THE HAPPIEST MAN



LOUIS BORGENICHT

THE HAPPIEST MAN

The Life of
LOUIS BORGENICHT

AS TOLD TO
HAROLD FRIEDMAN



G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS
NEW YORK

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To

MY WIFE, REGINA,

AND MY CHILDREN

WHO HAVE BEEN MY LIFE

FOREWORD

There is nothing sensational about THE HAPPIEST MAN. It is straightforward, plain. It is full of homely truths and humors. It is written naïvely and simply, as its subject related it. It is, as a matter of fact, a story which it would be presumptuous to tell in a happy age, because it would be no more than a counterpart of all other stories.

This is not a happy age. It is an age weighted with disaster.

In this October of 1942 we are fighting against that disaster. We are fighting *for* the American way of life. The more we know about that way of life, the better we will fight. So today THE HAPPIEST MAN is a story that needs to be told.

There is in it no country lawyer. No Yankee mother. No well-bred lady battling the Wild West. And yet this story too is, in its own modest way, as American as maple sugar.

So here it is.

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BOOK ONE: *GALICIA*

CHAPTER I

In which I get my first glimpse of the world from the roof of a shed and, later, escape with difficulty from a bridal chamber.

IN my life I have learned all the tricks except how not to be a damn fool.

I have always been doing, seldom thinking. I have never sat down of my own accord to figure things out. Someone, or something, has had to hit me on the head to make me do it.

Characteristically, I thought Polish Galicia wonderful. I was sixteen before I realized my mistake, and then it was only as the result of a parental edict. Perhaps there was some excuse for me in those early days. Constantly I was expanding the frontiers of my knowledge and experience.

To make something, to be able to produce, was the dream of my young years. But that dream was not always right in front of my eyes. Poverty has a way of making you pay attention to one thing only—that you may have bread on the table and boots on your feet.

That poverty was persistent for me, so persistent, in fact, that it almost wiped out the memory of the few happy years that went before. Of the time when my father was rich and there was food in plenty and clothing to spare, I have only scattered recollections. My earliest impression is of standing in front of a big white house and watching dozens of wagons and carriages of every conceivable build turn in at the gate. Toward evening it was, every few

weeks, that they used to drive up to my father's house. The drivers would bed their horses down for the night and troop into the big hall.

I wasn't more than three or four at the time, but I can still remember the hustling and bustling in the kitchen quarters on those days. I can even smell the fragrant cooking odors floating through the air from that direction. For our guests were served a hearty meal. Then, no matter if there were forty or fifty of them, every one found a satisfactory sleeping place. Of course we didn't provide them with fine stuffed mattresses. But soft old-fashioned feather quilts placed in rows over layers of clean straw from the barn made excellent beds. The visitors found comfort on our parlor floor. In the morning there was again a pleasant commotion as the guests were served a steaming hot breakfast and sent on their way.

In a home so noted for its hospitality, I took it for granted at first that people should visit us. Then I began to wonder who they were, and how it was they visited us so regularly. One day I asked my mother.

"These are merchants from the neighboring towns," she explained, nodding toward the crowded dining room. "They're bound for the Rzegocina Jahrmarkt—the great market. It's too far for them to go in a single day. So they stop here to spend the night. Every three weeks, in Rzegocina," she added, "they hold the great market."

Great market—the words thrilled me. I watched the strangers with a new and excited interest. They came from a world outside our fenced-in grounds. For the first time I became aware that there *was* such a world. I ached to see it for myself.

The next morning I climbed to the huge hayloft on the second story of the brewery my father operated. Plowing through the piled-up hay, I discovered a window overlooking a low extension of the building. The roof over this wing was

a sloping one, the drop to the ground was twenty feet or more, but in a moment I was through the window and edging along the shingles. On my startled eyes burst the sight of our grounds spread below, and beyond our fences flat lands rolling away to a horizon miles distant. I stood gaping at a checkerboard of fields growing every kind of grain—a checkerboard spotted with the roofs of homes and barns and the spires of churches which lifted over the faraway towns. A network of dusty roads wound apparently into a hollow over the horizon. On these roads I saw carts, cattle, peasants. In the fields I saw bent backs, and scythes and trowels reflecting the gleam of the sun. This, then, was the world of the Jahrmarkt merchants!

At the time I had no idea that what I saw was the plain around the Galician village of Lonkta. Nor that Galicia was that province of Old Poland which belonged to the rambling empire ruled by the benevolent Hapsburg Kaiser Franz Josef. Nor that, as far as dates go, it was somewhere around the year 1865. I knew only that it looked exciting. At once I set out to investigate it, as a stowaway in one of the merchants' wagons. Too young and not very wily, I was unceremoniously yanked back home, thrashed, and told to wait a few years. In the interim my parents chained me to the house, my father with a strap, my mother with a gentle word. My mother held me tighter. And then, in my fifth year, I escaped briefly from my country prison.

It was to a small city called Wishnicz that my brother and I went. For Father's restless spirit drove him to give up the comfortable but static life of a brewer. While he tried his fortune on a huge tract of land he had purchased in the north, he left us to the tender mercies of a boarding-school teacher. And a sourer, crankier couple than this teacher and his wife I haven't come across in the succeeding seventy years.

Leibisch Pientek was about fifty, a narrow-faced, long-

bearded man with a temper like a goat, and a habit of beating us when he was displeased—which was almost constantly. To make sure she wasn't missing anything, his wife would follow him up by pinching us till we were black and blue. "You should be slaughtered!" she would shout, in the much more pungent Yiddish. "You'll be the death of the Rabbi yet."

My brother Marcus was four years older than I, and didn't seem to mind it so much. But as profoundly as I could, at that time, hate a teacher, I hated mine. There was no one to complain to, either. When we visited home at the Passover and New Year seasons—three weeks at each visit—I didn't have the courage to speak up to my father. In those days there was a different attitude toward learning and toward those who ruled the classroom. The teacher was the teacher, and that was all there was to it.

During the long day in Cheder—the room where the pupils of all grades studied together—I had only one diversion. While the other boys droned their lessons, I used to watch Mrs. Pientek hide the key to the cookie closet. Since my father was paying a handsome sum for our board, and it seemed to me the food was much too plain, I had no scruples about locating the key and raiding the closet at every opportunity. I made sure never to take too many of the cookies, though, because then the good lady would have troubled to count them. As it was, for two years she suspected that someone was stealing her cookies, but she could never be positive.

Generally I took two and ate them at once. Then I put two more in my pocket and called it square. Not that I ate the extra two later. They were for Marcus. Nor did I give them to him just out of brotherly love. They were a kind of tax he demanded. And this was the manner of his levying it:

Life at the Pienteks' was pretty dull. The only break in

the monotony—aside from the cookie-stealing—was when I left the room and wandered out into the fields behind the house. In those days there were no sanitary arrangements at all. The fields were spacious and the grass was tall. I found a few bricks and some odd bits of stone and constructed a comfortable little lavatory for myself. The other boys admired it enormously, and I was very proud of myself.

Such occasions were rare, however, so that the only time we really had for recreation was the evenings. Since I was very young, I was afraid of the dark. I used to hang around the door and yearn to go out, but it was black outside and I knew that if I went out alone, a ghost would meet me and lead me off my path until I fell into some horrible trap. The other boys used to fill my head with stories of ghosts and demons, and I read of them continually in our books of legends. The Chassidic sect in particular encouraged all sorts of fantastic tales about wonder-working rabbis and powerful evil spirits. The one which frightened me most told of the spirits of the dead which were said to congregate on special nights in the synagogues, to hold a ghostly imitation of the Sabbath service. As in the ordinary ritual, they called men up to the platform for the reading of the Torah —the Five Books of Moses of the Old Testament—of which they used a copy rendered invalid by some mistake in the script. When a local living Jew received the dread summons, he had to get up, dress and hurry to the synagogue, where he had to mount the platform and repeat the conventional blessings. Then he had to stand by until dismissed. All through the hideous service he had to keep his face covered with his prayer-shawl, for if he caught even a tiny glimpse of his spirit companions, he was doomed.

Knowing that the darkness swarmed with all kinds of creatures, I used to shiver when I looked out from Pientek's doorway. Then Marcus would laugh and offer to accompany me. With him I was the bravest of the brave. We walked

and skipped and ran until we were so tired we had just strength enough to crawl into bed. Afterward Marcus would demand his reward. I had to give him the extra cookies.

He was a real Simon Legree, that Marcus. While all week long the food was of the plainest, on the Sabbath we had a fine midday meal, as was—and is—the custom in most Jewish homes. For dessert we got a special delicacy, generally a kind of potato cake baked with a golden crust on it. Every time this "Kugel" was served and I was about to plunge a luscious forkful into my mouth, I would receive a sharp nudge. I would look up and there would be Marcus, watching me with a knowing grin. Every week my own brother exacted this tribute of a slice of potato "Kugel" from my scanty portion as his payment for protecting me from the demons. I had to suffer in silence.

The second year the Cheder was just as trying, except for one exhilarating experience which made up for everything. Not long before the ending of the term the daughter of one of the town's important men was to be married. Learning that the ceremony was to be a gorgeous affair, I determined to attend. Of course it was an absurd notion. I would certainly be forbidden, to say nothing of having received no invitation. But I was a desperate child.

I made my plans well in advance. First I noted that in the door of Pientek's house there was a hole through which I would be able to get at the latch from the outside. I found a long bent nail and practiced opening and closing the door until I could do it without a sound. The nail I carried with me carefully until the night of the great event.

Since the streets of the largely Jewish town were brightly lighted that night, and crowded with citizens celebrating in the fashion of the fanatic Chassidim the wedding of the daughter of the most distinguished local citizen, I didn't have to worry about ghosts or traps for the unwary. Waiting only until Marcus's chest began to heave up and down

regularly under the sheets, I slipped out of bed, slung my boots over my shoulder and tiptoed down to the front door. I let myself out, slid the latch back into place with my treasured nail, and was free.

In the house of the bride I managed to avoid questioning by hiding in corners. Whenever somebody began to eye me suspiciously, I dodged away and found some other place to stand. I saw the whole thrilling ceremony from beginning to end. I repeated the promises and blessings with the eager bride and groom. I listened to the rabbi's sermon. I watched the groom smash with his heel the traditional wine glass. I envied the "Batchan"—a sort of troubadour —as he sang all kinds of verses about the bride and groom and their respective families, and then made up new ones as he ran out of familiar stanzas. Then at last—the moment for which I was waiting—the maids started to set the tables.

I stood by very innocently while they flung big white cloths over the boards. When the plates were set, the girls began to go around putting down a "Bilke"—a huge cake-like roll—at each place. Watching for my chance, with one jump I seized two of the Bilkes and popped under the big center table. In my haste I tried to jam the Bilkes into my pockets, but they were too large, so I just stuffed them under my shirt. Sitting under the table, I caught my breath and then tore one of the Bilkes in half and fitted the pieces into my pockets. The other I ate, slowly and with good appetite.

I sat there under the table counting the legs around me and waiting for the guests to finish their supper. I was content. When the lavish meal was finished, the dancing began. It is impossible to describe it. It was rich and full of life and excitement. Each guest danced with the bride, but in a distinctive way. She held one end of a handkerchief, and each succeeding partner held the other end, so that no man laid hands on her. Peering out from under tables and from shadowed corners, I enjoyed the proceedings to the full.

Suddenly I saw a brother of the groom's coming toward me with a doubtful, angry look. Certainly I was going to be thrown out, perhaps even given a good whipping. I ducked, and the next thing I knew I was hiding in a bedroom.

There I thought I was safe. Then—at the same time—I noticed that the bed was made up, and that footsteps were coming down the hall. As I stood petrified, the door opened and in came the bride, flushed and rosy, accompanied by the women of both families who were to prepare her for her groom. Hiding in the recess behind the window curtains, I was hot and cold by turns. I knew very well I had no right to be there. Yet, afraid even to think of the terrible punishment that would be mine if I was caught, I could make no sound of warning. I had to watch while, with chants of good wishes and motherly advice, the women began to undress the girl, starting with the heavy wedding gown. Under that were several petticoats. The moments seemed like hours to me. I stared longingly at the door, wondering whether I could whirl through it fast enough to escape. Off came one petticoat and then another. My feet seemed paralyzed, benumbed. Perhaps at that I lingered longer than I had to. But when only one garment stood between me and perdition, I covered my eyes with my hands, made one tremendous spring and was out of the door so quickly the women didn't even have time to scream.

In the corridor I leaned against the wall to catch my breath. I remember also that, the alarm over, I was unwilling to miss a single move. I managed to keep out of harm's way, as it turned out. I saw the women come out of the room finally, after which the men of the party, holding up candles and reciting the old songs, escorted the groom to the door. There, before he was permitted to go in, the boy was showered with last-minute advice and was impressed with the sacred nature of the relationship he was entering, and the responsibilities involved. In the old days

a wedding was pretty much a family, if not a community, affair. People were not bashful about giving practical and wholesome hints, either.

It was three o'clock or later when I reached home, exhausted but happy. I let myself into Pientek's house, closed the door carefully and climbed quickly into bed, being careful not to drop my boots too hard on the floor. Marcus was still sleeping peacefully.

In the morning I was scolded for being a sleepyhead. I just grinned. I said nothing until the afternoon. Then I could contain myself no longer. I drew my brother aside.

"Where do you suppose I've been?" I asked loftily.

"Where *could* you have been, Sleepyhead?"

"To the wedding!" I announced.

"In your dreams, maybe," Marcus laughed. He refused to believe me.

"See then!" I shouted—discretion lost in hurt pride—and pulled from my pockets the two pieces of Bilke.

His eyes opened wide. I could see he believed me now. Instead of complimenting me on my nerve, though, he gave me a five-minute explanation of the fact that I was a low-grade thief. Finally he relaxed.

"Well," said he, "since the deed is done already—let's eat!"

We enjoyed that Bilke as much as the one I had relished under the wedding table. Almost.

It was only a few days later, with the exultation of the wedding escapade still carrying me along, that Father arrived to take us home. In the north we found a stately house with extensive grounds around it. Father was no longer a mere brewer, I thought with pride—he was a real aristocrat. I wandered across the wide fields, made friends with the dogs, watched Mitera, the brawny Polish coachman and a great lover of Schnapps. I had no idea that Father was in fact almost at the end of his rope.

Not alarmed at first by the warning that the land he had

bought had been abused and then neglected altogether for a long time, he had felt confident that he would be able to make it bloom again. He had dreamed of plentiful days to come. "Der Mensch denkt, und Gott lenkt," however; "Man proposes, God disposes." In spite of Father's ability, energy and experience, he had been unable to bring the land to fruit. Struggling under heavy losses, he had borrowed money and made one final effort. It was at this crucial time that he brought us home.

During that summer and fall of 1869 men reaped a scanty harvest. Fields lay wasted, crops were poor. Though Father cultivated his land with a driving fury, he could make it yield little or nothing. Finally he was compelled by foreclosure to abandon his efforts altogether. Admired by the entire community for his education and understanding, called upon for expert advice by aristocrats and merchants, he was unable to help himself. We were left penniless.

There had been six of us at home originally. My oldest sister had married earlier. My oldest brother had seen how things were going and had struck out on his own, to relieve my father of *his* burden, at least. My second sister had followed his example and found a position as a governess in Tarnow, thirty miles off. My second brother was in a Hungarian Yeshivah, perfecting himself in the classics of Hebrew literature. Now Marcus, just past twelve, left home also, finding a post as a Hebrew teacher in a town a few miles away.

During this smashing of our family circle—only Moische and I, the youngest two, were left—Mother didn't utter a word of complaint. As she had shared Father's joys and pleasures in the days of his prosperity, so now she shared his hardships and unhappiness. I remember how she pleaded with him to be brave, not to lose faith in himself.

"The only thing is to fight," she urged him. "Even if we have to live on salt and water!"

She was not far wrong.

My parents wept on leaving their home in the north. To me it was no misfortune. For we settled in a little town called Zacliczyn. A dull, chronically poor collection of ramshackle huts—with no more than two thousand inhabitants at the very most, though they liked to call it a city—to my parents it meant, after what they had known, plain misery.

To me it meant the first contact with real life.

CHAPTER II

In which I learn the meaning of a gulden, and a snow man is buried with full religious honors.

I HAD been too young during the years of wealth to receive anything more than a vague impression of them. They left no mark. The first life I remember as a continuous passage is the life in Zacliczyn.

There I lived like a peasant. I wore the same tattered clothing. Mine was patched and clean when I put it on in the morning, but I had only a shirt, trousers and boots. The shirt I slept in, winding myself in its long tails for a little added warmth. The boots I reserved for Sabbaths and holidays. The rest of the time I went barefoot.

I ate the same food. Meat was a rare article on our table. Perhaps once in weeks we might have a Sabbath feast with a little bit of beef. In between times we ate rice, all kinds of grains and cereals, potatoes, black bread and milk—this last when we could afford it.

I did the same work. During the summers I used to go out into the fields. Potatoes were the big crop in our neighborhood. Men, women and children all turned out for this labor. I was not big enough to be harnessed to a plow as adults were. I did lighter work. The idea of it was to use a trowel to build up little mounds of earth around the growing plants. It was a matter of kneeling for hours on end and hunching along the furrows from plant to plant. A couple of quick motions, a pat with the hands, and then on to the next one. The work began at daylight and ended

after sunset. For this backbreaking labor the men received fifty kreuzer—a kreuzer roughly equaled an American penny —the women forty. As a mere child, I was lucky to receive even the smaller sum.

For lunches in those blazing hot fields, Mother would give me a sandwich or two of thick slices of black bread with occasionally a thin sliver of cheese in between. To wash down the bread I would search out a spring and lap up the clear cool water.

Living the life of a peasant boy, I came to know the land of my birth perhaps better than students or travelers.

One day I saw the local baron. In the carriage that rolled through the marketplace sat no glamorous noble with a scornful smile. Instead I saw a short, fat man of sixty, stupid-looking, with a huge goiter bulging over the side of his collar. While I stood stunned at this shattering of my belief that all aristocrats were handsome, I learned another truth. An infant was tumbling in the mud of the roadway, but the carriage never slowed a bit. It was only at the last second that the peasant mother made a lunging dive to scoop her child to safety. The horses maintained their even pace a foot from the baby's head. The pig-eyed baron never changed his expression, no more than if the baby had been a stray chicken. Behind the departing carriage the peasant woman stood like a stone and on her face was a look of helpless hatred deeper than words.

Afterwards I asked my father, and when he explained, I remembered the woman's face and understood something of the European peasant riots of which he told me.

In America it may be hard to understand, but in that land of my childhood—as in almost all Europe—the class lines were rigid, as feudal as they had been for a thousand years and more.

At the top of the heap in Poland, Father explained in his

scholar's voice, stood the aristocrats, the old nobles whose ancestors had defeated the Turks. In a country of fifteen or twenty millions, a few thousand of these nobles owned almost every square inch of land. In the same preferred position were the higher clergy. In the smaller communities the parish priest was the ruler in fact if not by law.

Along the fringe of this upper class hung the professional men—doctors, lawyers, and the handful of technical experts like engineers. The aristocrats handed down their titles from generation to generation, and only their children could aspire to high positions in the service of the State or of the church. The professions also tended to descend from father to son.

The second class consisted of the relatively few people who lived in small cities and towns. These were craftsmen of all kinds—shoemakers, tailors, carpenters, builders, blacksmiths—who learned at their fathers' knees, and in turn taught their own children, how to carry on the trade.

In the third and great class were the peasants, hardly above animals. Not that they were bad people, or stupid. They simply had no opportunity. Bound to the land for centuries, they had been technically emancipated in late years, but the lords maintained their stranglehold on land and the peasants could not use their freedom. They were not compelled to send their children to school, so they kept them at home and took them out to the fields to do the same backbreaking labor they and their fathers and grandfathers had done—to supplement the pitiful family incomes.

The peasants were not *called* serfs any more, it is true. Still they owed the local baron a certain number of free days' work in the year, and a good part of their produce had to go to the church. What they were left with was hardly enough to keep them alive for the next sowing. They lived in huts with leaky roofs and walls which let in every cold wet wind.

We Jews formed a fourth group. Our ancestors had been invited into the land in 1364 by Casimir the Great to form a middle class, for the noble families did not condescend to engage in trade, and the peasants were too ignorant and were, besides, chained to the soil. With the Industrial Revolution, this middle class activity became increasingly important. Yet, in Galicia as all over feudal Europe, the nobles continued only to hunt and make war while the serfs continued only to till their masters' fields. Prevented by law and by custom from working on the land themselves, the Jews came, as generation succeeded generation, to develop skills in trade and commerce, and perforce to exercise practically a monopoly over them. As industry and manufacturing arose, the same situation was duplicated in the new fields. The few lower-class Poles who were able to smash through the rigidity of the caste lines restricted themselves mainly to craftsmanship, in the manual trades like cobbling and blacksmithing. Down to my father's time and my own, the Jews still controlled trade and commerce, and perhaps dominated such specifics as innkeeping and medicine.

This was the burden of Father's explanation. At the time it was more words than sense to me. Afterwards I learned the truth of it for myself.

I learned the facts of economic existence also.

Galicia was a poor country, and an overcrowded one. Zacliczyn was typical of Galicia. It didn't take me long to explore it down to the last alley and outhouse.

There were some two thousand people in our town. When it had been a feudal village, no Jews had been permitted to live in it. In more recent years the town had bought its freedom from the ruling aristocrat, and there were in my youth some forty or fifty Jewish families established there. They were shopkeepers, tailors, shoemakers, merchants, innkeepers. The nearest doctor was also a Jew.

Zacliczyn-am-Dunajec was the full name of the place.

Consisting of a few rows of houses set in a rough oval around an open market-place, it squatted on the bank of the Dunajec River, which is next to the Vistula in size in all that region. The river was one of the few bright spots of our existence. In the warmer seasons the peasants would lash logs together and make rafts on which to float cargoes downstream, or they would row against the current with crude, heavy oars. In the winter cold spells, the river froze over and a hundred and fifty boys would go sliding merrily on the ice.

