a month.

To show my good faith I gave the five-dollar bill to the union president. He was pleased. He gave me a receipt and told me I would get a letter advising me when I could come to my first meeting. I folded the receipt with great care and continued to wash. I couldn't wait to get home. The foreman came over and asked me how I liked the work.

"Good," I told him.

"Lousy," he said.

"No good?" I asked.

"It may be good to you but it's lousy to us," he continued. "You are not a painter. I don't know what you are and I can't afford to find out. You go find out what you are."

Fired twice in two days. It could be discouraging. Especially if it got to be a habit. I forgot I wanted to be a painter. Yet for a whole year I received letters from the

union, asking me to come to a meeting and instructing me to bring the forty-five-dollar balance due on my initiation.

It took me no time at all to overcome my unsatisfactory experience with the painting industry. The very next morning I had decided to become a food tycoon. Abel was urging me to do something big. I agreed.

"The way to learn," he warned me, "is to start from the bottom. If you do that, when you are at the top no one can fool you. You can always see what was at the bottom." My brother was a philosopher.

THERE WAS A large grocery and delicatessen store about ten blocks from my uncle's home. They were looking for a boy. I was hired at twelve dollars a week. The hours somewhat exceeded the sunrise-to-sunset edict of the farm, but I wanted to be a food tycoon. I was to work from six A. M. to eight P. M.

In my mind I saw columns of figures. By eating all my meals in the store, I would not have any expenses and would be able to save all my wages. My rapid calculations revealed that at the end of the first year I would have six hundred and twenty-four dollars. Enough to bring my mother and sister from Europe.

I couldn't stand the stigma of getting fired again on my first day so I told no one I had a job. If I got fired I would have to tell no one either. But if the job worked out, I would tell my relatives, assured that I could hold it awhile. I got to the market at five A. M. The store didn't open until six. When the boss came he found me sitting on the front step, bright-eyed and ready for work.

My first job was to polish the fruit. To become better acquainted with merchandise I tasted everything in the store. We had good stock. Very tasty, too.

At eighty-thirty that evening, when everyone had left, I told the boss I would like to stay and fix the stand for the next day. He was pleased. I helped myself to several meat sandwiches, sour pickles, fruit and other things. I was young and it had been a long day. I walked home slowly.

As I approached the door, it was flung open and two large men grabbed me and pulled me inside. My uncle leaped to the phone when I entered and proceeded to beg the editor of a morning paper not to print the note of my disappearance.

The detectives sat me in a chair and began to ask me questions. When I wouldn't answer they got all the lamps in the house and directed them on my face. I told them there was enough light. Besides it was hot with those bulbs in my face. They wanted to know where I was, who kidnapped me, and how I managed to escape?

"Uncle," I asked, "who are these men?"

"He lives," my uncle shouted, "he lives and he asks questions." Uncle walked around the room twice trying to control himself.

"Flesh of my sister's flesh," he pleaded, "where were you?" Without waiting for an answer he started to scream at his wife, "It's all your fault."

It seems a rather unique custom, but among my people when something goes wrong the first thing to do is to blame one's wife. This is good for many reasons. First, it keeps the little woman scared to death and assures her dying before you, if from nothing else than plain, simple fright. Thus she can't get your insurance. Second, since

you are almost always larger than she, this tactic gives you an opportunity to bully her continuously.

"What will they say of me?" Uncle Leon moaned. "Already the first edition is on the stands. I can't even take care of my nephew. A disgrace. . . ."

The private detectives were paid ten dollars each. My aunt stopped crying and kissed me. She was glad to see me. Uncle stayed mad for a week. They were both happy I had a job.

I WAS OBEDIENT and worked very hard. I imagined the owner was pleased with my work. But he was rarely pleasant. In fact, the only time I saw him smile was when I turned my delivery tips over to him.

Saturday, we closed the doors at eleven P. M. after a long day of a long first week. The boss paid me twelve dollars and stood looking at me. After a minute he said, "That's all. You are fired."

I was a "good boy." He wanted me to work from six A. M. to eight P. M. I didn't leave before nine and twice I worked till nine-thirty.

"Like a horse I work," I told him.

"That's right," he agreed.

"You don't want a horse, maybe you want a camel?" I suggested.

"A horse is good enough. You work like a horse but you eat like a horse. You should have paid me for working here."

Can you argue with an idiot? I left. I came home slowly clutching the twelve dollars in my hand.

"Good evening, sport," Abel greeted me, "he comes with his big pay. One week pay for three weeks' work."

"I am fired again," I told him.

"I'm not surprised," Abel said.

"You don't think I work hard?" I asked him.

"Hard yes, smart no." He continued, "How in the world can you hold a job when you wear white socks? Don't you know in America white socks are worn only by criminals and gangsters? That's like a signal, a code of their gangs. Is it a wonder you were fired?"

I never wore white socks again.

EVERY CITY has its good side and its bad side. I was told the good side is called "swell." For the bad side my people had no name. Later I discovered the bad side is called "slums."

I was taught, too, that a very famous American, once a candidate for President of the United States, had said, "You never know a city till you've seen its slums." I tell you this for it was in the heart of that section of the slums, a section no longer even good enough as a slum for families and occupied only by derelicts, that I went for my next job.

This place is known as the bowery in some cities, in others it is called the tenderloin. There are other names for it. What it is called may vary but the horrid oppression, the odor are always the same.

After my failure to place myself as a cog in the American industrial machine, my family showed its determination by suggesting I become a barber. This had many

advantages. Not least among them was the fact that as a barber's assistant I could continue my schooling. In those days most barber work was done during the weekend. The wage wasn't bad either. The assistant got only five dollars a week less than the regular barber.

Abel was opposed to this.

"It is enough that one genius is buried in this family," he shouted at them, "must we all be barbers?" He was a barber.

"I have good reason to believe," he went on, "as I will illustrate to you blockheads one of these days, that Willig is a genius. Of course, I don't know if he is a genius of my calibre but he is at least a second-rate genius and that is damn good for a boy who is only off the boat a short time."

However, they beat him down, and the next day, sad and depressed, he took me to a barber school. Deep into the bowery we went where the filth and corruption had a scent all its own. It was new to me. I went to the curb and was sick.

Abel the realist paid no attention. It was an odd thing about my brother: he could be flighty, but when faced with the inevitable he knew how to accept it. He always did it with good grace. If I was to be a barber, and he confessed to its advantages, there was little need to have a weak stomach about it.

"It is not nice here, Willig," he said meekly.

"It is not nice."

"You will get your first experience and it will be worth while," he said.

"I will try," I said.

The twenty-five dollar enrollment fee was paid and I was a student. They assigned me to a chair and taught me how to say, "Next!"

MY FIRST PATIENT approached the chair preceded by many gremlins and three large white elephants all of which gave off a peculiar gas known as alcohol. I put a handkerchief around my nose. Under the supervision of my teacher, also no teetotaler, I fastened an apron around his neck. I leaned forward in my most courteous manner, as Abel had instructed me, and asked him what he wanted.

"Bring me three hamburgers with plenty of onions," he bellowed.

I asked him again, "Haircut or shave?" With this sentence I practically exhausted my knowledge of barbershop lingo.

"My dear fellow," my client said, "give me the works."

The grooves I managed to get into his hair have since become a fashionable style. In many states such as New York it is occasionally popular.

Have you ever seen the head of a gentleman being readied for electrocution? If you have, then you know—if you haven't, let me tell you that the style known as "close-crop-electrocution" was my very own original fashion. Since the job preceding a legalized killing is not done under the most relaxed auspices, a feature of the "close-crop-electrocution" is the various islands of hair surrounded by vast seas of newly acquired baldness.

"It grows back soon," my teacher said.

The shave is famous too, more so than the close-crop.

It is known as the "Arch Street Torture." It was only the miracle inherent in the healing properties of my patient's fine old alcoholized blood that prevented him from dissolving beneath my knife. His face was a lacerated hodgepodge and for a week he eluded the police who looked for him on every street corner.

It appears I had shaved no less a character than Philadelphia's most famous pickpocket and provided him with a unique, if temporary, disguise.

Abel's Golden Rainbow

"BUT I TELL YOU, you'll like him," Abel said.

"Who is he, this special guest you are bringing into my house?" Celia asked.

"He is my brother," Abel went on.

"Fine. We will be happy to see him. But why do you make such a fuss over him?"

"Sit down, Celia, please, and let me tell you." Here Abel paused to catch his breath and assume his most charming manner.

"Have you ever heard of Pasteur, Steinmetz, Edison, DeForest?" With each name his voice rose.

"I have heard of them all," she interrupted.

"I am bringing to you a greater man than all these. He is my brother Willig, you will see."

"For your sake we will be happy to receive him," Celia said.

This didn't satisfy Abel. He had a talent for gilding the lily. He felt he hadn't sufficiently impressed the household. For many hours far into the night, he told and retold the story of his remarkable brother, the great and accomplished inventor. There is little wonder that after these

glowing descriptions there should have been some slight amazement when Abel presented me, in all the glory of my sixteen years, as a collaborator of the great scientists of the world.

After a moment during which Celia regained her composure, she made me welcome. The room Abel occupied in the Hirsh's household was cozy. I decided that this was the place where I would live until I had begun to make my way.

Celia introduced me to the family. I had never before called anybody by their first names. But with the Hirsh's it was a necessity. There was Nathan, Celia's husband. He was a carpenter and a solid citizen who divided his time between his work, his family and his love of music. He knew me five minutes when, with his hand about my shoulder, his head tilted back, he sang a beautiful song to make me feel at home. It took little to get him to sing and great strength of character to get him to stop. He was a jolly man and loved his family with a passionate disregard for their natural faults and shortcomings.

The daughter and apparently the princess of the castle, a little cream puff, a bit of water in a desert, was a four-year-old beauty. Her name was Rita. She kissed me hello.

Celia's sister, about whom Abel hadn't stopped raving for weeks, had just returned from the hospital. She had had an ear operation. I was taken upstairs to see her where she lay in bed, her head almost completely covered with bandages. Only her eyes and her pale lips were visible. She smiled a little smile at me and said she would be very happy to get to know me better. I felt the strangest kind

of elation. It was as if my body were no longer incapable of flying. I felt at home.

She asked me how I enjoyed my trip across and what I thought of my new land. I wasn't aware there was anyone else in the room. I talked to Nina and to her alone. She had the ability to listen well. There are too few people who have developed this lost art. We talked and laughed often at things that might not have been funny ordinarily but suddenly were. I didn't notice when the others went to dinner.

In telling her of my trip I found her enjoying my tale, and when she laughed I noticed her teeth. They were pretty, even teeth and her skin had a luminous quality. She looked frail, like a young child who had lost its way in the dark. When she looked at me I felt gay and a little dizzy.

Several times they called me to dinner. I wasn't hungry. I wanted nothing more than to stay and talk to this strange girl. I was aware that Nina, weakened by our laughter, was falling off to sleep. I went on talking quietly, telling her of the beauties of my native village. I told her how the trees sang at night before the storm. I told her of the taste of water from the mountain streams. I told her of the things I had felt all my life but never had reason to tell anyone before. I sat and watched her sleep. I saw the beauty of her regular breathing and the softness of her lips. I sat back in my chair. In the peacefulness of the little room I nodded and slept.

It was much later, I know, when Abel half woke me and carried me off to sleep with him. I dreamt of this beau-

tiful girl all night, and in my dreams I remember a new determination to succeed. In the morning Abel and Nathan had gone to work when Celia woke me. She wanted me to have breakfast with her.

She asked me why my brother advertised me as a great inventor. I told her this: When he was twelve and I was ten we were taken by our uncles to see our first movie. The picture was exhibited by a man who came to our native village every few months. He showed his pictures in the town hall, using a homemade projector. Our house was one of the largest and he stayed overnight with us. I was all excited after we saw the movie and when we got home I asked him all kinds of questions. I was most intrigued by the material of which the films were made. He was at a loss in explaining just what it was and finally hit on the example of phonograph records. It was made of material similar to these, he said. I asked the man why couldn't we have people talk in the movies. He could make them walk, why couldn't he make them talk? I was young.

I rushed on to explain, before my excitable uncles could stop me, that by recording voices the same as on a phonograph record they could be placed directly on the movie film. In other words, I tried to tell them to attach a needle to the projector and the film would have a sound tract. This was pretty raw but it was the germ of an idea.

My uncles felt my head, took my temperature, undressed me and put me to bed. They thought I had become affected by seeing a movie for the first time. I was not permitted to see another movie till I was fourteen. It made little difference, it was probably the same film.

When Abel came to the United States and heard of the early experiments in sound recording by DeForest and others, he told everyone I would be a great inventor. Stretching his fertile imagination a little, he told everyone his brother *is* the greatest inventor alive.

Mrs. Hirsh admired my honesty and we immediately became good friends.

UNCLE LEON'S pompous speeches were beginning to bore me. Besides I wanted above all to be some place near this girl Nina. The room Abel occupied was too small for both of us. He was no fool and he liked to live at the Hirsh's. They were among the few people who ever really appreciated him. It would take more than simple logic to get Abel to move.

When he came home that night I asked him about living there.

"The bed is too small," he pointed out.

"We could get a larger bed?" I suggested.

"The room is too small for a larger bed," he said.

After a few minutes he must have seen how bad I felt.

"Well, Willig," he said, "stay here a few days and we will see."

EVERY NIGHT Abel would awaken many times. He seemed to be constantly bitten by some crawling thing. He always woke me and asked me if I felt anything. He would scratch the irritated spots but couldn't see any skin erup-

tions. Abel didn't know what to do. He was even ashamed of discussing it with me. I knew what he thought and since he said nothing to me, I didn't want to say anything to him either.

"Willig, you'll be happier some place else," he said.

"I like it here. It's nice and clean," I said.

"It's nice but how do you know it's cl . . ." he started to say.

"I know," I insisted.

Finally he told Celia he thought there were bugs in the bed. She raced upstairs and tore the sheets from the bed. She examined the mattress carefully.

"Smart one, do you see anything? Something crawls here?" she shouted.

Poor Abel. He couldn't lift his head. He picked up his fiddle and went to work. Regardless of what Celia said or what he himself had seen, the next night was no more peaceful than the last.

The following evening at dinner, Abel announced he had a speech to make. We all took him quite seriously as was the custom. He would discuss a secret topic, he said.

After a long preamble in which he thanked them for being alive, he concluded, "Celia, I leave you my little brother. I am, after all, an Americanized fellow. It is only proper that of the two of us I should go."

It wasn't that everyone was glad to get rid of Abel, that made them so happy. I like to think they saw how grateful I was and they reflected my joy. I looked at Nina, at Celia and Nathan and Rita's eager faces. I was lucky, I had a new family.

IT WAS SOME WEEKS before Celia discovered her hat pin missing.

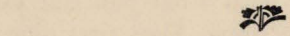
"Willig," she glared at me, "did you see my hat pin?"

"Hat pin?" I asked. "Hat pin? What would I do with a hat pin?"

"I hold my hat down with a hat pin. But you, smart boy, might use it for a bedbug. Was that nice, sticking Abel with it?"

I was too ashamed to speak.

The Philadelphia Lawyer



I COULDN'T STAND RIDING in Philadelphia's so-called rapid transit system. I decided to buy a bicycle.

I walked into a large store on Market Street. The salesman came forward bowing, polite, full of good fellowship. I told him what I wanted.

Hearing my accent, he inquired about my home town. As is always true in such cases, it developed that he was from a neighboring village, close by, in fact, only about eight hundred miles away as the crow flies. However, he had a cousin of a sister-in-law who lived in our town for a short time, under, I might add, suspicious circumstances.

Naturally this led to immediate intimacies. He insisted that he was within a parenthesis of being my sixth cousin, and taking this much to heart he would sell me a bicycle for fifty dollars out of the goodness of his heart and consideration for my parents. Fifty dollars! I thought this was a veritable fortune.

"I have only twenty-five dollars," I told the man.

"Do you see me standing over you with a gun?" he answered.

Quickly pen and paper appeared like Wall in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and I had signed my first business agreement.

Historians would do well to disregard this venture. They will learn little to benefit them except those wishing to prove the depth of my stupidity. I was to pay one dollar weekly toward the balance. Such things as interest and charges were mysteries it took me fifteen years to learn.

There were a few other technicalities I had overlooked. Only one bears discussion now and that is the simple unadorned fact that I couldn't ride at all. Now that I had the bike I also found myself possessed of a growing fear of riding in the narrow, traffic-infested streets. But being a brave man, I took the handlebars firmly between my hands and walked the thing to Strawberry Mansions. It wasn't a long walk. Except for the three autos that hit me and drove me into the gutter I didn't have a bad time of it. I was home in one hour and twenty-five minutes. I had slight pains in my calves next day from the damp weather.

Celia, ever a practical woman, glancing through the evening gazette in search of items to stretch her dollar, came upon a department store ad. The picture, the description, the manufacturer were all the same as my bicycle. The price was seventeen-fifty. This was the complete, the total price. Even at a glance I could see my bike had been more expensive.

Celia's face was still with anger. I could see that the fuse was set and in a minute she was going to explode.

"Fifty dollars, Willig!" she glowered at me.

Nina, as always, came to my rescue. "Perhaps," she said, "it's a different one."

"Yes, a different one," was all I could say.

"She says something," Celia yelled, "and he says it twice. Willig the yes-man."

Celia went on to read the ad aloud from beginning to end. She went to the yard where the bike was parked and compared it with the picture. There was no getting around the facts, or away from Celia. She was right and when she was, she could stop a hurricane of wrongs with her little finger.

I marched down the long trek once again. This time I only walked halfway. I had learned to ride a little. The scars, accumulated as I bounded off the pavement, weren't visible. Most of them were etched on my legs and remained covered by my trousers.

"Mr. Salesman," I called as I entered the store, "Mr. Salesman!"

My pseudo-relative came galloping out from the back.

"Ah, my European cousin." He came toward me. Holding my arm up with the elbow facing him was the only way I could keep him from kissing me.

"Enough," I said, "here's your bargain. Give me back the paper on which I signed away my life."

He got pale. His hands reached up to his tie and he loosened his collar. He came toward me, his eyes tearing. He took me by the lapels and then, blowing the odor of ten Bayuk Specials straight into my stomach, declared, "Take my life. You call me a liar, what is there left? You come in and I treat you like a near and dear one. You return

not to give me regards from your dear mother, but only to berate me. To throw garbage on me. Why?"

I extended the ad toward him.

"Ahhhaaa." He dropped me like a cold knish. "And who is this Gimbel Brothers to you, you should take their word over mine? Are they landsmen too, are they cousins? Does the same blood flow in your veins as in theirs? I thought you were of my people, I thought you had a heart and a brain. . . ."

I had been silent too long. "It's the same bike," I volunteered.

"The same bike," he mocked me, "the same bike, you don't say. Better someone should throw stones on me than I should insult a relative. And I don't want to do it, but you want me to drink mud. So what can I do? Greenhorn, only to the stupid eye does this look like the same bike."

"Celia says it's the same bike," I persisted.

"Celia, and who is this Celia, from your home town, too?" he wanted to know.

I told him she was my sister.

"A pity and a shame," the salesman went on. "A boy's sister takes him by the nose and leads him to the gutter. And does sister Celia know about steel?"

"She knows about anything that breathes and everything that doesn't."

"A female engineer, a metallurgist?" he sneered. "By chance a woman who by intuition can tell between tempered steel and iron, which is which and which is better?"

He hammered away at me and, being a born sucker, I

bought four dollars worth of additional accessories before he let me loose. I was now convinced I had the best bargain in the world.

Several weeks later when I felt I had mastered the bike I started to use it to go to work.

Some years ago there was a popular sport played by the trolley motormen in the city of brotherly love. A championship contest was in progress to determine which of these monsters could decapitate the greatest number of cyclists.

I was at a disadvantage or they never would have got me. The street was narrow. Cars were parked on one side and traffic sped down the other. My wheel got nervous and the trolley car struck me with a resounding whack. My left foot was badly banged up. I had more than a slight concussion and my body was covered with cuts and bruises. My bike, beaten beyond repair, lay on the curb beside me and whined like a sick child. I was stunned and remember only the ambulance ride, Uncle Leon's face in the hospital, Celia and Nina when I was taken home. They put me together with bobbypins and chewing gum and told me to get plenty of rest and quiet. This prescription needs none of the science taught in the eighteen years of formal schooling necessary for a man to practice medicine in our country. My grandmother knew enough to tell me that.

The first morning after my return from the hospital Uncle Leon came running in with the bicycle salesman. It turned out the salesman's name was Dimitri Abramovitz and reading in the paper of my accident, he had come to sympathize.

"Poor boy," he cried, "how will I face your mother when she comes to our country?"

"You are acquainted with my sister?" Uncle Leon asked. Uncle Leon had come prepared to find the salesman's name and then tear him apart. Since they had met here unexpectedly, Uncle Leon was won over by the puckered brow and tearing eyes of Dimitri Abramovitz.

"Has he signed anything?" Abramovitz asked Uncle Leon.

"Has he signed anything?" Uncle Leon asked Celia.

"The boy barely lives. How could he sign anything?" Celia said, chasing them out.

Abramovitz was indeed prophetic. No sooner had they gone than a citizen, full of bluster and legal statistics, came from the trolley car company. He looked me over, asked me a few harmless questions and then, pushing a sheaf of papers toward me to sign, told me I was getting three hundred dollars for my injuries and loss of time.

I didn't sign. Uncle Leon had warned me. The man packed his briefcase, told me I was a fool and left. My head ached and I was happy at last to be left alone.

He had barely been gone ten minutes when Abramovitz and my uncle came back. Between them rubbing shoulder to shoulder they supported a lawyer, in almost upright position, who incidentally happened to be Abramovitz's younger brother. The salesman's interest in my well-being suddenly became clear.

The legal brain entered. Celia and Nina stood nervously at the foot of the bed. I lay in a semi-coma praying for silence.

"Let's get to it," the lawyer said briskly, and looking

from Celia to Nina to me, he went on, "Now which one of you very good people is the unfortunate—"

"Abramovitz," Uncle screamed at the bike salesman, "better than Clarence Darrow you told me?"

"It's the boy, Ivan!" Dimitri told his brother. "The one in bed."

On flowed the lawyer, "Now as I understand the case . . ." Out came his notebook and his pencil danced across the pages taking notes. After twenty minutes, during which I answered each question twelve times, Ivan Abramovitz rose and paced the floor. He put his palm to his forehead and looked out the window.

"Well, Ivan, well?" his brother anxiously inquired.

"I . . . don't . . . know," he said, "the case leaves me cold. It doesn't stir me up."

"Stir you up, like sugar in your coffee I'll stir you up," Uncle Leon screamed.

"You would like a murder case maybe?"

Ivan's eyes shone like full moons. "For that I would give my life," he orated.

"In a minute I'll kill your brother and you too," Uncle Leon snapped. "Get to work and let's see what you can do."

Uncle Leon was capable of sounding like he knew what he was doing every so often. He got rid of the lawyer and the salesman and then proceeded to have a confidential talk with me. He said, "If they are willing already before going to court and before hearing from Abramovitz to come across with three hundred dollars, what will they offer when we take them to court?"

In the course of events, while the wheels of justice

ground out the kernels of law, my case came up. My injuries had healed. I had forgotten the pain and the dreams of fortunes. Uncle Leon hadn't, and Ivan Abramovitz hadn't, and Dimitri Abramovitz hadn't.

Immediately before the case came to court, my lawyer went over my testimony with me word for word. "I will tell them the truth," I said.

"Truth, what is truth? Now please, Willig. What time was it when you came up the street?" The man asked the question as if he hadn't heard the answer twenty times. I was weary of the entire business and wondered if all cases in the American courts were prepared this way. I felt I had a just case. Why then, I wanted to know, couldn't I just state it simply and be done with it. You would probably say I was naive.

Ivan Abramovitz had witnesses who came into his office, looked at me and were briefed in their roles.

I had lost two days from work learning questions and answers. Then, of course, there were the postponements and finally, after weeks of delay, the case was up in court. I was just one of many accident cases. It was routine and a man with a mouth full of ashes called it and a score of witnesses.

Ivan Abramovitz was now in the limelight. It was his hour of glory. He brushed his hair back from his sloping forehead, spread his legs apart and proceeded to address the court. Words ran from his tongue, and he gesticulated as if trying to catch them before they had gone too far. The court listened with some impatience as Abramovitz presented the case. After what seemed an incredibly long time he sat down, and I could see the long years of hope

and struggle that had gone into making one such man as Ivan Abramovitz.

It was his turn to present witnesses to support his argument. Only one witness had somehow or other managed to get to court. There was a strong suspicion that for one reason or another the witnesses had thought better of coming. And it might have been almost better if this witness hadn't come. For between him and Abramovitz there stretched a huge gulf of misunderstanding.