Particularly in the winter, however, since all travel off the main lines between capitals was by wagon over bumpy roads which washed out during the storms, we were isolated. Our method of living was most primitive.

Rabbi Memorial Library of the ERIE HEBREW INSTITUTE

The house in which we occupied three rooms was a ramshackle one-story affair, as were most houses in Galicia. Perhaps its chief feature was the traditional mill, made of two grindstones hollowed a little toward the center. I used to turn that mill often, to grind wheat and corn for my mother; she bought the raw product and we refined it for cooking use ourselves. A battered table, a few chairs, creaking old beds—these completed the furnishings.

Housekeeping was difficult. There was of course no such thing as turning a faucet and getting water. We drew our water from a well. We had neither bathroom nor bathtub. In place of the first we had a crumbling outhouse. For the second we used a large wooden basin which once a week served Mother for washing the clothes.

If we wanted to cook, or to boil water, we first had to chop wood and build a fire. For cooking we used a stove built of brick and lime. It was a low one with a chimney, and an open compartment for the fire. In those days chimney sweeps did a flourishing business. Every community had its "Kaminenkehrer" who visited each household once a month. I used to be terribly afraid of this soot-covered

stranger with the long broomstick. The stories told by the village children only increased my terror.

For heating purposes we used another stove, this one made of a sort of glazed earthenware and built right up to the ceiling. It was called a "Kachelofen." I shall never forget how one day in the first winter in Zacliczyn I gathered some snow, rolled it into a ball and stuck it into this oven to bake. Waiting impatiently for a few minutes, I figured it was thoroughly done and opened the door. Instead of a hard round ball, nicely browned, I found only a little drop of water. I didn't give up. Running out, I made a new snowball, bigger and harder than the first. I kneaded it violently to form a compact mass. Anxiously I placed it in the oven. I closed the door carefully and then, after a breathless wait, opened it again with a flourish. This time there wasn't even a drop of water. I never quite trusted that stove afterwards.

For the richer people, even in Galicia, there were decent houses, houses that had real stoves with the flames entirely enclosed. Though even these lucky ones had no bathrooms or bathtubs, still they did not have to draw water from wells, but had regular carriers who filled huge vats in the houses to suffice for the entire day. They patronized the large public baths which, having no real plumbing either, at least boasted a system of pipes and faucets connected to each bathtub and to a large tank filled by the carriers. The men used to go for their baths on Friday afternoons, I recall, and afterward they would meet in the beergardens to discuss the week's happenings over beer or wine and a bowl of beans.

This was not for the majority of us. For us in Zacliczyn —and we were, remember, still a long cut above the peasants who made up the vast bulk of the population—poverty prevailed twenty-four hours a day. Small cities and towns were overcrowded. Trades were too ferociously competitive to afford more than a subsistence living. There was no system to life. Most people were dirty. Meals were served when

somebody got hungry and managed to find something to eat. People lived from hand to mouth.

Hunger was normal, in Galicia.

I remember a time of need. The year's crops had failed, people walked the streets thin and hungry, and we were among those least adequately supplied with food. One morning my mother gave me a feather pillow to take to a rich grain merchant in the nearby village of Konczskyr, to leave as security for some wheat. In those days the trade in feathers was brisk and, for Galicia, well-paying. Every woman who could afford it raised geese for the feather business. I took the pillow and started off.

After an hour's tramp in the broiling sun, I reached the fat merchant's house and explained our need.

"We'll leave this fine pillow as security," I told him, "until we can pay for the grain."

The man took me by the scruff of the neck and flung me out to the street. Then he slammed the door.

I stood in the mud and wept, with pain and anger.

A year later I learned about actual famine. The failure of crops in successive years, in a region where everything depended on the harvest, left us all without resources. The richer people managed to bring in supplies from far away. The rest of us scraped along on crumbs and prayers. I recall to this day sitting around our battered table one lunchtime. The sun said it was lunchtime, that is. For us it was breakfast, lunch and dinner rolled into one. It was the only meal we were to have that day. On the table were plates containing a few grains of rice and a dab of milk. We had had that same feast the day before, and we would be happy if we could have it again the day following.

Suddenly the door swung open and a peasant fell across the threshold. He was half-starved.

We were children, and hungry too. Besides rice was—and is—my favorite dish. In company with my brother, I

hugged my bowl to me and spread a protecting hand across the top of it.

My father rose and helped the stranger to a seat on one of the wooden benches which served us in lieu of chairs. Then he took another dish like ours and passed it around the table. From each of us he took a spoonful of rice and a drop of milk, until the bowl contained a full portion. This he handed to the exhausted stranger.

When the man had licked up the last grain, and had thanked us and gone, Father made a single comment.

"Children, you are still young," he said. "But this is a point you must remember. In your life if ever anyone—Jew or Gentile, white or black—approaches you, it is your duty to share with him whatever you have!"

The rich grain merchant who refused our feather pillow was a dog. There were some, however, who agreed with Father. One such arrived on a day when there was no famine except in our own house.

Father was away. Mother, Moische and I remained quietly indoors. There was no reason for us to go out. We had no money and no way of getting any. For a week we had eaten frugally, and now for twenty-four hours we hadn't eaten at all. It was best to stay home and try to conserve what energy we had.

There was a knock at the door. It was a man from Tarnow. A teacher who hailed originally from Zacliczyn, he had come to pay his respects to Father on his way through the town.

My mother welcomed him as best she could in her fainting condition. The visitor listened to her explanation of my father's absence and her apologies for not serving refreshments, but he seemed hardly to hear them. He kept looking around the room.

"It's Erev Shabbos—the eve of the Sabbath," he said finally. "Why aren't you making the preparations—cooking, baking?"

First Mother tried to put him off with high words, but after a moment she looked at Moische and me and let slip the truth.

"There is nothing with which to prepare," she confessed.

That teacher received a meager salary, hardly enough to keep body and soul together. Nevertheless, he fished in his pocket.

"A gulden is all I can spare," he stammered. "But you must take it!"

He almost flung the coin on the table and hurried out.

Two minutes after he left us, I was racing to the markets. Gone was my weakness as I bought an armload of supplies—a measure of flour, potatoes, onions.

Mother put onions, a little fat and some flour in a pan with water, browned the mixture and set it out on plates for us. It was the first food we'd had in a day's time and we gobbled it like hungry wolves. Strengthened a little, Mother went ahead with the Sabbath preparations. She made Cholas—the twists that decorate every Jewish table on Friday nights—borscht, boiled potatoes.

For us that was a wonderful Sabbath, a great feast. In exchange value the gulden was quoted at forty cents—American. That day I learned better. I knew after that what a gulden meant. And it meant the same thing to everyone around us.

If hunger was the oldest inhabitant of Galicia, disease was not much its junior.

One of my earliest recollections is of a dark evening during the cholera epidemic which swept the country. Our town suffered like the others. People dropped in their tracks, died like flies. In hushed voices we children talked of the wrenching of the bowels which marked the first stage, the hemorrhages which drained the victims' strength. Warily we eyed each other. Then my father called me to accompany him on his mission. It was a Friday evening. Sabbath candles

flickered in many windows as we hurried down the muddy streets. We stopped in front of the house of a distant cousin. A door swung open and as we stepped over the threshold a sick smell curled out and enveloped us.

The stricken man had asked my father to come and intercede for him with the Almighty, I learned. In the sickroom Father stood and prayed. The cousin was dying, and in pain, but he calmed down as Father's voice reached him. I sat in a corner—we didn't know much about contagion then—and watched. Occasionally I dozed. But each time I waked, I saw the vivid picture again—the shaft of light from the candles in the adjoining room, the bed, the dying man, and my father praying, straight and tall and yet asking mercy. I was awake when the cousin died.

Death and disease were such familiar citizens, indeed, that we could even laugh at them.

Toward the close of this same plague a man died in our town and suddenly the authorities took it into their heads to insist that, for the sake of public sanitation, he be buried at once, in Zacliczyn. For the family and for the Jews of the community that was tragic. We had no Jewish cemetery; our dead had to be buried in Wishnicz, the largely Jewish town some sixteen miles away, where I had been to Cheder. We knew that the present deceased would never rest in peace if his body was buried in unhallowed ground. Yet there was no appeal from the decision.

When the heads of the community came to Father for a suggestion, he shrugged and smiled, then took the committee aside and offered a solution so quietly that I couldn't hear even a whisper. That night Brauner, the innkeeper, invited all the local officials to a party. Served all the beer and liquor they wanted, they were soon roaring drunk. In the meantime a few Jews got together and made a snow man about life size. They put a skullcap on him and dressed him in the usual black shroud. Then with great mourning they

went through the burial ceremony and laid him to rest in unhallowed ground. The officials, too tipsy to examine the body, witnessed the burial and returned to their drinking. At the same moment another villager, driving a farm wagon toward Wishnicz, was stopped at the crossroads by a soldier posted to inspect all vehicles against the transmission of the cholera from one district to another.

"What have you there?" challenged the soldier.

"Grain and potatoes," replied the driver. "Bound for the Jahrmarkt."

The soldier glanced over the load. Grain and potatoes it was. "Pass," he said.

A few minutes later the driver delivered his load to the sexton of the Wishnicz cemetery. They unloaded the grain and potatoes and then took from underneath the body of the deceased. Quietly, but satisfactorily, the man was buried. The Jews of Zacliczyn wore mystifying smiles for at least two days.

Ordinarily there was little enough humor in funerals, however. They were grim, awe-inspiring. Not only we youngsters but all the people of the town felt that in some strange manner we were peering over the doorstep of the dim divine regions, perhaps in closer contact than at any other time with the God we worshiped. For we, as members of the community, were sending one of our number out along the trail we all would someday follow. He would bring news of us to wherever he was going. We were quiet, respectful, more than a little afraid.

The ritual only heightened the feeling. In Galicia we had no elaborate caskets. We had only a simple black shroud for the body. It was carried—one man at the head, another at the feet—through the town. People shut windows and turned down lights while the sexton walked in front of the procession shaking a collection-box and chanting, "Zedakah Tazil Mi'Mavess!—Charity Rescues from Death!" The towns-

men were sure to drop a kreuzer or two into the charity-box, and the money was doled out to those in town who were even poorer than the rest of us.

There was never a week that I remember which didn't have its quota of these solemn processions. There was never a week when the synagogue didn't house the women of one or another family, lamenting their misfortune or, with the sacred wall closet wherein the scrolls of the Torah are kept opened wide, begging for mercy and for strength. I watched women of other families, friends and neighbors, praying with them. I noted how every stranger passing through town looked in at the synagogue, inquired the name of the sick or deceased person and added a prayer in his or her behalf to his own murmured words.

Class lines, poverty, hunger, disease—that was Galicia. Yet so much were these things a part of my daily existence that at first I accepted them. I enjoyed myself even in the darkest hours. I drank in every sight and sound and smell.

Then I saw my father beaten down by that feudal, barren land.

CHAPTER III

In which I receive some sound advice, and two spring chickens further my education.

A MERCHANT and a farmer of note, Father was even more respected for his learning. In his younger days he had studied with the famous Rabbi Chaim Halberstam of Neusandec, from whom he had received at sixteen the authority to serve as a rabbi in his own right.

The rabbinical life had held little attraction for Father, however. His physical appearance—he was tall, strong and good-looking—and his brain, which was eager for new ideas, led him into a field not often entered by Galician Jews. For the most part they were in trade and commerce, centering in Krakow, the crossroads of the trade routes into Silesia, Hungary, Russia and Austrian Poland. Father's bent was for the soil. Studying the most modern methods, he had become expert and, as related above, had accumulated an estate of his own.

Immediately after being stripped of these possessions, he was moved to accept his old teacher's advice and to take a post as rabbi in Bochnia, a city built around famous salt mines. Six months later he was back. I never knew exactly what happened, but I did know that in his youth he had rebelled against the narrow range of his courses and had stolen out of the Yeshivah by night to study alien languages like Polish and German. In Bochnia, I realized afterward, this expert agriculturist and man of broad learning must have rebelled once more at the conventions imposed on a rabbi

in that section, at that time. In any event he was home, the scars of his six months' trial visible in his eyes.

Once returned, he declined with thanks the offer of a friendly baron to appoint him manager of a huge estate. Common sense indicated that he should make use of his knowledge of languages and his acquaintance with the aristocrats of the country. He turned broker, to sell forests and manorial lands for Polish and Hungarian nobles. Because of the rigid Central European class divisions, almost all sales were made through the agency of Jews, Father pointed out. A man who spoke both Polish and German in a day when most Jews spoke only Yiddish was a rarity. His prospects seemed excellent.

Every prospect faded as trifles interfered to block deal after deal. Times grew harder for us, and Father's eyes grew dark with pain. Finally, with great suddenness, it dawned on me that this strange harsh man, with his stern moral code, was not all-powerful. More and more I saw him lean on my mother's simple strength. Then one day I watched her, when she thought she was alone, sink her face in her hands and cry her heart out over the level to which we had been reduced. That finished my carefree childhood.

Everyone has some person to whom he can point as the one who first set him on the high road, the one who put into words all the things that up to that moment were only buzzing blindly in the head. I have mine.

He was a tall, heavy-set man with enormous bushy eyebrows and deep-set eyes. He wore modern, German-cut clothes. In keeping with his appearance was his small, neatly trimmed beard. His name was Koppel, and he was a wine-dealer and a man of means.

I met him in Tarnow. It was one day when Father was off on business and Mother had put her pride in her pocket and gone to ask aid of her wealthy family that I left home also, against explicit orders, to try and canvass my brothers

and sister for advice and funds. Vigorous footwork, occasional lifts and the hospitality of innkeepers who knew of my father took me to the city.

Tarnow had a population of thirty thousand and looked to me then as big as New York did years afterward. I was amazed by its size, I enjoyed its wonders. For the first time I saw a business section, and another district set aside for residences. Most exciting I found a merry-go-round. I sat and watched the horses and listened to the music till my head swam. To ride on it cost five kreuzer, however. I had not been able to collect much from my hard-pressed relatives, and my little brother and I needed clothes and food. I kept the coins in my pocket and moved on, to make a clean sweep of all the relatives I knew in Tarnow, no matter how distant the relationship, before undertaking the long trip home.

Koppel was the last one I could think of. I found his home in a respectable neighborhood, inspected its tidy façade, mustered up my courage and, knocking, asked to see the master of the house. This distant cousin of my father's stared at me in perplexity.

"Little one," he asked suddenly, "who are you, anyway?"

"I am Nathan David Borgenicht's son," I answered, not without pride in spite of my patched shirt and trousers. "From Zacliczyn."

Koppel smiled and motioned me inside, to a chair. For two hours I answered his kind questions about my father and mother and the whole family. After that he invited me to stay for dinner. He didn't have to ask me twice.

After dinner the old gentleman looked up curiously.

"Today happens to be my birthday," he said. As if to emphasize the point, he showed me four telegrams. I saw that they were from his sons. One, he told me, was a doctor, another a professor of jurisprudence, the third a journalist, the fourth a successful merchant.

"Little one," asked Koppel abruptly, "can you write?"

I hung my head in shame. I could not write even the ABC.

The old man shook his head. "Tell your father," he said, "that I have brought my children up differently."

For a moment it was on the tip of my tongue to defend my father furiously. Then I realized that Koppel's tone was not unkind. He was trying to help me. He rocked back on his heels and looked at me soberly.

"Learn to write," he said, rocking forward again earnestly to stress each point. "And to speak. No matter what struggles you may have, get an education. It's the most important thing in the world. Then leave your little mudhole of Zacliczyn. Get out in the world. See things. Do things. Start out young or you won't start out at all. Get rid of your long Beckische and your side-curls. I wear no long gown nor curls and I trim my beard—but I am a good Jew nonetheless! I've brought up my four sons to a knowledge of both God *and* the world. It's time for us to open our eyes to progress, to what's going on in the world around us. We can't live in the past. Our eyes must be to the future. That's my advice to you, when you're still young and alert. Take it. In the years to come you'll be grateful. Stay where you are and you'll be a lost sheep!"

I was eight, and ragged and dirty with the dust of the road, as I stood in the house of this distant cousin of my father's, and listened to that speech. It was in 1868 or 1869, I am not quite sure which. I was not hungry at the time only because he had fed me. My shirt was ripped and patched again in half a dozen places. The soles of my boots were paper-thin, but I put them on only when I went into a strange house, so they served. I didn't know how to read or write, and I lived in a desperately poor Galician village. Since that day I have come a long way. Yet never at any moment during that passage of almost three-quarters of a

century have I forgotten the words of that beetle-browed man, nor the sight of those telegrams from his four sons. That moment opened up a whole new page of life to me.

Even then I knew it. They were not novel words Koppel had spoken, but nobody had ever thought to speak them to me before. I kissed his hand in silence and took the road homeward in a mist of excitement. Boots over my shoulder so that the long tramp shouldn't wear them out, my eternal switch cutting arcs in the air before me, I sang as I marched through woods and fields. I loved especially the psalms of David and I shouted them out to the sky. "I lift up mine eyes toward the hills from whence cometh my help!" And again, "A song to the heights: from the depths of my heart I call upon you, O Lord!"

There was a certain amount of literal truth in my singing appeal. The brother to whom I mentioned Koppel's advice only bowed his head in bitterness. "It is indeed hard when we are scattered like this, Leibchu," was all he could tell me. Into my pocket he slipped a gulden from his slender hoard, as a token of his good wishes. I loved him for it, but I also sang even louder to the Lord.

I knew very well that not even my father could help me secure the education which it was now my burning desire to obtain as the first step up out of "the mudhole." He was too completely taken up with his own desperate struggle for existence. It would simply *have* to be the Lord, I explained to my mother, when she also spread her hands in despair and asked me how I meant to go about pursuing the destiny of which Koppel had spoken.

She was hopeless at the moment. Her wealthy sisters had turned her out, left her sick with their ingratitude for the favors Father had showered on them in the days of his prosperity. She saw no good in the world. Her feeling was clear on her face, and I noted gladly that the work ahead

of me would be not only a career for myself but also a prop to my tiring parents.

"The Almighty will help!" I assured my mother with a grin.

And He did.

His first of many moves was to put into my head the notion of how to overcome the fact that the school term was already half over, that the authorities would surely show me the door if I came to them with a bald request to be admitted in the middle of the semester.

For two days I had been out in the fields around the town, making and discarding plans. I sang and lay endlessly in the tall grass. At the end of my meditations my mind was a complete blank. It registered only impressions of the sky and the trees, the sounds of dogs and sheep. I was becoming disheartened when suddenly the idea popped into my brain, in the form of a vision of the first-grade teacher—Hodorsky was his name, and he was well over sixty, tall, white-bearded, nearly toothless.

That very afternoon I was out in the market-place. After diligent searching, I found two likely-looking spring chickens and bought them from their peasant-woman owner with eighty kreuzer of the money I had brought back with me from Tarnow. The next morning I put the chickens in a basket, covered them to keep them from squawking, and set out for school.

Walking right up to Hodorsky's desk, I asked in my most elaborately civil manner, "Would you have the kindness to accept me in your school, sir? I know, gracious teacher," I added quickly, "that this is the middle of the term and students are not ordinarily permitted to start now. But all the other children can read and write, and I can do neither!"

Hodorsky looked at me. For a moment I was all too conscious of my puny eight years. My heart stood in my mouth and it felt as if I might swallow it. Then the teacher smiled.

"If you promise to be a diligent pupil, I will let you join the others!"

To me this was the answer to my most earnest prayer. It was a full minute before I could remember my offering. Certain that with his aged gums he would relish such a delicate morsel, I asked him humbly if he would accept a gift for "the well-born lady Hodorsky." I held forward the basket.

"What have you there?" he asked.

"Spring chickens," I replied.

Hodorsky sat back in his chair and laughed. His beard wagged to and fro as he rocked in the chair and clutched at his stomach. I stared at him, afraid I had made some horrible mistake. Finally he wiped his eyes and his nose and sat up straight again.

"They will make a tasty dinner," he said, nodding at the basket. "My lady will appreciate them. Especially," he laughed again, "when I tell her a little boy had the audacity to bring them so that I might let him come to school!"

He told me to take the basket to his house immediately, and to come to school in the morning, prepared for work. The next day I entered the classroom with my heart thumping, and found a seat. I listened eagerly to every word. The six hours raced by like seconds. When I came home again at three o'clock with my books in my hand, my mother pointed to them.

"What's that?" she wanted to know.

I told her what I had done. Her eyes opened wide. Then she smiled and patted me on the shoulder without saying anything. I was in seventh Heaven with delight.

A week later I bought two more chickens. These I carried, in accordance with the worldly wisdom gained from my first experience, straight to the lady Hodorsky. When I approached the teacher next day to ask permission for my

brother Moische to attend school also, he was constrained to grant even this boon.

Going to school in Galicia was not so simple as going to school in the United States. Outwardly it might have appeared so. The class consisted of about forty children. The boys sat on one side of the room, the girls on the other. The usual smiles and scowls and notes were passed while Old Man Hodorsky rocked back and forth on his little platform at the front of the room, droning his lectures and putting his questions. Six hours a day, five days a week, ten months a year, for four years—that was the schooling we were entitled to, though it was not compulsory.

There was one distinction. Along with seven or eight others in the class, Moische and I were Jews.

Feeling against Jews was not at that time a problem of daily life in Galicia. The friendly attitude of the Kaiser Franz Josef was reflected in that of most of his subjects, so that I have no harrowing memories of prejudice or pogroms. I lived my life in a distinctly Jewish atmosphere, but never with the feeling that the ruling powers were trying to put me outside the pale of humanity. Nevertheless, in a land where the official State religion was Catholicism, we were naturally, according to most Poles, a little different.

Daily we were reminded of it as we saw the two local priests making calls on their sick or bed-ridden parishioners. Down the street they would come in their long cassocks, each man with a large cross hanging about his neck on a chain. Both priests rang bells as they walked along, and every peasant and tradesman knelt as they passed. Forbidden by our faith to kneel to anyone but the Almighty, we Jewish boys used to hide behind barrels and boxes to avoid being seen. When either of the priests did notice us, however, he would only ring his bell doubly hard as if to warn and impress us. That was all.

Now, after a few days in school, the problem became more acute. I found that both priests taught religion classes.

To my delight, even this difficulty solved itself. I discovered that those Jewish boys whose parents objected were excused from these sessions. For my part, I loved the Old Testament on which most of the work was based and attended every lecture. The teaching was clear and unprejudiced. In those days they did not attempt to re-write a document of several thousand years' standing.

Our personal relations were even more pleasant. So friendly did the younger priest become when he found that, through study at Cheder and with my father, I knew my Bible backwards and forwards, that later he stopped me before I left town to seek my fortune and gave me his best wishes along with a couple of guldens to help me on my way. Even the old Probosc, his superior, followed suit.

With everything going smoothly at the school, there remained only my father to appease. For, when he returned, he expressed doubts about letting me continue.

There were some Jews in Galicia who forbade their children all but the most intensely religious studies. These were the Chassidim, the sect founded by the wonder-working Ba'al Shem Tov. They were the most orthodox branch of Jewry, believing in as little contact as possible with the world around them, for fear of contamination. To a man they wore long "Beckisches" and round fur hats, and let their hair grow into curly sideburns. As a whole they tended to be perhaps less learned than opposing factions, certainly more superstitious and in mortal fear of their rabbis, who were credited with magical powers.

Fortunately my father was not of these. He was one of that equally large, if not larger, group of Jews who felt that, in accord with the precepts of the sages, he is the wise man who learns from everyone he meets, Jew or Gentile, scholar, fool or infant. Many of this faction wore modern clothes;

all of them believed in no one but the Lord God of the Bible, and sought at all times to widen their knowledge and experience of the Christian world. Nevertheless, Father was still influenced by the environment in which he lived. Further, in that Jewish society where neither birth nor wealth but learning was the standard of judgment, he had remained a community leader despite his impoverishment. He knew that among the Chassidim eyebrows would be raised if Borgenicht's son went to the government school.

Dimly I sensed his unspoken objections, and rallied to meet them. I marshaled all the conventional arguments. Finally I employed weapons he had given me himself. Once I had heard him explain to an inquiring baron why some Jews spoke of a Christian as a "goy," while others, fewer, used the Polish "Poretz." Father had pointed out that "goy" was the Hebrew word for "nation." Over the years it had come to mean a member of any other nation than the Jews —a Gentile.

"The 'goy' is here, Father," a little Jewish boy might call out if a Christian came into the home or store. In our home, on the other hand, it was always, "The Poretz is here, Father." "Poretz" indicated an individual, in his own right. "The gentleman is here," we said.

"It goes back to the days of the ghetto," Father had told the baron. "The Jews were set aside, made to feel outside the national group. To protect themselves, they had to think they were different, or even better. Otherwise they would have melted away and died. So they called the Christian 'goy'—to make the distinction clear. Today that feeling is still strong. We Jews have not been emancipated long enough to feel secure. When we do—and that is partly your task, to help us—we will forget the word 'goy' and refer to everyone simply as an individual. 'Goy' as a term for a visitor or a stranger does not exist for me. If the Christians would co-operate, it would not exist for anyone!"

Now I reminded Father of that incident. I pointed out how he had always taught us we were all of one flesh and blood, all children of the one Almighty. My father was unfailingly courteous to everyone he met—at home, in the street, on the open road. If he saw a peasant working in the fields, he would call out in his deep voice: "Dzien dobry! Daj Boze szczescie!" "Good morning," it meant. "May the Almighty bring you good fortune!" If he saw a child trotting along at the edge of the highway, he nodded and smiled. Among his friends, I reminded him, he counted as many Christians as Jews.

As I talked, I watched his austere face relaxing and felt bold enough to beard him openly. It was a piece of impertinence I would not have dared even think of in any lesser cause. But now finally I spoke of his own youth. He himself had rebelled against a rigid diet of religious studies and had mastered Polish and German in secret. How could he deny me access to all the things he held admirable?

He was fairly beaten. With one of his rare smiles he bent his head and gave me permission to continue at school. He had no cause to regret it, for a week later I had wormed my way into Hebrew school also.

There was a Cheder at the other end of town. I introduced myself gravely to the teacher.

"Could you permit me," I asked, "to sit in on your classes free of charge?"

The teacher stared at me over his glasses. I had to say something to stifle his outburst.

"In return," I volunteered hastily, "I'll be only too happy to help you with the duller boys!"

I watched him like a hawk for a reaction to my brazen offer.

"What makes you think you can learn so quickly as to be able to help others?" was all he could say, though he raised his eyebrows even higher.

"Oh, I grasp things very quickly," I assured him. "I'm catching up six months' work in three at the public school. So I shouldn't have any trouble here."

The teacher blinked at me unbelievingly. He must have been deciding whether to throw me out or to let me go under my own power. Then my gall must have overwhelmed him. He looked me over again, this time with a flicker of interest.

"Well," he challenged, "we'll let you try it!"

In my ninth year, therefore, I felt that my schooling was satisfactorily under way. But there was another side to the story. The knowledge I was gaining would be helpful in the future. For the present—that present we live in, without choice in the matter—I was bound to the little mudhole of Zacliczyn. My horizon was narrow and—striking home to a boy—my clothes were in tatters. Even the patches were threadbare.

Clothes seem unimportant when you have them. When you haven't—well, I envied my schoolmates their "Beckisches" and grew more and more ashamed of my own thin shirt and ragged trousers. The long jacket I yearned for soon came to stand for everything I didn't have, everything I wanted. At night I began to dream about materials, admired the soft cloth and the skill with which my dream-tailor put it together. It became almost an obsession with me.

It was from this longing for a decent jacket, finally—and naturally one for Moische, also—that I first looked about for a way of picking up a gulden or two.

CHAPTER IV

In which dry bones buy me a "Beckische" without patches, and I become a one-man R.F.D.

AFTER school I began to prowl around the village. In my earlier years I had roamed through the fields and made friends with the peasants. Now I began hanging around the homes and shops of the village craftsmen. I watched tailors laboriously stitching their cloths, I nodded with each stroke of the shoemaker's hammer. Blacksmiths became more or less reconciled to seeing me near the forge, carpenters learned not to mind when I picked up the shavings from their floor. But in all the fascinating craftsmen's shops there was nothing I could do. Each one had his own sons to whom he was teaching the trade, as he had learned it from his father before him.

Back to the fields I went. They were always my refuge when I wanted to think. The air was clear in the spring after the harsh Galician winter. I walked in the meadows, I sang and jumped around out of the sheer joy of living. One day I happened on a field where a peasant was laying out bones in long rows, exposing them to the sun. After watching him in surprise, I was unable longer to restrain my curiosity. I asked him what he was doing with the bones.

"Drying them," he replied shortly.

For a moment I wondered whether perhaps he wasn't a little mad. Such harmless lunatics were not uncommon.

"But for what are you drying them?" I inquired cautiously.

"For fertilizer," he explained, straightening up for a mo-

ment to get the crick out of his back. "After they're dry, I crush them. Then the farmers all around buy the powder. It's the best thing for the earth." He bent again to his work. Again I stopped him.

"Would you *buy* bones?" I asked, suddenly eager.

"Bring as many as you can—and you'll find out!" the man said.

An hour later I was out in the fields with a sack. I still wasn't sure the stranger would be there when I got back. Perhaps the whole incident was some kind of delusion, I thought. But it was worth finding out. Scaling fences, poaching on the huge estates of landed aristocrats, I started picking up bones, cow bones, horse bones, dog bones, rabbit bones, chicken bones—all bones but human bones. Soon the sack was filled. I ran back to the dealer.

He was still there. Then I thought that perhaps he had been joking with me. Slowly I came up and told him I had the kind of bones he needed. Quite seriously and without hesitation he reached into his pocket and gave me a few coins. He took the sack, emptied it and started distributing the new bones in the same manner as the old.

Apparently the whole thing was on the level. Of course the peasant had given me just a few kreuzer. But it was money—money toward the "Beckische." The jacket appeared before me as almost mine. With a shout I picked up the sack again and raced away.

The next day found both Moische and me out in the fields, scouring every meadow and ditch and clump of weeds. By mid-afternoon we had two sacks filled to bursting. This time we took them home. Moische couldn't understand why I didn't lead him to the dealer, but by this time I had thought it over and had a better notion. We emptied the bones in the field back of our house and spread them out to dry. The following day we gathered another two sacks and spread them similarly. Everything went fine until my mother

looked behind the house. Horrified, she came running to scold us.

"What kind of game is this?" she demanded indignantly. "Filling our whole field full of old dead bones. Ugh!"

"But Mother, we're going to sell them for fertilizer," I pleaded. I explained how we had gathered and dried them. "Now," I added to both Mother and Moische, "we're going to chop them up and crush them, and then sell them to the farmers ourselves. We'll get more this way than from the dealer. And soon we'll have enough money for the 'Beckisches'!"

"Always the 'Beckisches'," sighed my mother dubiously. But she allowed us to litter up the field to our hearts' content.

Two weeks later we sold the bones for twenty guldens.

With the fields temporarily swept clean of bones, we needed a fresh venture. We turned to fishing. The Jewish people of the town all used fish for the Sabbath. The Catholic peasants and tradesmen ate fish on Fridays. So toward the end of the week there was always a good market for it. I took Moische with me and went out to one of the streams that meandered through the region. In these streams, we discovered, the fish hid under the overhanging banks, so we had to develop a technique for catching them. We took a bag and ran a stick through loops in the top of it, to hold it open like a net. Then I leaned over almost into the water and held the open end of the bag toward the dark places under the bank. When I was ready, Moische poked under the bank with a long stick. The fish swam out in alarm and, when we worked it right, they popped right into the bag. Swoop! I yanked the bag high out of the water and we had a few fine fish to sell. We repeated the stunt a few times until we had all we thought we could use. Then we took a dip in the stream ourselves—I still like a swim if the weather is mild enough for an old man—and finally went

through the town peddling our catch. We picked up a few kreuzer this way.

The second week, I remember, we caught a couple of eels. Since these do not come under the dietary restrictions which prescribe only fish which have both gills and scales, I was on the point of throwing them back when it occurred to me that my teacher might like them. The Christians roundabout considered them a delicacy. Proudly I brought them to school.

Mr. Salaschinsky—I was in the second grade by this time—thanked me, of course. When he looked at the catch more closely, however, he betrayed great excitement. These particular eels, he told us, were of a special kind which could be used as barometers. He put them in a glass bowl and instructed us to watch them carefully. If they lay quite still, the weather would be fair. If they acted up, it meant rain.

For a few days the whole class watched those eels religiously. The "barometers" worked fine. Then one morning on coming to school, I found the bowl empty.

"It's very sad, Leon," agreed Mr. Salaschinsky gravely. "But the poor eels were only being truthful. They got so agitated predicting that terrific storm we had last night that they leaped right out of the bowl and, of course, died!"

We *had* had a storm the night before. Mr. Salaschinsky spoke seriously and I had no reason to doubt him. So impressed was I that I went right out and caught him another pair of "barometers." It was only because he didn't have the patience to wait for another stormy night before taking the eels home to his wife for Sunday dinner that I found out the truth.

A few days later Jahrmarkt day came around.

In America I don't know of any such thing as a Jahrmarkt. A country county-fair would be about the closest thing to it. Except that the county-fair is entertaining, while the Jahrmarkt is a necessity. I suppose the best way of describing it

would be to call it a market day, but the words don't convey the real sense of it. In Galicia, as throughout the agricultural countries of Europe, the Jahrmarkt was the big day. From week to week nothing happened in the villages and towns. Life went on placidly. People lived and married and had children and died, all quietly. Generally on Fridays there was a little more of a stir than usual. A few peasant women would come in from the immediate vicinity, some vegetables would be sold in the market-place, and people would pass the scanty news of the moment. Then—in some places every three or four weeks, in others four times a year —came the Jahrmarkt.

For the Jahrmarkt the whole town was turned upside down. In those days every community was built around its market-place. If there were more streets than the one main one, they were simply placed like rings around the central open square, or oval. For Jahrmarkt day, the people who had houses lining this central space rented out their little porches to the merchants who came from all over the surrounding countryside. Generally the merchant put up a few shelves and set his goods out on them. Villagers coming by would see something they wanted, and would stop to haggle over the item. Meanwhile small tradesmen, unable to pay for a whole porch-space, would put little stands on collapsible legs and cry their wares from every corner. To the merchants' stands would come all the residents of the village and the neighboring communities, to stock up for the weeks or months intervening before the next Jahrmarkt; and the peasant women—these latter to sell produce to dealers and to individual customers from their huge baskets, and to buy in exchange materials from which to fashion dresses, or suits for their husbands and sons. Shawls were the biggest item in the sales to peasants. No costume was complete without a gaily-colored bit of material caught around the throat with some crude kind of pin.

The Jahrmarkt was the one opportunity for country people to buy. During the long quiet interludes they were almost entirely cut off from the sources of anything but the simplest supplies. Food, drink, tobacco—these could be purchased locally. For anything else the Jahrmarkt was the only outlet. In those days we had no general stores at every crossroads. We had no chain stores with branches in every little cluster of houses along a country highway. We had no mail-order houses with enticing catalogues and quick deliveries to out-of-the-way corners of the earth. We had a society very little removed from the manorial feudalism of centuries ago. Having known nothing else, we didn't realize our isolation. We knew only that if we wanted anything more than food or snuff or some other simple necessity, we had to come to the Jahrmarkt to get it. And come we did.

Zacliczyn was a small town. To our Jahrmarkt, which was held once every three weeks, came only thirty or forty merchants. Yet they managed to make the market-place colorful for all that hectic day. To cap my delight, I discovered a way to make the excitement pay.

The merchants' stands were all entirely open, and the peasant women especially were prone to theft. They were quick as cats to "lift" a shawl or any small item—from a bit of false jewelry to some morsel of a food delicacy. To a merchant whose losses ran high, I hired myself out as a watcher. With unflagging energy I kept climbing in and out of the display shelves, keeping a sharp eye on every customer—and the other eye on the merchandise. At the end of the day I collected two guldens for my services.

That these services were worthwhile I knew from personal experience. For, at an early Jahrmarkt, I had stolen something myself. It was more in the nature of a boy "swiping" apples from a pushcart than a real theft. I was eight at the time, and desperately in need of a pen-knife. I can't recall now why it was that I needed it so badly, but I was a boy

in a small town and there was nothing else I wanted. For weeks it took up my entire attention. Finally the day of the Jahrmarkt rolled around and I visited the market-place. Almost at once I located a poor little merchant with a collapsible stand and a beautiful assortment of knives. There was no harm in looking at them, certainly. So I looked.

There were black-handled ones and pearl-handled ones and curiously inlaid handles too. It was a black-handled beauty I fixed on, finally. All through the morning I kept coming back to stare at it. Each time I returned, I had a thrill of fear lest it had been sold. But no, my prize lay there quietly, obviously awaiting me, its inevitable owner. The only hitch was the fact that I had not a kreuzer. I continued to look at the knife longingly.

It was hardly my fault that while looking I should have noticed that the merchant had a habit of putting back his head when he shouted out the qualities of his wares. This putting back of his head enabled him to shout better, certainly. It also prevented him from seeing, for a split second, what was going on under his nose.

The next thing I knew I was walking along a lane behind the houses. In the distance I heard the uninterrupted shouts of the merchant. And in my hand I held the beautiful black-handled pen-knife.

Picking up a switch from a nearby tree, I opened the blade of my knife to do a little whittling. How I had waited for that moment! But something paralyzed my hand. I couldn't sink the steel into the inviting wood. I whistled in a carefree manner, did a couple of frisky jumps, whirling the switch and the knife, then closed the blade and slipped it into my pocket. I strolled along blithely.

Suddenly I felt a burning sensation in my pocket. Resolutely I tried to ignore it. No good. It got steadily worse. I put my hand in my pocket, wondering if perhaps it might

not be something else. All there was in that pocket was the pen-knife. Out it came and I looked at it sadly.

A few minutes later I was back at the merchant's stand. He was still crying his wares. Still putting his head back. He was too busy to notice that his stock had increased by one—one lovely shiny black-handled beauty. With perhaps one blob of perspiration on it from the palm of a frightened boy.

That was the first and last time. It was quite a while before I felt equal to looking my friends in the face, but by the time I was nearing my ninth birthday I felt righteous enough again to hire myself out as a watcher. From my own experience, I felt, I knew how and when to watch. And whom.

Though Moische was of course young, we usually managed nevertheless to get him one of the lesser booths to watch. The gulden he got for his services swelled our fund nicely. By the time my father returned from his trip to Germany, we had a combined fortune of twenty-five guldens. When he heard of it he was, though he was always strict and restrained with his children, hardly able to control his surprise and pleasure. As a token of his approval, he stretched out a hand for me to kiss. I was overwhelmed by the honor.

So pleased was Father, indeed, that he agreed without a murmur that we might have the jackets we had been saving for. Then there were no ready-made clothes; only in the largest European capitals was it possible to buy a complete suit. Ordinarily you had to buy the cloth and have the suit made to your measure by the nearest tailor. Father permitted me to come along to the next Jahrmarkt to help choose the goods, and then led Moische and myself to the home of the village tailor, who lived in a little shack hung about with bits of material and spattered with threads and buttons. In a week this unkempt magician had the jackets ready.

The following Friday I got home early. Carefully I oiled and curled my sideburns, then tied them with a bit of string so that they would stay neatly twisted for the Sabbath. Today I see girls using modern versions of that bit of string and calling them curlers. In my day the men and boys used them. A deftly-curled sidewhisker—called "paies"—was the sign of the dandy. I slept all night in the same position, to keep from spoiling the effect.

When the Sabbath dawned I was up to correct any damage the night might have worked. There was none. I got all dressed up in my fine new "Beckische" with new boots and a plush cap to go with it. Moische donned his clothes as quickly. There were no words to equal the occasion. We had earned the money. We had bought the cloth. We had watched the jackets being made. But not until we put them on did we really believe that they would be ours to wear. We stared at each other for a second. Then we linked arms and sallied out.

Long before my father was ready—this was the first time it had ever happened—we were at the synagogue, flaunting our new clothes. The judicious approval of our friends, after prolonged fingerings of the cloth, was music to our ears.

That was Saturday. On Monday my "Beckische" led me into an evil moment. Father was a strict disciplinarian always. Now, when I was a little older, he used to study the Bible with me in the afternoons and I never dared be a minute late. With my new coat I was so much the gay young man that for once I lost my head. We had had an early winter and the nearby ponds were frozen over. Naturally, after school, the whole troop of boys headed for the ice to practice up for later, when the Dunajec River itself became icebound. We had no skates, of course, but the thin soles of our boots served as well. My "Beckische" pushed me along with the first rank. I cut the fanciest figures, sped down the straightaways ahead of my most ambitious rivals.

Then suddenly, across the ice from me, I saw a tall figure, leaning on a cane. It was my father. When he was sure I had noticed him, he raised the cane and shook it slightly. It was a warning.

Thinking that perhaps I could soften the punishment, with one leap I was across the pond and running down the road toward home. Father was methodical in his punishments, however, as in everything else, and as inflexible. He began calmly, though burning with anger at my disobedience. At first I made no sound. As the blows continued to fall, I couldn't help crying out when he struck a spot already sore. My mother tried to stop him, but for once he paid no attention to her. I had to get the last full measure of my reward.

When Father was through, my mother hurried to put cold applications on my raw and burning skin. That eased the pain somewhat. Then Father was back. He stood in front of me and held out the strap with which he had beaten me.

"Kiss it!" he commanded.

I stood stock still.

"Kiss it!" he repeated. "And promise that after this you will come home to study—and go sliding on the ice no more!"

I looked at the strap, and then at Father's face. For a moment murderous revolt flared. Then I bent my head. I had no choice. I kissed the strap and tasted salt on it.

That experience shattered completely the exultation induced by the new jacket. It paved the way, also, for the reception later in the day of the news that the deal Father had gone to Germany to arrange, and which he had thought all but consummated, had suddenly been snagged on a trifle and fallen through altogether. Immediately the "Beckisches" became symbols of money spent on foolishness, money we needed for other, more fundamental needs. Not that my father or mother ever hinted as much. It was in my own mind that the conviction grew.

The next morning I was out looking for new fields of

endeavor. The season of planting was over, I knew, so there was no longer a market for the bone fertilizer. Once more I wandered into the fields to think. Meandering through the grain and lying in the shade of ancient trees didn't help me much this time. Returning to town, I looked at every house in passing. As luck would have it, I happened to notice the postmistress just stepping into her home. There was the germ of an idea.

In Galicia we had no mail boxes in front of our doors. We had no obliging postman to drop envelopes on our thresholds and whistle a warning to come pick them up. Every two or three days a government carrier might come round and leave a packet of letters at the house of the local agent. People living in the vicinity dropped in when they came to town, or happened by, and asked if perhaps there wasn't something for them. The postmistress would glance through the packet and reward the lucky ones with their letters, the others with a shake of the head. Many of the aristocrats in the neighborhood went a week or more without ever calling for their mail. It seemed to me they might be grateful to a courier who would bring letters to them the very day they were delivered to the agent.

The postmistress, a big buxom woman, was skeptical at first. Finally, as I argued, she grinned and slapped me on the back.

"Go ahead and try it," she laughed. "But remember—it's your own responsibility!"

I gathered up all the letters for people who lived out of town and set off. At the first fenced-in estate I came to, I was nervous. I just left the letter and hurried on. After that I stopped more and more often to talk to the managers of the estates and to the owners of the smaller houses along the way.

Most of them, I found as time went on, were friendly, willing to lend a helping hand. The very first evening I

brought home more than fifty kreuzer, given me by smiling "customers." The meaner residents, those who were furious at the thought of a ragged stranger daring to handle their mail, I defied. Persisting in delivering their letters against their explicit orders, I would sneak by and leave the mail lying in front of their doors, in the hope that they would get used to me gradually. In the end almost every one approved of the service and suggested that I make it permanent. As compensation for the beautiful blisters my circuit of almost ten miles raised on the soles of my bare feet, I was assured of a gulden or so a week.

This was too easy, apparently. After a month or two of it, I was struck down by malaria.