The simplest thing would have been to end the testimony as soon as possible. The genius of Abramovitz was a loud one and could not be silent. Finally, and from sheer exhaustion, Abramovitz sat down and with this a great change came over him. He was stricken with remorse and sat hearing and seeing nothing. The only sign that he was alive was the regular delivery of a frame-shaking sigh every few minutes. I waited for him to call me. I nudged him to call me, but he didn't answer. I was certain he would think of something clever so I was quiet.

The trolley company's testimony was short. I was pictured as an idiot, a wilful lying lout, a foreign agent come to disrupt the city's transportation system. Factually they proved without a shadow of a doubt that I lost control and drove into the trolley; that I was on the right side of the street going north, and proved just as convincingly that I was on the left side of the street going south. It mattered little, the judge slept peacefully and the jury dreamt of other things in other places.

It was then made very clear that I had passed a red light, and a strong seed was planted to the effect that I was both drunk and drugged.

Abramovitz' remorse deepened. He sat hunched in his seat, unable to ask a coherent question. At our blackest moment I heard him whisper, "A murder case, that's what I want."

Dimitri, the salesman, who up to this point had an idiotic smile on his face, suddenly decided the time to smile was past.

"We are lost," he told Uncle Leon.

"Why lost, can't you see they're lying?" Uncle Leon declared, full of fight.

Abramovitz, student of human nature, shook his head and pointed to his brother. "No, my cousin," he said, "Ivan's heart has left the court. We are lost."

What was I doing all this time? I was asking myself why didn't I sign the papers and get the three hundred dollars? But I was learning who had a hand on the heart of the court.

On and on the witnesses paraded. They dragged me through the muck as a foreign agent. I finally could stand it no longer. I rose and asked the judge if I might speak, I wanted to testify.

"You have a lawyer, young man," the judge said.

I ignored this and continued to speak. "Mr. Judge, you listen to lies, all lies . . ."

"Sit down, young man." The judge was stern.

I couldn't make him understand and it bothered me. My lawyer was transfixed on a planet of his own. He sat doodling and didn't say a word.

Uncle Leon rose and asked the judge to forgive me, I was young and headstrong.

"Shut up and sit down, you," he yelled at Uncle Leon.

Abramovitz the bike salesman wouldn't see his team silenced so quickly. He, too, wished to say a word.

Well, let me tell the rest to you briefly. It is too painful to tell otherwise. We didn't have the money to pay the fine for contempt of court and that's how we all spent two days in jail. It wasn't so bad, Uncle Leon had fortunately brought his portable chessmen with him.

I almost forgot to mention, we lost the case.

My Good, My Honest Friend, Mr. Bailey

I HAD BEEN A BARBER too long. There is nothing wrong with being a barber if you like it. But if you want something else you cannot be a barber forever.

Ever since I had been a little boy I wanted to do something with teeth. While this desire had lain dormant in the years I was adjusting myself to my new life, now it called and demanded answer.

Among my steady customers was the head of a dental laboratory. I told him how I felt. He understood how intriguing it could be to give someone a new set of teeth. He understood the sense of having contributed something to their happiness. While shaving my friend I asked for a job. We made the usual arrangement under the circumstances. I got paid nothing while I was being taught. I would still have sufficient time for part-time barber work and could support myself.

My work with him was interesting and the surroundings were pleasant. But when I had learned all he could teach I didn't want to continue working in an ordinary dental laboratory. I wanted work in an organization that did the

unusual, a place where I could further perfect my skill. When I had almost despaired of getting the kind of place I sought, the Bailey Laboratory, one of the best in the country, advertised for an assistant. Among its personnel were several fine dentists and a magnificently equipped laboratory.

My boss was pessimistic. "You'll never be hired," he said, "even an accomplished dental technician can't work for Sylvan Bailey. He is a crank, a precise crank. But he is also widely known as an honest man."

I didn't know how little I knew. Thus I could be full of courage as I went to Sylvan Bailey's office.

The office had the feel and smell of a successful enterprise. In direct contrast were the people waiting to be interviewed. There were more men than chairs and we all stood or sat uncomfortably eyeing each other. Everybody was nervous. There weren't many jobs in those days and there was hunger in the desire of these men to find a place for themselves.

One by one the applicants went into the office. They were interviewed and rejected in less than a minute. Had I been near the door I would have left, never to have met Sylvan Bailey. But before I knew it, I was seated before him and he was asking, "Are you a good dental mechanic?"

"No," I said.

"Well," he continued, "what can you do?"

"I can copy very well, sir."

With a great movement of satisfaction, Mr. Bailey rose to his feet. He called his secretary and told her to dismiss the other applicants.

"I'm looking for a young man like you," he said, "to copy my work and do as he is told."

I went to work for him immediately. Those whose paths crossed Bailey's could not leave untouched. No two people felt the same way about him. It wasn't a matter of liking or disliking him. The divisions of feeling for Bailey ran only to the intensity of the hatred various people could engender.

His wife, for some reason often the topic for conjecture, seemed to love him. He was allegedly a Socialist. He read the *Nation* regularly and occasionally he went to New York to attend a class at the Rand School. At best he may have been a third-class Socialist, but he was a first-rate technician.

When he was young he had married, as he said using the word loosely, for "love." He wasn't prepared to accept the holy blessings until it was made definite, as definite as it could be, that he wouldn't have any children. I think he might have wanted a child if there were a godlike decree guaranteeing the child against war, uncertainty and pestilence.

He didn't smoke or drink and looked upon those who did with distaste. He insisted, practically on the trek to the altar, that his bride live on twenty-five percent of his income. He hoped by penury to have enough money to retire in twenty years. The watch he carried was an Ingersoll. It cost a dollar and was guaranteed for one year. He had been known to demand a new watch for some minor infraction between its time and the Greenwich Meridian, one day before the expiration of the guarantee. His auto was driven until it could no longer be repaired

and fell into the gutter breathless. He was punctual to the point of insanity.

While I noted all these things and they did more than depress me, I disregarded them. I had found a type of work I felt exceedingly close to, and all my desires were paced toward succeeding. I didn't rest a moment at work, and at night I carried home the problems of the day.

Like all young men of my time, I was bitten by the desire to save. All over the country you couldn't help reading the admonishments calling on one and all to become millionaires by saving. We were on the crest of prosperity and if you hadn't as yet attained the princely post God and country meant you to, it was only a matter of time. I don't know whether or not I had begun to doubt the inevitability of financial fame. I do know I tried to be economical and save what I could.

Sometimes this took strange though popular turns. Half of Philadelphia didn't buy handkerchiefs. To them, and to me, it was a useless expenditure. At least half the city ate in H and H. There napkins were free. You took as many as you could carry away with you. These were my kerchiefs and they were pretty good, too. Bailey never missed an opportunity to publicly ridicule me for this. He would also call the world's attention to the fact that I took more than one toothpick and that I used a trolley exchange five minutes after it expired. These Bailey considered manifestations of gross dishonesty. But despite his noxious personal characteristics I liked to work with him. I was learning a good craft and making a decent wage.

It was the custom for Friday to be the dentist's rest day.

Bailey permitted himself a few hours off too. This Friday I speak of was a dull, rainy day. There was not a patient. I sat at the office desk and wrote letters. In the course of the day eighteen dollars was stolen from the cash drawer. No one, it seemed, could have got to the money but me.

"Willig," Bailey said, "you were the only one here?"

"No one was here."

"You admit your guilt!"

I couldn't argue with him. "How much notice do you want before I leave?"

"Two weeks," he said.

I told him I was innocent. If I had wanted to steal I could have, unobserved and undetected, taken a pennyweight of gold every day and accumulated a tidy sum in a short time. I didn't like being called a thief, and I resented the accusation that I would be so stupid.

I came home disconsolate. Celia's magnificent supper went untouched. Nathan looked at me from under his eyebrows and sighed as he took another bite of his favorite pumpernickel bread. He ate without taste.

Nina and Rita, aware that something had deeply disturbed me, ate little and avoided my eyes. I had infected the entire household. When I went upstairs for a moment, Nina called Uncle Leon. He came over bringing Abel with him.

"Some people will bite off more than they can get indigestion," my brother said when he heard the story.

"Excitement is bad for the liver," Uncle advised.

"You find the story relaxing?" Abel sneered.

"Children," the young Nathan said, "let us not fight with each other."

"My man is right," Celia insisted. "Think, what can we do?"

Nina said nothing. I knew she believed in me. What could she or anyone do? I was branded a thief.

"I will speak to this miserable creature," Abel threatened.

"Nathan, can I borrow your chessmen?" Uncle asked.

"Leon, you, too, are becoming an idiot. Is this a time?" Celia said.

"It isn't? With Abel driving the wagon, we'll be in jail again," Uncle continued, "and I want to prepare myself a chess game."

"Maybe I could get my union to picket your shop, Willig?" Nathan wanted desperately to help.

Celia tried not to laugh. The suggestion was an honest if ineffectual try. For the first time since I had come to the United States Abel couldn't help me. Two or three times during the conversation he tried to brighten me up.

"Willig," he begged, "I'll play anything you want."

I didn't answer. He took out his fiddle. I went up to bed without saying goodnight to my dearest friends.

LITTLE WAS SAID about anything in the office during the next two weeks. A general depression took hold of everyone. On the day I was to leave, Gertrude, the office girl, gave me my parting pay. There was ten dollars too much in the envelope. Bailey had stayed away and all Gertrude knew was that she was instructed to give it to me. Three of the doctors came as a delegation urging me not to leave.

Celia had suggested this, too. Despite the fact that she fussed and fumed about, her judgment was sound.

I stayed, but over my head hung the accusation that I was a thief. Bailey said nothing about my going and nothing about my raise. Between us now was my strange feeling about his honesty. I was not satisfied with Celia and the doctors alone knowing I was innocent. I wanted to convince Bailey and started to prove it myself.

My English had developed to a point where I could read like a literate native. I went to see Abel with my plan.

"Abel, do you think I can do it?" I asked.

"With your brain, of course," he assured me.

Wherever I went I saw books about detectives. Either we were a nation equally divided between cops and robbers, or these were all fairy tales. I read one after the other and observed how simple it was, once you studied crime detection, to bring the criminal to book.

Abel became interested too, and together we read and learned scientific crime detection. Several times, for a reason slightly unclear to me, I attempted to gather fingerprints around the office. This was always the first thing you did in tracking down your man. Once I saw Bailey watching me. I smiled sheepishly and pretended to be looking for a missing crown. My innocent smile was intended to throw him off guard. But as the weeks rolled into months and I didn't find a single clue, I blamed it all on Abel and his blind encouragement. I went back to brooding silently on my misfortune.

Things remained in this agonized pattern until the marriage of Gertrude, the office girl. This was one of those

affairs where the combined relatives of the bride and groom met for the first time. They would assemble in similar manner over the years at their various marriages and deaths and at no other time. Character assassination was their forte and the gatherings, sometimes spaced by months, more often by years, were spent slandering their respective mates.

Before one could behold the bride and groom standing in pathetic desire to appear regal, there was the music. Supplied by a five piece band, no two men playing in the same key, it was weird and nerve-racking. Usually the nerve centers were so completely filed down the music passed unnoticed.

The guests jockeyed for position. Everyone judged the finery of the other with a critical and prejudiced eye. The bride's people had long since, on fifteen minutes' acquaintanceship, developed a deathless, intense and mutual dislike for the groom's family. Only when death had claimed the last of both sides would the earth again return to its simple rotation.

At just such a perspiring moment one of the bridesmaids laid a hand on my sleeve and, wiping the gathering dew from her upper lip, requested me to follow her. Gertrude the bride, née the office girl, had asked that I be sent for directly and conducted posthaste to milady's chamber. This I did, not before I was almost battered down by the offering hands of relatives of both bride and groom who wanted me to toast with them on this joyous and free-drink occasion.

Gertrude was in a whirl. She tore handkerchief on handkerchief.

"Please leave us," she pronounced from beneath her ruby lips, which, in Crawford-like-manner, extended to a wisp below her nose.

We were alone and Gertrude started to cry. I had barely noticed the girl in our office. Yet here on her wedding night she held her hand on my shoulder, looked at me with warmth and cried. I felt dampness trickle down my back.

"My friend," was all she could say as she placed her other hand on my shoulder.

"For weeks," she continued, "you have been trying to find the thief. My friend, I know who it is." Then she told me the story.

In the course of that Friday, when I left the room for a few moments, one of the doctor's wives who lived above our office came in. She needed to pay a bill and took two tens from the register and returned two singles. She told her husband and he in turn returned the money and told Bailey. Almost immediately after accusing me, Bailey knew I was innocent. He told everyone not to tell me. He wanted to do it himself. Gertrude was the only one who knew he hadn't told me. She felt she must unburden herself before she stood up to God and her fellow men. And in her sweet melodramatic way, during her greatest moment of glory, she wanted to relieve my mind.

I thanked her and then proceeded to have as good a time as I could remember. It took two days for the pain to leave my balloon-like head.

When I could I went to work. Without a word I packed my instruments. Bailey suspected I had learned the truth. He tried to say something. I silenced him with a

look. As I was leaving I caught a glimpse of him, seated at his desk with a glass of water before him. In his hand was a little white pill. For some years, as a result of his rigorous demands on his wife to spend little, they had been ailing.

He worked his twenty years and saved enough money to retire. Weakened by his long years of tight living both he and his wife died within a few weeks of their retirement and only a few days apart. His money, piled up to maintain him in his old age, went to his nephews who, being devoted and loyal to their uncle and aunt, gave them an expensive and lavish funeral.

Unlicensed Dentistry

EVERY FAMILY has its toothless citizen. Uncle Henry, passed by fortune and a self-styled failure, was our toothless one. In truth he wasn't completely toothless. He had four teeth.

Naturally, for a man whose love for food ran closely behind his love for his beautiful wife, the four teeth were precious.

By this time I was progressing in my work as a dental technician. I wanted to help Uncle Henry. And he wanted to help me. I asked my employer if he would allow me to take some equipment from the shop to get an impression of Uncle Henry's mouth. I told him about my uncle. I knew he would be a happier man with a full set of teeth. I neglected to mention that Uncle had four natural teeth.

I was warned never to try to make teeth for anyone without a dentist's impression. It was illegal. I had no license. However, because it was a relative I was to work on, he gave me instructions for making a mold. It was to be a full upper and lower plate made with modeling compound and plaster.

Sunday morning I arrived with my equipment. Uncle Henry, in the midst of a huge breakfast, excited as he was about getting new teeth, insisted I wait till he had eaten himself into a minor coma. Which he did.

With all the finesse of a master magician I closed all the doors, pulled down the window blinds and spread out my equipment. My aunt rushed around helpfully. She boiled water in which I softened the modeling compound. The compound was then to be put upon a tray, slightly larger than the mouth, which in turn was to be inserted into the mouth by stretching it slightly. My tray, selected with inexperience, was twice as large as Uncle Henry's mouth. Several drops of blood on his white shirt front told us I had torn his mouth a little too much.

When the compound became slightly hard I removed it. Although at that moment Uncle could have doubled for Joe E. Brown, everyone thought the operation was skillfully done. It took a little persuasion to convince them the operation was only partially completed.

The next task consisted of pouring plaster into the modeling compound and placing the entire business back into the mouth. Plaster hardens rapidly. I told them this would take only a few minutes and I would have a cast of Uncle's mouth. Knowing the process superficially, I put twice the necessary plaster into the modeling compound. Uncle, adventurer in dishes of the Orient, had never eaten plaster soup. It trickled down his throat unchewed.

I was learning several things as I worked. One of the most amazing was the extent to which the human mouth could be stretched before it tore clear around the head.

As I recall it, my aunt was frozen to her chair. Her little daughter, a six-year-old genius reminiscent of Abel, sat at her piano practicing. She had never been known to go willingly to her piano before. This time, though my aunt didn't have the horsewhip in her hand, the child perhaps felt the scene needed music.

The plaster was set and Aunt Rachel pretended for a long time not to notice the wild rolling of the eyes, the waving of the hands and the general tremors that shot through Uncle's body. He could communicate in no other way. Auntie, the mother of many children, took both her childbearing ability and her labor pains seriously.

"Men," she said to me in disgust, "the fuss they make about a little pain."

Uncle, most of his faculties gone, could nevertheless hear. He stomped his feet and began to cry. For some strange reason this moved my aunt, and she asked how long the torture would continue.

"Now," I said, "I will take it out. In a moment you'll all be happy."

With great confidence I began to take the tray out of his mouth. It should have come out easily. Don't get panicky, young man, I lectured myself. It didn't budge. Try again. I did. Nothing happened except I could feel my heart freeze. Perspiration clouded my vision as I tugged on. Finally, Uncle bashed his chair against the wall, rocking it to and fro. Auntie began to understand.

She looked me right in the eye. "Willig, do you know what you are doing?" she said. "He looks so pale."

"Pale," I stammered, "that's just because of the plaster in his mouth. Makes his whole face look white."

She lost her temper then and dragged her youthful artist from the piano.

"Papa looks pale, no, my child?" she asked her.

"He looks dead," the child wept. With this corroboration Aunt Rachel, restrained to this point, let go.

"Call a doctor! Call a dentist!" She proceeded to run from one window to the other, opening them and calling on the neighborhood for help.

"Auntie, please, I'll go to jail. I have no license."

Nothing stopped her. She was a volcano of wrath. She opened the windows and I raced behind her closing them. The child, aware that papa wasn't dead, buttered herself a large piece of bread and went back to the piano.

Uncle, meanwhile, seemed to have lost the use of one eye which was completely closed while the other blinked constantly. He was slumped down in his chair, one foot thrust out and plaster running from his nose. I guess his condition might be described as uncomfortable.

My aunt yelled out the window again. I tried to reason with her.

"Please, Aunt, I'll be sent to jail. I have no license to practice dentistry."

"Greenhorn, came to this country to kill his uncle," she yelled. She dashed over and, violently grabbing her husband, pressed her palms against his jaws, pulled his head to her and began to rock him. That was all Uncle needed. His body was shaken with spasms. These were more than she could stand. With a mighty howl she lowered herself to the floor. Her contribution to bringing her husband safely through the ordeal was to return to the pagan. She proceeded to beat the furniture in witch-doctor man-

Kroll

ner. Her lamentations left her drawn and as she began to lift herself from the floor, she fainted.

Fortunately, she didn't fall directly on Uncle. I called my cousin, demanding water. The little girl had found the noise too much for her esthetic taste and had gone to spend a few days in the movies. She left a note to that effect on the piano. For a moment I stood before my unconscious relatives, unable to decide which one to save.

It came to me that Auntie's faint was fortunate. She was silent and out of the way. With strength born of fear and panic I lifted Uncle to his chair. I gently placed my foot on his chest, not before I had been careful to remove my shoes. I did not want to crack his rib.

Uncle was completely relaxed. That is as good a description as any of a man who was gazing into the eyes of the Angel Gabriel. I tugged and the cast came out. I had made the impression.

I left Uncle on the floor where he had fallen. I rushed to the bathroom and got some absorbent cotton which I stuffed into his mouth. On the return trip I got some water to pour on Auntie. I took the blood-soaked mess from Uncle's mouth and restuffed it with fresh cotton.

Auntie returned to the living, speechless. In her hysteria she had momentarily lost her voice. We didn't know then the cause was so simple. Yet there was no time for another catastrophe so we reserved it for later if we needed it. She looked at me and molten metal poured from her eyes.

Together we lifted Uncle to his bed. He revived. He put his hand into his mouth and discovered the four precious teeth were gone. I had pulled them out with the cast.

I thought he would kill me. I started to back out of the room.

Auntie, shocked into realizing what happened, regained her voice long enough to pile one scream upon the other. Uncle Henry, ignoring this completely feminine action, motioned me over to his bed.

"Willig, a mistake, huh?" he tried to say.

"Yes, beloved Uncle . . ."

He waved me silent. "You'll make me new ones?" he said.

"If you'll only let me."

"Make new ones, my boy," he mumbled.

As I started to leave, barely able to move from nervous exhaustion, he called me back.

"Don't let this bother you," he whispered, "everyone is entitled to one big failure. Only don't take advantage. See it shouldn't become a habit."

I Get a New Stomach

THERE WERE NEW THINGS every day. I was happy but there was a blot on the horizon. My stomach was in rebellion. It refused to function with the food I fed it. These were the delicacies introduced by Abel, among them those American aids to its stomach specialists: hot dogs, pretzels and free mustard.

In fact, this free mustard brings up that interesting "free" theory. The only thing that appeared to be "free" was the mustard. I must interject the thought of erecting a monument to the malicious idiot who some place in our history introduced the custom of dousing every bit of food, with the possible exception of ice cream and coffee, with this unesthetically colored paste. He surely must be an American hero, his practices are so widely followed.

Abel was an expert for a long time. And you know, as soon as he had a new experience he was an authority. He dragged me from one indigestible meal to another. We sampled every ulcer-building product of our culinary art.

Abel was unharmed by this organic abuse. I became a constant visitor to doctor's offices. For a long time it ap-

peared to be my only occupation, my only form of divertissement. I had just begun to read about the scientific experiments of the great bacteriologists. I was inspired by the thought of scientific cure. I read many heavy tomes on the functions of the bodily organs. For weeks most of my conversations were in medical jargon and scientific terminology. Celia had long since declared me insane.

To many of the doctors I visited I was the happy occasion for a fat fee. My little nest egg had long been hatched and flown the coop. I had a steady job and, since I was worried about my health, I was really only the middleman for my money. There I had it, there I didn't. But then, what is more precious than health?

Celia suggested I try to get placed on the payroll of the Chamber of Commerce. No one could approach me without hearing paeans of praise for the Philadelphia physician. In my youthful enthusiasm I neglected the fact that I was getting worse. Finally, during the Viennese vogue, I went to an elderly doctor who had studied in Vienna, lived in Vienna and died in Vienna, all, I fear, before I went to him. He also left there all that was good in that highly overrated city and brought with him much that was dull and neglected. He was slow in thinking, slow in decision and slow in removing the tube from my stomach.

In true Teutonic grandeur his stomach pump was twice the size of those normally used. Now, there are few excursions into medicine more completely horrendous than the stomach pump. Here we descend to the level of becoming a part of a modern machine. Down into your middle goes a large tube and your stomach processes are

deliberately reversed. What should go down is made to come up. It is more pleasant to stand on your head all day.

We had to take time out for awhile from reversing my processes. For several weeks I didn't walk past a doctor's office. This helped no more than the visits. On the advice of a distant relative whom my grandfather owed a fifty-year-old favor, I went to see another Viennese professor. In Philadelphia during the despotic reign of these great professors, it was unthinkable for a doctor graduated from so mediocre a school as Johns Hopkins to make his way down a main thoroughfare in broad daylight. This next mortician, who worked with all the finesse of a highway robber, put me on a prune diet. For a week I was not to eat anything but prunes. I lived through the week, my stomach uninhabited except for two pits which I had accidentally swallowed. He contributed nothing to me except a rapidly developing skeleton. When I meekly inquired into his method of cure, he walked to the wall and read me his Viennese diploma.

The next group of medical men who mangled me across their tables like a slab of beef promised I would be better either in winter or summer. Their diagnosis depended largely on what season of the year I visited them.

In despair, I listened to Celia who had been urging me to go away for a few days rest. It was a strange rest. Abel decided to accompany me. This resort we went to was famous for its clientele. There was no one there who didn't have some ailment. So great was the variety that after several days I ran into no one who had precisely the same type of illness. Naturally, everyone was not only an

expert on his own type of disease, but an authority on others. The discussions raged from sunrise to sunrise. Abel was the center of the stage with long recitals of his many operations, none of which he had had.

One morning at breakfast, a Mr. Gibney, who occupied a table with me, raised a dainty, well-seasoned morsel to his mouth. When it was halfway to his lips, his wife's delicate hand cracked down on the back of his neck.

"Darling, if you so much as dare put your teeth into that, I will call Dr. Lieb," she blackmailed him.

Gibney pleaded with her. Finally, after extracting many promises from the poor fellow, she consented. She agreed not to report *this* misdeed to the great Dr. Lieb.

For several days the Gibneys held their doctor's whereabouts close to their breasts. As I became more uncomfortable, they weakened and told me his address in New York City.

The next day I took my painful stomach to see Dr. Lieb. Fronting a façade specially constructed with a lavish hand resting in the mortar of Greek architecture, several streamlined automobiles emptied their bejeweled occupants into the offices of Dr. Lieb.