I was always extreme. When I contracted the fever, it was discovered that I had the variety which runs in four-day cycles of soaring temperatures. In between recurrences I was weak but able to rest. During the high spots I was almost always delirious. After a few of these attacks I began to grow feeble. The local doctor couldn't seem to do much except to dose me with quinine. When friends and neighbors suggested all sorts of home-made remedies, my mother, who was after all a cultured woman with a husband who was a man of the world, couldn't put too much stock in them. Nevertheless, so great was the fundamental ignorance in which the country was steeped, and so powerful the tug of her son's illness, that she finally yielded to the temptation of having the postmistress look me over.

The postmistress had a reputation in the vicinity as a sort of medicine-woman. Besides, she was my friend. Thin and wasted, I was brought to her house and left alone in a darkened room with her. Charms and incantations buzzed over my head seemingly for hours. When she made the sign of the Cross over me, I remember wondering anxiously whether that might not affect me adversely because I was Jewish.

Nothing happened, one way or the other. Frankly, the "cure" was a failure.

Back home I went to shiver and shake with the fever again. Finally my mother gave me a few spoonfuls of a nasty-tasting brew. Whether or not I can attribute my cure to that I do not know. Perhaps the disease had about run its course anyway. In any event, for those who have malaria and would like to try the remedy, the formula is simple. Go out in the fields in the fall—I think that is the right season —when the snakes are basking in the sun and shedding their skins. Collect these bits of skin, grind them up and make a tea of the powder. Give this tea to the patient, and wait for results. It was as simple as that. It was suggested to my mother by an old peasant woman.

Later I had experience with another of these "cures," this time with a Chassidic "wonder rabbi" trying his hand on my brother Moische. On the night that Marcus and I returned from Pientek's Cheder, we had started the dogs to howling, and as a result of the commotion Moische had suffered a paralyzing attack of fear. Recovering without incident, he had grown up cranky and high-strung but without any apparent sign of disease. In his ninth year, however, he had another attack, and his malady was diagnosed as a form of epilepsy. Seizures followed one another more and more closely thereafter, sometimes even once a month. From his most afflicted moment Moische subsided invariably into a deep, motionless sleep, from which he awoke refreshed and in perfect health once more. Naturally, nevertheless, my parents tried every conceivable remedy. Whenever Father could scrape together a few guldens, he took Moische off to a specialist with the promise that somehow he would pay whatever was demanded in return for a cure. Every doctor made the same comment. Nothing could be done for the boy.

It happened that when my brother was fourteen, a "wonder rabbi" visited the neighborhood and friends urged Father

to take Moische to see the holy man. Skeptical of the special powers of the Chassidic rabbis, Father held that every man's voice was equally loud when it was raised in prayer. But my mother, worn out by long years of hoping, pleaded with him. Father and Moische went to visit the miracle man.

Taking the patient into a private room, the rabbi first prayed over the frightened boy. Then he gave him a few blades of some exotic grass, which he sewed into a little sack and told him to wear next to his heart. At the time of the new moon, he directed, Moische was to go down alone to the bank of the Dunajec River and to repeat a little prayer he taught him. It was pitch-black at the new moon, Moische knew, and the river bank was damp and lonely, but the rabbi assured him he would be safe. Moische agreed to go. With Moische safely outside again, the rabbi called in my father, told him what the instructions were and gave him one final command. When Moische returned from the river bank, he was to be given a tea compounded of common herbs and —a few drops of my parents' urine!

Horrified, Father stormed out of the house in a passion. But when he told the story to my mother, she clutched at the straw of hope and insisted that the "treatment" be tried. It was—and from the date of his first trip to the river bank to this very day Moische has never suffered another attack.

Curiosity about these "remedies" still lay in the future for me, however. For as I recovered from the malaria, I was consumed by a new fever. It had occurred to me that while I was making a few kreuzer from my watching at Jahrmarkts and from my mail service, I was still dependent on the generosity of those I served. It was not an adult way to earn money. Gradually I began to grope toward a method of doing something for myself, of handling a concrete item and obtaining a return for value received. I wanted to be a merchant.

I determined to begin at once.

CHAPTER V

In which I become a village hero, and leave home to mount the apprentice auction block.

At the next Jahrmarkt I was ready for my debut. Traditionally, my stock in trade was Brause water.

This Brause water was a kind of soda. Simplicity itself to make, it contained nothing more than well water, acid to make it bubble, and a little sugar for sweetening. I set up a table and chair, put glasses out in rows, and was open for business. The day was warm, the bidding was warmer, and my mixture was a refreshing drink. The peasant women especially gathered around my stand and kept me hopping.

Soon I even developed a competitor. Though he was older than I, this Efroim was a short fellow, and his voice was not so loud, so the peasant women continued to give me their patronage. Efroim swore that one day he would get the better of me. Right into America we carried the friendly feud. Efroim became Ferdinand, and today Ferdinand is a multi-millionaire and the head of the largest shirt-business in the country.

On that first Jahrmarkt day I felt his rivalry not at all. When I counted up my profits that night, I found to my surprise that I had the equivalent of, say, a dollar and seventy-five cents. Leaving glasses, table and chair at the house of a friend who lived near the market-place, I ran home, jingling the coins in my pocket. My mother prepared a gala supper. Nothing so special as meat, of course; but still she managed to do wonders with the poor dairy food.

Despite its "easy money" the Brause water selling palled on me quickly. It was such a small business, and with so little future. The flush of pride I had experienced at being a real merchant died away. I was almost ashamed of my humble enterprise. I began to look around again.

On the morning of the next Jahrmarkt day I was out on the road which led in from the country. Peasant women began to come along with their baskets of eggs, chickens, skins and whatever else they thought they could sell in the market-place. I walked along beside them and tried to explain that they would profit by selling me their produce right there on the road instead of dragging it all the weary way into town. I would pay them good prices, I pointed out, and would save them time and effort.

Some of the women listened to the argument and to the prices I quoted, and then handed me their baskets. As soon as I transferred the stock to baskets of my own and paid them, they turned and went home, each with a full pocket and a light heart because of the day's time saved. For my part, I hid the loaded baskets in clumps of bushes along the road and picked up more empty ones from where I had secreted them early that morning. I always had room for more goods.

At the Jahrmarkt the peasant women who went all the way into town were sold out by ten or eleven o'clock. That was when I began my sales. With a basket on each arm I paraded through the street, crying my wares. There were always late-comers who arrived only to find the peasants' baskets stripped clean. They fell on me like hungry wolves and were glad to pay the slightly higher prices I charged.

All day I kept racing back to recover the baskets I had hidden. When I took stock at the end of the day, I had only a few odds and ends left—and a profit of almost three dollars! The next time my profits ran even higher, for the suspicious peasants had compared my offers with the prices

they received at the market and found mine reasonable. After that they dealt with me, and were satisfied to save themselves the trouble of trudging into town. I had a full-fledged busines. The money I brought home was sufficient to keep us all in food and other necessities for a few days, for I kept out of the household funds only enough working capital to pay the peasants for their baskets on the next Jahrmarkt day.

Inevitably Ferdinand discovered my scheme and copied it. Luckily, his legs were shorter. I could jump twice as high and run twice as fast. He had to take what was left over after I selected my goods. Nevertheless, he found that there was room enough for two of us in the Jahrmarkt day business.

The Jahrmarkt was held just once every three weeks, however. In town there didn't appear to be anything in a business way that I could do regularly. To this complaint Alter Brand, a dear friend of my parents', had what he considered the proper answer. He asked me to come into his store after school to help him prepare for his weekly markets. People used to ask for minute quantities of things like flour or pepper or salt, he explained, and it was too long a proposition to make up the amounts in the rush of the day. He was sure I would be able to make up little screws of paper, containing a few ounces of flour, or an ounce of pepper—so as to have these small amounts ready for customers at a moment's notice.

Alter Brand may have been a dear friend of my parents'. I did not count him any friend of mine, for poring over little slips of paper in a dark store, measuring out mouse-bites of groceries, was not my idea of a career. Or even a casual job.

"I'm sorry," I told him. "Really I'm enormously grateful for such an opportunity. But I just don't think I could do it. I can't weigh those measures. I don't know how."

When Brand eyed me up and down quizzically, I thought

I had said quite enough and edged toward the door. With one leap he grabbed me by the collar.

"Come ahead then, stupid," he laughed. "I'll show you how. Even such a blockhead as you shouldn't have trouble with this job—it's so easy!"

There was no help for it. I sat in Alter Brand's grocery store and wound paper screws. When toward evening I got up to go and Brand handed me fifty kreuzer—I hadn't expected half that—I decided perhaps even this job wasn't so bad after all.

To complete my schedule I tried every way I knew to occupy my remaining free time. I found a gentleman who wanted a grandchild coached in Polish. For this I received seventy-five kreuzer a week. When the sowing season came round again, I routed Moische out of the house and drove him mercilessly through the fields. With fertilizer in demand once more, we collected bones, made a ghastly mess of the field behind the house and in the end averaged two guldens a week from our efforts. Thursday fishing expeditions augmented the fund.

Simultaneously I was plowing ahead through school. Naturally we had no typewriters then, nor adding machines nor lightning calculators. Since everything was done by hand, a fine style of writing was a great asset. I practiced my penmanship morning, noon and night.

As I moved from class to class, I found outstanding a teacher named Flakowicz. When there was no room for us in the schoolhouse, this kindly, lovable gentleman took us to his own home for sessions. In addition to his teaching, Mr. Flakowicz played the church organ. Yet, when he and his wife discovered that I was going without lunches, they carefully observed the Jewish dietary laws even in the generous help they extended me. In return for the bread and honey and baked potatoes I enjoyed at their table, I helped their young daughter with her lessons. The hours I spent

with those gentle people are among my pleasantest memories.

Finally, with a diploma from the school, a mastery of Polish and a working knowledge of German, and a variety of jobs and enterprises, I began to feel—at eleven—grown up a little. Hardly had the sensation dawned when, by virtue of an incident which roused the whole town, I emerged completely from my status as a ragged urchin and became a full-fledged member of the community.

I myself was involved in the latter half of the episode. The first half I knew only by hearsay. It appeared that a woman named Leah, of a neighboring village, was—at twenty-eight—the wife of a good, honest businessman and the mother of two children. She was also extraordinarily beautiful—tall, dark, clear-complexioned, and with a splendid figure. Perhaps her husband took her too much for granted, paying too much attention to his business and not enough to his wife. In any case, she encouraged an eighteen-year-old clerk in her husband's store to believe she might conduct an affair with him. Terribly in love, the boy developed all kinds of romantic notions. The upshot was that the woman waited until the husband went to Vienna to buy goods, locked the store, took her children and drove with the boy to Zacliczyn to be converted to Catholicism. The understanding was that afterward she would marry the clerk.

Since a conversion was considered a great triumph for the church, the Probosc and the younger priest escorted the woman, the boy and the two children into the high-walled home of the aristocrat Marcynski to await the ceremonies, and prepared to stage the appropriate celebration. As a happy afterthought, they hit on the idea of baptizing Leah and the children the first Sunday and the clerk the following week, so that the village people could have two parties instead of one. While the local Catholics beamed, the Jews of the town went into mourning.

Informed by friends, Leah's husband came hurrying home to plead with her. She was firm. He asked for his children, at least. Again she refused to listen to him. One child then! Backed by the church, she refused him even that small comfort.

On the first Sunday she was baptized amid scenes of gay rejoicing. With her two children she left the town at once. There is no I-told-you-so angle to her story. She did not come staggering back through a snowstorm, to the sound of sad music. We simply never heard of her again.

But we did hear of the clerk. And plenty. He was being saved for the next Sunday. In the interim his old mother, a widow of long standing, came from Tarnow to weep over him. Rebuffed, she went home and visited her rabbi, who instructed her to take a brick, inscribe the son's name on it, and at the appointed hour toss the brick into her kitchen fire. As this baked brick melted and the name was consumed, so would punishment visit the offender. Virtually a sentence of death on her own son, it was a horrible thing for a mother to do, but she felt it was her duty. From the effects of it, she almost went insane.

By this time everyone in Zacliczyn was tense, expectant. Every latest development was passed immediately from mouth to mouth down the street. We all knew at once when Saturday night some of the officials started to celebrate the coming conversion. We scowled when the clerk, deciding he was "one of the boys" now, began to make merry with the others. We grinned when ten minutes later he was flat on his back and they were beating the life out of him because it was only Saturday night—and he was still a Jew! We gained new hope, finally, when the clerk was reported too black and blue to appear as scheduled, and the ceremony was put off until Tuesday.

That was where I entered the picture. That a boy should break his mother's heart and imperil her mind so ruthlessly

was naturally more than any loving son could stand. Having heard over the week-end the complete tale of the mother's grief, Leon decided he would tell the clerk a thing or two.

Getting into the grounds was simple, for me. Some of us Jewish boys were accustomed to going into the place with our Christian friends to weed the aristocrat's gardens—for our own pleasure as well as out of deference to him. On this Monday I walked through the massive gates as usual, with thirty or forty other boys, and started picking weeds. All afternoon I kept glancing around surreptitiously, trying to spot the clerk. As the day drew slowly to a close, I was frantic with impatience. I had all sorts of heroic notions of hiding in the grounds and then climbing to the clerk's window late at night. How I was to locate his particular window I didn't bother to figure out—but I would do it! Then suddenly I saw my quarry in the distance, walking by himself.

For five minutes thereafter I told that clerk what a scoundrel he was. I used up every name I could think of, every term of reproach. To think that he could wring his mother's heart like that, and all for the sake of a fickle married woman! I was only eleven, and perhaps didn't appreciate his grand passion, but as it turned out it was just as well. For when I stopped for breath, I saw he was crying. Great racking sobs!

In the next minute I learned that he was heartsick about the whole business—that his lady love had confessed she had never had the remotest intention of marrying him and had only used him to get her out of her home town and into the protection of the priests—that he wanted to get out and go home to his mother and never see Zacliczyn again—that he was desperately afraid the Poles would kill him if he didn't go through with the conversion now—and finally that he was virtually a prisoner and couldn't possibly escape. In the minute after *that*, we completed plans for him to be on top

of the wall at five o'clock next morning so that rescuers could pick him up from the road outside. Close to the wall, I pointed out, was a tree up which he could make his way. When he complained that the other side was sheer, I guaranteed him that there would be some men there with a ladder to get him down safely, and a wagon to speed him away.

Terrified, but in even greater terror of the conversion, the clerk finally agreed. All I had left to do was to get the necessary men, ladder and wagon, and I had only a couple of hours to do it in. They proved ample.

All that evening there was subdued excitement among the Jewish residents.

"Leon," warned my father, "you'll get it yet if you don't stop sticking your nose into other people's business!"

"Make him stop!" pleaded my mother, afraid for me.

"Father can't forbid me," I told my mother, proud to be the center of so much attention. "Because this is a Mitzvah —a good deed!"

At five o'clock I crept behind four men up to the appointed place in the wall of Marcynski's estate. A dog barked inside. Then everything was quiet. We waited five minutes. Ten minutes. One of the men stood at the horse's head, ready to clap a hand over its nostrils if it started to neigh. Still nothing happened. The men started to look me up and down. They knew I was not above hoaxing them, for I had something of a reputation for mischief. I prayed desperately that the clerk might keep his nerve. Otherwise it might go hard with me. Then suddenly he was there, his face as gray as the wall in the morning light. He stared down at us from the branches which swung out over the roadway.

In a moment the trembling clerk was hidden in the straw at the bottom of the wagon. Another moment, and the driver had led his horse carefully past the estate. Leaping into the seat, he whipped up the fresh animal and they galloped away toward Tarnow. The other men shook hands

with each other and then, to my delight, with me. We scattered in silence.

The next day there was again excitement and anger in the village. Only this time it was the Jews who wore the smiles. Of course no one could imagine who had helped the clerk escape, yet he was safely back in his mother's arms. Every time I walked down the street, passers-by nodded and smiled. My chest expanded three inches with importance.

So convinced was I, indeed, that I was now a man that I raced a little ahead of myself, and informed my father that I was leaving home to seek my fortune.

I was just under twelve. I was skinny for my age, and the malaria of the previous year had left its mark. Father listened gravely to my speech and then, without a change in his expression, calmly denied my urgent request.

"You are too young," he offered by way of explanation. "And not strong enough."

I cried and threatened and warned but, knowing my father, I felt in my heart that I could not go. Resentfully I resumed my business activities. I ate as much as our table allowed, and managed to put on a little weight. Then in the spring I released my pent-up longing to plunge into the world in a sudden journey.

In Krynica, a resort high in the Carpathian Mountains near the Hungarian border, lived a sister whom I had seen only once in my life. On the pretext of visiting her and the brothers and sisters and other relatives more or less strewn over the countryside along the way, I set forth. Receiving, as always, lifts from silent peasants, meals and lodging from friendly innkeepers, advice and perhaps a few kreuzer from the relatives I found in the villages I passed through, I arrived without incident at Krynica to find myself in the most beautiful place I had ever seen. Lying in a valley surrounded by wooded peaks, it had everything—streams, lakes, bridges, castles. More important to me, it was graced by

the presence of many aristocrats, along with tourists from the capital and even from other countries. Never able to have enough of gazing at these wonderful strangers, to my delight I came into even closer contact with them.

My sister, I discovered, bought huge quantities of milk from the peasants roundabout. When this milk was poured into cups and allowed to set, it became sour, thick and delicious, the most popular, refreshing drink in town. Immediately I began to help my cousin Deborah with the pouring of this milk. Heaving milk cans around in the deep cellar, setting out little white cupfuls in long rows by the light of sputtering candles—this was very exciting. Of course I was tempted one day to sneak down to the cellar, test the cups with my finger to make sure they were thoroughly "set," and then stick out my tongue and lick the top cream off every one. Like a machine gun I went down that line until eighteen or more were desecrated. The fact that I was chased with a broom handle and later chastised did not dampen my enthusiasm. For, the indiscretion forgotten, I was allowed and even encouraged, along with the other children of the house, to help sell the beverage.

I carried my tray through every street in town, peered into every shop window, addressed every passer-by who looked as if he came from a distant place. I heard names like Warsaw, Vienna, Budapest, perhaps even Berlin. I listened to accents from every quarter of the compass. Slowly yearning hardened into resolution. When I returned home after a few wonderful weeks, I would no longer be balked.

"The time for departure has arrived!" I announced to my father.

This time I meant it. I would have given my right arm, of course, to have continued my education. But I had gone as high as I could in the free public schools and, far from being able to help me along, Father was himself in dire need of whatever I might be able to contribute to his household.

In the absence of the opportunity for further learning, therefore, I was determined to escape from the trap of our small town. News of other Zacliczyn boys who were making their modest ways in the world was filtering back to us and eating into my pride. Koppel's advice, the picture of him standing there displaying the telegrams from his sons, was vivid in my mind. Yes, it was time to go.

There was no special calling I was leaving to pursue. In Galicia there was no such thing. My career was determined in advance by my birth. I was a Jew, and a Jew without money. The nobles were nobles, and their sons would be nobles after them, above the meanness of trade. The sons of the peasants would be peasants themselves, in their turn. The sons of the artisans would follow in their fathers' footsteps. For the Jewish boys it was a question of a commercial life. For me, a Jewish boy with not a kreuzer to his name, it boiled down to a question of what storekeeper—what tobacco, notions or drygoods man—I could persuade to take me in as an apprentice.

No profession was accessible. No factories needed manning. No unexplored ground lay awaiting the pioneer's plow. I had to find a niche for shelter while gathering experience, and food enough to keep me from famishing altogether.

It may be hard for an American, faced with a vast panorama of agriculture, industry and commerce, to understand this. In Galicia it was not hard to understand. It was the thing I had grown up with. At the time I had no complaint.

"I'm going to Krakow," I told my father, "to bind myself out in the open market."

Near the cattle markets at the various Jahrmarkts were platforms to which mounted the various boys and girls who were anxious to hire themselves out. Prospective employers came, looked them over and took whom they wanted. The minimum term was six months, though more generally it was a year. Wages were not part of the agreement. They sim-

ply did not exist. The employer merely fed you and lodged you. You worked until you were permitted to stop. If you ached and cried and felt homesick, you got over it, because at home things were no better. In Krakow, the capital city of Galicia, I felt my prospects would be a little brighter than anywhere nearby.

Even now Father tried to dissuade me. But this time there was the shadow of a doubt in his eyes. My insistence carried the day. He nodded agreement. Giving me a note to a cousin who lived in Krakow, he suggested that it might be possible for her to introduce me to her brother-in-law, a prominent banker. Though the chances of getting an audience with this exalted gentleman were exceedingly slim, he warned, at least it was a bright dream to keep before me.

Four days before Passover I was ready to go. The Passover week consists of two holy days at the beginning, two more at the end, and four days in between which are sacred only in that they link the two ends of the week. It was during these four days that the young boys and girls of the Jewish communities mounted the auction platforms in greatest numbers to bond themselves out; it was during these days that the greatest number of employers visited the markets. I figured to be in Krakow early so that, if the banker refused to see me, I would still not miss the pick of the prospective employers at the Jahrmarkt.

In my pocket as I prepared to go was the little fortune I had been able to scrape up—a couple of guldens out of my Jahrmarkt profits; a couple my mother had been able to save from her meager household funds; and an entirely astonishing three guldens from the village priests, two from the young cleric and one from the Prohosc, both of whom loaded me with advice and exhortations to visit them if ever I returned.

Thus fortified, I kissed my parents and Moische good-by and left Zacliczyn behind me.

CHAPTER VI

In which Progress overtakes my "Beckische" and sidecurls, and smallpox kills a bank clerk.

KRAKOW burst on me like a thunderclap.

Tarnow, with its thirty thousand inhabitants and neat little business section had seemed to my eyes a world metropolis. Krakow boasted a population of ninety or a hundred thousand. Sitting astride the Vistula at the point where that great river becomes navigable to the larger boats, the city was in those days the trading center of Eastern Europe. Traffic for Silesia, Hungary, Russia and Austrian Poland all had to pass through its gates. Colorful, hectic, full of varied costumes and dialects, it was into the bargain the intellectual center of the Polish nation. Ancient buildings dotted the city. On a mountain overlooking the roofs the great University, founded in 1364 by Casimir the Great and second only to Prague in all Europe in age, was a breath-taking sight. Old churches, synagogues, museums, castles, bridges —on every block was a landmark.

I looked about me, pop-eyed. Around me flowed streams of strangers, each bent on some vital private mission. To ears accustomed to the slow, stolid pace of country towns and peasant labors, it was bound to be either deafening or delightful. To me it was first one and then, after five minutes, the other. I liked Krakow. At once I decided that by hook or by crook I would stay there.

That night I couldn't sleep despite the soft comfort of my mattress, and the fact that my cousin Judith had re-

ceived me cordially and had promised to do what she could. My mind clung grimly to the next day. Was there the slimmest chance that the banker might save me the humiliation of the auction block?

In the morning Judith was waiting for me.

"Polish up, youngster," she laughed. "We're going to see Birnbaum!"

I met a cultured, modern young man of perhaps thirty-five, head of the bank which bore his name. When he looked down at me, I felt suddenly clumsy. In his neat office my long gown and dangling sidecurls seemed horribly out of place. I reddened, but Birnbaum only smiled.

"How old are you?" he asked.

"Past twelve," I replied.

"Past twelve?" He leaned back and laughed, not too unkindly. "Why, you're not even Bar Mitzvah yet!"

Bar Mitzvah—literally, Son of the Commandments—is the Hebrew equivalent of confirmation. On "becoming Bar Mitzvah," the young Jewish thirteen-year-old assumes the rights, duties and obligations of a full-grown man.

"I can do a good day's work yet before I become Bar Mitzvah!" I said quickly.

I felt I had to speak up. The glimpses I had had of the bank premises and of Krakow as a whole had shown me the other side of the world from Zacliczyn. To gain a foothold in that new world would be the fulfillment of a hope I had not dared even dream about. I had never pictured myself as a Cinderella, but here was a chance for every wish to come true. I would have fought lions for it.

"If only you knew my father," I pleaded, "I'm sure you would take me on. Judith, his cousin, can tell you about him. Of course I can't ever be half the man he is, but at least I have a mark to shoot at!"

Over my head Birnbaum smiled at his sister-in-law.

"Can you clean an office well?" he asked me. "Can you

sweep and dust? Most of all, can you deliver messages quickly and efficiently?"

The impossible was happening. I could hardly believe it, but in Birnbaum's tone I detected the hint that, barring some unpardonable offense, the job was mine. My heart swept up into my mouth and I grinned from ear to ear.

"At sweeping and dusting I'm an expert," I almost shouted. "I can even teach you some *new* tricks. As for delivering messages, I can run like a deer in the forest!"

"Well, boy," said Birnbaum, "we'll try you!"

I couldn't keep my feet still. They made a little jump. Birnbaum's eye was caught by the tail of my long coat.

"One thing," he smiled, eying me up and down till I wondered what it was he saw. "We can't have you looking like that. Not as *our* office boy. We'll have to dress you up a bit. Take off the Beckische and trim those sidecurls."

"Don't worry," he added reassuringly, "we'll just take off a little. Besides, I'm modernly dressed and I go to a German barber, but I'm as good and orthodox a Jew as your father. You can be too. How about it?"

I fingered my curls. I thought back over the pains I had taken with them, the hours I had oiled and twisted them. Then suddenly I thought of Koppel. Eyes to the future, he had warned me. The curls and the Beckische belonged to the past. I knew what lay that way—and I wanted no part of it.

"When do I start?" I asked Birnbaum.

At the barber's I winced when the scissors bit into my curls. When they were gone, however, I felt somewhat relieved. By the time I was finished, a suit had arrived from Birnbaum's house, discarded by a son my age. Dressed finally, I tiptoed over to a mirror. Leibchu was gone. I stared instead at a little German boy, wearing a cocky round cap like every other office boy in every other bank. The

first shock over, I was proud of the change. Five minutes later I was out with my first message, to another bank.

Though Krakow was a puzzle to me and I had to ask my way at every turn, my knowledge of Polish came in handy and I had a ready tongue. To make up for time lost in questioning strangers, I took three steps to everyone else's one. Breathless, I returned to Birnbaum's with the desired information.

"Boy, you sure are fast!" exclaimed the clerk. "You must have run all the way!"

"Not run," I corrected him. "Flew!"

He grinned and motioned me into the inner office for the next errand.

At seven the bank closed for the night and, as the next step in the Cinderella story, Birnbaum took me home with him. I gaped at each succeeding mansion in the fine district through which we passed. Birnbaum himself lived in a spacious residence which seemed to me nothing less than a palace. He must have been amused by my reaction. For once I was speechless.

At dinner, served in the high-ceilinged and paneled dining room, the settings disturbed me. There were too many forks. I fussed with my napkin, stalling for time. Then, cautiously I glanced around the table, at the children seated near me, and up the length of it to where Birnbaum and his wife were deep in conversation. At last I saw an older son of the host's lifting a small fork to his mouth. Easily and with the greatest nonchalance I took up the same fork of my own little army, and started to eat. The other diners were slower, but that one son was always waiting for the next course. I kept my eye on him, and managed to choose the right weapon with which to attack each successive dish.

When dinner was over, I was shown to a luxurious guest-room. Again I was momentarily overcome. But who was I to quarrel with good fortune? That morning I had come

in from the country, a ragged peasant in a Beckische and sporting long sidecurls. The same evening I was a little German-style bank runner, going to bed in the sumptuously-fitted room of a mansion! I slept like a top.

Bright and early the next morning I was sweeping out the office. On the go without a let-up the rest of the day, carrying message after message to other banks, I was filled with a sense of my own importance. Here I was intimately connected with the work of the world. I wished my friends in Zacliczyn could see me.

During the few moments I had occasionally between errands, I watched the bookkeepers. Calmly seated at their desks, heads bent over endless sheets of ruled paper, they seemed like superhuman beings. In those days they were not the cogs in the machine they are today. It was an age of handwork, and the clerks were a vital part of any organization. Upon their ability and integrity much depended. I scarcely dared admit the faint hope that someday I too might earn the right to sit at a desk beside them.

After a couple of weeks I was cheered considerably when the bookkeepers let me sit in a corner in odd moments and practice penmanship. I had always been interested in writing. Now I spent every scrap of leisure at it. One of the clerks took a liking to me and let me copy his flowing style. From this beginning I began to imitate the writing of the others also. They were flattered, and I was helped, because from each I took what I considered the finer points and incorporated them into my own hand.

One day I was particularly intent on this practicing, concentrating on a large capital letter. It was to be a beauty. I jammed my tongue into my cheek and knitted my brows. Slowly I began the elaborate design. For a moment I held my breath. Then the letter was finished and I straightened up, heaving a sigh of relief.

"Boy, you write well," said a voice over my shoulder. "Your penmanship is perfect!"

Leaping off the stool, I whirled and stood at attention, facing the head bookkeeper. He had been watching over my shoulder, but I had been too absorbed to notice him.

"We'll have to find another sweeper and duster," he smiled. "We can't have you wasting your time like that. From now on you will write out letterheads for the firm!"

Stupendous advance! I went around with a grin that almost split my face in two. That night I wrote the great news home to my parents. And I said a silent word of appreciation to Koppel, who had given me the necessary advice and warning. His prophecy was being fulfilled already.

From morning to night after that I wielded the pen in Birnbaum's office. It was a glorious feeling for a twelve-year-old to know that every letter that went out had my handwriting at the top of it. Evenings were equally exciting. While all the Birnbaums were wonderful to me, I became particularly fast friends with Samson, their son of about my age. Together we wandered through the city. He was almost as expert as a regular guide on every historic and interesting spot.

My only regret during this heavenly interlude was that I was enjoying this splendid life myself while my parents continued to endure the poverty of Zacliczyn. With each new letter from home I would feel again the pain of being unable to help. But apprenticeships were long in those days. Sometimes two or three years went by before any wages were given. Board and lodging were the universal compensation, and the maintenance I was getting was in itself a wonder. There seemed to be no solution.

Abruptly at the end of the fourth week of writing letterheads, Birnbaum called me into his office. I wondered what I had done wrong, for at the bank I was never asked for

anything except penmanship any more. Birnbaum looked me up and down.

"You're going to receive twenty-five guldens for the next six months' work," he told me.

I couldn't believe my ears. I had been working just six weeks altogether and would have been glad to work a year and more without dreaming of asking for money. Probably my feelings were written all over my face.

"Of course you'll have to clothe yourself out of that," Birnbaum smiled. "But you'll be able to get some things from Samson. He's about your height."

All business again, he motioned toward the door. I bowed and, still crimson with excitement, stumbled out.

I had not a thing in the world to worry about, I thought elatedly. I could start helping my parents at once. And as for myself—Birnbaum evidently had a good opinion of me. I would grow up in the firm. Perhaps even—impossible but attractive dream—I would someday have a voice in its management! Yes, there would have to be some such development. I wouldn't remain forever an employee.

My chickens were all counted and neatly wrapped for delivery. The only difficulty was that they weren't hatched yet. Nor were they destined to be.

After three months of Heaven, I felt an odd dizziness on getting up one morning. As I worked, I managed to throw off the feeling, but every time I sat still again it returned. Two days later, in the office, one of the clerks stopped beside my desk and nudged me.

"What's the matter, Leon?" he asked. "You look sort of funny."

"It's nothing," I assured him quickly, my head heavy, nodding. "I feel fine, thanks."

Five minutes later I slipped and fell forward against the desk. My eyes burned, my hands trembled, the pen weighed ten pounds as I tried to drive it across the papers. With

my head reeling so that I could no longer see, I finally sought out the head bookkeeper.

There was only one refuge for me in Krakow. My sister Sallie was working in that city. Because she had received me coldly once before, I hadn't bothered her earlier. Now I had no one else to turn to. She had no alternative, either, I suppose, so grudgingly she called a doctor. His diagnosis was simple.

I had smallpox. I had to be rushed to a hospital.

Declaring that my case was too desperately contagious, the Jewish Hospital refused me entrance. We rolled on and on in our hired "Droschky." Finally, in despair, Sallie took a friend's advice and applied to the Holy Sisters' Hospital. The nuns received me kindly.

Day by day I grew worse. With my entire body covered with sores, the nuns had to tie my hands to the bed to keep me from ripping open the itching ulcers. Suddenly my eyes were affected. For two weeks I was completely blind. My only visitor was Sallie, and even she couldn't come near me. I remember begging a clean handkerchief from one of the Sisters, so that I could at least pat my visitor with it. Alone in a strange city, in the hands of unfamiliar Catholics, halted on the very threshold of a career—the blindness about put the finishing touches to me. I lay quietly in bed and cried.

One thing only roused me. I found out about it when one day a stranger was ushered into my room and I heard with amazement my father's voice. Explaining that out of sheer cruelty an unfriendly resident had telegraphed home that I had died, he told me that my mother had been so profoundly shocked that she had gone almost out of her mind. Father had caught her on the brink of the deep well behind the house.

In those days an oath was a fearful thing, but to Alter Brand—that stanch friend—it was a question of restoring my mother's balance.

"I swear on my own life and the lives of my children that Leon is alive!" he had said.

He knew no more about my health than anyone else in Zacliczyn, but he had felt necessity outweighed the transgression of swearing falsely. He had agreed to stay with Mother while my father made a hurried trip to find out the truth.

The news of my mother's grief swept away my listlessness. My one desire was to reassure her. Begging my father to rush back to thank Alter Brand for his loyalty, and to comfort my mother, I promised to write as soon as I could. For a week I fretted impatiently. Finally the mist began to clear and I could see a little. The first day that I could open my eyes without pain, I begged for a pencil and paper. A letter from me would do more to reassure my mother, I knew, than all the words of comfort in the dictionary. When it came to it, though, my fingers wouldn't hold the pencil. One of the Sisters bent over and wrote a few lines herself, then held out the pencil for me to sign my name. That way Mother would know the note was really mine. I thanked the Sister for her understanding and, with my hands covered with the bursting sores of smallpox, managed to scribble a word of love and my signature.

In another ten days I was mending. The surest sign was that I recovered my appetite. Double portions of "legumine" —boiled rice sprinkled with cinnamon and sugar, and to this day my favorite dish—went down my throat at almost a single gulp. The nuns began to smile and I, all eyes and ears once again, began to chat and ask questions.

Immediately I ran into a problem which distressed me. The Sisters began to suggest that I should be grateful to the Savior Jesus for having brought me back from the edge of the grave. Gradually they became more and more insistent. Suddenly I realized that they were aiming for a conversion!

It was a horrible position for me. After all I was sick, destined to remain in their care for weeks, and brimming over with gratitude for their wonderful kindness. Anything else in the world they might have asked me to do, I would have done most gladly. But to adopt a religion that was not mine! That was the only thing they asked of me—and it was the one thing I could not do!

At first when one of the Sisters entered my room I used to lie very still, hoping that she would think I was asleep, so that she would not stay to torture me. As my strength returned, however, they visited me at all hours of the day or night to repeat their urgings. My head began to swim. Finally I became desperate. When one day three of them sat around my bed, reminded me of my debt and raised once again the inevitable question, I sat up with a shout.

"A Jew I was born and a Jew I will remain!" I cried. "I believe in only one God, and that there *is* only one God. To Him all people are alike. Everyone who is decent and good, whatever his religion, has an equal place before Him, and an equal share in the Eternal World!"

Exhausted by my outburst, I lay back on the pillows. When I opened my eyes again, the Sisters had gone.

I was saddened by their coolness to me after that day. Only one remained as friendly as before. During my worst moments, this one Sister had slipped into my room to put a cool soothing hand on my forehead and lull me to sleep. At that time I was blind, and recognized each Sister by her step and her voice. When my sight returned, I knew none of them until I closed my eyes and, listening, recognized the voice. Then I could look at the face and identify her. This one particular Sister I did not have to identify. The first time she came into my room, after my blindness, I sensed her presence at once. A little thrill spiked through me as I looked up at her lovely chiseled features and deep, sorrowful eyes. I knew her before she spoke. Now it was

she who remained affectionate. When the others left me strictly alone, she sat beside me and patted my hand.

"Brave, clever boy," she said once, in astonishing approval. "You gave the right answer. You were born a Jew, and you should be loyal to your faith!"

In the weeks that followed I tried often to fathom this Sister's interest in me. I was even more concerned when she began to mention great troubles which oppressed her.

"Dear boy," she murmured one morning, wringing her hands, "I love you so much. If only you were older so that you might understand—you could lift stones off my heart!"

I waited for her to continue, but she rose abruptly and hurried out of the room. Though I ached to help her, I realized she would have to decide herself whether to confide in me. After seven weeks I was ready to be discharged but my questions were still unanswered. Happy that, now that I was leaving, most of the Sisters smiled again and wished me luck, I still sought out my one special friend. As if to confirm my thoughts, she whispered to me to stay in my room and wait for her.

Upstairs again, I fussed with my tiny bag, packing and unpacking it interminably in an effort to appear busy. Then my friend was there. I looked at her expectantly, trying to explain with my eyes that anything she felt like saying I would hear and keep tight shut inside of me forever. But apparently she had mastered her grief. She kissed me tenderly on the forehead and gripped my shoulders.

"May the Almighty bless you and all your undertakings," she prayed. "And if ever you have the chance—come and see me!"

Slipping a piece of my favorite cake into my hand, as a final gift, she took one long searching look at me and then, turning sharply, went quickly down the corridor. I stood quietly a moment before brushing my eyes free of the tears that had filled them and walking down to the door. That

moment has come back to me many times. I have never understood it, or gotten over the baffling feeling it aroused. I had been permitted to read the first pages of a story, but I had not been privileged to find out the reason for the strange happenings in it. Many times when I was in Europe in later years I tried to find that Sister. I never could.

On leaving the hospital I had expected to be able to get right back to work. Both the head bookkeeper and Birnbaum's eldest son had visited me to assure me that my job was waiting. But again my hopes were dashed. My eyes teared constantly and my face and body were a fiery red. Doctor's orders were to return home and to take hot salt baths for at least three months. And when those three months were over, midnight had struck for my particular Cinderella. From the capital came word that I had been away too long. It had been impossible to keep the job open.

For a moment I was stunned. Then I saw that my parents' disappointment was greater even than my own. My father appeared especially downhearted.

"Don't you worry," I told them. "I'll find something just as good!"

Obviously I had to start all over again. I knew very well that the door through which I had peered into a different world was slammed in my face now. But there was no sense wasting time. Almost a year had elapsed since first I had left home, and Passover was not far off. I spent the first two days of the holiday week with my parents, as it turned out, and then set out once more for Krakow.

I was one year older. I had had some valuable experience. But this time I had no letter to the sister-in-law of a wealthy banker. God would provide, I assured my parents. During the week boys and girls would be bonding themselves out in the open market. Certainly I would be able to find a place. The Birnbaum incident had been too lucky, anyway. Things didn't happen that easily. Now the real start would

come—the hard way. I was sober, determined, as I marched along the dusty road to the capital.

That road was even longer than I thought. As a matter of fact it wasn't until a few years later that I reached the end of it. For fifteen miles along the way I found the town of Brzesko, and stayed there overnight with one of Father's numerous cousins. Father had relations in the most convenient places, and it was the custom for every member of a large and scattered family to exchange hospitality with the rest. This particular cousin received me warmly and asked me all about myself. When I explained my position, he nodded thoughtfully.

"You can write Polish, you say?" he asked.

"Perfectly!" I answered proudly.

"And German?"

"Not so well as Polish. But I'm learning."

"Then perhaps I have a place for you right here," he smiled. "That is, I *think* I can get you one."

"Thanks a lot," I told him, "but Brzesko is a small town —you haven't more than ten thousand people here. What chance for advancement can there be?"

"Just wait and see," was his suggestion.

After dinner he introduced me to a pleasant-looking, middle-aged man by the name of Klapholz.

"He owns the tobacco store in town. He is the government agent for the lottery. And he owns the distillery!" My father's cousin looked at me to see if the news had changed my inclination to go on. Klapholz watched with a friendly expression. It seemed sensible to hear what he had to say.

After we had talked for a few minutes, Klapholz asked me for a sample of my writing. I drew my fanciest letters on the piece of paper he handed me. Since I wasn't too keen about the position, I dashed them off easily, with a flourish. If I had been more anxious, I suppose my hand would have

trembled and I would have made a botch of it. As it happened, the letters turned out neat, precise.

"My boy, you write beautifully," said Klapholz. "Can you speak Polish—but fast?"

"Positively," I replied.

"Then I think we can make a deal," he smiled. "What salary do you want?"

The question startled me. I had expected to bind myself out as an unpaid apprentice. Now this stranger was actually offering me money! It was hard to refuse him. Certainly a job in Brzesko was not what I wanted. Equally certainly, however, my prospects on the auction block at Krakow would not be brighter, and the process would be ten times more painful. This was as easy as falling off a log. Besides, it was fairly close to home and my parents. It seemed presumptuous at the time not to accept so obvious a sign that the Almighty was looking after me.

"Salary?" I repeated breezily. "I'll stay with you for two months. Then you can decide what I'm worth to you, and pay me accordingly."

"Fair enough," said Klapholz promptly.

We shook hands on it.

CHAPTER VII

In which the Kaiser Franz Josef makes me leave a job, and I am introduced to "Schnittwaren Handlung."

THE morning after my first meeting with Klapholz, I started to work. I found that my duties consisted of selling tobacco, cigars, snuff, wholesale liquors and stamps —for all of which government monopolies my employer was the local agent; and of helping to run the government lottery. From early in the morning until ten, and from four in the afternoon until dark, I helped in the tobacco store, learning everything I could about the various brands of tobacco, about how the cigars were made and imported, how snuff seemed to appeal to women at least as strongly as to men. From ten to four I conducted the lottery.

This lottery was very much like the Irish Hospital and other modern sweepstakes. It was not based on horse races, however, but on drawings held every two weeks by the government. Peasants, tradesmen—the whole town swarmed into the agencies to enter their selected numbers. The Treasury received a handsome annual sum over the amount it paid out. The agents received a commission.

The exact way in which the lottery worked was this: the bettor picked any four numbers from zero to nine and placed his money on them; if one of the numbers was listed among the four selected in the drawings—held at Lemberg and Vienna—then the bettor won a small sum; if two of his numbers appeared, the sum was larger; if three, it was a comfortable amount; and if four, he won a fortune. I don't recall

either of the two larger winnings while I was working, though, despite the fact that after the first couple of days I was permitted to handle all the transactions myself.

Nor did the peasants seem to mind that their winnings, if any, were small. Often I thought that it was the excitement of the betting which they liked more than anything else. For they chose their numbers in all kinds of fantastic ways.

I remember one burly farmer who came in with a "sure thing." He had dreamed of a cow of his taking off and flying over his barn. Since this had struck him as a most significant vision, he had spent the greater part of the next day consulting the old women of the neighborhood and looking into a dozen mystic volumes of folklore. There were all kinds of stories about queer objects and the digits they represented in the "science" of numbers practiced by old crones in the backward sections. Eventually he figured out what numbers were implied by the strange dream, worked out the formula, and came into the office in great glee to record his choice.

For the rest of the fortnight he walked around with his chest out, certain that the big prize money was his. Then came the drawing. The result was the worst possible. He didn't win the grand prize, but neither did he lose out altogether. If he had, there might have been one helpful effect —he would have lost his faith in the old folk tales. As it was, he won a small prize and for months afterward went around in a nervous state, uncertain whether to damn the mystic numbers or to praise them.

This peasant was no exception. The reasons for selection of numbers which some of the patrons revealed to me privately were each of them weirder than the last. At first I was inclined to take most of them seriously, but gradually I began to suspect them. Too often the wonder-numbers didn't turn up. And I was getting older.

When my first two months were over, Klapholz was satisfied enough with my services to give me a salary of thirty guldens a year. It wasn't a bad salary for a youngster at that time, but I was not content with it. I looked around for ways to add to it.

"Men," I addressed the peasants next day as they assembled to give me their numbers for the coming drawing, "I understand that there used to be an old man here who was so slow you had to wait hours before he got through with you. Now I work fast just for your convenience."