The good doctor had two waiting rooms. A nurse sized me up and directed me to waiting room number two. There was not a seat available in either waiting room. The people in both rooms seemed to be completely different from each other. Generally, they fell into two categories: the rich and the poor. After a few minutes I was interviewed by another nurse, who asked me the routine questions. Name, address, occupation and income.

"How much," she inquired, "can you afford for the visit?"

"Twenty-five dollars," I said. I was surprised when fifteen minutes later I was called in. Many of the patients in waiting room number one had been there before me.

Dr. Lieb was a serious-looking man. He was very bald. His red beard was long and heavy. He had bright eyes. He was reading my record as I entered.

"You are willing to pay twenty-five dollars for the visit?"

"Yes, doctor, if necessary, I will pay fifty dollars."

"You are a working man and you say without hesitation you will pay fifty dollars," Dr. Lieb fumed. "Are you perhaps a millionaire working man?"

"No, doctor," I answered, "I earn twenty-five dollars a week."

"There will be no fee," he said.

"I insist . . ." I began.

He turned to me fiercely. "Shut up and take your clothes off."

I was taken to a special x-ray room. After a short while the plates were developed.

"You see," he said, pointing to the picture with a huge baton, "you have a beautiful ulcer in your stomach."

"Doctor, how long will it take you to fix me up?"

"You are twenty-one?"

"Yes," I answered.

He said, "It took you twenty-one years to spoil your stomach, you don't expect me to fix it in twenty-one minutes." Still deeply engrossed in studying the x-rays,

he added, "At any rate, nothing can be done for you. You are finished."

"Finished!" I cried. "But, doctor, I didn't live yet! I'm not even a citizen. I have to bring my mother to this country!"

"Bring her quickly, young man," the doctor said, "she may come in time for your funeral."

I could feel the cold breath of death on my neck. I looked at the doctor with tears in my eyes. "Dr. Lieb," I pleaded, "Isn't there anything you can do . . . anything . . ."

Before the doctor could answer a great noise came from the entrance to waiting room number one.

"Excuse me a moment, please." He rose and walked to the door. As he reached it, it was flung open over the body of a protesting nurse who had fallen before the onslaught of a huge woman.

"Doctor," she wailed, "I simply must see the doctor. . . ."

The nurses tried to drag her from the room. Dr. Lieb nodded to them and they left.

The lady smiled from her lips to her three chins. She raised her hands to her face and her fleshy upper arms waved like the wings of a vulture. She walked accompanied by quivering layers of expensive fat, expensively accumulated. Her heavily mascaraed eyes were pierced by rivulets of broken blood corpuscles.

"I must see the doctor," she screamed, "I insist . . . I simply insist." Suddenly, her eyes focusing in the darkened room, she saw Dr. Lieb standing before her.

"Good morning, Herr Doctor. I just had to see you. I

do not feel well. I am very ill. Dear little man, you must help me, I must belch . . ." In a moment he had written her a prescription.

"Doctor, I feel better already. Don't forget to send me a bill." And she was off.

I was impressed by the rapidity with which the doctor had analyzed her ailment and concluded her cure. Forgetting my immediate grief I told him so.

"You could have done the same for her for much less," he said. "I'll charge her fifty dollars for that."

I was amazed. "How could I do that?"

"All she wanted was some seltzer. . . . She doesn't know it, but she's paying for your visit."

"There is little use, if I am going to die. Can't you do anything? I will do whatever you tell me."

"You're a liar," he solemnly assured me.

"Please doctor," I begged, "I will. Give me a chance to live. . . ."

It turned out that Dr. Lieb planned to give me a new stomach. In his thirty years of practice only twenty patients had succeeded in taking the cure. The process was long, trying, and, the doctor assumed, took more guts than I had. He insisted I was a lout, a fool, a weakling, but he was willing to give me a chance.

"Now," he said, "you go away somewhere in the country. Get into the sun." It was only April but he insisted I wear as little clothes as possible.

"Write your memoirs," he directed, "keep yourself amused."

On the first day I was to take four glasses of milk. The

second day three. The third day two and finally on the fourth day one. This was to constitute my entire food during these days. On the fifth day I was to take nothing but a powder he gave me. This I took in a glass of water once a day.

"By that time," Dr. Lieb said, "you will hate food. Continue this until you feel you are ready to die. Then call me and I will give you further instructions."

My desire for food was great. For four days I sat on the farm, so hungry I could have eaten a breaded horse. I almost did. Several times I had visions of myself catching one of the chickens and roasting it. By the fifth day I was weak but not hungry.

The tenth day I went fishing and had difficulty holding the pole in my hands. I tried to be a little active after that and for the next ten days, to keep myself from digging my grave, I went walking, stopping often to rest.

On the morning of the twenty-eighth day I could barely lift the telephone receiver as I called Dr. Lieb for the "further instructions."

"Are you hungry?" he asked.

"I don't have the strength to open my mouth. Tell me, Doctor, if I live who will swallow my food for me?"

"No wisecracks. Gandhi could go on a fifty-day hunger strike, you can last more than twenty-eight days. You sound not at all as if you are dying. Call me in a few days." The farmer's son had to replace the telephone receiver as I stumbled my way out to a chair in the sun.

On the thirtieth day I looked down at where my stomach had been, counted every rib and thought of how suc-

cessfully my spine and ribs seemed to be merging. My kneebone stuck out so proudly that it could have cut a hole in my trousers had I worn anything but shorts. I called the farmer's family and as the light of high noon faded before my shrunken eyes I told them what I wanted done with my remains. I asked them to get in touch with my family to arrange for my burial. I thanked them for their kindnesses. Then, as the darkness gathered around me, I said a final goodbye and remembered no more.

A RED BEARD tickled me awake. I pushed a bone-lean hand through the hairy forest and looked into Dr. Lieb's smiling eyes.

I had been cured. I had a new lining on my shrunken stomach.

"You feel better, my boy?" Dr. Lieb asked.

"Yes . . ."

"Now then. I have worked out a series of diets for you. I want you to become a vegetarian. Don't eat all the kind of garbage you have been eating and you'll be well. Remember, you're a vegetarian. . . ."

I didn't quite understand what this was but if Dr. Lieb suggested it, I would do it.

Turning my eyes from the doctor's face, I saw Abel.

"Doctor, he's cured?" he asked.

"Quite."

"Hello, Willig," he bent over my bed, "you're better?"

"Yes . . ."

"This time without fail you are going to become a citi-

zen. We'll get your second papers very soon. . . ."

"Thank you," I said.

"By the way, kid," he continued, "did you ever eat Philadelphia scrapple?"

I fell into a tortured sleep, and as I did I saw Dr. Lieb dragging Abel out of the room by the seat of his pants.

Nina

No one in the house spoke much of my affection for Nina. Even Abel, who talked on every conceivable subject, found himself without words and therefore fell silent. But he smiled at us when he saw us together and he, like most of our friends, sought to warm himself by the fire of our friendship.

Sometimes Celia or Nathan would start to scold us for staying out too late, or for sitting in the dark fingering the stars, and then they too would shake their heads, smile and turn away unable to understand what had held the words back.

Yet a shadow of some sort hung over Nina. A quality of reserve I couldn't break through, a thing I couldn't fathom or explain. I worried about it, I tried to get through to her, but her thoughts would have left and gone searching. Often, as we listened to the sound of the waters of the Schuylkill lapping our boat as we rowed, I could see the misty film, the curtain of sadness hiding her eyes from mine.

I don't quite know how all this started with Nina. I wish I did. I wish I could go back over all those early

moments and hold them in the heart of my hand. Perhaps it was because from the beginning she had been kind to me. And I had admired her from the first instant I saw her. She had a delicate beauty that appealed to me but more than that, during the pathetically humorous stumblings of the young immigrant, she always held out a hand to help me over a hurdle. Her reserve, her moods and my shyness prevented us from being anything but neighbors and near friends. You might say Nina's twenty-first birthday marked a turning point.

I cast off my shyness. I don't know how, but it fell away. I spent much more than I could afford and bought Nina many small presents. These were the things I had seen her need during the year. There were the handkerchiefs she had admired, the scarf that would set her eyes off so well, the stockings she said she couldn't afford, the two books of poetry she had taken from the library and reluctantly returned. These were purchased at separate stores and delivered at different hours spaced through the day. Toward evening a large bouquet of roses topped it all off.

There was to be a party for Nina at her mother's house. It was several blocks away, and as I raced toward my own darkened home I was mentally hurrying to see Nina at her party. I entered and without turning the lights on dashed upstairs. As I was halfway up the short flight I turned for some reason, and there sat Nina in the living room surrounded by my gifts. I went to her.

"Happy birthday, Nina," I said.

She started to thank me for the presents, but before she said much she took my face in her hands and kissed

me. I had never kissed a woman before. I was too young even for my tender years. When I released Nina and looked into her eyes, I saw that she loved me, too. It was all too much for me and I ran to my room. I locked myself in and didn't have the courage to face her and all the people at the party.

Somewhat later I heard Nina explain to Celia and Nathan that I was too sick to be disturbed. She told them I had a bad headache. Yet, when all were asleep she knocked at my door and left me a sandwich and some milk.

THE HOME of Celia and Nathan was a gay place. And we were a gay crowd. It seemed only natural, since my ways were odd and stumbling, that I was the butt of the gag. Laughter was as good a tonic as any, and even if I was made the goat it was worth it to hear Nina laugh.

I was working very hard during this period. I had my dental work and my studies. Between the two, when I started home each night I was a very tired young man and my bed was heaven.

The houses in the block where we lived were little different from the homes on all the blocks around. They were almost identical on our block. These were the first thoughts I had as I put the light on in what I was sure was my bedroom, only to discover a woman asleep in my bed. Her clothes were neatly folded on a chair alongside. The covers were pulled up well over her head which was topped with a kerchief. She slept with her face to the wall.

While I stood paralyzed, unable to do anything, my eyes fell upon a note on my desk. It read: "I have been waiting for you a long time. If I fall asleep, please do not wake me and if anything happens, please don't tell my mother."

That was the last straw. I opened several of the bureau drawers, looked at the pictures and became convinced I was in the right house. I couldn't get myself to just shake her awake so I tried to waken her by dropping a book. I turned the lights on and off, I sneezed, I coughed. Nothing I did woke her.

As I was about to shout, it became apparent that if I yelled loud enough to awaken the girl I would also get the rest of the household out of bed. I didn't know which would have been worse. I trembled to think what Celia would say to me. She probably wouldn't have objected if I had asked her, but to sneak in with a strange woman! The longer I stood stuck to the floor unable to get to bed, the more convinced I became that I had actually invited the young lady to visit me.

I began to plead with her in a hysterical hush, "Please, Miss, whoever you are, you may be in the right room, but in the wrong house. Look, I am only a greenhorn. You must be looking for the young man next door. He is the Americanized one and even owns a horse which he rides down the street every Sunday."

All the pleading in the world wouldn't stir the lady an inch. As tired as I was, I soon decided to let fate worry the situation through. I sat in the easy chair and fell asleep.

I don't think I had more than closed my eyes when Celia, Nathan, Nina and Rita came charging into the room,

pulled on the lights and woke me. I was too startled to speak. Nathan leaped to the bed and uncovered the girl. I sank into the chair with my hands over my eyes. Their laughter gave me a moment and I pulled myself together.

There in my bed lay the lady. A revealed and horrible sight, but on closer examination it appeared to be nothing more or less than a dummy. Nathan, a genius with his hands, had made it. It was good to hear Nina laugh and I forgot how tired I was. Later I fell asleep and slept very well through the night.

Uncle Leon's weatherbeaten and practical eye saw how things stood between Nina and me. With all the wisdom of his many blunders he guessed what was wrong with her. He didn't tell me what he suspected. He did try to discourage my emotion for her.

"One can travel farther and faster than two," he said.

"You mean to insist, Uncle," I said, "that two horses can't pull a wagon better than one?"

"Two can," he answered, "when they both pull. . . ."

He discussed little more than that with me. He felt responsible for my well being and tried to do what he could to keep me on the straight and narrow till my mother was able to come.

I had determined that part of my job would be to get Nina well and happy. It seemed strange that a young girl should get so many colds and cough so much from the slightest chill. When I discussed this with Celia she worried and told me to try to make Nina happy. No one in desire to have the girl happy I took her to places where the house knew what it was Nina suffered from. In my laughter was expected.

We saw every comedy that came to Philadelphia. We went to the country, to the fairs which reminded me so much of those held near my home town. We went for long walks and I spoke to her endlessly about the things we would do together in the future.

"Nina, dear," I said, "we are young and the world is young." She smiled her little enigmatic smile at me and I didn't feel too young then.

Nothing helped, Nina grew more frail. The heat came in the summer and the people sweated in great distemper. But no matter how irritable the heat seemed to make everyone, Nina moved among us with kindness and a good word for everyone.

We sat in the little rear garden of our house one hot night, trying to catch a breath of the humid night air. Nina told me she was going away to the country.

"Will you write to me?" I asked her. I was sorry to see her go. I didn't want her away from me for more than a day.

She promised to write. She turned a deaf ear to all my repeated demands to share the burden of her illness.

A few days after Nina had gone I received a letter from her. It was really two letters, one of which was sealed in a separate envelope. The first said:

Dear:

I am sending you two letters. Please read this first and do not open the other till you have read it. We arrived safely and our beloved Rita behaved like a grownup. She is very happy to be with me only she

misses her Uncle Willig. Who doesn't? She really loves you. Sometimes I am jealous. I had to read and re-read the little poem you sent her. By now she knows it by heart. I hope you don't mind, I set the lovely words to an old song we all sang. What can I say about us, and there is little to say about me. I am resting and being away from the heat is a blessing. I know what my illness is. The doctors here and in New York have only confirmed what I have known for a long time.

You will know, when you read the other letter, what keeps us apart. I know you will be shocked, but you will understand as all my loved ones must, that soon, very soon, I am going to leave you forever. I cannot dream any more. Reality stares us in the face. I have tried to pray, to prepare myself. How can I? I know I am painfully unable to love. Every hour we have spent together has been a glorious day. Beloved, do not grieve, you must live for both of us.

Nina.

And on the second sheet of paper the envelope of which I savagely tore open, was the single word "Tuberculosis." It was useless to cry.

The winter of 1925 struck with fury. The storm brought torture to many, to me it fitted my raging torment. Nina had been home. We said nothing about her letter and I tried very hard to be gay with her. I appeared each day in a different mad outfit to make her laugh. I invented funny stories to tell her. If I heard the merest suggestion

of something she liked I ran to get it. I neglected my studies and spent every available hour near her.

On the wildest night of all when the wind, bent on destruction, howled its pain around the house, Nina was rushed to a sanitarium. No one was permitted to see her. She lay pale and wasted on the pillow and weakly insisted that I do not visit her.

Before she left she told me she didn't want to see me. She held her poor withering hands before her and through tears told me she didn't want to be remembered this way.

Nevertheless, in the vain hope that she would call for me I made the sad trip to the sanitarium. I would go to the desk and ask to see her. I always got the same answer. Then I would walk for hours, round and round the hospital, trying to find her window, sending my love to help her.

On a dawnless morning, Nina's father, poor broken old man, rang my bell. I followed him down the crooked street. I knew by his face and his unspoken tears that Nina was dead.

Alone with her I uncovered her face. It was young suddenly and full of life.

How Abel Went into Business

YOU MIGHT IMAGINE a man with as much life as Abel would be dissatisfied being an ordinary neighborhood barber. He wasn't. He found a great deal of interest in his life. When he didn't he had the ability to manufacture it. It is a happy gift.

He loved children. In the crowded section where Abel worked there were more children than their mothers knew what to do with. His shop became a day nursery for the children. It was more than habit or convenience for the mothers to leave their riotous offerings to civilization with my brother. He loved it. He sat them around a circle and played sprightly little tunes for them. He told tales of his great adventures abroad. Perhaps the most amused and gratified spectator of all this was Abel himself.

He worked with a sorrow nevertheless. My brother had been unmarried for longer than he preferred. He decided he would marry. No one among the many women in our nation's third largest city suited him. When he could he would take a trip to New York "to look over the prospects." It was always the same story. They were either too tall or too short. Sometimes he would return

full of love, the embers of which would burn out by morning and he would once more find balm for his wounded heart by playing for the children.

It was after returning from one of his wife hunts that I saw Abel walking down the street toward my home as I had not seen him since the day I arrived in America. He was a man of action, a man of good fortune, a man with the world by its well-considered tail. When he saw me coming toward him, he ran to meet me. He threw his arms about me and danced me down the street, laughing and singing.

Abel had found a woman he could love. She was young and pretty and smart. She seemed to be a paragon of all the virtues, whatever they are.

"When may a mortal like your brother view this miracle of womanhood?" I inquired.

"Sooner than you expect. If you don't look quickly, she shall soon be your sister."

I leave the subject of intuition to woman and credit the clairvoyant to a figment of woman's prattle. But I must confess I was alarmed. On Friday Abel hadn't known the woman. On Saturday they had met and by Monday, he was walking on one ear screaming "Marriage, marriage." We talked for hours and Abel sang an iliad for his love.

I am dense and it took a long time for me to realize there was something he was working up to. There was a hitch in his marriage plans.

"After all," he said, "she's young and wants pretty things."

I agreed.

"And being a barber, a man with my talent, where's the sense?" he continued.

I agreed. There was nothing startling or new about this.

"What I've got to do is to make money," he said.

"And by what windfall do you expect to make money?" I inquired.

"Lucy has a way."

"Her name?" I asked.

"Her name," he replied.

At the mention of Lucy he rolled his eyes and started once again to tell me of her wondrous charms. I let him ramble on, breaking in with a question every five minutes. Where and how did he meet Lucy? Finally, when he stopped talking long enough to listen, he told me. He had met Lucy through a relative, and it was this same person who was trying to help him set up in business. This is what made me suspect the entire deal.

The relative in question was a genuine relative, that much is true. His name was Debarrow, a swindler from way back. But a man who, I understand, had reformed and was now a respected member of a community known in New York as "Bronx."

It happens that from my home town to Debarrow's mud hut was a matter of some miles. Often as boys we would visit his parents or go on errands that took us in the vicinity. They, being good folk, would never permit us to leave without presenting us with small gifts for our parents, and goodies for us to eat on the way. This was accepted custom. No sooner had we left the Debarrow ancestral estates than our man under discussion, only a

boy then but still a pox on him, would come charging out of hiding, take us by surprise, beat us and steal our gifts. Consequently, we would return home empty-handed. We were ashamed to tell mother what had happened. And she blamed the Debarrows for a breach of this etiquette. Thus, when Debarrow the Terror came to repay our visit he was sent home giftless. Naturally, family vendettas start from such things.

With this background you can understand my apprehension when I learned who it was that walked Abel so close to the altar.

In a great burst, my brother said, "Willig, you've got to lend me some money."

"For heaven's sake, of course." I had little but I would have given it all to him if it would have made him happy. I thought he wanted to modernize his shop.

"Good, thank you, Willig," he said. Without a further word, his brows tightly knit, he left.

About a week later he called and asked for fifty dollars. He instructed me to meet him at the Pennsylvania Station. I got the money and brought it to him. He was on his way to New York. He was evasive about everything but Lucy. He was going to see her. Yes, he was going into business and would soon be making a lot of money. He was long on color and short on details but I didn't press the point.

I asked him did he want any more money. He didn't. He needed three hundred for an immediate investment, he had two hundred and fifty dollars, therefore the remaining fifty would suit him fine.

I heard nothing till the following week when he repeated practically the same procedure. He called, I got the money and I met him. He told me nothing, only that he needed another fifty.

When this happened a third time, I was very angry and decided I would give him no more money unless he was more explicit with me.

"Three weeks in a row you milk me," I angrily told him.

"For a hundred and fifty dollars we should part company?" he asked.

"Of course not."

"Just be a little patient, brother, the business is a little more expensive than I thought. On Monday I'll tell you all about it. I am thinking of taking you in with me."

Between Abel's charm and my desire to have him succeed I was placated. On Monday he came to see me with a huge bundle under his arm. He barely took time to tell me of Lucy. He was brisk and to the point. What he unwrapped resembled a small mimeograph machine.

"For this you paid four hundred dollars?"

Abel stopped unwrapping and sagely remarked, "Let us not say anything too soon."

After some minutes he had the entire thing on view. He asked me to come close and sit by his side. He took a piece of oblong paper about two inches by five and inserted it into the machine. He turned the crank and a brand new shiny United States Treasury dollar bill fell into my hands.

"Some business!" Abel stood back proudly.

I was too shocked to say anything except, "Again!"

He inserted a slip of paper and a dollar bill dropped into my palm.

"And in case you think this is stage money, or no good money, or rotten money," he said, "come with me."

In the bank Abel asked to see the president. His imposing figure and foreign manner immediately assured the clerks that he was a man of fortune come to deposit money, not to withdraw or beg a borrowing.

In a few minutes we were standing before the president. He asked us to be seated. Abel leaned back in his chair and leisurely lit a cigarette. He took the two dollars we had run from his machine and thrust them under the president's nose.

"Sir," he inquired, "am I right in assuming these bills are good sound legal tender?"

The president examined each bill carefully. Yes, he pronounced them good, sound, legal tender.

Abel explained he was considering converting some of his holdings in Canada. Being unfamiliar with American currency he wanted to assure himself by being paid in small bills and convincing himself that these were good, sound, legal tender. The president was flattered and asked Sir Abel to call again and bring his clerk with him. I forgot to mention I had been introduced as a "clark."

We went home and Abel told me how our cousin had put him in touch with the manufacturer of such machines.

I hadn't been working long. I had accumulated a little money. I didn't mind giving it to Abel, but I couldn't understand why I had to work so hard when there was a machine that made dollar bills.

"It is legal?" I asked.

"Debarrow swears on his mother's grave," Abel said.

Abel dreamt of fortunes. He saw Lucy in a beautiful house. The day was all sunshine. Hearts full of joy, we inserted paper and dollars dropped out. We examined each one with glee. We congratulated ourselves on our good fortune. After we had ten dollars our first failure hit us. We put paper in and nothing but paper came out.

"Willig," Abel roared, "Great Inventor! What has happened?"

He nagged me as I sweated over the machine. It was a fake. Within the drum ten single dollar bills had been cleverly concealed. When the ten dollars were "printed" there was no more money. Abel had been taken for two hundred and fifty dollars and I for one hundred and fifty.

"It's Lucy," I told him gently.

He couldn't believe this. He was so saddened he could barely speak. I insisted Abel take our last ten dollars and go to New York. "Arrest them if need be," I demanded.

He was gone for several days. When he returned he was tired, unhappy and dirty. He had practically walked from New York.

"Did you get the money?" It was a useless question.

"No."

"Did you have them arrested?" I asked.

"How can I put Lucy in jail?" he said.

I wanted desperately to cheer him. "Come, brother," I said, "all is not lost. You will find another way to get your girl."

"There is no girl," he told me, "she says I am a failure."

"Girls always feel that for a time," I assured him, "but you will forget this and succeed at something else. She'll be waiting."

"No," he said.

"How can you be sure?"

"I am sure," he told me. "She married Debarrow this morning."

For a while we sat and said nothing. Then he got up, stretched and said, "Willig, who wants to go into business anyway?"

Bargain Day

FOR SIX YEARS I had been corresponding with Mother, urging her to learn English in preparation for her trip to the United States. I knew when sister came she would be young enough to go to school. Mother was a strong-willed woman. When she set her mind to something, she usually succeeded. She was no longer young. She had had a life that couldn't have been characterized as easy, but now with her interest in learning English aroused she behaved like a schoolgirl.

She constantly wrote me letters full of love and triviality. She wrote in what purported to be English. Had it not been for the fact that I am sure James Joyce hadn't wandered to my home town and that Mother was too busy to read him, I would have sworn she was a disciple of the Irishman.

It never took less than three days to read a one-page letter from Mother. Then this could only be accomplished with the assistance of several friends I had among the scholars of the University of Pennsylvania. It got to be a holiday when Mother's letters arrived and the professors looked forward to it. It was a scholastic feat to be

able to read the word and then trace its degeneration from a perfectly sound Anglo-Saxon syllable to something of which even the Welsh wouldn't be guilty.

Despite the quaint spelling and the strange mixture of syllables, like a column of smoke one thing rose certain. Mother and sister wanted to come to America. In firm and unmistakable terms they wanted a full and detailed explanation of why they hadn't been sent for before.

The reasons are unimportant now. Abel and I made a heroic effort, to quote that master of understatement, and proceeded in making final arrangements. We purchased tickets for them as a sign of our intentions. In a manner extremely vague and confusing to me Abel had made two thousand dollars. It was fortunate that he had the money then. I don't know how or what we would have done without it. In later years it would have been better for Abel and for me if he hadn't, but that is a story for another time.