They turned to one another, nodding agreement.

"Suppose," I continued, encouraged, "each one of you gave me just a penny to show that you're pleased with the service. A single penny won't mean much to you, but it would help me a lot. If you think quick service is worth it—here's a box, with a slit in it for your pennies!"

Not daring to watch how many of them would dig into their pockets, I stuck busily to my entering of numbers. But when the books were closed for the day and I looked into the "Puschka box," I found a hundred kreuzer—a whole gulden! I was overwhelmed. At the end of the week I had four and a half guldens. It was a fortune. I thought it best to tell Klapholz about it at once.

"So!" he growled, eying me sternly. "You're making a regular business out of it!"

"If you don't think it's fair," I replied, my heart sinking, "I'll stop."

"Go ahead," he grinned, disconcertingly. "It's an excellent idea. If they feel you deserve it, it's up to them. But," he asked suddenly, "what are you going to do with all that wealth?"

"Half of it I'll keep," I replied. "The other half I'll send to my parents. We'll both be better off for it."

Klapholz knew of my father, and was only too glad to encourage my scheme. Fortified by his sanction, I watched my

penny business grow like a mushroom. Every peasant soon came to know me by name, and to pass the news of the day when he came into the office. Toward the end of the fortnight, when the books were about to be closed, the office was generally stormed. If a special friend happened in, I managed always to attend to him first, explaining to the others that he had an appointment. Afterward I would find in my box not one kreuzer but two. To delay those stingy ones who refused to spare their pennies, I used the same excuse in reverse. Each time the stingy one would reach the front of the line, I would discover that the three or four people behind him had all arranged special appointments, and the unhappy peasant would find himself back at the end of the line once more. After a few experiences like this, he would generally yield and locate the road into his pocket.

No sooner did I have the lottery machinery greased and oiled and running smoothly than Klapholz found a new occupation for me. Putting in a line of linens from Moravia, and fine flannels, to my intense delight he established me in charge of the new department. The office was put next to the lottery room, so that I could handle both without too much difficulty.

For a time I couldn't decide which I liked better. The lottery made me feel tremendously important, of course. The peasants saw me entering their numbers, declaring the books closed, calling out the winning figures—they couldn't help feeling I was the big man in the lottery game. They dropped their kreuzer in my "Puschka box" and did their best to get on the right side of me.

In the goods business I was just the clerk, even though I did have charge of it. Small traders came in to buy a few yards of one piece of goods, or ten yards of another. I cut the goods, kept track of my dealings and each week sub-

mitted my accounts to Klapholz for checking and approval. I was just an employee again.

Nevertheless, as time went on, I found myself more and more absorbed in it. I caught myself wishing traders would come in. The peasants had few subjects to talk about—crops, numbers, Jahrmarkts. The traders, most of whom were Jewish, traveled to and fro, read, listened, kept their eyes open. They knew what was going on in the world, and talked about it. In America almost every little town has its newspaper, its digest of fact and opinion. We can hardly realize, even those of us who lived through it, how completely isolated was each Galician town—or any other Central European town, for that matter. We caught only occasional rumors of great events, murmurs from far off. I had scarcely even heard, for instance, of the Franco-Prussian War. The traders were the only ones who brought us news. Through them I maintained a kind of contact with the larger world I had glimpsed so briefly.

More than anything else I got a thrill out of the fact that I was at least on the fringe of "Schnittwaren Handlung," literally the handling of piece-goods. In those days the piece-goods man was clothier to the world. And of the three fundamentals required for life in that simple society, food and shelter were humble. Clothing was the aristocrat. Practitioners of the clothing art, dealers in wonderful cloths from every corner of Europe, traders who visited the centers of industry on their annual buying tours—these were the merchant princes of my youth. Their voices were heard, their weight felt. I saw myself now as one of them, or at least a fledgeling.

Always I had had a love of fine materials. Now I found myself developing the itch to feel and to come to know every weave, and how and where it was made; to be able to tell a thread-count by the tips of my fingers in the blackest

darkness. I began to realize I was born for dealing with goods in one form or another.

That that realization took so long to mature was due entirely to the fine treatment my employer accorded me. Along with my job went board and lodging as a matter of course. In a decent house, employees were considered as nothing less than members of the family, and the Klapholzes were of the finest. They treated me like a son. I worked hard—from morning to night six days a week. But so did they. There was a spirit of co-operation in the store and in the household. I was as happy with them as I could have been anywhere away from my parents.

Their house was good as Galician houses went, though it would be a poor enough shack in America. There were only two of us in the room where I slept, and that in itself was a wonder. The fact that my sleeping-partner was the forty-year-old Polish governess of the Klapholz children never bothered me. I slept on a couch that opened into a bed at night, and was invariably too tired even to notice the woman. I think she was fully as matter-of-fact about it as I was. In Europe, generally, people got along much more practically than in America.

The food was excellent, by Galician standards. We ate at the same table with the family, which consisted of Mr. and Mrs. Klapholz and their sons of three and five.

All in all, their home was my home, and I considered it as such. It was only on Saturdays that I left it at all—in the mornings to go to synagogue; in the afternoons to visit a friend of Father's, with whom I studied the Bible commentaries of Rashi, and THE ETHICS OF THE FATHERS, still one of my favorite readings; and in between times and in the evenings to wander out to the fields. Generally I went around with another Zacliczyn boy who was working in Brzesko. Like any growing youngsters, we used to play games in the grain and the woods, go on informal little

parties with other boys or with a few girls, lie in the sun and sing and tell stories. When we were very bold, we hid in the tall grain near the road to watch for older girls to pass. Sometimes we would with great sophistication discuss their finer points. More frequently we would make horrible noises and stomp about to try and terrify them into flight.

Those Saturdays would have been idyllic in any land. In Galicia even the weekdays were wonderful. They drugged my ambition. Indeed they beat down my hazy hankering for piece-goods until the Kaiser Franz Josef himself brought up reinforcements.

I remember the scene and thrill to it again. At an estate on the outskirts of Brzesko was brewed at that time "Okocima," the aristocrat of beers, the finest beverage in all Europe. When we heard the news that, en route to Krakow on his triumphal tour of the country, the Kaiser was going to stop for a moment at Brzesko, the townspeople fell to work. Enormous barrels were placed at the station. On top of them were piled slightly smaller ones, and then smaller ones still on top of these. A great pyramid of beer barrels was completed just in time for the Kaiser's arrival. Every person in town jammed the square near the tracks. The train approached. Up the pyramid climbed the brewmaster of the Okocima brewery. His enormous belly got in his way as he went. Several times he tottered as if about to fall and smash the whole structure. Each time, miraculously, he regained his footing. Finally he made it. He sat atop the pyramid and surveyed the square.

The train pulled to a stop. From among the brilliant uniforms on the platform one single one emerged—the Kaiser!

An assistant handed up to the brewmaster a two-quart mug of foaming beer. The brewmaster stood up, round-bellied and red-faced, an assistant bracing each leg from behind. He swung his arm high in salute. The beer foam flew into the air from the mug.

"Vivat der Kaiser!" shouted the brewmaster at the top of his lungs. "Vivat! Hoch lebe der Kaiser!"

He drained the brimming mug without drawing a breath. Meanwhile the crowd echoed his shout. The square rocked with the sound. The Kaiser bowed his acknowledgment, a broad smile lighted his face.

From the spot to which I had squirmed, up in the front rows, I didn't miss a bit of braid or a single wink. I felt a terrific excitement. The big world outside came back at me with a rush. I had to get out, to see things, do things. First and foremost, I had to see our beloved Franz Josef again!

Boots over my shoulder, I trudged the weary miles to Krakow. Now and again I got a lift. Since the Kaiser stopped often on the way, I managed to beat him there and once again I witnessed his reception. It was different from, but just as impressive as, the spontaneous roar of affection at Brzesko. At Krakow I saw organized processions of greeting. Galicia was practically an autonomous province, with her own Diet and her own leaders; and all these leaders turned out to greet the ruler. Their presence testified to the fact that most minorities found living under Hapsburg rule a comparative Paradise in the Hell of Central Europe. Jews, for instance, used to pray for Franz Josef every Saturday as the "Melech Chesed"—the king of loving-kindness. In the churches of every other faith his name was equally reverenced.

During his stay in Krakow I saw him time and again driving through the streets in an open, unprotected carriage, leaning out to acknowledge the cheers of the crowds. Franz Josef drove through the streets of Krakow and then continued his tour. I returned to Brzesko, footsore, ragged, but filled with new determination. Though the Kaiser never knew it, he had fired anew the heart of at least one fourteen-year-old. The sight of the ruler from Vienna, and of his

courtiers and counselors, had brought that other world close to me again, had made me almost ashamed of the ambitions which had once seemed so audacious. Krakow itself was a very small oyster, after that vision. Brzesko, and Klapholz's store, was little short of a prison, complete with bars and walls.

I stood it for only two days. Abruptly, on the third morning, I told my employer I had to leave.

"Why? But why?" he asked, completely bowled over.

"I've been very happy here for two years," I told him, a little tearful myself. "Your wife has been a second mother to me. But I've got to go!"

He still refused to believe that I had no better reason than impulse. I tried to explain.

"I know all there is to know about the lottery. And about the stamps, and the tobacco. There is nothing else for me here. I've had a taste of 'Schnittwaren Handlung' through the linens and flannels, and I must have more. Piece-goods will take me out into the world. And that's where I've got to go!"

To this Klapholz had no reply. At last he shrugged helplessly and gave me his blessing. Half a block away, he reminded me, was a piece-goods store. Not a very grand place, to be sure, but at least it was "in the line." Now that I had made a start in Brzesko, it would have been foolish to go elsewhere without funds or name. Besides, I had a nodding acquaintance with the owner. "The boy with the big mouth," he called me—but as a compliment, for my fluency in Polish.

It was to this Epstein I went with my proposition.

"I'll work for you for six months without pay. If you decide I'm worth my salt, we can make a deal for the next six months, provided the terms are satisfactory to both of us. How about it?"

Ten minutes later I was in "Schnittwaren Handlung."

At least I was able to write this great news home to my parents. Actually, I was engaged in cleaning up and straightening goods which had been messed up by other clerks.

Not in the least discouraged by this humble start, I found the work hard, but I loved it from the first moment. I watched every transaction intently. I noticed how each clerk handled his customers. I examined each piece of goods a dozen times, first looking at it, then feeling it without looking at it, until I began to be able to tell materials apart by my fingers alone. Finally, I watched how Epstein ordered. Each item, I discovered, he bought from a different source. His trade was with both small dealers and private customers who bought at retail a couple of yards of cloth for a suit or a few strips of colorful material for a dress. Others picked up shawls or kerchiefs.

As clerks Epstein had a daughter, a stepson, and one outsider. As an apprentice, I was the youngest in the house. Gradually befriending the stepson, from him I learned some of the smaller points which are so important in the aggregate. Many a chore I did for him in return for his hints, but this, as I have had proved to me again and again throughout life, is the only way to learn. And learn I did. At the end of two months I felt it was time to quit doing nothing but dirty work, and to start my career as a piece-goods merchant. I felt fully qualified.

Jahrmarkt day rolled around and Brzesko was thronged. The store was crowded with buyers at an early hour. The clerks had more work than they could handle.

"Leon," Epstein called as he rushed by to fill an order, "see to it that all the goods are folded and put back where they belong on the shelves and in the stock room!"

"Not me," I told him.

He stopped to gape at me.

Respectfully but with grim determination, I assured him

that I didn't think it was fair to throw me the leavings of the other clerks any longer.

"I'm going to wait on my own customers," I announced.

He could have tossed me out on the spot. I tried not to give him the opening. With a grim face I turned to the nearest counter. It happened to be the boys' suits department. The name is perhaps misleading. It was only a single counter. Certainly there were no boys' suits there. There was only material, bolts of cloth lying a little spread out for customers to see and to buy. In the "boys' suits department" we had cloths suitable for boys' clothes. I thought that would be as good a place as any for me to begin. Without a backward glance I took my place at the counter.

Either Epstein was baffled by my nerve or he was too busy to argue. He left me quite alone. I was on my own.

My first sale, to a friendly peasant woman and her grinning son, was the biggest thrill of my life up to then. As I handed the three guldens over to Mrs. Epstein, who served as cashier, I couldn't help beaming proudly. All that day I kept coming back to her with the receipts of my sales. All day I kept bending over the counter, measuring out cloth and cutting it—to the sixteenth of an inch. Measuring was not easy and mechanical, as it is today. Then it was skilled work, done by hand. The measuring was enormously important. A miscalculation of even a sixteenth of an inch, when often enough repeated, mounted into an alarming quantity of costly goods. And if the owner caught you in a mistake—that was a cardinal sin!

I worked like a beaver all that Jahrmarkt day. At nine that night we sat down, exhausted, to supper. As the youngest apprentice, I was accustomed to sit at the foot of the table. That night, however, Mrs. Epstein beckoned to me as I came in, sent one of her own children down to my humble seat and put me next to Epstein himself, at the head. I swelled with pride.

That day I learned one basic principle—to be meticulous in cutting. Soon I grasped the second—never to let a customer escape empty-handed.

Epstein was always watching us for that. I resolved never to miss an opportunity for a sale. In Galicia, in those days, people did not "shop" for pleasure as they do in American cities. There they came in only when they needed something, and if they did not buy from *you,* they bought elsewhere. That fact gave a different "slant" to things. "Anything goes" might have been the motto of the Galician merchants—and customers too.

I found that out at the first Jahrmarkt in another town to which we went. It was the custom of even the smaller merchants to send representatives to every market within reach. Zabno was the name of the place Epstein sent us to, and it was quite an important trading center. The peasant women flocked in from roundabout and stormed our stall. A wagon-load of goods hardly sufficed for the day.

Those peasant women were hard bargainers. Shawls were their chief purchases. We were well stocked but we had to use every wile to sell at a profit, without losing our customer to some shrewder trader.

"This is the finest shawl, dear lady! You couldn't possibly get any better—not even duplicate it—no, not in the whole country! Too much? But it *cost* twelve guldens—how can I give it to you for ten? Oh, no, there's nothing like it in Zabno. Go around and see for yourself! Did ever you see such a material? Dear lady, you'll be able to wear it for years. See these colors—how well it looks on you. You'll remember me if you take my advice and buy this—you'll remember me with thanks!"

On and on—hour after hour—haggling, cajoling, talking, teasing—selling! Selling was the goal. Sometimes we arrived at it in a roundabout fashion. An occasional stubborn peasant woman would keep repeating a single figure, not a

kreuzer above her original bid. Since she had her eye on a shawl which actually cost more than the price she was willing to pay, I would use every plea to make her understand. Her very ignorance led her to keep repeating her price. That, she thought, was the way to drive a bargain. She never knew it, but she was wrong about that. There is after all a certain rock bottom below which you cannot go. So, after exhausting every device I knew—including even the slapping of hands, which in Galicia signified the conclusion of a bargain—I would pretend to yield.

"Very well," I would tell her. "I want your trade. I want you to come back to us at the next Jahrmarkt. Even though I'm losing money, I'll sell the shawl to you at your price."

Then, bending down to wrap it up while the peasant grinned in stolid triumph, I would snatch a slightly cheaper shawl from the shelf below the counter. A little sleight-of-hand and it was the cheaper shawl which, wrapped and tied, was handed to the woman. She thought she was getting the shawl she had selected. Actually she was getting one of the same color and design, but of a slightly inferior cloth, commensurate with the price she had paid.

In these tricks I was caught between two millstones. I couldn't let the woman have the shawl at less than cost. And just as certainly I couldn't let her get away without making a purchase. Epstein wouldn't keep me long at that rate. I simply saw to it that the article she got was honestly worth what she paid for it, and suppressed the doubts that bothered me.

Later I came more and more to despise the haggling indulged in by certain types of customers, and the underhanded methods of petty merchants. I have always preferred to tell my patrons the truth, and to ask them to take my word. That is the way I have built up my name for fifty years in America. On a customer who trusted my

pledge and my judgment I have never played a trick in my life. It is only of people who know your business better than you do, who refuse to accept your advice, that you—every sound merchant—are tempted to take advantage. Because they are *asking* for it.

Every Jahrmarkt found me more elated. I was at last, on no matter how small a scale, a merchant of piece-goods! Out of sheer good spirits I used to jump out of the wagon on the way home and race ahead of the galloping horses. The life with Epstein, poorer far than with Klapholz, couldn't depress me. I was doing what I loved.

I slept in a room where three of us crowded the walls. At night I used to sit up to practice my handwriting by the light of a candle. To sleep I never devoted more than four or five hours, except on Friday nights, with the Sabbath holiday on the following morning. I was carried along on the crest of a rising wave. Work was the only thing for which I lived. I felt myself growing every day more expert in my line—more at home with, almost in love with, goods of every conceivable make.

Six months whisked by quickly. Then, with the day for the renewal of my agreement with Epstein only two weeks off, I was hailed on the street by an elderly woman whom I recognized as Mrs. Florenz, owner of the second largest store in town.

"Leon!" I heard her call.

I wondered whether perhaps she hadn't made a mistake. Surely she hadn't called *me*.

"Come here, boy," she repeated, beckoning.

I stood in front of her, questioningly.

"I've heard a lot of stories about that mouthpiece of yours," she smiled. "Apparently you have a tongue and know how to wag it. Why do you waste it on a dead little place like this?"

For a moment I was stunned. Then I recovered. If she

had heard I was a sharp fellow, I had better live up to my reputation.

"All right," I asked bluntly, "what am I to do?"

"That's easy," she told me. "My son has a store in Jaslow. You must have heard of it. Wolf Brandstatter's. 'Unter dem Lowe,' it's called. The Sign of the Lion."

Of course I knew it. Who didn't? It was a store famous throughout the region.

"And that's not a little city, either—Jaslow. There's room for advancement," Mrs. Florenz added. "How about it?"

"How about what?" I asked, more confused than before.

"A job there!"

"A job at Brandstatter's?" I was overwhelmed. Then I coughed the lump out of my throat.

"It's impossible," I sighed. "I'm bound to Epstein."

"But aren't your six months up soon?" Apparently she knew all about me.

"In two weeks," I admitted. "But I've worked for nothing these six long months. For the next six he'll have to pay me at least twenty-five guldens. How can I leave him just now?"

"Don't worry about the money," Mrs. Florenz advised me. "You'll have plenty of it, all in due time. But now take my advice. Get out of this town. Go to Jaslow—and opportunity!"

Immediately all hesitation was swept out of my mind. The very idea of a job at Brandstatter's was enough to make me drunk for a week. It was like moving from a corner candy store to a Fifth Avenue Schrafft's. Brandstatter himself had a curious reputation. Idle rumors told of his unorthodoxy in religious matters, and his ruthless disregard of Galician convention in business. He was considered more modern, more progressive—and was therefore more feared and disliked in some circles—than any man in our field in our whole part of the vast province. My mind started build-

ing up pictures of the man and his establishment. Jubilantly I went to break the news to Epstein.

"It's a wonderful offer, isn't it?" I asked excitedly. "We'll work out something here till you get a new apprentice, and then I'll be on my way!"

"New apprentice?" Epstein asked coldly. "You're bound to me for another six months and don't try to sneak out of it!"

I was thunderstruck by his attitude. Bewildered, I reminded him that we had agreed I would stay providing everything was mutually satisfactory. There was no "blank check" given him to keep me.

"You cannot leave me!" he swore, pounding the counter till it shook.

"Can't I?" I shouted back, aroused now. "I'm not your slave. I worked for you for six months for nothing. That was our bargain. Now I'm simply asking you as man to man to let me go with good wishes. If you choose not to, very well. We're not in Egypt, remember. I'm free—free to go wherever and whenever I want to. And I *am* going. Good-by, Mr. Epstein!"

"I'll drag you back," he shouted after me. "Go as far as you like, I'll drag you back!"

I slammed the door in his purple face. The next hour I was off for Jaslow.

I traveled by rail to Tarnow. From there I rode a wobbling cart the sixteen miles to Jaslow. It was no trick to find Brandstatter's. It was the outstanding store in the city. Over the doorway hung the well-known sign—"Unter dem Lowe." I pushed open the door and went in.

A tall, powerful man of under forty glared down at me over a curling red beard. Finally he spoke.

"Are you the boy my mother sent?"

This, then, was Brandstatter. He had a booming voice, it roared like the lion on his sign.

I nodded in answer to his question. "I am," I said.

"You look young," he said, sneeringly. "How old are you?"

"Fifteen."

"How long have you been away from your mother's apron strings?"

"Three years."

He seemed impressed. Stroking his red beard, he asked me what I had been doing during those three years. Briefly, I told him.

"And having been at this Epstein's for six months, you expect to be a full-fledged clerk in *my* establishment?" He threw back his huge head and bellowed. "Ha! That's funny!"

I have always had a temper. Here I was being made a fool of. I saw red, but kept my voice even and cool and respectful still.

"I came to Jaslow only because your mother urged me to," I explained carefully. "It cost me a lot to get here, but don't you worry about that. I'll go back. It won't be *your* disappointment."

"Well," he said, stopping me as I turned toward the door, "my mother wrote that you had a good mouthpiece. Let's see you use it. What did you sell at Epstein's? Were you in the men's department—or in the dress shop? Or did you perhaps sell the peasant shawls?"

He was still poking fun at me. The clerks stood around, grinning and winking.

"It's a small business," I replied. "I sold everything."

"Everything!" Again Brandstatter guffawed. "You must be an expert!"

"In Epstein's small business I *was* an expert!" I retorted desperately, determined that he wouldn't get the better of me.

For a second he glanced down at me. Then he called his sister-in-law, a shrewd saleswoman.

"You be the buyer," he told her gruffly. He turned back to me. "Let me see you sell her."

I could have asked for no better chance. I leaned one hand on the counter and vaulted over it with a flourish. While the others stared, I calmly asked the lady what it was she wished to buy.