"Abel, where did you get so much money?" I was bewildered at first.

"I made it in stocks," he quietly assured me. I hadn't the faintest conception of what this was.

"Sure," he said, "it is simple. I got a tip and I played it and I made money."

"A tip and a play, good, when will you do some more of this magic?" I asked.

I got nothing definite by way of an answer. This tip Abel got from a customer he shaved. According to him he gave promise of becoming a cow well worth milking. However, in an argument over what kind of after-shave lotion to use, Abel lost his easily misplaced temper and

called the client "a frog-faced jerk . . ." Thus both financial and tonsorial relationships were at an end.

We pooled our money. My brother, being a man of finance, had the checkbook. And from this little book he could, were he of a mind to, write a check for three thousand dollars. He might do it, too, even if the writing of that one slip of paper would send us into the street without a penny for a pretzel.

We started out on a clear day to furnish a little apartment where we might live with Mother and sister in comfortable but modest fashion, as best suited our earning capacity at the time. We went to several department stores but Abel liked none of them. As soon as he was in a department he proceeded to behave like an India potentate. In many ways my preposterous brother was a bit of a snob who sought to elevate himself by the demanded servility of others. Yet there was such a good-natured desire in all his madness. He just wanted everybody to notice him and like him.

After a morning of walking we came to a furniture store that had the kind of thing we were looking for. The prices, on further examination, were out of proportion with what we chose to spend. I was all for leaving when Abel saw a young salesgirl coming toward him. She was short and thin and unattractive. She held her salesbook before her and constantly fidgeted with the rubber band that held her pencil to the book.

"Can I help you?" she hoarsely stammered.

"No," I said, "your prices are too high."

Abel stood looking at the girl. I was tired of his pranks and wanted to go.

"Perhaps over here, we have some . . ." her voice trailed off as she pointed to the rear of the store.

"Yes," Abel said, "yes, we'll look."

He was courteous and attentive. I couldn't understand it. The girl, hoping for a big sale, was flushed and excited. She talked incessantly, having fallen completely into Abel's molding hands. On and on they both went striking a higher and higher pitch. Abel wanted a huge sofa upon which he could recline in a manner that best suited his personality. The girl, success within her grasp, delivered herself up to drunken hysteria. Yes, yes, yes, she had just the thing! I retired to the sanity of a quiet corner and watched them play the scene. The girl was Elisabeth Bergner and is there an actor in the world who could be my brother other than Danny Kaye?

The couch under discussion was a huge thing. It was heavy and surely would necessitate the carving of a larger door in any place we would move. It was what is called overstuffed furniture and here is a place where the English language cannot be bettered. Overstuffed is a perfect description. It *was* overstuffed to the point of bursting and exhaustion. In fact, it was the tiredest-looking divan I had ever seen. The bright red and forest greens made Abel's heart beat loudly. While her icy hands waited extended, Abel wrote her a check.

Next he wanted lamps. This was a quick turnover, one, two, three, he had three lamps he wanted. Realizing Abel was going to buy everything we needed from this thin little girl, I made a list of the things we needed and gave it to the girl. Dining room suite, kitchen equipment, beds and so on to the last mop. She got it all.

With tears in her eyes she took Abel by the hand and

thanked him. He smiled at her and it was a shame. Who but he would ever be able to satisfy that girl's dreams now? When we were outside I asked him, "Abel, why?"

"Why? Because she's a little girl who didn't make a sale in a week I'll bet. Live and let live, share the wealth, live and let live, I always say. So we paid a few dollars more. Did you see her smile?"

One could hardly call it an original or even a practical philosophy but that's what he told me.

WE BOUGHT other things that day in antique shops. Books which my brother purchased to fill the bookcase were selected for the color of their bindings. He picked big red ones and little black ones. He had a positive passion for little black books, he bought them in any language they came. It made little difference, he had no intention of reading them. In an antique shop he considered buying a large metal lamp holding five bulbs of varying ferocity, each and every one of which could be lit either simultaneously or singly. The salesman attributed everything but human frailty to this global monstrosity. The wiring was faulty and it looked like an old battering ram. But Abel bought it and wrote a check.

When we got home we were happy. We had bought furniture, we had paid for it and soon Mother would come. Early next day after the furniture had been delivered, we got a cable from Mother. Translated from her quaint English by ourselves and the Western Union, the burden of the message was, "Sister will not come. Must have $1500 for million-dollar catch here."

For a moment we were silent trying to recall who was

worth fifteen hundred dollars in our village, dead or alive. Finally, I turned to Abel and asked him what did he think.

"I don't know," he said, "Mother says to send it."

"Perhaps she knows," I loyally said, "we'll send it."

"And from what bank will we take it, little brother?"

"Haven't we got any more money?" I gasped.

"Forty-three dollars and seventeen cents," he said. "We just can't send it. Of course we could cash in sister's ticket, but that would bring very little." Abel begged me to forgive him for being so extravagant. He pleaded to be permitted to return some of our purchases. I knew this was silly. Even if we sold every stick we had bought it would not get us fifteen hundred dollars. I had long since learned that by carrying a new article around the corner, it becomes second hand and worth little of its original price. Even if we could get the money, where would we put Mother?

Abel didn't play the fiddle all day and contributed to the general bleakness and lack of funds by not going to work. I set him to dusting the bookshelves and filling them with books. I cleaned the kitchen cabinet and stood the dishes on their sides as I remembered Mother doing.

I wasn't surprised when I looked up to find Abel gone. He probably went for a walk to forget his problems. I went in to inspect his work. He had left everything half done. Books were scattered over the floor. There, beneath a pile of Baedekers describing the beauties of Venice and Florence, among the books bought for the color of their bindings, was a black book that caught my eye. It was a German Bible in excellent condition. No pages were missing, the title page was unmarked. The binding was clean

and intact. It had been published in 1743 in Germantown, and on the flyleaf, in faded ink, was the scrawled signature "von Steuben."

That evening, depressed about Mother's wire, I visited a friend at a rare book shop and casually asked him about the book. The next day we sent my sister the requested fifteen hundred dollars.

Looking for a black book to go with his colored jackets, Abel had purchased a Saur Bible, which had once belonged to Baron von Steuben, for ten cents. I sold it for fifteen hundred dollars to a rare book dealer.

One last word here, please. When Abel reads this it will be the first time he has ever heard of how we actually got the money. You must understand I couldn't tell him he had solved our problem. There would be no living with him. So I want to apologize to him now for having told him I borrowed the money from Celia and Nathan.

Mother's Independence Day

ON A MAY DAY IN 1927 Mother arrived in New York City. I went to meet her alone. Abel was going through a period in which he couldn't stand emotional strain, as he put it. His artistic temperament was a thing he had to be very careful with. Going to the boat and partaking in all the excitement was more than he could stand. The thought of having to ride to and from New York with Uncle Leon was also not an event to look forward to with pleasure.

"Let him stay home," Uncle Leon insisted. "A boy doesn't see his mother so many years, can't come to make her a proper welcome, is no son. Better my sister should have had a stone. Less aggravation and less expense, I always say, nothing is many times better than something."

Abel was unmoved by Uncle Leon's tirade.

"Uncle Leon," he said, "do I instruct you? Why should you tell me what to do? My nerves are worn raw. I'll see Mother when she comes to Philly." Only the fact that we had to make a train kept them from coming to blows.

THE BOAT, A LARGE and majestic thing, was tugged up the

river. I was taken back to five years before when I stood eagerly on the deck of the ship, without pants. I could not say I had been treated badly since my arrival. I had pants.

When Mother came off the boat I hardly recognized her. She had aged more than I expected. She kissed us both and looked around for her favorite.

"And Abel?" she said, looking over our heads. "My boy, where is he?" Neither Uncle Leon nor I knew what to say. We stared at each other dumbly.

I found my tongue. "He couldn't get off work, Mama."

"In America," she asked, in the excitement forgetting her resolve to speak English, "when a mother comes they don't let a boy off for a day, shame, I say."

Everything would have been all right but Uncle Leon, the man with the wandering tongue, couldn't keep still. He told her that Abel could have got off but felt the excitement was bad for him. Mother didn't say a word. I could see she had been hurt.

She carried only one little suitcase. I thought, there was a bright girl coming to America with little luggage. But it wasn't true. She had brought two large cases with her. She gave me two checks for them, explaining they were too heavy to carry.

We walked over and stood under "H" looking for Mama's trunks. We looked and looked and couldn't find them. I went over to one of the customs officials, and showing him Mother's baggage checks asked him where I could find them.

"Are you her son?" he asked me.

"Yes."

"Well, then, will you please get your mother and follow me." He walked away expecting me to follow him. I ran, got Mother and Uncle Leon and rushed to the customs office.

We were alarmed. Mother kept looking at me as if it was my duty to supply a solution.

"Abel would know what to do," she kept repeating.

Perhaps he would have, and maybe he wouldn't have felt like fainting either when we were taken to another floor where Mother's boxes were, but Uncle Leon and I did. This is all a long time ago, yet even if I have no clear, visual picture of what happened, I do remember the smell. As best I can recall, there were two large boxes not unlike coffins, battened down with ten locks each. It took four men to budge them.

Mother was asked for the keys and after the usual search a woman young or old has to make for the simplest article, she found them. Later, the customs official who spoke to me first told me that in twenty-six years inspecting he had never seen the equal of Mother's cases.

In one there were four comparatively harmless sheepskins she had midwifed and raised herself. It wasn't to her discredit that they stank like death. She planned to make a warm winter coat of them. They hadn't been tanned or cured, and even people accustomed to interesting odors on the waterfront believed a new abattoir had opened for business on Pier 57.

The other articles in the case had been permeated with the odor. There were also stray lonely European maggots that crawled on the family bedding, the feather com-

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forters and mattresses. Even the large brass candelabra had an unforgivable stench.

The second case had its own particular odor. There were only two objects in it. The larger was a tombstone on which my mother's name and date of birth had been carved. There remained but to carve the date of her death. The second parcel was useful immediately. It was a bag containing three dozen hard-boiled eggs, packed, Mother assured us, against the famine she was told to expect here as a result of sending food to the starving in Europe.

The inspectors were satisfied Mother carried no dynamite with her. We were permitted to take the tombstone for which we had to arrange special hauling at considerable expense. But everything else had to be destroyed. Mother cried all the way to Philadelphia. Once in our beautiful new house, however, she relaxed sufficiently to have a violent quarrel with Abel.

Abel couldn't resist the fiendish desire to razz her about the tombstone. Between them they kicked up an awful row. Abel stayed a day or two with his lower lip extended. Mother eyed him furtively. Neither would give an inch. My brother packed his things and left for New York. As I recall it, I never thanked him for leaving me alone to take care of Mother. Next time I see him I mustn't forget.

The summer heat that has made Philadelphia one of the most infamous cities in our world struck Mother. She was stunned by the clammy hand of humidity. I insisted she go to Atlantic City. This city by the sea often appeared in my life as a solution to many problems. She

hemmed and hawed about but I finally convinced her. I told her exactly how much money I had. I insisted I could afford to keep her at a nice place for about a month.

I took her down to the sea and saw that she was made comfortable. I didn't know whether she would like this particular place, therefore, I arranged to pay them weekly. I had a long talk with her, and later in my letters I lectured her on the great American talent of resting. I told her of the women who rested in the south in the winter and in the north in the summer. Of the men and women who have learned to relax before and after meals and whose technique of resting from resting is a thing they are very proud of.

Mother liked it at the shore. She was satisfied. For the first week she experimented with my prescription for taking it easy. Then she began to write me sneering letters, in which she tore her contemporaries apart. I wondered what I could do to relieve her restlessness.

Apparently, the decision wasn't left to me. In a few days I got a letter from her. She was going to stay all summer. She didn't want any more money from me. She had a job. She was independent and had only one request: I must tell all the relatives.

I was more than puzzled. I was also concerned. With her unique language, in such a short time she had landed a job which must have paid her fairly well. She was still at her hotel. Well, Mother was a big girl now and if she was happy, I was. However, I was unable to resist a gnawing temptation to call her.

"Mama, how are you?" I asked.

"Better as better," she said, refusing to speak anything but English.

"Mama, I'm worried, what do you do?"

"Worriments coming to an end is finding in the pit grows cancer," she sagely remarked.

"Philosophy, Mama, is an expensive pastime over the long distance phone, please." I insisted, "Tell me what you are doing."

"My son, God with hand personal made this, believe me," she went on, "the hol' day it sits by me. Den once a time, every so couple minutes, I'm nodding."

That was all she would say. I managed to get the address from her and on my first day off I went to see her. I didn't tell her I was coming. I really wanted to get to see her in her new environment without her being aware that she was observed.

It was in a large store on the boardwalk, seated comfortably on first this chair and then that, that I saw Mother.

The store was packed with a crowd of overdressed men and women intent on proving the extent of their pocketbooks. "Going once . . . going twice and for the last time," the auctioneer chanted. And by a prearranged signal a little old lady, innocent-looking yet distinguished, nodded and the bid was raised. She was known as their best customer. Heavenly father, how could she afford to buy what she did? I watched this procedure several times. Often now she lost the article only to have it gobbled up by an eager gentleman with more bric-a-brac than he knew what to do with.

Mother had a big smile on her face. For five dollars a day she sat and enjoyed the sun streaking into the auction rooms. She was the picture of health, spending fabulous sums without taking a penny from her pocket. She enjoyed her work. Mother was a skilled bidder in an auction room. A shill.

Frankly, she confessed she thought the men were quite insane for paying her. She would have been happy to sit around all day nodding her head for nothing.

The Memorable Misfortune of Cousin Julius

WITH MOTHER'S COMING an entire new layer of relatives was discovered hiding not far from the Philadelphia Zoo. Among all these creatures was one who so represented the repulsive, you must meet him. His name was Julius and although he had, it was alleged, two good eyes, he kept one open all the time and the other not at all.

Just how Julius got into the Almanach de Gotha as a cousin of mine has never been explained. I don't know by what marriage to whom Julius emerged as a cousin—surely his wife was no cousin—but cousin *he* was, entitled to all the dubious privileges granted him under his personal Magna Charta.

Incidentally, I have always looked upon these relatives who insist on being not only relatives but friends, as an imposition only exceeded by Astor's great rape of the Northwest.

Coming at almost any other time in my life, I might have enjoyed having Julius squeezing through the floor boards every time the old feed bag was about to be hung.

Mealtimes were visiting times for Julius and he ate his way into Mother's heart and straight through the ever-growing hole in my pocket. I feared what would happen if he opened both eyes and saw the food on both sides of the table. Fortunately, one eye remained sealed.

My life during this period wasn't anything you could really laugh about unless your sense of humor had taken to the slapstick and you enjoyed yourself nightly by entering your home and greeting the little woman with a largess of pie in the face. Since laughter is supposed to be but a hairbreadth from tears, the state most of my dearly beloveds usually wallowed in, I can tell you that I was more than a little restless for a long time after Nina's death.

The patriarchs of my family, once removed from Pithecanthropus erectus, with the delicacy of touch of Sousa's timpani section, drove after me with the soothing effect of a rocket attack. They were education-crazy. Now, education is all right in its place and I wanted to collect as much of it as I could. I had discovered Horatio Alger, and if he could succeed so often I could succeed some time. Yet the more I learned the more I was told how little I knew.

This I attributed to some American quirk I hadn't been able to untie, for at this time I considered myself a rather smart guy. I hadn't got very far as yet, true, but I felt that if the more I learned the more I needed to know, I was racing with seven-league boots to the dunces' corner.

I should have seen the signposts on the road, loudly competing with nature and winning hands down. I should

have remained as sweet as I was instead of continuing with my studies. I was dumb enough at this time not to realize that I could live all my life without once having to go to Cousin Julius for information.

But Uncle Leon was of a different mind, I must love that man to flatter him so. He was of a different mind, I started to say, if any mind at all.

"To every family comes as a gift a true teacher," he told me. "Take advantage of what God has given us."

"If God gave us Julius," I said, "we have sinned and Julius is our curse."

"When did I ever give you bad advice?" my uncle asked. "When?"

"Cut my tongue out, Uncle," I said. "You give me bad advice? Only sometimes," I added diplomatically, "no advice is good advice."

Subtlety is not Uncle Leon's forte and he insisted Julius was my man. Words will be words and I continued to learn, for in the back of my head grew a strange cancer. I would be different. I was going to be an American of the species that upon learning became more valuable to themselves and their country.

My cousin Julius was a grotesque man with a gruesome underlip and an insatiable passion for kreplach and sour cream. He had a wife that I shall tell you about in good time. Cousin was a man who wrote poetry, taught a special bonded-whisky brand of English and all in all was a well-rounded louse. There were many who disliked him and others who would have shot him on sight. None were known who would give him floor space if he lay dead waiting for the undertaker to call for his cadaver.

I did feel sorry for Julius occasionally. He meant well and if the road to hell is paved with good intentions, I feel free to tell you that it was Julius who personally paved that much traveled road. He did it, I am prepared to swear before the plenipotentiaries, and he did it himself. If he did nothing else, I insist he is deserving of a notable place in history.

Because of his advanced megalomania, his rapidly acquired superficialities and his general distastefulness, he was elected by the family sachem to teach me English and all allied subjects. And if you didn't think all the subjects were allied, you didn't know Julius. Given this broad canvas to work upon, many times I would fall into a tortured slumber and see us working on this broad canvas as we wrestled it out, with more than ten thousand spectators screaming from the rafters as I and that nightmare kid "Julius Oh Julius" came to grips.

"Bring him to the canvas, one-eyed Julius. Bring him to the canvas, old faithful, wonderful, glorious Julius," they would shout.

I had my defenders. I wasn't alone. I prefer to remain silent on what they yelled. After all this book is expected to sell at least one copy that will demand postal delivery. I do not want to tangle even in a dream with the postal authorities.

Bless them every one of them, and may God in his merciful heaven look down upon them and protect them from the wrath of an honest and adult body floating through the mails, dragging all its clerks, and its clients, and its public away and across the Stygian blackness made popu-

lar first by Milton and immortalized by the Catskill Mountains.

Julius and I had strange adventures in the English language. His English, highly fortified by a Galician brogue, was a thing of strange and poetic beauty. If you're in the market for a Galician brogue, Julius had enough for a three-day sale. I liked best when, reaching epic heights, he called me, "mine boycheck." His instruction, when leading me through the jungle of English grammar, was succinct. With a flash of cold steel into the air he would say, "You vill be so kindly to make wid dat voib."

We wandered from verb to verb in blissful ignorance of the difference between a tense and a noun. We learned that an adverb was something like a verb and a pronoun a close relative to a noun. To Julius, a man of deep passion, "Anglish is a think you mos give to you hole, undiwiding life."

He worked me like a racehorse. It availed me nothing to cry, "I am young yet, Julius, spare me." He looked at my eyes red-rimmed from sleepless nightmarish nights and then his merciful streak came to the surface. When I fainted from exhaustion, maybe it wasn't a faint, perhaps it was just sleep, he gave me ten minutes rest between "de potry of Mealton and de Litremaneure de French Klasiks."

But I see I am giving you only one side of the remarkable character of the remarkable tutor who set my education back to scratching my ideas on a cave in Fairmount Park. Since I was no more advanced than the cave man when Julius finished dragging me back, why should my

means of communication be better? Let us at least be consistent, Julius would insist on it, I assure you.

Julius' life was equally corrupted by his personal problems and those of his inventions and discoveries. He had, after years of research and study, his secret plan to simplify the naming of presidents. He claimed to have a patent on it and went often to Washington to spend several days in a wastepaper basket at the Library of Congress. He nestled among the many unread government reports consigned from the printer directly to the wastebasket. There were many, so many, in fact, that living in such comfort rather spoiled Julius when he came home. There, ensconced in splendor, he waited his opportunity to sneak his idea into the record. He didn't want to have to go through the formality of having his idea presented in Congress and then thrown into the wastebasket. He was all for cutting the red tape.

"Directly to the wastebasket!" was Julius' own immortal battle cry.

Julius did not want to disrupt the movement of the planets by the titanic battle which would ensue, he was sure, with the introduction of such startling legislation as he had to offer. And if you think I am exaggerating one molecule full, you can just stand up and say that and reveal the simple fact that you have never met or had a Cousin Julius.

To avoid unpleasantness and a smoothly running Congress, Julius awaited his opportunity to place his law directly into the books without the formality of a speech or a committee meeting, hoping in this way to have it

achieve what he termed "the oblivion it so very well deserved."

"Ah, Julius," I told him, "you are a great man."

He was not hindered by this praise. His scheme, simply put, was to have each president named George Washington so that the question which often stumped school children and caused unavoidable delay on quiz programs would be settled once and for all. But aware that all genius is a struggle, Julius was prepared with a counter-proposal. It was his master counter-proposal. If the first idea didn't immediately capture the fiery imagination of the masses, he would propose that there be a simple number put after each George Washington. And you doubted for a long time, I'll wager, that Julius was brilliant. The arrangement would make for a George Washington the twenty-eighth, twenty-ninth, etc.

Genius may grow in a cabbage patch and Julius may have been willing to go there, but his scheme saw no seed and no fruit. Reluctantly he was forced to abandon it. Still he couldn't break himself of the habit of going to Washington to sleep in his favorite wastepaper basket.

Before we leave this particular side of Julius, let me read you a letter from a well-known legislator who, learning of Julius' scheme, wrote him as follows. Before I give you this priceless historical document, let me say that Cousin Julius wasn't without his supporters. Never let it be said in jest or in tears. To some I guess he must have been a well-loved man—everyone for some reason that only bees and flowers know about is someone's well-loved man.

Julius has asked me, for the benefit of the record, to let him tell you about the letter. To facilitate matters, I have taken the liberty of putting his remarks into conventional English.

"Dear people, I am happy that my good cousin, my pupil, has withheld the name of my correspondent. There is every year, in our country, an election campaign and it is indeed possible that one, having the means at hand, might be elected on the strength of this communication."

Now to the letter. Let us leave out the beginning, the salutation, to save time and worry. Let us get to the meat of the document.

"Let me see . . . 'In regard to your letter of the fourteenth inst' . . . no that's not it. Let me see, 'I am forwarding you herewith enclosed our seventeen-thousand-page pamphlet on the growth of mushrooms. . . . I am wild about mushrooms . . . you, too.' But no, no, this is not the letter.

"Why do you bother me with these details. If you want a letter, dear Cousin Willig, why come to me with every one of your little, insignificant problems when I am dealing only with matters of the inner mind today. How am I, of all people, to know where that letter is. Did I write it? Ask me where did I put a letter I wrote, then we have a more likely proposition. And speaking of propositions, geometry, that is an interesting study. . . ."

You see what I mean?

I WAS GOING TO TELL YOU about Cousin's second problem. His wife. She was a gentle woman from whose pores an

acid malice filled the air. Children, happy children, running home from play would go screaming down the street. She affected people that way, she brought out the worst in everybody. And what she did with herself was a marvel and a wonder of efficiency.

For some years the family had speculated, as they did on everything, on why Julius used only one eye.

"Cancer," Uncle Leon announced.

"Go, go," his wife said and meant it. "Go on, how can you say such a thing?"

To illustrate that he hadn't lost his power of speech and was indeed capable of saying it again, if nothing more, Uncle Leon opened his mouth and whispered, "Cancer." This can only serve to show you how people frightened half out of their wits can go around still talking.

Other diagnosticians in my family offered their opinions varying from gallstones, a popular ailment at the time, to tumors, a close running second in the choice of operations.

You can well imagine my surprise when, one morning, Cousin Julius came toward me as I leaned upon the table studying. He was looking at me with both eyes.

"Julius!" I cried. No longer was my cousin a Cyclops. "Julius!" The tears running down my face blinded me and in the interim Julius sat staring, as if surprised at what he could see with both eyes.

With great patience, I managed to piece together some sort of a story. That very morning it had happened. His wife hadn't awakened from her sleep when he stirred himself that day. Usually she was up by this time, rattling skillet and pan as a gentle reminder to him that the cock

had crowed and he should come for his indigestion. She loved to feed him breakfast. Her chicory (she wouldn't give him coffee—made him nervous) has been used to varnish a floor, enriching its life by some twenty-five years. So Julius drank his hemlock every morning, his closed eye receding further and further into his head with each cupful.

The morning in question she didn't budge. He shook her gently at first, fearful lest she blow a subway tunnel in him with a concealed tommy gun. When she offered no fight he moved her about the bed a bit. The neighbors claim he tossed her along like a rolling pin stretching a bit of dough for a carload of blintzes.

Then with a joyous huzzah he realized she would never awaken again. The doctor said she died of heart trouble. My relatives think Julius aggravated her to death, an original method of homicide anyway.

As Julius left his house this morning, as we walked down the street, his eye, closed for twenty-five years, opened and he finally saw the world as a man should see it. I tell you he was a new man, I know, for even his English improved.

Henry Ford, Is a Genius?

THE NAME OF HENRY FORD was magic, even in darkest Europe. Therefore, deepseated in my mind was the feeling that someday I would probably sit behind a Model T. This would be a sign that I had begun to succeed.

Secondhand cars were a clutter on the market this particular year, and I spent considerable time looking at them in showroom windows and reading of them in the papers. My "success" didn't warrant any great expenditure. I had all but given up hope of driving down the line in my very own automobile when I ran into "Marvin the Bargain Man."

Marvin had his prototype in all civilized countries of the world. I am certain that even among the so-called barbaric peoples there were "Marvins." The truth is, I feel he came straight from barbarism with little time spent veneering him.

I went around to see Marvin. He presided over a disreputable graveyard of unburied trash. He was doing a snappy trade. I noted that few people bargained and all paid cash. Then they got into their cars and rode off. It was all so quick, it was a pleasure. One minute you had to

walk and the next, thanks personally to Henry Ford, you could ride.

"For you my bright, my charming, my good-looking young feller," he chanted, "I have the best, the most efficient little car you ever saw. It is in superb condition, if I may be permitted the use of that daring, glaring adjective, its price is made to fit and suit and snuggle right into your little old pocket. . . ." He had to come up for air. I saw my chance.

"How much?" I asked.

"For this excellent example of the gasoline engine, perfected and personally handled by the genius of Henry Ford, we usually, that is always on a bright day like this, God grant that it does not rain or pour on us today, get two hundred and fifty dollars in cash."

I started to walk away. He didn't move a step, he didn't stop his loquacious flow of rhetoric for a minute.

"Since this is our bargain, our cut-price day, or day to lose money to please our ever-discriminating clientele, not considering the extras which are free you can buy this hill-climbing road eater, gasoline abstainer, for the slight fee of one hundred and twenty-five clams."

In his office I paid a hundred and twenty-five dollars for the car. Naturally, nothing was free. I was not even surprised to discover Marvin had forgotten a few essential extras that weren't free. I paid ten dollars for a transfer of ownership certificate. Later I would pay ten dollars for a driver's license. Still it was a bargain. One hundred and forty-five dollars isn't two hundred and fifty. I told this to Marvin and he admired me for it. At least so he said.

"Marvin," I said, "can I ask you a favor?"

"I pass them about to my chums like confetti," he said. "Ask me what stands upon your tongue, little customer."

I explained that I couldn't drive. I told him I don't want to lose the bargain, and I was thus prompted to buy the car first, planning to take driving lessons later.

"A smart boy," Marvin remarked to the elements, "a smart boy."

He spurned my thanks. We shook hands on the deal. He promised to store the car for me at no charge. Real American business. Fair and square. On the up and up. Everything clean and aboveboard. Everything hunky-dory. I shook hands with Marvin like he was a member of my lodge.

"A pleasure to do business with you," I told him.

Marvin recommended a teacher who would prepare me for my driver's test. I went immediately to see him and we made such financial arrangements as were necessary. The transactions were the height of simplicity; I merely gave him ten dollars. But on all other matters I was silent. I told him where I bought the car, but not what make it was or the price. I was afraid if I told him how inexpensive it was he would want to buy it for himself. Actually it was none of his business. I was learning. Being tightlipped paid off. Yes, sir!

Everything progressed in a manner best described as smooth. The only trouble was I did very little actual driving. I would go for my lesson, the teacher would explain the parts of the machine and then he'd drive me about for fifteen or twenty minutes. On the occasion of the third

lesson, which may be referred to as a gala event, I was permitted to drive the car downhill once, with the ignition off and the instructor's hand on the brake.

My instructor, a Mr. Hutchins, was obviously an Englishman who believed a good bit in theory and not at all in practice. He had convinced himself practice was an Irish quality. He was a cautious man who wore a belt and suspenders, rather half afraid that without both the empire would slip away. During the fourth lesson, it dawned on Mr. Hutchins that we needed gas. He stopped at a gas station. I found myself paying three dollars and fifty cents.

After my fifth and last lesson, he asked me whether I thought I could handle the car. I honestly couldn't answer since I had barely been behind the wheel. I felt I needed a few more lessons. This was quickly decided upon at two dollars each plus gasoline. I extracted a reluctant promise from the instructor to go with me the day of my examination.

Some weeks later when I could expertly drive up on any curb, the maestro decided I was ready for my debut on the highway. The next morning we presented ourselves at the police station. Most of the people apparently lacked the gift and failed. At least that is what I assumed. I told my instructor this. I was wrong. They do not pass he said because "they don't use grease."

"How would the officer know whether the car was greased or not?" I was still somewhat of a greenhorn.

"Greasing," my instructor always spoke with some distaste, "means giving the officer five dollars. They then permit you to pass."

Rapidly calculating, I discovered the car cost me ap-

proximately a hundred and eighty dollars to that moment. Approaching the problem philosophically, I told myself five dollars more or less didn't matter. I gave my instructor five dollars. He went into the booth and in a few minutes he came out with the officer who took the seat next to me and told me to straighten the car. I did. "Drive to the corner," the officer demanded.

I had no sooner started than he yelled "Stop!" I did.

"Can you read?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Are you over eighteen?"

"Yes."

"Are you a citizen?"

"Yes."

He then took out a small rubber stamp, stamped my learner's permit and smiled. I had passed. I was a full-fledged legal driver. Mr. Hutchins declared himself completely happy at the way his pupil had behaved.

"You did fine," he said, "just fine."

He drove me to the lot where in impatient grace my car lay waiting for me.

"Which is your car?" he asked. I pointed to the Model T.

"Not that!" he shouted.

When I had calmed him he explained that a Model T had an entirely different gear shift arrangement. In order to drive it there were other things to learn, things that he hadn't taught me.

"Is my license still good?" I didn't want to have to buy any more grease.

I don't remember whether it was good or not, I decided

to take more lessons and drive with my license. Mr. Hutchins felt that in three lessons he could equip me with enough knowledge to handle the product of the genius of Henry Ford.

Marvin the Bargain Man, eager to replace the car he had sold me, needed the space in his yard. While the instructor and I were at his lot I asked Mr. Hutchins to drive the car for me over to a garage where it would take up its new life.

Here the man illustrated the scope of English diplomacy and allowed me to peek behind the international net of intrigue where the secret of why the sun never sets on British soil is revealed. The transfer of my car from one garage to the other would constitute my first lesson under our new arrangement. Mr. Hutchins was the inheritor of a great tradition, he was definitely no greenhorn.

Under his expert hand the car purred to a start. His fingers had the touch and with the slightest twist he set the motor running. The crank and the motor obeyed him. However, as we got under way a severe change set into the mechanism. It puffed and shook as if the road was a river bed. It heaved and then it hawed and then it stammered. Mr. Hutchins pulled the car up to the curb, wiped the moisture from his forehead and asked me, "If you wanted a girl, would you go to the cemetery for one?"

"If I wanted a dead one."

"You bought your car in a graveyard," he added.

"It's a bargain, isn't it?" I insisted.

My instructor said nothing, diplomat that he was. He replaced his hat and drove me to the garage. He got out of the car, his lower lip trembling and walked away.

The garage was a many-storied affair. My auto was

taken up to the second floor on the elevator. The rent was reasonable. That is, reasonable for Rockefeller or Morgan or even Ford. But if I kept my car there for a year, if it stood up on its spindly legs for a year, the rent would have cost me about fifty percent of the purchase price of my black beauty.

Under Mr. Hutchin's expert tutelage I was able to manipulate the machine in only four lessons. You may add eight dollars for lessons and another three-fifty for gasoline. The cost of the car was mounting. Well, I told myself, luxury comes high. I had just learned that phrase and was rapidly driving everyone wild by using it whenever I was called upon to carry a casual conversation past the how-are-you stage. Then, if my companion of the moment sought to involve me further in his petty problems, I would end the discourse by remarking as I ran, "Luxury comes high, doesn't it?"

About this time I had also become acquainted with a quaint American custom. This was practiced by a class of Americans I wanted to be part of. That was the Sunday driver class. From what I could learn these people were rather remarkable. A taxi driver told me about them. It seems they bought a car on Friday, learned to drive it on Saturday and on Sunday took the family and Aunt Becky driving.

My course of study and application took a bit longer than a weekend. Yet this Sunday I would be a Sunday driver classman although among all my relatives I had no Aunt Becky. I was saddened by this and until then didn't realize what the loss meant. To have so many relatives, so many varied kinds and names, and no Becky. I was cursed.

Earlier on Sunday than it is decent for a man who works all week, I was up tinkering with my car. I opened and closed the doors, lifted the hood several times and put my hands on the motor to get them dirty. The vastly complicated engine was mysterious to me and I didn't know the rear end from the carburetor. When I had enough of this, I washed my hands and took the crank from under the seat. I was now going to start it. I took off my jacket and started to crank. The engine was cold and lonely. It wouldn't start. From the end of the garage I heard a shrill whistle.

"Hey, bud!" the voice shouted.

I straightened my crippled back and called, "Hello."

The fellow came nearer. He was known as a grease monkey. This is a type of man who loves to work on engines, an emotion I was in sympathy with, and in the course of his fascinating labors occasionally gets himself so covered with dirt and muck that it is difficult to make out his features from that of animal, vegetable or mineral. Hence the name "grease monkey." You will find most of the species kind, gentle and soft-spoken. That is if you are deaf, dumb and blind.

The grease monkey said, "This jalopy come with a key?"

"Here it is." I had it on a long ingeniously worked chain bought especially.

"Now, Buster," he said, "you just take the little bittsy key, like you do when you go into your cosy wosy housy, and *then you put it into the keyhole and turn on your ignition!*"

Illustrating the lecture as he went along, he turned the

crank and the car rattled into action. He lifted his cap, creased the muck on his face into a smile and said, "There you are, you poor, dumb, stupid bastard!"

I was afraid the car would stop so I leaped in. I understand if I had been a really good American by this time, I would have punched him on the nose. I discovered later that it was all right though, remember he was smiling when he said it.

But I instantly forgot my words with the mechanic as my beautiful engine roared. My mind was full of the beauty of the countryside I would soon see as I drove out of the city. I thought how proud my friends and relatives would be to see me sitting behind the wheel of my own Model T.

With these thoughts filling my head I started toward the elevator. It was much too late when I remembered I had forgotten to lock the door. Meanwhile, someone else had used it. Not being a modern safety elevator it had gone, open door and all. It didn't take long for me to reach the first floor. I couldn't get all the way down, but I landed neatly on top of the elevator. It took four men to remove my car from the shaft.

The garage owner, a man apparently accustomed to chaos and earthquake, quietly suggested I park on the first floor in the future. His assistant, who had been of such kind and polite help in cranking my car, caustically inquired, "What future?"

I resented that.

There was a slightly higher charge for the first floor space. It was nothing to get apoplexy about. Only five dollars more than upstairs. I paid the extra five and thought

of what a wonderful man it was who first invented the wheel and how our civilization has been advanced since then.

As a result of my rapid descent from the second floor, there were some repairs needed on the car. Window glass for two windows. The radiator had been punctured. A tire, torn from its mooring, needed replacement. All in all, God being merciful, I was let off easily. Twenty-five dollars covered my predicament.

Another week and it was again Sunday. I went to the garage to get my repaired car. The steering wheel was slightly slippery and in the course of driving downtown I developed a new style of driving. First I was on one side of the road and then the car, having a will of its own, got me on the opposite side. Later we were able to compromise. We stayed, as if by mutual agreement, in the center of the thoroughfare.

I was on Chestnut Street. This boulevard is a narrow alley on which autos are permitted to park while the center is pierced by a trolley. No place for a novice.

I wouldn't say the brakes were completely faulty. They just didn't hold very well. I could manage to stop the car, but only by leaping on the brakes full force and standing on them. This way I could convince it, with my hands on its throat, to stagger to a halt within, say, a hundred yards. The hand brake was loose. In reaching for it I bashed my head against the steering apparatus. My lip, where my teeth cut into it, didn't bleed very much. However, when the hand brake unscrewed itself from the floor I was clever enough, and my will power and determina-

tion strong enough, to make a decision. I would rely on it no further.

Suddenly the light before me was red. I tried to stop but the car didn't. I collided violently with a long, low, expensively built automobile. I rushed from my car.

The trip had its harrowing quality by this time. An index into the condition of my nervous system can be glimpsed by the fact that all I could say was, "Mister, please, Mister, please."

The owner of the car let himself out. He came around and studied the damage. It was slight. With me nothing slight could possibly happen. The damages to my turkey were considerable. I rushed to assure the gentleman, when my reflexes returned, that I was at fault.

"You admit you are at fault?" he asked me.

"Yes, sir," I hastily replied.

"Obviously you haven't been in our country very long," he said, and without more ado or much more of anything else for that matter, he drove off.

I tried to start the car. I remembered about the ignition. I turned it on. I cranked. I looked up at the heavens and prayed. My prayers must have been misunderstood for no sooner had I finished my silent prayer than a thunderous shower came up. I cranked some more. I thought of my brother. I tried to summon his strength and then cranked. Nothing helped. I was all alone.

Six trolley cars had piled up behind me. They began to clang—clang till it sounded like a national disaster. But my car would not be scared into starting. Four of the motormen, without a word to me, lifted my Model T and

deposited it at the curb. I started to crank again. I was being blinded by the rain which ran down my shirt front. My pants were soaked and clung to my legs.

Shortly a police car pulled up and the officer with great politeness asked me, "What's wrong, young man?"

"Nothing," I answered, "I have a license. I just bought this new car. It got too wet from the rain and won't start, would you mind giving me a push?"

"I'll push you to jail," he screamed at me, "where's your inspection sticker?"

Good heavens, what was an inspection sticker? "Inspection sticker?" I ignorantly inquired.

"Yeah, inspection sticker, should be on your windshield."

I stared at him dumbly. He told me to get into the car. He pushed me to the police station. It wasn't far, only ten blocks. In the old country it was a disgrace to be taken to a police station. I was happy I saw no one I knew.

The policeman approached the magistrate's bench and told him I was driving a car without a sticker. He added, "The car doesn't look safe."

"What do you mean not safe?" I was indignant. "It's a new car. I just bought it. This is the first day I have driven it."

The magistrate looked down at me severely and said in a flat voice, "Twenty-five dollars."

"Mister Magistrate, why must I pay twenty-five dollars?" I asked.

"No inspection sticker. Twenty-five dollars. It's the law."

"Please, you look like an honest man," I tried to continue.

"Young man, that's the most flattering thing ever said in the court. But are you guilty or not guilty? Where is your sticker?" the magistrate declared.

"I am guilty, but I am not guilty, too," I stammered.

The magistrate had a headache. It had been a long day with Sunday drivers.

"Step aside, young man, we'll come back to you in a minute. Don't look so alarmed. We won't hang you today. Church won't allow hangings on Sunday," he said.

I sat down and tried to recreate the steps by which I had enmeshed myself in this tangle.

"You're in trouble," a man said as he took a seat by my side.

"For such news I give you thanks," I told him.

"Wise guys I don't help," he started to get up.

"Help?" I asked. "How can you help me?"

"In this business, I got the questions *and* the answers. For fifteen dollars you are a free man." Again a bargain. The judge offered it to me for twenty-five dollars. This fellow offered for fifteen.

"Are you perhaps a cut-rate magistrate?" I asked him. Who knows what would have resulted had the magistrate not called me back.

"Now, my young friend, how does it happen you have no sticker for your new shiny car?" he asked.

Everything began to dance before my eyes. I raised my hand to my forehead, moaned just so loudly and fainted. I awoke to find myself the center of attraction. I rested on a bench surrounded by solicitous bailiffs.

I was much older when I learned that in America only women are permitted to faint when in distress. I told the magistrate I would return tomorrow to pay him the

twenty-five dollars. Happy that I was alive and wouldn't delay his dinner by dying in court, he took my name, my license number and let me go.

I called my garage and they towed my car home. This prompt service cost ten dollars. When the car was safely nestled in its niche on the first floor of the garage at ten dollars a month, it was found to be ailing in all four tires. They were as flat as my bankroll. I asked the garage man if he could repair it.

"This car," he answered, speaking his words with great deliberation, "can be fixed like you can drain the Atlantic Ocean. You better sell it for junk. You'll be better off with a horse."

When he wanted to rent me space at ten dollars a month it was a car. Now it was a bottomless ocean. I refused to take his word for it and sent for another mechanic and my former instructor. We held a consultation. They looked sadly at my car and went away. Nothing could be done. This convinced me it was only fit for the graveyard. I called Marvin the Bargain Man. Marvin didn't bargain. He was very honest. He told me right away.

Fifteen dollars was all it was worth. Fifteen dollars is what he gave me for the car. With the change of our relationship, as he became the purchaser and I the salesman, he grew monosyllabic.

Well, I was rid of the car and I had a feeling of freedom, but what troubled me then and troubles me now is, do you think the magistrate is still waiting for me to bring the sticker?

The Zoo

I WAS WORRIED ABOUT ABEL. He had been gone for several months after his argument with Mother and I hadn't heard from him. Well, I said to myself, New York isn't Constantinople.

I felt hurt. If he wanted to write or call or come to see me, he could have. I interpreted his silence as an affront. Abel had a simple mind. If he was angry with Mother, he reasoned I was Mother's son and, therefore, he should be angry with me. Perhaps by the same token he was angry with himself, too. Maybe that's why he couldn't get himself together on a letter to me.

With this profound reasoning to set me off, I decided to go to New York to find him. From a mutual relative I got his address.

Abel appeared to live in a fancy neighborhood. The buildings were all tall and terribly clean. Every entrance was graced by a canopy, and in front of each doorway stood a strong man to open the doors. The people who lived in these houses were either feeble and couldn't open their own doors or they were so rich they didn't have the

energy. It has always been a wonder to me that atrophy of the muscles should be a by-product of wealth.

How could Abel be living in such a place? As I walked around the block turning this thought over in my head, I noticed other entrances to these buildings. They were marked "Delivery" or "Servants Entrance."

Servants Entrance, it came to me, that was it. Abel was working as a barber, perhaps for some foreign potentate who was already his cousin.

Finally locating the Servants Entrance that fitted the address, I walked in. Here the hallway wasn't quite so clean. Everything was gray and dismal and had broken the impact of an illusion.

After a long wait for the elevator, a little wisp of a man poked his head from between the doors as the lift came from the cellar.

"What do you want?" he asked.

"I am looking for my brother," I said.

"So, my son, are we all looking for our brother." He went on, "Has yours a name?"

Has he a name? Just because it was known to only a small circle internationally was no shame.

"Abel Halevy is my brother." I said it much too proudly.

"Well, now . . . Well, now . . . you don't say. Mr. Halevy, your brother? What 're you doin' back here?"

"Doesn't he live in this house?"

"Sure does. Finest man in the building and that's saying a lot, there is seventy-five tenants here," the little man said.

He told me how to get to the front. He didn't want

Abel Halevy's brother riding on the freight elevator. Mr. Halevy would never forgive him, he was sure.

I entered the lobby and sank to my ankles in a softness that made walking a pleasure. Stumbling around joyfully in this lap of luxury I almost upset a jug large enough to hide half of the forty thieves. A young lady behind a partition watched with disdain and contempt my expedition across the weavings of the Chinese. It took bravery to walk right up to her.

"Mr. Halevy, please," I mumbled, "I want to see him."

Her face relaxed, not that it did it much good, but it did relax. She became all coyness and youth. She oozed her trained charm.

"Surely, sir. Just a moment. Would you care to sit down while I phone?"

She offered me a seat on what surely must have been one of Louis' beds. I told her I preferred to stand. I wasn't actually standing. The rug was supporting me, firmly fitting its woolen fingers around my calves.

"Whom shall I say is calling?" the young lady inquired.

"His brother."

Her eyes searched me for the grace and robust characteristics that made Abel. She turned away quickly. She found no resemblance.

I couldn't hear the conversation. I was told to take the elevator to the eleventh floor and go right up. The girl gave me a parting smile. Abel's magic had spread over the entire building.

He met me as I got out of the elevator. He kissed me roundly on both cheeks. While he asked me how I was, he proceeded to half push, half carry me down the corridor.

His mop of curly hair was pasted down. He was a picture of opulence. He wore a huge silk robe that glistened, fine leather slippers and a pair of horrible striped pajamas. His apartment was no less elegant than the lobby.

"Well, well, Willig. It is good to see you," he said, "tell me about everybody."

"Mother is fine. Uncle Leon asked me to tell—"

"Well, well, and how is Uncle Leon, and the others?" he interrupted.

"Uncle seems to be not so—"

"Well, well, that's fine."

"No, Abel, he's not feeling so . . ." I tried to say.

Abel's eyes wandered over his apartment.

"How do you like it, Willig?" he asked.

"It is beautiful. Must be very expensive."

"That depends," he said.

"On what?"

"For me it is cheap."

He was flying on a cloud. I awaited developments.

"How comes all this, my brother?" I inquired.

"Everything in good time. First I must tell you the good news."

As he spoke he lifted me out of the chair and pushed me down a larger foyer toward a door. He knocked and waited a moment.

"Are you up, dear?" he chanted musically.

"Just a minute, love." A woman's voice.

"Abel," I said, "it's a woman?"

"How can you tell?" he laughed. "It is a woman and her name is Bess."

My brother had a woman and not a word to us. I told him it was awful.

He didn't have time to answer. The door opened and a young girl came out. She was undressed in a lace business that gave off sparks. It was supposed to uncover her only here and there. She would have been more dressed with nothing on. She yawned deeply directly in my face, and then being told I was Abel's little brother she kissed me on the cheek. She wore good perfume.

She apologized for having to run away. She had an appointment and would have to dress. Did I mind? I don't know if I did. I did know I couldn't talk. I was stunned. It was unreal. It was a dream.

"Abel," I asked him sharply, "why didn't you let me know?"

"There was no time. Especially in New York there is less time than in all quick America. Have you been in the subway here?"

"Yes," I said.

"Then you know."

He dressed, and much to my surprise he went out without his fiddle. We walked in silence. In the elevator he said nothing. In the taxicab Abel was deep in thought.

"Why so silent?" I asked him.

"I'm thinking whether or not I should be a bull or a bear this week."

I didn't understand, but I knew my brother. Sooner or later he would tell me what language he was speaking.

"You live like a millionaire," I said. "What do you do for a living?"

"I am in business."

"But what are you doing?" I insisted.

"I am in the greatest business in the world. The world works for me," he said.

"But how?" I wanted to know. "What do you do?"

"Nothing I just use my head. Remember what Uncle Henry told me to do? Now I am the stop and go. I am in the stock market and I am worth, as of this morning, one hundred thousand dollars."

"One hundred thousand dollars!" The weight of saying it tossed my head from side to side. "Abel," I patted him on the back, "you are a rich man."

"One could say I was," he soberly agreed.

"Why don't you take your money and fulfill your life's ambition?" I asked.

"Of which ambition do you speak, Willig?" he asked. I didn't know he had several burning life-absorbing ambitions.

"Didn't you pray for an opportunity to go to California? To buy a ranch?"

"All in good time," he answered, "when I have one hundred thousand dollars I will go."

The man was balmy. He had just told me he had one hundred thousand dollars. A minute later he said he didn't. Finally, he explained he had shares, his girl friend's, incidentally, totaling about ten thousand dollars. They were bought on something called "margin." I didn't pretend to know what this meant. But there was so much about Abel I couldn't understand that I wasn't disturbed by this bit of ignorance.

"What is this bear and bull business?" I asked.

"Everything you have to know," he said impatiently. "these are complicated things."

We had arrived at his stockbroker's office. Abel walked slowly across a large room, meanwhile taking a cigar from his lapel pocket and lighting it. He greeted many people in a familiar manner and then motioned me into a heavy leather chair. He signaled to a boy who stood with others on a raised platform upon which they continually changed many numbers and letters. These strange functions were performed while they called to and were answered by the men in the leather chairs. I didn't have the faintest notion of what was going on.

"Sell me five hundred shares of Cities Service," Abel instructed the boy. Several times he repeated the procedure, he bought and he sold. Then he went to lunch.

"In answer to your questions about bulls and bears," he began as we were seated, "to you it is complicated but to financiers like myself it is nothing. Listen closely. You buy shares on margin. That is, you pay a percentage of the total value. For example, if a share costs a hundred dollars you buy it for ten percent, that is ten dollars."

"That's a bargain!" I volunteered.

"Quiet," Abel insisted, "it's not a bargain. It still costs a hundred dollars."