Watching me closely, she asked for a shawl of a very unusual cloth and color. Within a minute I had picked several styles of the shawl she wanted from the piles on the shelves, and had stretched them out on the counter before her. I rattled away in Polish, explaining the fine points of the cloth as well as the special features of each model I was displaying and urging her to take my advice and accept the one I picked out as best suited to her. When she tried to beat me down on the price, I refused to yield. Using my best and most fluent Polish, I worked her to the point where in all reason she had no alternative but to take the shawl at my price or else feel that she had missed a very good buy. She turned to Brandstatter with a smile. I hung on the very expression of his face.

"All right," he conceded grudgingly. "You can stay a while. You needn't take the first cart back."

CHAPTER VIII

In which I beard a tyrant, and local boy makes good.

If Epstein's introduced me to European "Schnittwaren Handlung," then Brandstatter's was my high school and college.

Frightened but determined that first day, I took off my jacket and was immediately ready for orders. They came thick and fast. My department was cheap clothing—that is, the materials for cheap clothing. Once again I was at the foot of the ladder. I packed and re-packed goods, and put back on the shelves what other clerks had upset. At intervals I felt twinges of regret. At Epstein's I had been somebody. Here I was a flea, without even the flea's puny power to bite. As I worked, however, and as the other clerks corrected me, I began to sense something new. Things were run differently at Brandstatter's. I began to see what made "Unter dem Lowe" famous.

The difference lay in small things, to be sure. Never, for instance, had I wrapped a package right before. This I realized the first morning. Cutting, measuring, waiting on a customer—everything was done with a touch of distinction. If I kept my eyes open, there was plenty to learn. I threw regret to the winds and buckled down with gratitude. Granted, that for the initial three weeks I cried myself to sleep out of homesickness. I was catching on, getting the swing of it.

Brandstatter's, I learned, was the most important store in Jaslow, a city of some twenty-five thousand inhabitants.

The city was the center of the political district—a subdivision of the province itself—and the governor and a host of officials lived there. Active in politics, Brandstatter enjoyed their trade.

His store occupied only one floor, but it spread out into an extensive place. It took up more than eight thousand square feet altogether. Wholesale flannels and linens comprised one department, retail goods for men's clothing another. There was a department for ladies' dress woolens and silks, one for tablecloths and handkerchieves, still another for cotton goods for peasant wear. Every conceivable kind of cloth found its way under Brandstatter's roof sooner or later. It was Paradise for an eager beginner.

Brandstatter himself was in full command, and he ran his store with an iron hand. His wife and family—four girls and a single son—also worked, as was the custom of the day. Three clerks and a handful of apprentices rounded out the staff.

Our lives were even more intertwined than our working together would imply. We lived together also. We ate at one huge table, starting with Brandstatter himself at the head, down to our humble little group of boys at the foot. We slept in the same house. We clung to each other for protection against our employer's rages.

Brandstatter was my teacher, and the best I ever had. But he was also arrogant and cruel. Once after I had been there some time my old malaria recurred. For two weeks I was on my back. Every fourth day the fever soared and I was left weak and gasping. In between attacks, however, the sickness gave me a ravenous appetite. One day Brandstatter came by as I was eating. He watched me for a moment, then burst into violent cursing.

"Faker!" he cried. "Pretending to be sick so that you can lie idle and eat like a horse!"

I never forgave him for that.

Sometimes he would be in a hurry for something, and would want one of us apprentices to get it for him.

"Donnerwetter!" he would roar. "Wo ist der Junge?"

I recall even today how I used to resent that impersonal shout. Brandstatter realized it, I am sure. But his nature was such that he got almost a perverse pleasure out of hurting people.

He was altogether a curious man. His huge body, his red beard, his fierce appearance all marked him in a crowd. His mind was as unusual. In his youth he had gone to Yeshivah, like other Jewish boys who could afford it, but soon, unable to stomach what he considered the narrow views of the group in which he moved, he broke out of bounds. From that time on he followed his own course. Ultimately he became a highly educated man, versed in almost every field. German and Polish were like native tongues. Politics in the Christian as well as the Jewish community came easily to him. His chief hobby was philosophy. In the works of the great thinkers he read constantly. He used to exchange volumes with a local priest who believed as much in Christianity as Brandstatter did in Judaism. This priest went so far, in fact, as to carry on an affair with a divorced but beautiful countess, which earned him notoriety throughout the district though he was a man of great culture. Brandstatter and he made a brilliant combination. And a terrible one.

It was a happy day for me when Albert Seif, the head clerk, became my protector. One evening he asked me to run down to the shoemaker to get some shoes he had left to be resoled. Before bringing them back, I made sure to polish the shoes to a glistening shine. When I handed them to Seif, he nodded, beaming.

Every evening after that I cleaned his shoes. When I noticed a spot on his clothes, it didn't take me long to snatch up a whisk broom. I anticipated his least wish, watched

his every gesture. Instead of being too obedient and humble to his assistants, I concentrated on their chief. Before long I was in his good graces. I scarcely realized it, though, until one day some three weeks after I first arrived, when Herr Brandstatter stalked into our department and beckoned to me.

"There is going to be a Jahrmarkt," he said, "and I want you to come into the men's clothing department, to help out. You can pack goods, and help the clerks when they need you."

Desperately, suddenly, I aped an earlier request.

"Pardon me, Herr Brandstatter," I blurted out, "but I think now I can do more important work than folding and packing other clerks' goods. I've been in cheap goods and I know the line. If you will permit me, I'll prove to you that I can sell!"

Amazed by my impudence, Brandstatter gathered himself to annihilate me. Just then Albert Seif stepped forward.

"I know this youngster," he said, while relief swept over me in a cooling wave. "I've kept an eye on him. He's competent. Let him sell. I'll be responsible for him."

I could see that Brandstatter abandoned reluctantly his idea of choking me on the spot. His business sense prevailed, though, so he shrugged and turned away. I kissed Seif's hand in gratitude.

All that day I walked on air. Customers seemed to float by in a kind of wonderful haze. Everybody was friendly, courteous. People bought as they had never bought before. I could hardly contain my excitement. Here I was, at fifteen, in absolute glory—selling for Brandstatter's!

That night Brandstatter granted me the reward of an approving nod. A month later he transferred me to the ladies' dress goods department, a step upward. When I continued to polish Albert Seif's boots, nevertheless, one of the other clerks asked me whether I wasn't ashamed so to lower my-

self. My only reply to the questioner was that he had a false sense of dignity. So long as a man retains his own integrity and self-respect, he can clean manure off the streets all day and still be a fine gentleman. False pride is a vicious thing.

In Yiddish there is a very expressive word—"Schmeicheln." It conveys the idea of flattering someone for the express purpose of getting something out of him. It includes the important quality of insincerity. I think my own attitude lay somewhere between false pride on the one hand and this "Schmeicheln" on the other. There was a vast difference between boot-polishing and boot-licking.

In shining the boots of Albert Seif, I myself found the genuine pleasure of doing something for a neighbor. And I gained the invaluable opportunity of learning my trade. Seif continually put himself out to help me. First he showed me purely mechanical tricks. Packing goods is an art in itself, I discovered. Today I can still wrap a package along with the best man in the shipping room, and a sloppy package sends me into a sudden temper. Cutting is a skill acquired only by application, with speed and accuracy the prime considerations. Placing goods on shelves is not something that can be done haphazardly.

These were the simple things. After them came the intangibles. To stand erect and alert behind the counter, fresh and smiling for each new customer—that was something I had not seen, though I had felt its lack, at Epstein's. It was Brandstatter himself who gave me a vivid lesson on this topic.

One day an old Jew, complete with long gown and side-curls, shuffled into the store. Noting that Brandstatter was standing near the door, I looked on anxiously, for I knew how contemptuous my employer was of this old-type Chassid. As if to confound me, Brandstatter stepped forward and greeted the man cordially.

"Nu, Reb Simon, how goes it?" he smiled. "How's your wife, and the family?"

He waited on the old man himself, and even escorted him to the door on the way out.

I watched the whole performance open-mouthed in wonder. Then cautiously I approached my chief.

"Honored Herr Brandstatter," I asked elaborately, "may I ask you for an explanation of a great puzzle?"

"Well, what is it?" he snorted.

"Can you tell me, gracious Herr, how it is that you express such friendship for Reb Simon—who made only a six-dollar purchase altogether—and to whom, in all frankness, you would not condescend to say so much as 'Good morning' if you met him on the street?"

Brandstatter stared at me under his bushy eyebrows. Finally he lifted an instructive forefinger.

"You're young yet, Leon," he said. "Perhaps you can still get it through your head in time to do you some good. Courtesy is very cheap. It is also the dearest thing in the world. Outside, on the street, I am Brandstatter the Lion! Here, in my store, I'm just a worm. Remember," he pointed out, "that from my business comes my whole prominence. From my business comes my clothing and the food on my table. Through my business my children are getting their education. So *to* my business I must be a slave." He hesitated, then nodded toward the door and the street beyond. "That old Jew has grown-up daughters and sons. Perhaps in a few months a girl may get married and need a trousseau. Perhaps a son will be going away and need a suit. Now he makes a six-dollar purchase. Next year it may be a hundred. If you don't look out for the little things, you won't get the big ones!"

Properly impressed, I nevertheless took silent exception to this teaching that courtesy is not so precious on the street where it does you no practical good as in the store where

you can exact a cash value. "He who makes a worldly use of the crown of the Torah shall waste away," Rabbi Hillel had said. I had learned from my father to substitute "courtesy" for "the Torah" and still to find the saying apt. Now I set aside Brandstatter's double standard as a man, and concentrated on studying his ability as a merchant. Intensive work brought quick results.

Three times a year Brandstatter went on trips to Vienna, Budapest and Moravia, to buy goods. Each time he returned with enough materials for the next four months. Of course every piece of goods had to have a mark on it, for the private information of the salesclerk as to its price. Every man had—and has—his own code. Brandstatter's, curiously enough for that arrogant atheist, was the German phrase, "Von Gott Kommt Aller Segen—Er Ist Der Mich Beschutzt! From God Come All Blessings—He Is the One who Shields Me!" Each of the capitalized figures stood for one of the ten digits.

During the days following the arrival of the goods, the place was peopled by crook-backed clerks bending over endless streams of cloth, dabbing away with long-handled pens. By this time I had gained some respect for my knowledge of Polish and my salesmanship. No one knew, however, that I could write particularly well. The marking gave me my chance. Soon Brandstatter noted the speed and distinctness of my lettering.

"You write very well," he admitted. "Can you write German also?"

By this time my practicing of German script had borne some fruit. I nodded confidently and wrote a few sample words on the paper he thrust at me.

"Excellent!" he commented. "From now on you may help me evenings with my bookkeeping!"

Without another word he walked away. I practically

reeled where I stood. The honor overwhelmed me. To help Brandstatter himself with his books!

The marking of prices and helping with the bookkeeping was a tremendous stride. Through this new work I really got my teeth into the piece-goods business. From it I learned where every piece of goods came from, how it was made, how much it cost. I learned what sections of Europe provided the best materials, what specific towns produced the finest of the fine. It was through Brandstatter's training that I came to know every one of dozens of cloths so well that I could feel it and then name the maker and the town where it was manufactured, and call out the thread count. These things soon came to be an unconscious part of me. Days and nights I pored over goods. I've always felt that it was impossible to sell something you didn't believe in yourself. I believed in Brandstatter's goods implicitly.

It wasn't long before I had an opportunity to demonstrate the effectiveness of that belief. Brandstatter's display at the Krosna Jahrmarkt occupied a whole block. Bursting with pride at being on the staff of this famous merchant, I looked out for the best post for myself. A little smile, a little gall, a little youthful enthusiasm—and the day was won. I sold shawls.

These were our biggest item. They were set out on shelves far above my head, but I flew up and down the ladder like a feather. Peasant women begged me to accept their money in return for the brightly colored wraps. The second one customer left, another began to haggle. Then Brandstatter came by. From a strap around his neck dangled his money bag. Those of the other merchants were scarcely opened yet, but his was already half full. He stood at my stall and gathered in the receipts. As the coins flowed seemingly without end, his eyebrows gradually went up. When he was finished, the money bag had little room left

at the top and his eyebrows were not far from his hairline. That evening he invited me to have tea with him.

"Leon, you did your full duty today," he began, like a king bestowing the highest favor on a loyal subject. "I am pleased with you."

Half an hour later I walked out of his room with a year's contract, at the colossal sum, for me, of a hundred and twenty-five guldens. Expressing appreciation for his having taught me bookkeeping as well as the piece-goods trade, I had nevertheless been wary enough to remind Brandstatter that it was on my own time that I had helped with the accounts, and that he had not paid me during my apprenticeship. When my employer argued that I was immoderately young, I had replied, in the words of the Hebrew saying, that "You cannot judge a pitcher by its looks, but by what's inside of it!" Refusing the three-year term he suggested, I had hesitated and evaded until he dropped the paternal mask and talked straight business. After that we traded briefly and the result was my contract, and a glint of respect in Brandstatter's eye which perhaps pleased me more even than the modest fortune which was to be mine.

From that day on I was no longer the humble apprentice. All Brandstatter asked of me now was to sell. I could give free rein to my own ideas. Easily I shifted from department to department, and in each I was at home. Gradually I was entrusted with more and more work. Soon all the bookkeeping was left in my hands. When the spring season was about to open, I was put in charge of the branch store at Ivonicz.

At this spa and resort, surrounded by Carpathian peaks, and patronized almost exclusively by aristocrats and wealthy foreigners, Brandstatter's quality store did a nice business. I found a way to improve on it.

In Ivonicz it was the custom to take an after-dinner siesta. With the store business at a standstill, I left an assistant

in charge and made the rounds of all the hotels, checking the new arrivals. Learning what count or baron or great merchant had just come to town, where he was stopping and what his habits were, I hired a peasant to carry my samples and went to visit the newcomer. Generally a supercilious butler would open the door.

"I represent Brandstatter," I would announce, "the most highly regarded merchant in the region. I have here some very special articles in which I'm sure your master would be interested. Certainly," I made quick to assure him, "I wouldn't take up the time of so honored a gentleman if I didn't have something of unusual worth to show."

By this time the butler would either have interrupted to say there was no possibility of seeing his master, or he would have been attentive enough for me to offer him one of the excellent cigars I had ready for emergencies. If he accepted it, I would go on to ask him to explain to his master that a young boy was begging humbly and sincerely for a moment of his valuable time. Frequently the appeal was successful. Once in the aristocrat's presence, I generally managed to reach my objective. The goods I offered were so beautiful—to these nobles I brought only the finest we had, which the general run of customers did not take up—that I put my heart and soul into the selling of them. I loved them myself and, I think, was able to express some of my feeling for these gorgeous cloths.

Having gotten into the good graces of the hotel people, I soon had a regular system whereby I was informed at once when some promising new prospect arrived. Sales from my expeditions mounted up. When Brandstatter visited us on Sundays, he looked over the books and was increasingly gratified.

During that wonderful sequence of months even my misfortunes turned out to my advantage. The man who fell into the ocean and came up with a pearl had nothing on me.

One day late in the Ivonicz season, the shop door swung open and a gendarme walked in.

"Leon Borgenicht?" he inquired.

I nodded.

"You're wanted in Brzesko," he said. "Come along!"

For a moment I was stunned. Then it dawned on me that this was the work of Epstein, my former employer. He had threatened to drag me back, and now he was doing it.

Of course I had told the whole story to Brandstatter the first day I worked there. He had just laughed, and told me to forget it. Afterwards Epstein had made a couple of tentative moves, but each time Brandstatter had warded them off. This was something else again. The policeman had a hand on my shoulder. I had no choice. Without a moment's notice I had to leave my indignant assistant in Ivonicz, and travel off with the gendarme.

I traveled in a sort of relay, being handed on from the gendarmerie of one city to that of the next. Through Brandstatter's influence, at Jaslow I was able to stay at the store instead of at the police station. For two hours I worked frenziedly to prepare stock which the Ivonicz store needed, while Brandstatter's beard bristled and he pulled every wire he could think of. Then the gendarmes were there again.

It was already late on a Friday afternoon, and I explained to them that I could not travel on the Sabbath. They would have to wait until sundown Saturday.

The gendarmes insisted that I go on at once.

"All right," I told them furiously. "We'll walk!"

The gendarmes got angry too. The wagon was ready and we were to leave at once. I pleaded with them, and even Brandstatter, irreligious as he was, argued for me. There was no real question about the outcome. The court order was specific. I was hustled into the wagon and carried off.

Brandstatter had arranged a night's lodging for me at the home of a friend in the next town. The following morning

I pleaded again to be allowed to stay over until sundown. Again the gendarmes forced me to go on. I was piling up a great score against my friend Epstein.

Finally arriving in Brzesko, I found that Brandstatter's mother, Mrs. Florenz, had taken a room for me at a hotel. There I was held virtually a prisoner until Monday, when I had to appear in court. There was something of the comic opera about the rest of the affair, serious as it seemed at the time. Epstein, I learned, was deeply disappointed that I didn't come back to him peacefully as soon as I arrived in town. Finding that Mrs. Florenz was contacting officials everywhere, he went to swear revenge on her for her meddling. She showed him the door. Monday morning, however, the court conducted only brief proceedings before ruling that I had to return to Epstein's. The latter grinned his satisfaction.

"Where are your things?" he wanted to know. "Your clothes?"

"In Jaslow—where they belong!" I told him, and turned away to keep from flying into a murderous rage.

"Listen," he said, catching hold of me, "be good and do your work. I'll forget everything and pay you what you're worth!"

"Epstein," I replied, "I wouldn't lift a finger for you for all the money you make in ten years. You've brought me back, but you won't be happy about it. You may forget everything. *I* never will!"

That first day back in his store I did nothing but walk up and down, and go to the house for my meals. I couldn't help noticing the way they did things, though. I couldn't close my eyes and my ears. After the distinction of Brandstatter's methods, Epstein's seemed crude, outlandish. At times I felt an urge to push him out of the way and show him how it should be done. It was my conscience as a merchant speaking. I silenced it.

The second day was too much for me. As I stood idly in the back, I watched Epstein's stepson dealing with a customer who didn't seem to know what he wanted. The stepson apparently didn't know how to find out, or how to encourage his man to make a choice. That is part of the merchant's skill—to ascertain what it is that the customer really wants or, if that is impossible, to know what he has that is good and *make* the customer want it. Finally the visitor turned away from the counter, empty-handed. I could control myself no longer. As if by accident I intercepted him near the door. It was like child's play. In no time at all I had sold him thirty-four guldens' worth of goods. He thanked me and left.

Epstein and his wife thought it a good time to argue with me again. "We'll consider you as our own son," they pleaded.

"I am Nathan David Borgenicht's son," I retorted haughtily. "He is known and respected throughout Galicia, and Hungary and Austria, too. Yet you forced his son to break the Sabbath. Please understand that what I did just now I did because I am a merchant—not for you!"

That night Mrs. Florenz let me know confidentially that things had been "arranged" with the court. Imagination told me that she had made some financial deal with the local judge, but I never inquired into the matter. I knew only that on Wednesday morning I was free to go. Quickly I packed my things.

"I'll call on the highest authorities!" raved Epstein.

"Nonsense!" I told him, and pushed the door in his face for the second and last time.

Returning to Jaslow, I found to my amazement that I was a kind of hero. Even more pleasant, my employer had, through my absence, discovered new virtues in me. The net result of the whole experience was a new contract, at

two hundred and fifty guldens per annum, and an entirely paralyzing promise.

"Albert Seif is getting married to my sister-in-law and going into business for himself," Brandstatter informed me. "Do as well next year as you have this past one, and you can be head clerk when he leaves!"

Even in Galicia this dream came true, and sooner than I expected. Three months before the full year was over, Seif married. Two days later, before opening the store for business, the staff assembled in Brandstatter's office. There were the three clerks, the pop-eyed apprentices, and the family.

"Herr Borgenicht is my head clerk," boomed Brandstatter. "His rules and regulations are now in order!"

For Leon, who had come there as an unknown apprentice not two years before, it was a breathless moment. Even the time when I had polished Albert Seif's boots, just a few months back, seemed somehow remote. As soon as I could, I left the store and telegraphed the news to my parents. "My dreams have become reality," wrote back my mother in her beautiful German.

As head clerk, I patrolled the store like a special guard. Yardstick in hand, watching eagle-eyed for an escaping customer, I stalked up and down the aisles proudly. If a clerk failed to conclude a transaction, I managed to appear at his side to bring the sale to a head. Rarely did anyone walk out on me. Brandstatter, his tall bulk looming in the background, clapped me on the shoulder.

"You're Johnny-on-the-spot, my boy!" he admitted cheerfully.

That year was the zenith of my success and happiness, in Galicia. I was still only a boy, but my head was in the stars.

My descent was even more precipitous.

CHAPTER IX

In which I take stock of myself and my situation, and decide to move on.

It started routinely enough with my asking—and receiving—Brandstatter's permission to visit my parents when the New Year holidays rolled around.

In Zacliczyn I found that I was a celebrity. "Local boy makes good" was the attitude of the townspeople. Old men nodded and stroked their beards with satisfaction over Nathan David's son. Girls who had gone to school with me sighed and made sheep's-eyes. My ego swelled as I claimed the center of attention at games and dances.

"No wonder he's a devil in business. He used to be one at school!"

The remark was tossed at me, apparently casually, at a Saturday night dance. It was one Suruchka Eisen who said it, with a glint in her eyes. She was a tall brunette, with a pretty face and a beautiful figure. It was pleasant to trade compliments with her. I might have been more circumspect if I had suspected her intentions.

One day when I was back in Jaslow a messenger came from the girl's grandparents, who lived in town, that Suruchka was at their home and anxious to see me. I dropped everything and hurried over. I've always been interested in news from home. Besides, the girl was pretty.

During the two weeks she stayed, I spent every leisure moment with her. Together we walked outside the town limits—no young lady could afford to be seen unchaperoned

with a young man, and in town you never knew whom you'd meet. Our final parting was difficult, our heartbreak over the separation eased only by our still-unspoken hopes for the future. Always as I worked, her pretty face and lovely figure appeared before me. Then, as I was patrolling the store one morning, a familiar face glared at me from the doorway. It was my father.

Brushing aside my greeting, he led me out of earshot of the others in the store.