"Then," I said, "it isn't yours, if you pay only ten dollars for it."

"It's yours to buy or sell but you don't own it," he said.

"You only own ten percent of it?"

"Well, not exactly," he continued, "but for the sake of argument you own it all but you only invest ten percent except if it goes down."

"What do you mean goes down?" I asked.

"If the value of it falls to ninety or eighty dollars you have to pay more if you don't want to lose it."

"How can that be?" It sounded incredible to me. "If it is a hundred dollars a share, you pay ten dollars, if it drops to ninety dollars you have to pay more?"

"Correct. You have to invest more so that the share is yours for more than ten percent."

I asked, "If it starts to go down, and you're losing money, why should you want to buy the share?"

"So that you don't lose the ten dollars you put in originally." Abel was getting weak.

"So," I said, "and if it loses till it's only fifty dollars you have to put still more money in?"

"Yes," he said.

"Crazy business to pay more for something that is worth fifty dollars than you do for something that is worth a hundred. How long can this go on?"

"It always happens that a few dollars saves the share," he assured me. This satisfied me for the moment but didn't convince me.

"And the bear, what animal is he here?"

"If I decide to be a bear," he continued, "I buy for the market to go down. For a loss on the market."

"Is that smart?" I seriously inquired.

"Yes."

"Smart to lose money, that's nonsense."

"Willig! Wait, let me start at the beginning. You don't lose money. When you are a bear you don't buy, you only sell."

"Abel, something has happened to you," I said, "how can you sell if you don't buy?"

My brother was rapidly regretting his desire to explain the stock market to me. He made another try. With a burst of great concentration he said, "A bear sells stock he doesn't have!"

I burst out laughing.

"And now what?" Abel asked.

"First," I said, I honestly couldn't stop laughing, "he doesn't buy, then he sells stock he doesn't have. And what do you call this, my brother?"

"You think you can understand high finance so easily. Can you keep quiet till I explain or not?"

"Look, Abel, I am quiet."

"A bear sells stock he doesn't have," he continued. I tried to keep a straight face. "He sells stock that is listed on the market at a hundred dollars a share. He sells it marked for delivery next week in the hope that the market will drop by then and when he delivers the shares he didn't buy to the man who wanted them at a hundred dollars he may get them for only ninety dollars and sell for a hundred . . . see?"

"Ahhha. Don't sound honest," I said.

Abel pretended not to hear. He continued, "A bull buys shares in the hope that they will go up."

"This I like. This I understand. My brother, you must become a bull in this zoo."

There were other things he tried to tell me but I had heard enough. I was too hungry to listen to any more about high finance. After lunch we went back to the

broker's office. Everything seemed to be very tense. People whom I have seen walking before, now ran. All about me people were frantically rushing to telephones. Slips of paper filled the air and piled up untouched in corners. The floor was soon a flood of scrap. They all ran, and Abel ran too. For an hour he was too busy to notice me.

"Got to get more margin," he said to me once as he passed me on the way to phone. He called his woman and she came down with more money. Within another hour, Abel needed more.

"But baby," he pleaded with her, "just a thousand will hold me."

After much persuasion, during which time Abel gave a performance that would have made Barrymore, all three of them, run to the sticks, he got fifteen hundred dollars. This, too, was dropped into the bottomless pit. The market was falling. All about me people were saying it wouldn't hold.

Wheat was falling, cotton was down, and Abel sat slumped in his chair as the bell sounded the close of trading for the day. Abel could barely get out of his chair. He went to a window and was told he still had something. When I asked him what was happening, he didn't answer.

He took me home with him and wouldn't let me leave. His girl friend was out at a party. The next three days were repetitions of the first. Abel borrowed heavily from his girl who assured him each time that he had the last of the money she would give him. After the fifth day we didn't go home. We stayed at a nearby hotel. I watched as Abel's clothes began to hang loosely on his body. He didn't eat and he didn't talk.

At the end of ten days Abel was wiped out. There was no reason to stay any longer. We walked down the street. No one stopped to talk. No one wanted to talk to anybody. Suddenly, in the fighting moment for survival everyone was everybody's enemy.

Snatches of conversation filled with death and loss corroded the air. The chairs in the broker's office were empty. The floor was littered and the news of suicide no longer of shock or interest.

Men who had neglected their businesses to get rich quickly went to hospitals to recuperate slowly. Some returned to their useful occupations, resolving never to be bulls or bears again.

Abel's girlfriend no longer answered the phone. She had moved out of their apartment. My brother was silent. We went to his regal dwelling to pick up his things. The doorman had become an icicle with a nose. The girl at the desk had lost her tongue and glared at us. We were unshaven, unkempt and poor.

I helped Abel pack. He cried for awhile, then he sang, and then he said, "About that ranch in California, Willig, if I had five hundred dollars . . ."

It was October 13, 1929. I didn't say anything to my big financier brother. Three days later I gave him my last five hundred dollars. Abel and his violin left for California.

The Courtship of Donna *or* How I Wooed and Won Her Father

NATHAN WALKED THE FLOOR all night. He had what might be termed a rather heavy foot and I couldn't sleep either. I went into the hall separating our bedrooms and spoke to him.

"Nathan, the night is for sleeping."

"Mr. America," he said, "Information Bureau. I know the night is to sleep but I can't."

This from the man who could sleep through a flood and did till the waters licked the bed and the wind tore the roof off the house.

I was alarmed. "What's the matter?"

"I saw today a girl, Willig . . ."

"You told Celia?"

"Certainly I told Celia." He was offended. "I tell her everything."

"And she wasn't angry? When a married man comes home and can't sleep because he saw a beautiful girl, his wife has reason to get mad."

"Did I say I couldn't sleep because the girl was for me?"

"No, Nathan."

"And," he continued, "for whom do you think I see this girl?"

"For whom?"

"For you, you idiot!"

Satisfied that he had talked himself out, I had difficulty getting much more out of him. Naturally, my curiosity was slightly piqued. I pestered him till he confessed she was heavenly, she was a greenhorn but much smarter than me. She was, he insisted, like a bird in the morning dew.

Early next day I bought myself some sleeping pills. If happily married Nathan could be so affected by her, I perhaps would never sleep again.

After Celia introduced me to Donna I did very little to win her. She seemed to be chasing me all the time. I tried to fight her off and as everlasting proof of this I present these letters written by Donna to Celia and vice versa.

Dear Celia:

I know you mean well. But why did you introduce me to Willig Halevy? There is something about him I can't understand. He frightens me. When I first met him, he didn't say a word all evening. He just sat and looked at me till I thought his eyes would wear me out. Then when he called to take me out he didn't stop talking for three hours. I hadn't invited him but somehow he knew I wasn't doing anything that evening and when I opened the door to go out to buy a paper, there he was sitting on the stoop.

"Good evening, Donna," he said.

I greeted him, he has such a nice smile, but then he began talking. The things that man can talk about. I know he is more than a good friend of yours and I am asking you to please tell him to stop bothering me. I can't stand the way he looks at me. You have never heard the way he talks to me. First he remarks on the weather. He says, "Look beautiful one, how the stars smile at you." This is especially ridiculous when the clouds hang over the city like a curtain and there isn't a star for a thousand miles. He's a poet he says. He recited poetry to me so long and so late that I couldn't get up in the morning. What he says is flattering. He is also a world authority on current events. I know how little I know, but do you think I need a three-hour lecture on the United States Constitution? He was looking into my eyes which he described as "the last word," and when he came closer to me I was frightened and pleased at the same time. He held my hand. I was so moved by his lovely words I didn't mind that either. Then he came closer and dropped his head for a moment, thinking of another snatch of poetry, I thought. As he lifted his head and my heart beat so loudly I thought he could hear it, he said, "And what is the Bill of Rights? Do you know the Fourteenth Amendment?"

Celia, get rid of him for me, please.

I send my love to you all.

Donna.

Dear Donna:

I fully sympathize with you. I tried to raise him, but he grows so fast his head is already in the clouds for some

years. Only one thing I can tell you, if he loves you he will marry you.

Celia.

Dear Celia:

If you don't do something for me I will go out of my mind. You know I have several suitors. One is a lawyer, a doctor, a chemist. They are all fine men with assured futures. They are good-looking. What in the world do I want with a little no-good Willig? If things continue as they are I will have no suitors and no mind.

Last week I was supposed to see "Beggar on Horseback." Dr. Gross had tickets and I looked forward to a nice calm attentive evening, the kind of thing one can expect from a sane human being like Dr. Gross. However, at 6 P. M. the night of the show, Dr. Gross got a telegram that his mother had taken seriously ill in Boston and he had to leave instantly. He was very sorry and I told him we could go another time. He insisted that I see it that evening and asked me to send for the tickets so that my girl friend and I could see the show. I sent my young nephew for the tickets but he didn't return with them. In fact, I don't know when he did get home. But at half past seven Willig showed up with two tickets for "Beggar on Horseback," which he explained he had just bought from an old friend who was "indisposed." He talked so fast and with such fury. He looked into my eyes so intently that I didn't have the energy to fight him off. We went and during the times when Willig kept quiet, which were rare, I enjoyed what I could hear of the play.

Then when we left the theatre and I felt relaxed and invigorated, I surprised myself by being glad to be with him. Willig announced that he couldn't take me home, his mother was waiting up for him with some hot milk and he had to get home to drink it. I wanted to dance or walk or talk about the play. Willig left me standing speechless on Broad Street, alone. Next day I received a note from Dr. Gross. He wrote, "I am very happy to tell you that my mother isn't ill and wasn't ill. If you didn't want to go to the theatre with me you could have told me instead of resorting to such a shabby trick as that telegram . . ." I don't want to tell papa about this for he would be very harsh with Willig.

Donna.

Dear Donna:

Willig isn't here and I can't talk to him. Nathan went over the other day and tried to. When he came home he had to lie down for three hours before he regained his senses. He told me Willig spent six hours telling him about you. He wouldn't let Nathan get out of his chair to get a drink or do other things one has to in the course of six hours. Nathan will not be able to go to work for two days. He complains his head is spinning and he hears only the words, "I love Donna, I love Donna." Just to be able to tell me about it, Nathan tried to count the number of times Willig said "Donna . . . I love Donna . . ." When he was in the thousands he felt his head reeling and it was then Willig brought him home in a taxi.

What more can I tell you. Keep well.

Celia.

Dear Celia:

I will not marry anyone who orders milk when everyone else orders coffee. That's beside the point though, for now I'm in a real muddle. I shall have to leave the city to get away from him. I have just decided. Besides, Papa must go to New York and then to Canada with my brothers. I have trouble enough without Willig. You know the florist who wishes to marry me. A nice boy with a good business and an assured future. He has sent me flowers for three months, long before the visitation of your plague spot, Mr. Willig Halevy. For the last two months I have been receiving a love note with the flowers each day. They are so beautiful I couldn't understand how my florist got so romantic all of a sudden. I looked upon him in a much more favorable light than I ever did before. When he took me out I waited to hear the beautiful things he wrote on the notes. I permitted myself to appear much more interested in him and I let him hold my hand and even talk of marriage. Although I didn't give him my word, Papa doesn't like him too well, I thought seriously of marrying him and told him I may.

This morning the flowers arrived as usual. With the most beautiful note of all. I was swept off my feet and when I turned the card over, there in that scrawling handwriting was the name "Willig Halevy." What am I going to tell poor Dave the florist? Shall I tell him I fell in love with him through Willig's poems? He is coming tonight for his answer.

Donna.

P. S. I understand Willig knows the messenger who delivers the flowers.

Dear Donna:

You should know now that David's crisis is past. His pneumonia was not really a bad case. The doctor couldn't understand it at first but when I told him how Willig took him ice skating that evening and showed him how much better it can be done in shirt sleeves, he understood. Willig is also better, he only sniffles a little. He talks a lot about the sacrifices he makes for you. At any rate, you were saved at least for the moment from having to turn David down. Willig also convinced him to go to Florida for a rest.

How is your father?

Celia.

Dear Celia:

Father hasn't been so happy since he left the old country. Willig comes here almost every day just as Father goes to the synagogue for evening prayers.

At the synagogue they have taken to calling Willig Father's son. I am cornered but I am going to New York in a few days. Then I will be rid of Willig. I am happy at the thought of not seeing him again, especially after what he did to me the other night.

We were to go to a concert with several of my friends. Willig as usual walked in a little late. Before he could take off his coat he got mine and put it on me. He explained as he hurried me to the door that he had some millionaire friends he wanted me to meet. I was rather curious to see what kind of friends Willig could have among the Main Liners. He took me in his so-called new Chevrolet which stops every fifteen minutes while Willig talks it into going

again. We parked outside and Willig told me he wanted to see if they were home. He had grown quite considerate. He didn't want me standing in the cold for a minute, he said. When the door was open he would come for me and save me the discomfiture of waiting in the cold. I thought that was nice.

One hour later when I had turned blue from the cold he came out and without a word started up the motor and drove away. I couldn't say anything I was so cold. I was angry and I screamed. Willig stopped the car and offered to take me to a doctor. If I could have moved my frozen hands I would have smacked him. "I know," he said, "what bothers you, dear one, you are peeved because I kept you waiting so long." Peeved! he said. He explained, "When I got inside there was a big fight going on. They threw furniture at each other and yelled loudly. In the first place, since you are going to marry me, I didn't want you to see married life in such a light, secondly, I feared for their lives, and I couldn't leave until they were exhausted and I had tucked them into bed. . . ."

I went to the concert with him but it took so long for my ears to get warm I couldn't hear much of it. Besides we were so far from the orchestra I couldn't have heard them well under any circumstances. This was strange, for the last time we went to the concert we had excellent tickets. Willig wanted to see how I would react to being poor. I didn't talk to him all the way home and I didn't say goodnight. At the door in the cold he recited a poem to me. It was all about the night and how the cold vanished from him when he looked at the warmth of my beauty. I asked him to come in and sat him on the sofa. I

went to the kitchen and made him some hot chocolate. I wanted to sit near him and hear him tell me some more poetry. When I returned he and Father were deep in a game of chess and he didn't even look up at me when I ran from the room.

Donna.

Dear Donna:

Your father was here yesterday. He likes the way Willig prays. He is also amazed at his knowledge of the Talmud. Before you get angry all over again your last suitor Paul is off your list.

Willig told him he was through with you, that he would raise Rita and marry her. Then he would get the kind of wife he wants. Paul thought this such a good idea that he has crossed you off his list and will wait till his distant cousin Belle, whom he has been raising, is old enough to marry. Willig laughed for two hours when he told us how he did it.

Good luck on your trip to New York.

Celia.

P. S. That millionaire is a client of Willig's. He goes often to readjust the plates he made for him.

Dear Celia:

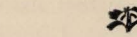
I cried all night. New York is a beautiful city and I should have been happy. But I was so angry I cried all night. Willig insisted on taking us to the station when we left Philadelphia. Father dislikes traveling in the streetcars and thought it a fine thing for Willig to be so attentive. They sat and talked for hours, poring over the history of the past until it was nearly train time. Willig took us to the Broad Street Station. He carried our bags in and then he

sat down with us. When the conductor called "All aboard," Willig kissed Father and then for the first time he kissed me. I sat down hard. Willig went right on talking to Father as if nothing had happened. Before we realized it we were moving. Mr. Halevy said he would ride as far as Thirtieth Street and finish his conversation with Father. It is only a short ride but I hadn't stopped blushing from the last kiss when we got into the station. Willig got up again and kissed Father. I waited for him to kiss me but he didn't. He walked very slowly to the door but by the time he got there the train was moving too quickly. He was about to jump when I ran and got him by the arm. I didn't want him to get hurt.

There is one more station in Philadelphia, at North Philadelphia I told him. He returned to our seats without a word and resumed his conversation with Father. At North Philadelphia I walked him to the door, but as he kissed me goodbye the train moved. I didn't hear it going till Father tapped us on the back and told us we were engaged. I am writing this as you can see from the Pennsylvania Hotel. It is only a few hours since people have begun to call me Mrs. Halevy and I can't get used to it. Willig and Papa are sitting in a corner discussing the Talmud and it's my wedding night. I don't know what to tell you but surely you must have known all the time . . . I guess everyone did. It was clear all along that I loved Willig. Why would I have stood for all the abuse if I didn't? I know he'll make me happy and I'm glad I married him, but tell me, Celia, what kind of a fellow is this Willig anyway?

Love,
Donna.

The Man with the Bicuspid Brain



OF ALL THE MINDS I have had occasion to observe at work and at slumber, in which state they mostly resided, the mind most elusive and fogbound is that of the American dentist. Practically any other group of civilized men in our country would respond to improvement, invention and the general betterment of their product. Except for a few rare adventures, this is not true of the dentist.

Hung as he is some place between the ethics of the medical profession and the biting teeth of the sordid businessman, he has managed by years of practice to absorb the worst features of both. Yet some dentists have their wisdom teeth already and do practice good dentistry.

Observed while working at so delicate an organism as one's mouth, through which practically everything we strive for must pass, it is a wonder he isn't loading ash and garbage in the city dump for all the delicacy of his touch. This rude, gruff exterior hides a heart of gold, unmineable and of very low karat. You will discover this if you are one of the multitude who, for want of a better way to toss your money to the monkeys, decide to repair a molar or two. I am certain you have sometimes been x-rayed for

a missing cavity or a quickly summoned abscess. Here you observe the master touch. The gentleness with which Herr Doctor jams his thumb and forefinger into your gullet, a thing of such privacy, is enough to make you vomit and often does. You will pay five dollars extra whether you know it or not for the questionable pleasure of regurgitating.

AFTER I LEFT Bailey's madhouse I did nothing for a time. I was turning over a scheme of going into business for myself. I had just married and, after my trip West, the subject of making money was no longer eclipsed by the fond discussion of a Talmudic symposium. But there was more to it than that. I wanted to try experimenting with several ideas I got while working for Bailey, and I wanted the freedom being in the business world would give me.

The problem of an office was settled by Nathan. He huffed and he puffed and he blew my house up. He built me the finest dental laboratory in the city.

To many people the problem of just what a dental technician does is as great a mystery as what happened to Judge Rutherford of Haverford County on the eve of his eightieth birthday. Let me tell you this in a roundabout way since it is a rather roundabout subject. In the morning of a month not long past you awaken to find that your teeth are going to pot. You look into the mirror, and after getting over the first shock at what Rubenstein's Hair Balm can do to your scalp, you wash the ever-falling hair from the wash basin and, opening your mouth,

you are reminded of Lon Chaney as the Hunchback of Notre Dame.

This isn't the first time you've been racked with pain in your dentures and finally, with the little woman beating a samba on your konk with a saucepan, you decide to do something about it. You visit a dentist and sure enough in nine cases out of ten you meet him on the day of his reckless phase of manic depression. That is the tooth-pulling phase. So he yanks the bothersome bicuspid. He yanks bicuspids during the next few days with all the speed and politeness of an Iowa farm boy winning the corn-husking contest for the tenth straight year. Your mouth looks like an unplowed furrow. Then all the rays of the searchlight of science are upon you, and you are a fit customer for a bridge or a plate or a complete upper or lower, or any one of the numberless contraptions invented to ruin your disposition from that moment till you are tucked safe and unprotesting into the lap of the earth.

You keep dipping into your bankroll, never understanding why you personally must pay for the boy's entire education. You are happy to finance his last year at college as well as the final big week and a corsage for his girl on the night of the last prom. You will even pay for the car he rented and wrecked. But that is all. You are adamant about *that.*

The bills begin to roll in. You look rather bleary-eyed at the bill for two hundred dollars or more for the plate. (I am giving you prices prewar and not adding the taxes or the cost of the doctor's wife's new mink.) This mag-

nificent imitation of your dearly beloved oldest companions cost your friend the dentist less than ten dollars. That is, he pays the dental technician or the laboratory five dollars for service and anywhere from one dollar to four depending on the quality he thinks he can get away with. After all it's your mouth, not his.

I went to work in my laboratory, where I began experimenting. This was fine as a fiddle until my little woman called my attention to some rather bothersome slips of paper which made periodic appearance. These she patiently explained to me were the monthly bills and I had to pay them.

Thus it was that another great scientist was all but nipped in the bud and I proceeded to do commercial work. I didn't mind soiling my hands with the filthy lucre if I could only have got my fingers on a pocket full of the stuff. Mostly it came to me in such microscopic quantities that Donna's poor eyesight is traced to the day she searched the table for my proffered money only to discover the folding money covered by two files that danced upon it and ridiculed my entire enterprise.

So I vacillated from being a poorly paying dental laboratory to an unsuccessful dental laboratory until I invented a gold plate which I called the Art-Press. Technically this has many advantages over the older form of torture known as a complete upper and lower. It is lighter and much more durable. In fact, so much more durable that not too many of my colleagues were eager to place them. It was a shame for you, little citizen, and if you suffer now, remember I did what I could to replace that

bridge you are wearing, that feels like a loaded Mack truck, with a comparatively light and good plate. It could easily have lasted a lifetime.

Here we come into titanic collision with the two conflicts going around in the dentist's bicuspid brain. These we have mentioned before. They are the ethics he would like to have and the business sense he must have to stay in business, and finally the business sense that drove him to dentistry in the first place. I say "drove" advisedly. I cannot conceive of a man in partial command of his faculties taking up dentistry because he finds it other than a way to make a living. True, he can always shut up his clients, or patients, whichever they are called these days, unlike the physician who has to listen ten times to the recital of Aunt Lizzie's kidney complaint, with no variance in the ten superb performances.

As soon as something is invented that will benefit anyone, two things happen. First, it is disclaimed as a fraud and a fake and unworkable and too expensive and not expensive enough and each authority has his own Philippic which he hurls at you with the wrath of Jupiter. Then, when like a pinpoint of light coming through Father's bowler hat, it must be admitted to exist and to prosper and to work, they rush around saying it is nothing at all, they knew about it all the time. They have, in fact, been doing the same thing, only theirs is better.

Through these two phases of experiment, analysis and torture my young bones were rattled. There were other inventions too, like the show plate on which the dentist could make money, but they all met with the same re-

markable lack of financial acclaim. My one consolation was that Abel wasn't around to see my predicament. He surely would have ridden out on a white charger determined to rectify the wrong done to me. But I was getting too old to be spending so many nights in jail with my defenders, Uncle Leon and Abel. So Donna and I kept our misery to ourselves. Not that the trouble wouldn't have covered the entire family like a sleeping bag.

Occasionally, I was able to pull a wee chestnut out of the fire to feed to the wolves when the breath of the bill collectors was hot upon my neck, by the sale of some gold scrap I had bought. I was going through my "discard" drawer collecting some scrap when an old woman came in and wanted to sell me an old gold plate that was really antique. From the style I placed it at about a hundred years old. Yet my principal interest in it was the fact that I bought the gold from her for twenty dollars and I would add that to what I had, make a little profit and I could pay a bill or two.

Two days later a new scrap man came to buy my scrap. He noticed the old gold plate, admired it and offered me twenty-five dollars for it. I leaped across the room and kissed him. Later that same day the scrap man returned and asked me did I have another plate like the one I had sold him. He was prepared to pay any price. Upon coming home, and after careful examination, he had come to the remarkable conclusion that it was a museum piece, in fact, at this moment the TWA was winging it to Los Angeles to a dental museum there. He wanted a companion piece for it which he was sure the museum would be

devilishly happy to have. He instructed me to find the companion if one did indeed exist, and to pay any price for it.

I promised to look for one and I meant to keep my promise. So firm was I in my resolution to keep my eyes open that I couldn't sleep at night, thinking what a few hundred dollars would do to straighten my tangled financial affairs. The scrap man called every day and I was heartbroken to have to report constant failure to him.

About ten days after my initial discovery of the plate an elderly gentleman walked in with one that looked like the thing I had been searching for. The workmanship was identical, the only apparent difference was that several of the teeth present in the other were missing here.

I pretended to have little interest in it. The old man wanted to borrow some money on it. I gently explained that all appearances to the contrary we were not a bank nor a loan society nor even the Morris Plan, we were just a simple little dental laboratory and we would give him whatever he wanted for the plate.

Shall I torture you with the details of how we haggled and how, with a promise of two hundred and fifty dollars for the plate from the scrap man, I gave the old man, who bargained with the skill of an Oriental banker, my last hundred and twenty-five dollars? No, I think not.

Nor will I reiterate the ear-drumming I got from Donna when after a week the man didn't show up to take his piece to the museum, and I couldn't find his address, principally because he never gave it to me. I did feel silly when I discovered, after the man didn't call me, that I had

fallen victim to one of the oldest dodges in the business. The plates weren't identical. They were the same plate.

I think it must be obvious to you without my sketching in the details that this final deal finished me up in the dental mechanic business, and if it weren't for Donna I would have been happy to go back to the relative simplicity of cutting somebody's hair and getting an honest dollar on the spot for an honest dollar's work.

Abel Strikes Gold

ABEL HAD FINALLY found a place that fitted him like a suspender strap. That is more than I could say for myself. His utopia would have to be a place where fairy kings dwelt and garlands danced. Where all was merry and gay in a world peopled by little men with big bank accounts. This he found in the magic and mayhem known to mortal man as Hollywood.

Smarting under the refusal of my contribution to science, I was easy prey for Abel's wire. It was an invitation to visit him, sugared with an appetizing morsel worth five hundred dollars. He promised to repay the 1929 debt. Donna had the soul of an explorer so little argument was needed to get her away. Before I had a chance to get the laboratory plaster from under my nails we were entrained for the capitol of froth.

I couldn't tell from the scant word received since his trip west, just what he did in the film world. He seemed contented enough. We didn't know whether or not Abel had become a production chief or whether he was still a food taster in the commissary. I had only recently learned that he got bored with the lack of advancement on his job

and quit it. He considered the occupational hazards too great. The truth about his present employment we learned shortly after our arrival. For the everfading record let it be written in blood that Abel was a studio masseur.

His personal status had taken a turn for the better, too. The great American slogan, contrived by a bed manufacturer and nurtured by grasping marriage agents, that two could live as cheaply as one, had taken hold of him. He had married a fine woman. In fact, she seemed so completely sane that I couldn't figure out what she could gain in a union which saw Abel occupying half the throne. I had only begun to learn that America was the land of the "gag" and anyone would do anything for a gag. She told me Abel and his fiddle were a lot of laughs. I offered to buy her a joke book, promising her the same end result without the wear and tear on the life-giving tissue. For some reason she said it wasn't the same thing.

They were a congenial pair. She has long since got in the habit of waking Abel with a cold bucket of water accurately delivered.

"It keeps him down for a good part of the day," she explained.

This invigorating routine seemed to be what the doctor would have ordered if anyone in California was ever so disloyal as to call a physician. In defense of Abel and his wife, a little stick of dynamite labeled Mary to confuse the innocent, they did not yet belong to a cult or a fad and they hadn't taken to eating dirt, natural or dehydrated.

Abel was in the process of hitting the jackpot when we arrived. His rise to a position of prominence was due to

a train of circumstances born of fear and derived with the solemn intent of bringing the ceiling down on everyone's head.

Here's how it happened. The portfolio of food taster had been wrenched from his hands when he was found to be using white mice to taste the food. In fact it was suspected he himself had prepared the dish which had sent three producers screaming for stomach pumps.

Abel sketched himself a little life-giving scenario. You must understand it is necessary to change a name here and there. At this writing Abel is still working at the studio. However, any resemblances to persons living or dead, or events living or dead, is deliberate, and anyone finding themselves mirrored can shrink with horror if he likes.

One day he drove up to the gate of a neighboring studio, Jewel Productions. He did not ask for a job as is the accepted custom in our civilized country. He came in, his white jacket buttoned like a doctor's tunic close to the throat. He carried a neat black satchel. He drove his car to a rushed stop in front of the studio gate and screamed for attention.

"Hurry," he stormed, "open it, you idiot, do you want him to die while you tarry on your insipid business?" The guard, momentarily startled, passed Abel through. Inside, my brother quickly found his way into the office of Harry Hilton Hurley, the jewel of Jewel Productions.

Three secretaries immediately leaped to attention and did a buck and wing out the door. Abel smiled at them and secured their signatures on a life term contract which he proceeded to tear up and deposit in the trash basket.

"It is good I came," he said to a startled Harry Hilton Hurley.

"Why?" Harry Hilton inquired.

Abel didn't say another word. With a well calculated twist he spun Harry Hilton around and had his clothes off in one earth-revolving gesture. At each protestation from the helpless man Abel massaged him more vigorously. Hurley was forced to relax. Say what you will about my brother, and you probably have heard it said, he knew what to do with his hands.

In fifteen minutes Hurley was asleep, dreaming of little fat cherubs all eating dollar-sign lollipops. When he awoke to the sound of Wagner's Rhine music delivered by Abel on a stolen French horn, he asked, "Who are you?"

My relative had long since heard of the art of innuendo. He raised his eyebrow a bit, stared straight into the producer's eyes and hushed the word "Shhhhh" directly into his face. No one had spoken to Harry Hilton Hurley like that since he was three, so unable to answer silence he said nothing.

After a few minutes, when Abel had replaced his tools, he said, "You got bank trouble?" Hurley was startled at hearing in his own office what every soda jerk from Seattle to Agua Caliente knew.

"How do you know?" he asked.

"I know everything."

No one could fool Harry Hilton Hurley. He knew a bank spy when he saw one. No, he thought in the back of his mind, he would not be outsmarted, he'd take this

flunky and make him *his* agent. Harry would then have a pipe line right into financial heaven. He sat back and, putting his thumbs into his vest, knew he had scored against the eastern banking syndicate which was contributing so generously to his stomach ulcers. Abel was hired on the spot for an undisclosed salary and an indefinable job. Vaguely he was told he was an "adviser." Harry indicated he could relax best when he was slapped by a masseur or a banker, so the only part of Abel's duties clearly outlined was the daily massage.

Harry indicated to Abel that a good word dropped by him in certain financial places would be rewarded by four figures. My brother wasn't green, but he didn't quite know whether it was four chorus girls or four figures following a dollar sign. In either event the thought was a warm and welcome one. And so, under the gloriously warm California sun we lolled at the beach, ate the largest of everything that grew and listened to the breathless tales that Abel brought home every day. But things couldn't go on this way. Every week Abel's salary grew and no one knew when it would be necessary to pull up a Brink's truck to cart his earnings away. It all came to a head while Harry Hilton was in the middle of a super epic.

"Abel," he said one morning, "I would like you should glance with me at a number we got ready in the projection room."

"For you, H.H.H.," Abel said, "anything"

Down the halls they marched in charming conversation, discussing the latest developments in a many-lined communique reporting the comings and goings of a four-

legged mammal known as "Kiss Me," running in the seventh at Caliente. They were mutually interested in the outcome of this life and death struggle, Abel for a fin on the nose and Harry for a trip to the cleaners if the nag didn't at least show. In the projection room H.H.H. was handed a large drink of something to quiet his nerves. Abel asked for one, too. This combination sedative and stimulant was supposed to put them in fine fettle; actually the dope made all celestial.

Abel's level head could not be turned. As the epic unfolded he grew more and more restless. Finally, with a rude gesture reminiscent of the Bronx Cheer, but brought to a higher degree of efficiency by his genius, he stalked out of the room.

Harry Hilton Hurley, alone in his palace overlooking the Pacific, ate no dinner that night. He did not sleep. In the morning, when Abel arrived with a song on his lips, he found H.H.H. waiting for him. Harry, who looked very tired after a sleepless night, claimed he needed a massage. Abel was only too happy to give it to him. After an hour of relaxing, the "chief" felt free to come to the point.

"My boy," he began, "you are one smart feller."

Abel didn't answer for this was a fact well known by all and called for no comment on his part.

"You didn't like the picture?"

"You call that a picture?"

"As bad as that, you think?" H.H.H. was on the verge of tears. He cried easily. He had taken lessons, when first he arrived, from none other than that coach of crying, the great Maria Ouspenskaya, Hollywood's gift from Leo

Tolstoy. Maria Ouspenskaya had once been a great dramatic coach, but in this age of super-specialties, she had perfected two startling techniques. One was the ability to shake one ear at a time and the other to cry real live tears. She frowned on the use of glycerine and Harry Hilton had been one of her most apt pupils. Raised in a family where tears were the everyday dessert of life, Abel was left as cold and clammy as an uneaten tapioca pudding.

"Help me," Harry Hilton cried as he rose from his chair and faced his better profile to the camera.

I will never believe that either of them had the faintest conception of what the other was talking about. They nevertheless found themselves in complete agreement. Abel, the man with the people's touch, was to help with the picture.

After he had washed the tears from the Chief's face he asked for a conference. This, I was to learn, is a kind of Roman bout where the gladiators are thrown to the lions. Here many a noble and budding soul, singing in lyrical phrases and possessed of an understanding of people and their desires, has been woven into the rugs or embroidered into the woodwork.

The twelve writers responsible for the epic under consideration were fired to a man to be replaced by another twelve writers who bore an unmistakable resemblance to their former colleagues. The only noticeable difference was the large numbers on the fronts of their prison suits. The humans in the room at the time were those unrelatived: the assistant director, the cameraman, the editor and such ordinary working people who could sneak in,

since they actually had to piece together the flagons of drivel.

I entered the scene of devastation as Abel's assistant. Everyone in Hollywood must have an assistant. It is an ironclad law of the jungle, and anyone caught without an assistant will lose face and bring disgrace upon himself. I was pressed into service.

As the great men sat and discussed the picture, Abel massaged them. While Abel as chief people's consultant massaged Harry, he naively asked to see a copy of the script under discussion.

"Script?" Harry asked. "Script... who has the script?"

After a frantic search it was disclosed that no one knew precisely where the script was. In fact, a hurried analysis of the copious notes taken by six stenographers disclosed that they were all discussing different pictures. Abel dashed into the studio library, and diving into a welter of foolscap came up with a dust-encrusted manuscript. He retreated to a corner of the conference room, and while a rapid game of fancy pinochle was played and I completed my fifteenth massage, he read the masterpiece.

Meanwhile, Harry called for his secretaries and, borrowing a page from a worthy predecessor, asked for silence. He dictated his immortal words slowly: "From now on before we make a picture, someone must read it." The conference drank tea and nodded its assent.

Abel finished the script and sat dreamily smoking.

"Well, Abel, well?" Harry asked.

"This is a movie," he said.

"Who wrote this?" Harry inquired of his secretary.

"Oh, him, you don't want him?" she said with a sour face.

"Why such a face?"

"You fired him," she said.

"Who is it?"

"Arnold Dan Wart, that upstart . . ."

With a wave of his hand Harry ordered the room cleared.

"How can I thank you?" Harry asked Abel.

For once the genius was silent, he didn't know what he had done. The fact that he had accidentally fallen upon a gold mine which lay buried under the debris of a chase completely escaped him.

Initiative Ltd.

APPARENTLY MY NEW COUNTRY, not unlike most others, worshipped at the altar of financial success. The creative product, at least as far as I was concerned, didn't seem to have much in the way of value on the open market. All about me my friends were achieving a state of precious opulence. I soon learned that everything yellow in their homes was gold.

Among the leaders for the crown of an American success in my family was my brother-in-law Al. He was already a kind of Horatio Alger character who had begun to make a great success. Having little but an insatiable ambition to start with, he had begun to build what was to become in its way a Twentieth Century empire.

How was I doing in all this? Not so well. I had been various things at various times, all ending unsuccessfully. On the long journey home from California I thought a good deal about my future. There is probably no pastime so unproductive as thinking about one's future. As the miles rolled into cities and we neared the east, I had thought myself in and out of every conceivable kind of work. None of them as traced from Nevada to Colorado

showed sufficient promise of giving me what I now knew I needed to be happy.

Al's words to me before I left had made a lasting impression upon me. I remembered them and added a few of my own. The total of his carefully-thought-out formula impressed me at the time as being wise and sound. He told me he wanted leisure when he was young. That became my goal, too. We both wanted leisure early in life so we could have some fun before we were too old to enjoy it. Al had begun to beat a path through the jungle toward getting this, but I was in a funk.

The only road to early retirement, my fevered brain told me, was in business. Al wanted me to go into business. Donna, who worshipped Al for all the logical reasons one member of a family loves another and all the other reasons Al's abilities entitled him to, urged me to take his advice. Their idea was that I join Al in his textile business. I hadn't been able to make up my mind.

My brother-in-law was extremely busy doing good. He was a young man who very early in the scheme of life had been bitten by two things: a strong philanthropic desire and a love of life. When his philanthropies didn't leave him penniless, he was forever traveling about searching for new opportunities to expand his business or hunting down some cause that could use a friend. Most causes that Al undertook were shocked at first by his vigorous treatment. But soon, when the results begin to pour in (all this mind you, before Mr. Bing Crosby became Robin Hood O'Malley) they were reluctant to ever dispense with his services.

It was only natural that Al couldn't keep his nose to the grindstone all the time and have sufficient strength to climb into the clouds as well. Thus a crack always appeared in his armor. For the more mundane tasks of carrying out his instructions he had the misfortune to hire one nut after another as manager of his textile plant. It was only Al's strong basic judgment and keen grasp of the project that kept him in business.

But I wanted to go into something by myself. My ambitions were rather nurtured by a large bony fellow who pasted himself to my ear early in our flight from Abel. He was still stuck to me when we got into Chicago. Of all the gentlemen I had met, this star sapphire, a square-shouldered chap whose executive manner was an amalgam of British Diplomacy and the hurly-burly of a football coach, was a thing to behold. He spoke entertainingly of vast enterprises and made a kind of hocus pocus with his voice at the tail end of which I, weak and unfit for reason, agreed to go into business with him.

I had looked forward to seeing Al when I got back to New York. I wanted to talk the matter over with him. This had always helped me and I thought to do it this time. But Al was away.

My train companion invited me to view his version of a gold mine up in the Lehigh Valley. I was instructed by Mr. Louis Gregorian, the train love affair, in the course of three long distance calls, spaced ten minutes apart, how I was to travel, where I was to lunch, with whom and with whom not I was to talk. I was told what to look at while I traveled. I was even invited not to submit an ex-

pense account of my adventures. Upon my arrival it came as somewhat a shock, as you may well imagine, to learn that Mr. Louis Gregorian didn't own the plant he had invited me to. However, that didn't prevent him from acting as he did or from trying to emulate the owner by taking trips. But whereas the owner's trips were meaningful, his were meaningless.

The plant I was called to belonged to my brother-in-law Al. Louis Gregorian, perched in a flight of fantasy, was Al's new manager. Mr. Gregorian wasn't impressed with my relatives. Even after I told him he wasn't the owner. He seemed not to hear. He was a blunt man. His tactics and strategy, which I am certain he didn't learn from Clausewitz (he was a non-reading man) were, "Attack, toujours attack." It was a theory with him. He laid down a heavy barrage of mortar shells in the general vicinity of my sensitivities. His opening blast was one of grace, refinement and restraint. "You are," he said, enunciating beautifully, "dumb and stupid, but you are clever enough to learn."

The slick Mr. Gregorian was a very different man in his office. He was affable enough but it was all going to be his way. That was clear. While I was limply hanging on one contradiction after the other he must have noticed I was losing interest in his venture. He came over to me from around his huge desk.

"Willig, Willig, I will make you rich and famous. You surely can't ask for more. You come in Monday and don't forget your brains. . . ."

While I had my hand on the door knob waiting to form the sentences to tell him I didn't want to work for him,

he said, "Be happy, Willig, smile and throw out your chest, you are the new manager of these enterprises."

Outside of the fact that he made "enterprises" sound bigger than J. P. Morgan, and though it wasn't but a beginning, it was Al's and showed promise so I became interested. I was young and an executive position had never been offered me. What with Abel constantly draining my life's blood, albeit amusingly everywhere I turned, I had very little. I was eager to set my wife up in proper fashion. I figured my chance had come. Also, I wanted to show Al I could do a little something too.

As far as problems were concerned there seemed to be none. Al had just left a smooth-running organization, and money appeared to flow freely and unhampered. At least so it seemed. I had stumbled upon a gold mine. Before the deal was minutes old Louis Gregorian, wishing to imitate Al and claiming he would get some large orders, had purchased a seat on a plane to California. The next thing I saw was the back of his head going out of the door. It was ninety days before I saw his face again. And then only for a moment when Al told him a thing or two. That was later and I don't want to run ahead of my story.

My head was in a whirl. What could I do? I knew Al well enough to know at an instant that he had left the business not in good hands, perhaps, but with enough money to carry it over a crisis. Gregorian was the villain. But regardless of who was at fault I had to solve the problem myself.

Impatiently the day was passed. No call came from Gregorian. No one in the office had his address or his phone number. At quitting time the bookkeeper sadly

asked me, "You have insurance?" I did but I didn't shortly after. I raised about eighteen hundred dollars on a policy I had taken on Celia's insistence when I came to America.

I didn't go home that night. I went to Philadelphia instead. I poured my troubles into Celia's ear. I asked Nathan to lend me an additional eighteen hundred to be able to meet my obligations. Just why they lent me the money I will never know. Except they were the salt of the earth. I had no security. The business I represented was a shambles.

I must record a bit of philosophy Nathan passed out while he wrote me a check.

"Willig, I give you this money, I don't know why. Maybe I like the way you part your hair or the way your eyes look so honest. Maybe they are not honest, Celia says they are. Let it, like everything since the day I saw that woman, be as she says. But I know if I have two pieces of wood each four inches thick, a four-inch nail will not hold them. The same with that business. You are pouring water into a broken bucket. Anyway, be a good boy. Here is the money. . . ."

There was nothing wrong with Louis Gregorian's peasant instinct. When he knew the crisis was passed he called. I wasn't in so he sent me a wire.

"You are a financial genius," he wrote, "please advance me on my account one thousand dollars to complete deal. Keep up the good work."

He also sent me his love. Frankly, if at the moment a good pushcart had been available or an elderly lady had come along with ten cents in her fist asking me to write a

letter, I would have left my exalted position and set up shop as a letter-writer.

It looked as if anything yellow in my house would be bananas.

The Taming of the Demon

YOU HAVE HEARD of the banks closing and the holiday during which the newspapers amusingly related the difficulties of the rich, caught as they were without a spendable sou in their pockets. But since the bank closing had the therapeutic value of a high-colonic irrigation on the financial body of our country, it could be amusing to some. To others, caught in banks that weren't in a hurry to open their doors, it was sad. Especially when these institutions came forth with lame excuses and little money.

My executive friend was caught in such a show. He solved the problem by some miraculous sixth sense and emerged from the chaos with a larger plant than he had before. Incidentally, there is about such men an almost unfathomable ability to swim when the water gets choppy. They have perfected the tactic of staying on top, and if it calls for the utilization of methods looked upon by some with a raised eyebrow, he at least has the good grace occasionally to repair the serious damage.

There is also the talent for making money which some people have and others don't. I can't explain it. Maybe it's a sense of smell. For myself I was dissatisfied with my job.

The purely managerial functions weren't really very impressive. My daily dozen consisted of running interferference for Louis. I became a fall guy. A new phase and a new manner of life opened for me. The fall guy is usually, if you haven't been one, the chap who gets kicked in the slats often and punctually, to avoid any possible notion that he is the equal of his fellows. Then also, how could so important a man as Louis Gregorian speak to the various creditors who came calling? His mind had to be occupied with other things. Thus business as business seemed to me a dry even if rewarding enterprise. Much to my employer's chagrin I began to experiment with a new cloth. Like all men with a pure talent for making money, he had a patronizing attitude for anyone who wants to satisfy any emotion other than that of making money. These gentlemen have the inventiveness and ingenuity of dead maggots. This is best observed when, their talent thus defined and brought to bear on a problem, they are certain nothing new can be attempted or created.

"Willig, aren't you happy?" Louis asked.

"What has that got to do with it?"

"All this talk of new inventions, it unsettles me," he said. The bulk of Louis' argument was that we had a product, what more did we need?

"Here we'll cut a corner, we'll save three cents on a dozen. I can get that sold, but sold as seconds and not lose our labor in them. . . ." he lectured, "Willig, cut a corner and build a house, I always say . . ."

I couldn't answer these arguments or the more violent ones either. Then he would pull the stops and resort to ridicule. This is always a weapon of the closed and unad-

venturous mind. A new idea is difficult and requires thought and orientation. This taxed Louis' lazy brain which was accustomed to loll in the sun of its supposed magnificence. It wasn't surprising to me when my desire to learn more about knitting machines was greeted by his guffaws, the horn call of the illiterate.

The fascination of machinery and invention are unknown things to most men who are in a business primarily to make money. When I showed an interest in the machinery that made our products, I was building toward the kind of future I wanted. I knew if I was to strike out for myself it would have to be by contributing something new to the already flooded manufacturing field.

I had an idea for a new type of cloth. But I was in the unfortunate position of having to learn the fundamentals of the machine first before I could make it do something it had never done before.

There are few things perfected by man as intricate as the knitting machine. I fell in love with it. Through the good graces of an old mechanic I learned my way around it. In the snobbish circles of business and finance there is a lowly picture of the poor wage slave. In its revolting degree it is perhaps without parallel that men who are so gifted have to kowtow to men who are so inept. Pots of gold give a man a throne from which to spit on his fellow men. Louis Gregorian sat on a little throne and spat out of all proportion to his station in life. He didn't like George Walker the old mechanic and George didn't like him, but they needed each other and during this marriage of convenience I became George's friend.

I won my way into his heart. He was a toothless curio

of a forgotten age. He was one of the last of the old skilled craftsmen who are rapidly and unfortunately passing from our scene. He came up in his trade the hard way, from an apprenticeship in which filing a slab of metal to a perfect square is part of graduation day. He was toothless. All my life has been hit with the staccato of men who were toothless.

I took George's problem to heart and had him fitted and then personally made him a set of honest teeth with proper metal. George didn't know how to thank me. In what he considered payment he taught me the intricacies of the knitting machines.

I began the hard way. I took the machines apart and put them together. When I had mastered this, I began all over again until I was certain I could assemble the entire complicated mechanism with my eyes closed. I studied the power, ability and scope of the machine.

For six months I tried to perfect my idea of a new cloth. During this time, there were relatives festooned about my head. Their contribution to my experiment were clouds of gloom. Donna didn't say very much, but I knew she believed in me. Uncle Leon journeyed up to the plant to give me the wisdom of his misspent years. I tried to tell him what I was doing.

"Willig, Willig," he sighed, "what will ever be with you?"

"Why do you say that, uncle?"

"Here," he went on, "you have a golden opportunity. You can become one of the biggest, but look at you. You haven't shaved for days. Your office is piled with letters." He lifted a handful to illustrate his point.

"In a few days I'll have my first batch of cloth. It is something new and can do wonderful things."

He wasn't listening. He looked at me. He saw my unpressed trousers, my unshaven face. I looked lean and hungry. I wasn't eating. Sleep was a thing I'd almost forgotten.

I sent Uncle Leon away a saddened man. He felt all the promise he had for me when first I came to America was lost. He told me as much. I tried to cheer him up. I fear I didn't succeed very well.

Within a week my new cloth came out of the machine. I wasn't surprised to feel my eyes well with tears. I had made something myself, something no one ever had made before. It was mine, I had created it. George held it between his gnarled hands. He was proud that he had taught me all I knew. I called the new cloth "Akordionit." It actually acted like an accordion in its stretching qualities. When made into a garment it fitted practically any sized person, within reason of course. It could expand or contract. I made a garment for Donna out of it and she wore it and washed it in countless tests. It stood the gaff well. We were all excited. I had it patented.

These were the lean days. I showed my invention to my boss. He could frankly evince little interest in anything not blatantly heralded by a dollar sign. All I had was a sample of cloth. I had no orders.

I borrowed carfare to get to New York. Once there I threw off my hesitancy. I went to work with all the high pressure I had absorbed from my employer. New York is no city to be broke in. I had little money and the pressure

of succeeding in my venture weighed heavily on me. There was a buyer in New York at this time who I knew could solve my problems. He represented the largest mail order house in the world. Being a big shot he was difficult to see. I have learned since that only the genuinely busy people have any time. Driven by the conviction that my cloth was novel and useful, driven also by the scorn of my boss and the confidence of my wife, I was determined to see this gentleman.

The twelve dollars I had borrowed were running out. Mr. Propper the buyer, known in the trade as "the demon," still refused to speak to me over the phone. After all, I was an unknown little guy. Appointments were made only with other big shots. Most successful men warm themselves at their mutual fires. An unknown is a wintry and fearful blast, best avoided.

In the evening I walked to Columbus Circle lonely and depressed. I thought of how years before Abel had come here every day to kiss the feet of the discoverer of America. I stood for a time in Columbus Circle. I heard the dispossessed men talk about the directions in which they would move the world. They stimulated my thinking and suddenly the idea I needed came to me.

Late as it was I managed to find a print shop open on Eleventh Avenue. I spent my last three dollars. I had cards printed and the name that shone from its center was W. Propper and nothing more.

Early next day I appeared at the office of Mr. W. Propper and presented my card to his secretary. The girl was startled. Mr. Propper to see Mr. Propper, this was hardly

routine. She was curious and disappeared at once into the formidable inner sanctum. In a moment she announced that Mr. Propper would be happy to see Mr. Propper.

I neared his desk saying aloud, "I wondered, I wondered."

"What is it you wondered, Mr. Propper?" he asked.

I told him I was eager to meet a man who carried my grandfather's name. The gentleman, I explained, who went down in history, considerably down, as the greatest general and humanitarian produced by Austria.

"I am surprised and pleased," I added without blushing, "surprised that everyone pictures you as a beast and pleased that you resemble a human being."

Not fully realizing what I had said, his face was bathed in a pleasant smile. He confessed my ruse was the most original he had run into in years.

"Very interesting, young man," he said, "you are clever enough to have something worth selling. What is it?"

I whirled to my feet and began my sales spiel. Propper was no fool. The fabric appealed to him. He gave me a tremendous order. As I wrote it on a piece of borrowed paper it suddenly occurred to me I didn't have the money or the machines to produce one of the garments I was committing myself to. However, I gave him no sign of my predicament. When I had finished writing he signed the order. He called his secretary and told her to advance me a check for the order.

There was no need to talk more. My eyes told him how I felt....

The River Rises

ONE YEAR AFTER MY FIRST ORDER I was free of Louis Gregorian and the owner of my own factory. I loved the little place. It was really no factory. It hung on the bank, over the last lip of earth, and washed its rump in the Lehigh River.

First possessions are important things and although I knew we were in constant danger of flood, I could not move. I had not enough money to get a better place, for one thing. On the other hand, I felt the river would be a good luck omen. It is wise not to trust too much to intuition.

We were at a spot sixty miles from Philadelphia. This country has more of the old world than the highly touted and over-publicized tourist places like Montreal and New Orleans. In the three cities of Bethlehem, Allentown and Easton, there are spots and people straight from the Palatinate—Moravians with their candy and quaint customs, the Quakers, the Amish, the Dunkards, and to me the best of the lot, the Pennsylvania Dutch.

When I set up shop I confess I didn't know just how to become a boss. I imagine many employers start out re-

membering their grievances as workers and are determined to eliminate these for their employees. Somehow, in the ensuing melee dollar bills get stuck in their eyes and they can see nothing else. I am aware of the fact that I wasn't the first man to decide to be a good boss. Benevolent despotism has long since ceased to be an amusing topic.

We Americans are so violently opposed to dictatorship I cannot understand how we have tolerated industrial dictatorship in our midst, clothed as something else. Scratch a benevolent despot with a union contract, and the extent of his recoil will be a good indication of his basic sincerity. I am thus often given to wonder why it is that a man will be content to give his workers real benefits that will cost him very often more than adherence to a union contract, but will spill the blood he would ordinarily nurture when confronted by an organization of workers.

Seems to me a man should have the right to get what he wants. You may look, if you're not too busy, into our pioneer background and see how man came by his desires to be independent.

I wanted to get good men and women to work for me. I wanted very badly to produce my Akordionit. I wasn't interested in making a fortune.

The hiring procedure engaged in by most firms is peculiar and in my opinion very un-American. I have counted at least seven of the basic tenets of the Bill of Rights violated. But then perhaps when a man hires on a job he parks his Bill of Rights outside. In fact, it would be more fitting if, in advertising for workers, the employer simply called for one and all to make his life an open book. When a man gives you money for something he buys from

you he has the right to know all about you, hasn't he? Therefore, when you go shopping next time and the butcher cuts you a slab of flesh, do not buy it till you have discovered how he voted in the last three elections and whether or not he attends his church and if so does he go regularly.

There are many places in the world where prying isn't considered snooping. Take Austria for example. Austrians, and I speak as a man who was born there, are international gossips. They want to know everything. Not necessarily for the sake of information, for they will either forget it or misplace it immediately. They want to have information to provide food for discussion. This is understandable on the Blue Danube, but not here. For further proof of this point listen to the gossipy music Strauss has given us.

Here is what we did with the regulation blank most companies use:

EMPLOYEE APPLICATION

1. Name and address. (This is important so we'll know what to call you and where to get you if we need to. We'd like also to know how to address your pay envelope. Please answer this accurately. If you have more than one name, please just give us one. Be consistent, use one all the time, don't switch on us and confuse our records.)

2. Age? (We only want to know if you are a minor. If you are not you may fix your own just so you don't upset the social security records. To us you are as old as you wish us to assume.)

3. What is your nationality? (That is your business.)

4. To what church do you belong? (That is your business.)

5. Where were you previously employed and for how long? (You can tell us what you like about that, if you think it will help you get a better job. In an hour we'll be able to tell you whether you are any good for us. That's really all that matters.)

There are many forms that are worse. I've seen applications for simple jobs, which only semi-literate people could be forced to take, that required the filling out of a form that would stump the average high-school teacher. There is hardly an American who hasn't sat biting his fingernails and chewing the stub of his pencil trying desperately to answer the questions honestly and fairly. Yet in most cases, especially before the great and recent war, no one checks the information, except that on occasion it can serve to cut an innocent man's throat or bring around a new strange blight, a by-product of free thinking. I believe the most recent scientific name for it is "slow-starvation" from the Latin of the same name.

We were not eager to spit on a man's dignity by public exhibition of his innards nor were we desirous of placing the full weight of our "exalted" position around his neck. The application was a novelty, the plant was considered a freak and many workers flocked to our doors. We got the cream of the working population. For a time we worked in a frenzy which matched the days off in terms of hours. I knew no quitting time, and it was only when I could

stand no longer, when my body screamed meaning to be obeyed that I would sleep.

Spring was early that year. The winter had been severe and the ice and snow piled high on the mountains started to thaw. The river rose each day. Hourly the water gained in momentum and the graceful running stream became a roar. Snakelike it crawled higher and higher.

Scientists in government bureaus were certain my little plant was safe. Being a man with blind respect for the word of science, I paid no heed to the river. We worked on. I was deaf to the entreaties of my employees to get the machinery and stock to higher ground. Science had spoken and I was really too tired to hear the sense in their arguments. I was also a boss and a boss must get stubborn sometimes, even if he cuts his throat in doing it.

Then the rains came. Nice, slanting rain suited for a poem, but of little practical use in the Lehigh Valley. A more destructive and unwelcome guest would be hard to imagine. The seepage of the mines was added too, and the river was a black, growing menace. As night came the river was higher.

I couldn't hold the river with my two hands, and dulled by days of anxious waiting I went to sleep with the assurance of the county agent that I need move neither my stock nor my machinery. I slept fitfully, the thunder belching full in the night.

The ringing phone drew me from the bed. In an instant I was wide awake.

"Willig," my manager cried, "the water is over everything. We are wiped out."

The actual conversation isn't important. Suddenly in

the great moment of shock and loss I felt a strange detachment, as if this tragedy were happening to someone else. I was assured no one was injured.

Donna awoke anxious and distressed.

"Now, now, don't get excited," I told her.

She couldn't have appeared calmer. She didn't answer me at all. She got out of bed, went to the kitchen cabinet (we hadn't yet got to the barroom stage of manufacturer) and poured us each a stiff drink. My wife is strictly a one-drink woman. She kissed me warmly and we started to dress.

We drove our car as close to the plant as we could and waded the rest of the way on foot. We held hands tightly like two children confronted by the unknown dark. The plant looked bad, but the river had reached its peak and was subsiding.

As we stood there together it seemed all my friends in town had come and many I didn't know. The so-called Pennsylvania Dutch squareheads. They came around us, some spoke a word or two of encouragement, others merely stayed by our side as if protecting us from the impact of disaster. It was a warm, rich feeling.

I told them I would do what I could to restore the plant and assured them of continued work. I told them I had confidence in them. They seemed to have confidence in me for they brought their bank books, and many offered me their life savings.

Someone built a fire, for the rain had chilled us. As we stood in the night watching the swiftly flowing river, an old Schwenkfielder pastor asked me if I would like him to

pray. I had never met the man but it seemed like a good idea.

We, of perhaps half a dozen different faiths and sects, held hands and said a simple prayer.

I had doubted from time to time the wisdom of coming to America. Times when I was lonely for things I had learned to want from my homeland, times when illness made me feel alone, but that moment as we prayed before the ruin of my first large enterprise, I knew I had discovered America for myself.

Speaking for Myself

IT DIDN'T SURPRISE ME when I became a businessman to discover that success was based in the rather inescapable practice of driving your fist into your opponent's middle and digging out his liver. The artful act was completed by slapping him across the face with it.

I cannot speak for my technique and I don't know whether I succeeded in doing the accepted thing correctly. I am told I did it badly. Yet I managed, by following a philosophy completely headed in the opposite direction, to make something of a success in a small-fry way.

However, we are a nation of small fry. Occasionally, we cook up a lively stew and the great, looking down their noses from Mt. Olympus for any possible fissures in their gold structure or any contenders to their financial hall of fame, choose a representative group of the latest indoctrination.

When I was first approached to speak at a dinner given by a businessmen's committee on the occasion of the birth of Abraham Lincoln, I was honored. In twenty years I had gone from not knowing chewing gum to speaking be-

fore the most enlightened and revered citizens of our nation. Was it unnatural for me to feel proud?

I had done my share of delving into our history and it seemed to me the dinner would have been better dedicated to Alexander Hamilton or even Stephen Douglas. Just why many of these men wished to associate themselves with a man of brimstone and revolutionary fire who said so many seditious things, as Lincoln did, confused me. I was still young, you can see, and naive in the ways of politics.

But it didn't take me long to discover another American oddity. You can almost choose your own wife and your way of living, but in politics you are expected to do as your father did. Our two-party system uses this, and the only difference in the arguments is the variance in accent, depending upon what part of the country you may be in while listening to a young man insist it was good enough for his pappy and, by gum, it'll be good enough for him.

Like all the other speakers I was to mumble a few remarks about Abraham Lincoln. I wondered, as the day of the meeting drew up in front of me, what Lincoln would have said to this gathering.

Early on *the* day, fearful that I would fly away, the chairman called upon me and proceeded to ply me with beverages not intended to induce memory or sociological critique. I didn't mind bending the elbow a bit with the boys. Soon one or two of my companions inquired into my affairs. They requested information about what "game" I was in. Here I discovered that there are those industrialists whom one is inclined to stumble over in the halls of finance, where the millions are incomprehensibly

juggled, who look on it all as a gigantic "game." These playful boys in the midst of a discussion of one thing or another inquire whether or not so and so has returned to his "game."

There appears to be no set league in which this contest can be played. Nor are the number of participants limited by any Marquis of Queensbury regulations. The rules are vague except in one important regard. You must never be down for long. If confronted by a stronger adversary, you scream uncle. The translation of uncle in the parlance of the game is "bankruptcy court." However, before you are completely outfitted for the tournament you get, among your equipment, something called a "corporation." This spreads the responsibility so thin as to make it non-existent and, therefore, you can always actually pick up your matchsticks and go home if things go badly, arriving there not too worn by the ordeal.

As played in various parts of the world the game is an indication of the character of its players. For example, in the United States the team is called a corporation, and wears its colors above the cut version of the term as "Inc." or "Corp." One can't say much about that, except that not one in a thousand knows what a corporation or what being in a corporation means. But some may and it says more or less what it means.

Take the British and here please forgive me if I must appear to be unkind or anti-British—I am not. I am only making a point about the game. Our English cousins call their corporations Limited (Ltd.) which is supposed to mean a limited company when in effect it means just the opposite. It is an unlimited company.

One must take his hat off to our South American businessmen. Like everything else about these people they are honest (within their colonial corruption, of course), greatly to their misfortune, perhaps. They call their corporations, in translation, Anonymous Societies (S.A.). There is a thing that says what it means and puts you on guard, as you may very well be, when you are in sport with them.

As to the game itself, it is a catch-as-catch-can affair. On occasion it turns out to be the accepted thing in its successful practice that the living standards of an entire country be visited by a bit of strangulation. If the country doesn't die in the inning, shouts of "Well done" or "Olé!" or "Attaboy" ring through the stadium.

At other times it might be necessary to promote a minor war. This is the most skilled of maneuvers and it's not to be left in the hands of novices. When an oil field for example is astride the borderline of two small countries, you fire a shot here and there, print an editorial unbiased and unprejudiced to the extent of not taking sides, yet so worded that each nation is soon at the other's throat. Brother, then you have finesse and will soon qualify for a seat with a large trust or cartel. These are the top league boys. But serve your apprenticeship first they will tell you. Get yourself a nice little corporation and buck the antitrust laws a little, find where there are seams and open them a bit. Soon enough you'll be a profile in a big magazine devoted to glorifying and immortalizing the well-played game and its stellar players. In fact, one can get so carried away with this game that on many occasions, while the well-groomed gallery is shouting encourage-

ment, one might, in a moment of recklessness and desire to please the audience, steal one's last bite.

We have been taught this game and we play it out. If the game requires a mite of cannibalism, and we must be given to the talent of eating each other, is that so very bad?

Of course, I was under the apparently erring opinion that we were living in the Twentieth Century. I dreamed we were the inheritors of the good things the great have been piling up for thousands of years. Therefore, when I was introduced to the fine art of placing the stiletto between the third and fourth rib, I must confess, it came as a great shock. So, it seemed the culture of the ages was pruned and primped to perfect the dagger thrust into the heart of your fellow man.

This is indeed a depressing thought. If you are of the impression that this is a languid or an incorrect appraisal of the philosophy governing the "game," let me lead you by the hand and we can stand in the doorway and listen to the voice of God himself tell you what I've just said. We get it translated only by mortals and in sweet apologetic words, with each table move explained and elucidated.

As you stand before the stadium waiting your turn to be either contestant or victim, do not ask the price of admission. It is rude and uncouth to ask the price since you always pay it.

Thus it was that all afternoon on the day of the banquet, while my fellow contestants played open poker, I buried my head in a pot of books. I was looking for words to say what I felt and believed.

The banquet was a beautiful thing with a disgusting array of uneaten food. For the most part the guests drank a good dinner. This characteristic had little to do with their particular station in life. There are other strata of society where the guests drink a good dinner. Many times there is no dinner at all for it has been spent on drink. We shall not hold this against them.

I would like you to meet the cast of characters personally. But for reasons which I hope you will understand I will not call them by name. I am still from time to time found charging down the corridors swathed in ticker tape. I have been known to swing a financial deal needing the assistance of the money bags.

The chairman, a gentleman whose head shone dazzlingly rose to make the introductory remarks about the good fellow Abe Lincoln was. As the chairman spoke I couldn't help thinking of what his dear old ancestor was doing during the life of the man he was now eulogizing. He was quite a man, the chairman's relative, for when he died, a good wage, an average wage, was anywhere from three hundred and fifty to five hundred dollars a year. Imagine how hard he must have worked, and what hours, to have left over one hundred million dollars when he passed away. Passed away, moved on or what, his master stroke while alive, was bribing elected bodies so that he wouldn't be hindered in his search for grants and franchises. These are little slips of paper which introduce you to God and determine which side you shall play on.

If you were a poor immigrant in a far-off country where you died a slow death with no humor to relieve the poverty because the game was even more ruggedly played,

and you wished to come to a new country, you helped our chairman's ancestors win their game. For the gentleman had, by the whisking of a gold wand, got the right to carry your mail to and from Europe. When you paid twenty-five to thirty cents for a little letter, and this represented in Lincoln's time more than enough to eat for several days, that was the gentleman's price for admission into the game.

The chairman told how Lincoln wrote on a shovel. How he was born in a three-sided cabin. The usual high-school essay delivered by a young boy candidate for the title of head cretin of the school. This speech prepared by bright young men, the water boys of the game, working out of any number of stables, was not lacking in a certain strange odor which did not emanate from the venison.

The smoky haze of countless Havanas filled the air. The speeches rolled off the tongues of financial genius almost as quickly as the Puerto Rican peasants could cut sugar cane for them with a machete.

I was seated next to a youngish man who was one of the country's wealthiest. I imagine he meant well, was moderately honest and worked hard, all according to the ethical code he had been raised to accept as the standard for his conduct. It wasn't his fault that his great-grandfather had made his fortune by stealing the public domain to build railroads. Once built on government land which was a strip ten miles wide oftentimes containing much mineral wealth, these grants were either wholly or partially financed by the people. Then grandpère, being in business for reasons other than amour, manipulated them.

You must permit me a slight parenthesis here. For we

run into a term often used in the game. In our study of this amusing contest the word manipulate may mean the insertion of a swivel joint on the heads of your board of directors so they may be trained to look the other way. Or it may mean training them to follow your eye and ear to the nearest lode. Then, if the vein is discovered to belong to another party or parties, it must be crowbarred away. That is one form of manipulation. There are many others. A complicated manipulation is getting into tangle with some lawmakers who would stop a movement in one direction. You convince them they are wrong and they reverse their field and get on your team. That takes talent, but it is being done more often than not. Sometimes the means of barter is money; oftentimes the chips are more clumsy and may consist of blackmail, extortion or other little known but valuable methods. None of these techniques are easily attained.

My table companion's ancestor had managed to get by. But it is unfair to blame all this on my friend. He came along after all this was done. And his manipulations were much more studied and weren't so blatant. That is one thing the young men, up and coming, can't forgive. Those old robber barons were so noisy about it all. Every age has its tactic and my youngish friend had to step more carefully. He could not carry a club. There were other more gentlemanly methods at his disposal. Furthermore, there were new encumbrances, dash it all, new regulations every Wednesday and Friday that simply had to be got around. And the people, the great surging mass of people that seemed like flies when seen from the office buildings and who were always cluttering up the roads and restau-

rants with their unwelcomed presence. Hadn't they got rowdy? Yes, and a little tired perhaps of being the whipping boy in the game. Strength was a relative thing and they mustered a little of it and insisted on certain mild restrictions for the game and its contestants. However, a young man steeled at Groton and tempered at Harvard could, within three years after his apprenticeship in any of a dozen offices, learn to legally deal himself a pretty hand from below the deck.

So much for my companion on the left. On my right was another man who may interest you. He had a high forehead and a straightforward eye. He was aristocratically bred like a good race horse. His nostrils were thin and given to quivers at the least disturbance. His ancestors had mellowed and blended him down from the first families of the thirteen original colonies. Mindful with each union to add to the family pot. The pot had grown large enough for all to bathe in lukewarm gold bullion.

Originally, they had made "their's" in furs. The gentleman who had sired the lot was one of the roughest players in the history of the game. Surely I couldn't be expected to hold it against my friend if his ancestor had been smart enough to steal from the Indians. Haven't you heard of the white man's burden? This was apparently it. Good furs of some types are quite heavy. And if he stole their hearts, it was all part of the game. He played rough but the pay was good. But the legalized piracy he had so ably perfected was really nothing. In later and more mellow years the old man said it came easily to him, sort of second nature. The gentleman at my right had a mind that opened and shut on a series of prejudices which had been

carefully evolved in his compact and economical brain from the time he had said "Da, da" and a gold spoon was inserted into his toothless gums.

Yet many of the clients at the fiesta were in a position where they could sneer at the men I have described. For their fortunes stemmed from yet an earlier method of the game and one that is perhaps the most stimulating. The device by which these people are rolling in clover was run up about one hundred and seventy years ago. It is the master stroke in the game as any one in his right mind would be happy to agree. For here we are able, in this single deed, to see the entire manner in which the team works in perfect coordination.

It can be recalled by some today, with only a shudder or two, that our country was born in a revolution. It may even be remembered that as always, there had to be men to fight wars and these men, being in effect factory hands, had to be paid. The boys who got the hotfoot at Valley Forge had to be paid something. The country was new and its money worth slightly less than the paper it was printed on. The soldiers took it and got what they could.

At that time we had as Secretary of the Treasury a shrewd gentleman from whom Andy Mellon learned a thing or two. This Colonial gentleman, as soon as the country stood somewhere between its knees and its feet, decided to redeem the soldiers' script at full value. A patriotic gesture. Something to show the boys we were thinking of them. Can you honestly tell me why one shouldn't tell one's friends the good news first? The man was only human and so he did. It must have been the poor communications or the fact that the public hadn't

been told. For while the soldiers starved, not aware they were soon to get full value for their script, they sold it to men who were eager to buy it, the fools, for a few cents on a dollar. Well, it's a free country, isn't it? Do you want to stifle personal initiative? Free enterprise in this atomic age is, after all, the cornerstone of our civilization!

Oh, the ways of high finance were fundamental I discovered. The laws most closely adhered to were those which took us a long way back to a time when men did not look aristocratic, nor did they know the art of finesse. Today, you may slit your neighbor's throat, cousin, but for heaven's sake don't soil the carpet.

I must confess to a feeling of profound compassion for the dumb brute of the jungle. He labored so mightily and so little. And once achieving, after thousands of years of strife, something that looked civilized, for him to continue mauling his competitors' innards seemed to me unkind.

While I sat and spun my thoughts around, the speeches rolled on and on. It was really a banquet about themselves and not Abraham Lincoln. I don't know whether it was the food or the wine or the speeches, but I wanted to lie down and be ill. I had taken the precaution of reading a few of Lincoln's own words. The speeches here made Lincoln out to be a bosses' man. Lincoln, they said, was a great party man and if it so happened that he was incidentally a great American, so much grit to the gravy. The all-absorbing fact was that Lincoln was Lincoln.

This was a strange phase of my life in my new country. The tactic was old and perhaps European or universal. Historical distortion was hardly on a par with learning to

Kroll

eat hot dogs, but it comes under the heading of making an American. It was my turn to speak, and since this was tantamount to my graduation day, I was excited and heard none of the things they said of me.

"Gentlemen," my voice rasped, "gentlemen, I am enriched by this experience and I want to thank you for inviting me to be here tonight to listen to your speeches. I am happy to see you all so gay." This was interrupted by much applause, as such things are.

"I am," I continued, "really just a little guy among you and I don't quite know how to say what I want to. You must bear with me, please.

"I think we are all immigrants or the sons or descendants of immigrants. For more than twenty years I have tried to learn to be an American. To everyone a different man is symbolic of our country. To me, Lincoln is America.

"I have heard much talk tonight about what kind of man Lincoln was. Obviously, he means a great deal to us all. We are again at peace and our thoughts can turn to thoughts of peace. To the immigrant boy, which I was and will probably always be a little, the picture of Lincoln, the understanding of Lincoln and the similarity of his struggles with those of most ordinary people does not go unnoticed.

"It is significant that I learned my business methods from Lincoln. You may say I learned my economics from him. I have heard much talk of capital and labor tonight. I must confess much of it leaves me very cold. It would seem a simple thing for we who are heralded as the greatest organizers in the world to organize our lives so that

we are not in constant combat. Or are we to assume that man is only happy when clawing his neighbor? I don't believe that. If I did I would have to concede that man is the most ferocious of beasts. Times are bad, but I'm not set to agree to that yet.

"Many of the speeches displayed a great weakness in their portrayal of fear for labor. Capital is shrieking at labor and labor has been heard to utter a loud retort in the general direction of your brittle skins. It is a song only rivaling the hit tunes of the moment, but it goes like this . . . Without capital nothing would happen. A business must first have money . . . etc . . . You've sung it with words by yourselves and music by the old Grim Reaper.

"While I attempted to succeed in my business and while I watched the other fellow make mistakes so I wouldn't blunder as he did, I learned. But I learned from Lincoln, too. Since this is a Lincoln dinner I am sure I will be permitted to read a quotation from him."

They applauded.

"Lincoln said:" I continued, " 'It is assumed that labor is available only in connection with capital; that nobody labors unless somebody else owning capital, somehow by the use of it, induces him to labor. Labor is prior to and independent of capital. Capital is only the fruit of labor, and could not have existed if labor had not first existed. Labor is superior of capital and deserves much the higher consideration. I bid the laboring people beware of surrendering the power which they possess, and which, if surrendered, will surely be used to shut off the door of advancement for such as they, and fix new disabilities and burdens upon them until all of liberty shall be lost.' "

I paused for a moment. Things were not going well. The silence was profound. I was taken aback for an instant and then, realizing the fat was not only in the fire but burning away, I plunged right on.

"When I raise the wages of those working for me, I help raise their purchasing power. Then they can more nearly approximate what they have actually earned . . ."

I knew by now the chairman had developed the kind of indigestion you call upon the Mayo Clinic to cure. I knew too the shuffling feet and the general desire to flee was nothing requiring psychiatric treatment but rather a simple case of wanting out. I was so carried away with what I was saying I only half noticed the audience reaction.

"Fellow Americans," I orated, "I consider this my graduation day . . ."

The chairman had risen in the midst of my last sentence. He had, with a scholarly wave of his hand, motioned to the orchestra which began blaring out the *Star Spangled Banner* as I hardly had the last word out of my mouth. Grateful to their ever-present chairman, the gentlemen rose from their Lincoln banquet and sang as lusty a *Star Spangled Banner* as you ever heard.