"You young whippersnapper," he roared, whirling his cane in threatening circles. "Hardly out of your shell yet and you dare to think of marriage! And to a baker's daughter!"

At that time baking was a low trade, engaged in almost exclusively by ignorant people. I didn't think about this bias at the moment. I was too busy trying to fathom the source of Father's information.

"Do you know who you are?" he thundered on. "That you are the son of Nathan David Borgenicht, pupil of the great Rabbi Halberstam?"

I was the head clerk of Brandstatter, the Lion. But I was also, and painfully at the moment, the young son of my terrific father.

"I don't know what you're talking about," I cried, begging off in abject surrender and alarm. "What *is* all this?"

"Suruchka Eisen, the baker's daughter, has returned to Zacliczyn boasting of her conquest," my father told me shortly. "She's told everyone that you're getting married soon. The whole town's buzzing with it!"

I was thunderstruck. Then, disillusioned by the disclosure that the girl had apparently set out to hook me with the utmost deliberation, I thought—now without any rose-tinting—of the fact that, beautiful as she was, Suruchka was nevertheless an unrevealed number of years older than I. My father nudged me in the ribs to remind me that he was

waiting for a reply. In that moment, standing before him, my ardor cooled to the freezing point.

"She came from Zacliczyn," I pointed out with the greatest innocence. "So naturally I went to see her. I'm always concerned to get news from home. I don't know what size the girl has blown it up to in Zacliczyn. In Brzesko that's all there is to it!"

Father eyed me judiciously. How much he believed I never learned, but evidently my answer mollified him. He relaxed, and for the rest of his visit there was not another word of Suruchka. Finally he was ready to leave. It was then that, with almost a casual air, the blow fell.

"I should like you to leave Brandstatter's," said Father, without previous introduction of the subject.

For a second I kept saying the words I had begun. Suddenly his sentence registered, and I stopped in my tracks. He stood facing me, and repeated his request.

"All during this visit I have been watching," he explained. "Watching the clerks, the way they do things. It is good. It is modern. But it is something else also. It is irreligious!"

"Things which are good and modern don't have to be irreligious!" I protested in bewilderment.

"No, they don't," agreed Father. "But Brandstatter's is. The man himself, though cultured, is an atheist. His clerks work on the Sabbath like any weekday. Ultimately you would be tempted also."

"Never!" I cried. As a matter of fact, when I first arrived in Jaslow, I had indeed found that the clerks worked on Saturdays to clean up the confusion left by the Friday markets. Telling Brandstatter that I would work all Saturday night after sundown if he liked, I had insisted I would not desecrate the Sabbath and, after a sarcastic grunt, he had yielded the point. Now I mentioned the incident to my father.

"I will never violate the Sabbath!" I repeated desperately. "I am my own man here!"

"Your good intentions are not enough," replied Father. "You would be better off in a more religious atmosphere. In Tarnow I have a cousin who owns a large store. With your experience, you'll be able to get a good post there. You must leave Brandstatter's at once!"

The whole thing was mad. He was asking me deliberately and without cause to abandon the best post I had ever had, the post I had worked and prayed for.

"This means my life to me," I pleaded. "Don't shut your mind to reason!"

Father left without closing the matter one way or the other. I didn't know what had put the bug into his head. All I could do was hope some favorable breeze would blow it out again.

For a few days my work fell off. I was ill with worry. Gradually, as one week and then two passed, I cheered up. Perhaps, I thought, Father had exorcised his unhappy notion. Apparently, however, he had just been giving me time to adjust. The third week I received a letter insisting that I leave without further delay.

I was too sick at heart to reply. Immediately there followed a telegram.

"WILL DISOWN YOU AS SON UNLESS LEAVE AT ONCE. REPLY BY RETURN MAIL."

There were no two ways about *that* one.

For three days I walked around talking to myself, oblivious of the store and the customers. The shock of Father's first command had been like stumbling into a stone wall in the dark. I had been numbed. Recovering, I had squirmed desperately in an attempt to get around the obstacle, forget it existed. Father's telegram ended that. I had to face it.

There seemed to be only two alternatives. I could disobey my father—or I could go to Tarnow.

With my background I was not a candidate for rebellion. I had always accepted "Honor thy father and thy mother" as a living commandment, second in importance only to the honoring of God. The possibility of defying my father never took any serious hold in my mind. I could not stay on at Brandstatter's.

But I could not go to Tarnow, either. My very bones cried out against it.

I knew Father's Tarnow cousin. In his typical Galician town I would find myself bogged down in a slow-moving, untidy business marked only by its lack of enterprise. I would be trapped in a community whose members shut the world out from their own circle and devoted themselves to carrying on in a manner resembling as closely as possible the way of their remote ancestors. Suddenly I saw those others—Klapholz, for all his kindness; Epstein; all the small men sitting behind counters and over desks, running stores in dead little backwaters, treading the same worn steps day by day, impervious to new ideas, unaware of the world moving around them, stifling in an ancient society where a man's life was determined by his birth. Dimly I realized that my restless shifting from Klapholz to Epstein to Brandstatter had been moved by my desire to escape from that narrow, confining environment.

The deeper implications were beyond me at the time. I was just eighteen, and I had come a long way in a short while. In my heart was only my cherished ambition to be a great merchant in "Schnittwaren Handlung," to be active in that bright world glimpses of which I had caught at Birnbaum's bank and from the Kaiser's tour. Yes, and from Brandstatter's. And the only way to achieve that end, so far as I knew then, was to associate myself with fine establishments, to learn my business backwards and forwards,

and then ultimately in a dizzying future to launch out into an enterprise of my own. I could not renounce that dream. I would not be shunted off the road!

Starting to take stock of myself and my situation with the sick conviction that I had only two alternatives—to stay on in Jaslow and defy my father, or to go to Tarnow and be utterly miserable—I emerged with a compromise solution.

I would leave Brandstatter's and satisfy my father. But I would also satisfy myself. I would go somewhere where the future was brighter, the world more promising and accessible than in the little towns of my native Galicia.

CHAPTER X

In which I depart for the Land of Promise.

I WAS naturally afraid to write to my father that I was not going to Tarnow. In the back of my head was the hope that by the time I saw him next I would be solidly established somewhere, and would have the means to cool his anger. Putting the thought of him resolutely out of my mind, I cast about for a destination.

Warsaw was my choice.

A great capital and an ancient European city, it was in the thick of the world's commerce. There I would be able to make good use of my beloved Polish; in a city where most Jews spoke Yiddish I would have little difficulty in placing myself.

It seemed an attractive prospect. In Warsaw I would see new, great activities. I would meet new people. At the very least, it would be a step forward, a broadening of horizons.

Having made my choice, there was left only the matter of breaking the news to Brandstatter. He had been my teacher and had only just shown his confidence in me. Now I had to repay him with a blow. It was best to get it over with.

I could not embarrass him by explaining that it was his custom of working on the Sabbath to which my father objected. Having no other argument to offer, I merely blurted out the bare announcement that I was leaving, and fled.

At first Brandstatter refused to believe me. Then with

a roar he sprang into action. He argued, persuaded, pleaded. In a hundred ways he tried to convince me that my moving on would be a dreadful mistake. It was flattering and touching, but I had to turn down every plea. As a last resort, he locked up every stitch of clothing I possessed other than those on my back, and refused to yield them up until I agreed to remain.

For ten days we faced each other. At last I could stand no more. Showing him my father's telegram, I explained the whole unhappy thing. The love and honor I owed my father obliged me to leave.

To this Brandstatter had no reply. He asked only one favor—that I stay through the Jahrmarkt of the following week. Of course I remained. It was God's blessing that I did, for two days before I was to leave for Warsaw, a letter arrived for me from Hungary. Eisen, a young man whose tutor at apprenticeship I had been—he had made the three-year stretch in one—had settled in a town called Eperjes and was doing nicely. Recalling his debt, he now urged me to come to join him. As he put it, Hungary was practically crying out for my talents.

It was a kind thought, and for me another in the series of strokes of luck which have steered me through life. To us in Galicia, Hungary was a golden land. It is hard to describe exactly the position it occupied. It might be like comparing the arid Dust Bowl of our own Southwestern United States with the fruitful valleys of California. In Hungary, we Galicians knew, people were more modern, less bigoted, richer in the world's goods. When the wealth of this earth was parceled out, Galicia must have been last in line. Hungary might have been first. Its broad fields yielded rich crops. There were less people to consume its produce. And all over the world Hungary had a name for passionate nationalism and proud, civilized living. To suggest living in Hungary was to open up a whole new vista.

Without the letter from Eisen I would never have dared even to dream of it. I understood now that Galicia was poor. I understood that Hungary was rich. But Galicia was what I knew. Hungary was a strange land. Not that it was fear that held me back. It was, rather, inertia. With most of us the place where we are is the only place in which we can conceive of being. If mine had not been a common feeling, the whole population of Galicia would have moved into Hungary.

Eisen's letter was the jolt I required. I looked at Hungary, reviewed what I knew about it, and wondered a little that I had not thought about it before. I tossed the prospects back and forth in my mind. I tried to draw up a ledger-like form, listing debits and credits of the two alternatives.

Warsaw was in Poland. I was a native, I knew the language. In Hungary I would be a stranger, dependent entirely on my untried German. I would have to learn Slavisch. I would learn also, however, to live differently —to work less, to play more, to become polished.

I inspected the map. The Carpathians lay between me and Krynica, where my sister lived. From there it was a short run to the Hungarian border, then a smooth trip through flattening land to Eperjes, in the heart of the rich country of Hungary's eastern plains. Warsaw lay to the north.

On the last day I made up my mind. Immediate prospects were far better in a Polish city. I turned south—to Hungary.

There were no railroads traveling my path. I left Jaslow by wagon. Behind me I left the hard lot of Galicia, the narrow life, the desperate struggle for bread and a roof. Now that I was leaving, I knew I would never go back.

Before me lay Hungary. It was new. But I have always loved novelty. It was difficult for a stranger. But I have

never been afraid of difficulty. It was thrilling. And I have always looked for that thrill.

Past the horses' ears I looked to the mountains ahead, and to my destination beyond them. Already the air was lighter.

BOOK TWO: *HUNGARY*

CHAPTER I

In which I buy a Prince Albert and top hat, and become a Magyar overnight.

ELJEN a Magyor!
Lebe hoch der Ungar!

The same in Hungarian or German—long live the Hungarian! Gay costume, hat on the side of the head, glass of wine in the hand, and song on the tongue.

Eljen a Magyor!

I said it myself as I crossed the border. That border? No tariffs, no guards, no passports. Just a man saying, as he chirruped to his horse, "We are in Hungary now."

It stretched away in long low downs, a country of rich black soil. Coming from the harsh Galician earth, I loved it on sight.

Immediately I seemed to fit into the landscape. Just after midnight of the second day's riding, we arrived at an inn in a suburb of Eperjes, my destination. Dismissing my driver, I ordered supper and started to flirt with the innkeeper's daughter. Then in a corner I saw a group of merchants gathered for the following day's Jahrmarkt. Most of them were Galicians—complete with curled hair and Beckisches.

"Look at those Polacks," laughed the girl. "Did ever you see such clothes? You'd think that, living in a country next to Hungary, they'd have some manners!"

Instantly boiling, I leaped up and stuck my thumb in my vest.

"My dear child," I declared with all the dignity of my eighteen years, "I am a Polack, too—and proud of it!"

The girl stared.

"Those merchants were probably brought up that way," I couldn't help continuing. "But smooth hair and modern dress are not Hungarian alone. You yourself admired my fluent German a few minutes ago, and this is my first trip out of Galicia!"

"Ach, mein Herr," she apologized, "don't hold it against me if my remarks were out of place!"

I grinned. Deep down inside I was tremendously flattered that she had taken me for a Hungarian. A moment later we had laughed off the whole thing and I was attacking the excellent food.

The breakfast next morning was as good as the supper. As I discovered in the next few years, good food was the commonplace in Hungary. Many of the good things of life were part of everyday living there. Not for local pride alone was it called Hungary the Golden. It was indeed a fair land. And Eperjes lay in the heart of it.

Sebes, the province of which my new home was the center, was part of the eastern agricultural and cattle-raising plain which stretches in a long slow slope to the Carpathians. This great plain is one of the most fertile spots in Europe. Its Tokay wine alone is enough to keep most of its population rooted.

The town itself included some thirty thousand people, with a sizable Jewish colony. In general aspect and activities, it differed considerably from its Galician counterparts. Eperjes was clean. Eperjes was thriving. It boasted a sawmill, stores, artisans' shops. Around it lay the finest grain lands in Europe. An hour away were the salt wells of Somvar. The streets were broad, lined with small but neat houses. Everywhere were roads surfaced with crushed

gravel. In the country peasant groups were constantly replenishing this paving.

Modern facilities did not exist, of course. But an outhouse stood behind every home. Water carriers walked the streets in the morning and filled the kitchen vats for the usual nominal fee. Wooden basins were used for washing clothes and people. The Hungarian women used to shine the hoops of these vats and basins till they shone like gold.

Because the crops were good, life was not difficult. True, I soon learned that five thousand noble families owned more than half the arable land in Hungary, and looked on labor of any kind as degrading. I came to know that in that intensely reactionary country the ancient clans, like Apponyi and Szilagyi, were perennially in conflict with one another, or else battling side by side for secession from the Dual Monarchy of Austria-Hungary, which was until 1914 almost a United States of Central Europe. But, though I lived for nine years in this area of struggle, neither I nor those with whom I came in contact took part in or even witnessed these upheavals. Perhaps it was for lack of means of communication. Perhaps it was because the Slovak peasants around us knew, with the age-old wisdom of the land-worker, that their lot would be much the same under one set of aristocratic rulers as under another. Whatever the cause, Slovak peasants in the fields and Hungarians and Jews in the towns —all carried on their work and went their way. I found the life leisured, systematic, wholesome.

Two days after my arrival I was already working as a favored clerk in the piece-goods store of one, Herr Kannengieser, alongside Eisen, the friend who had urged me to come to Hungary. My modern appearance and my letters of recommendation had dispelled the merchant's traditional suspicion of Galicians. From the start I got along famously.

An average day at the store brought in a mixture of peasant women speaking Slavisch and townspeople speaking

German. At first I had trouble with the Slavisch. It has softer sounds than Polish or German, containing as it does a great deal of Russian and Ruthenian. I learned quickly, however, studying at night, and soon found my selling no longer hampered.

German, the language of culture all through Central Europe, was my specialty. I spoke as I wrote—with a flourish. My rolling of "r's," diligently practiced where no one could hear, attracted the attention of the young ladies.

"You speak like a Viennese!" they simpered.

The compliment lifted my heart to the skies. To my further delight, I found the general run of customers far easier to deal with than the Galicians, and the peasants for the most part above petty thievery. "Name the figure you want to spend and let me give you the best value we have for the money," I was able to say to many of them. It made selling a pleasure, and left merchant and customer satisfied, friendly.

The explanation for the difference in attitude I saw at first hand. In Galicia to secure the barest necessities was a grim struggle. In Hungary it was not. The whole matter of haggling, stealing and penny-pinching boiled down to that.

In Hungary even the Jahrmarkts were different. Here I found no Galician slapdash improvised lean-to, but a prefabricated, tent-like affair. The back and two sides were made of waterproof canvas. The front was taken care of by the counter. When the stakes were properly put into the ground, you had a regular little shop, orderly and businesslike.

On Jahrmarkt days we used to pack our things in a wagon and gallop out of Eperjes about four o'clock in the morning. Before us lay a three- or four-hour ride. The roads were of course black as pitch, except on moonlit nights. We hung a couple of naphtha lamps on the shaft between the horses and hoped for the best. The best was a maximum of six

spills into the ditch per hour. The worst was a broken axle, or a wheel smashed against the embankment at the side of the highway; only occasionally did any Jahrmarkt-bound merchant suffer serious injury. Three or four hours of this perilous galloping usually brought us to the scene of the market. We leaped off the wagon, unfolded the tent, spit on our hands if we were so inclined, and went to work hammering stakes down into the frequently frozen ground. In winter frost-bitten hands were a problem. Rubbing them with snow was our remedy.

While as always the work was my delight, the home life I found pleasant also. The Kannengieser household was a good one. The table was not the scanty one of Galicia, but the plentiful one of Hungary. There were a few items I favored—farfel, kishke, kugel. In Galicia these simple dishes were hardly accessible. Here I found them at every turn.

The social life was as lavish. As if to make up for time lost in Galicia, I took to it like a duck to long-sought water. The first money I made went to the purchase of a Prince Albert coat and a top hat and cane. Every evening after work, and Saturdays after synagogue and study, I joined the band of clerks—called "Kommis"—who were the smart bachelors, the young eligibles of town. There were fifteen or twenty of us, at starvation wages, trying to preserve our dignity. We called ourselves, in the presence of ladies, not Kommis at all, but Kaufman—merchant. We swung our canes jauntily as we strolled on the Promenade. The girls used to sit on benches and giggle or whisper as we passed. As the hour grew late, they might pair off with us for a brief and innocent flirtation. Except in the most crowded streets we weren't permitted to walk alone, of course. Even on "dates" after marriage had been proposed, chaperones were required. Local parents got around the problem of amusing the small children by sending them with couples, to supervise.

I found no "necking." You might kiss a girl's hand in parting. If you knew her very well, you might even have a real good-night kiss. But in a polite, gentlemanly way. Manners were the mark of the socially accepted.

No doubt this life was altogether formal, almost excessively courteous. But in Galicia I had known hardly any social life at all. Despite the Hungarian proprieties, I enjoyed myself to the full.

I didn't drink. Once, indeed, I stopped off for a Schnapps with Kannengieser after a profitable Jahrmarkt. Though I am convinced I drank only wine thereafter, I nevertheless grew deliriously happy and lay all night in the wagon going home, singing at the top of my voice a ghastly mixture of Polish and German songs with a few Hebrew psalms thrown in for seasoning. The next day was so harrowing that I never drank again.

I didn't play cards. In Hungary pinochle was played with passion, but I avoided it like the plague. I preferred to conserve my energies for dancing.

In this field I became a Magyar overnight. If every true Hungarian leaped to his feet at the first note of music, then I was one hundred and fifty per cent patriotic. I generally pursued the musicians and pleaded with them to play. The six-step waltz was new then, and the Czardas was traditional. It took me no time at all to learn them. The Czardas particularly was exhausting, but while I did it my feet went of themselves and I whirled dizzily up to glory. Sometimes the ground seemed too heavy for me and I skipped onto tables and chairs to do a wild dance over them.

Gypsies provided the tunes. If there is sweeter music this side of Heaven, I have yet to hear it. These gypsies were not of the caravan type; they were musicians first and foremost, and were always somewhere about, ready to strike up their violins. More often than not I tired of the regular dancing halls, picked up a couple of fiddlers myself and

took them to a private home where a few friends had gathered. One colleague of mine was wild with love for the elder of two wonderful dancers at whose house we were practically boarders. Often when the evening was over this Willy would drag me to the fields outside town and moan out his "death song," as he called it—about how Betty didn't love him and would lay him low in his grave. How I did it, I don't know. But I could dance until two, listen to and even sympathize with my friend's lament for an hour more, get up a couple of hours later to do a full day's work in the store, and finally turn up fresh as a daisy for the next evening's entertainment. And I did do it, almost continuously.

From every angle, then, that first twelve months in Hungary fulfilled the bright promise in pursuit of which I had left my native Galicia. The succeeding years appeared to enrich and extend that promise.

In the first of them I managed to wipe my mental slate clean of worry over my father's wrath. Finally mustering enough courage to write, I enclosed in the letter my total savings up to that time, minus what I had spent to keep my Prince Albert and top hat in good repair. By return mail I received the expected rebuke, but also a message of forgiveness. Father conferred his blessing on me, gave me news of Mother—she had been ill for some time—and informed me that there was just one thing which had disturbed her. That was the changing of my name from Leon to the Hungarian Lajos. In writing, I was even using the German equivalent, Leopold. When I explained that in Hungarian Leon meant "dog," Father agreed that Mother would approve the change also.

Four years later, after making the rounds of the three prominent piece-goods stores in Eperjes at progressively higher salaries, I was able to fulfill that part of my dream also which had to do with a wife and family.

I was almost twenty-six when I first thought seriously

about taking this next step in the traditional journey through life of the Central European young man. I was jolted into it by a birthday greeting from my mother which resolved itself into an appeal to see me married and happily settled while she still lived.

I had been so busy working and playing the sport that her reminder of my impending birthday came as something of a shock. At twenty-six, I realized suddenly, I would be, in the Europe of that day, a confirmed bachelor. The picture did not appeal to me. I had always taken for granted a wife and children, lots of children. Because it was so easy for me to fall in love, I had always leaned over backwards to retain my independence. Now it occurred to me that perhaps wives and children could not be taken for granted. Marriage was a *positive* business.

In some panic I began to look around for the right girl.

CHAPTER II

In which my worst customer is proposed to me in marriage and I decline, after which her father grudgingly accepts me.

IN Central Europe getting married was not so simple. There the "Shadchan" method was generally practiced. "Shadchan" is Yiddish for matchmaker. There were some people in the business, of course, who exacted a fee if the marriage they proposed was consummated. But most ordinary people were Shadchans also, if only amateurs.

Only infrequently in those ancient communities did a boy and a girl fall in love and then tell their parents they wanted to marry. Generally it was the parents of a girl of sixteen or more who thought of marriage, looked over the local boys and proposed a match to the parents of the one they selected. Once the parents of both parties were agreed, the boy and girl involved had a few "dates" and then, if they were congenial, they became engaged. If they weren't, they parted friends, with no stigma of broken troths.

Combined with the abuse of parental power which sometimes manifested itself, this way of arranging marriages was capable of working hardships, of course. I knew one girl, full of wit and sparkle, whose parents chose for her an unworldly scholar who spent eighteen hours a day in the study hall and who seldom doffed his round fur hat and long Beckische. When they forced the unwilling girl to go through with the marriage, she retaliated by sending her bewildered husband back to his studies and entering into

a series of scandalous affairs with the wilder, wealthier youths of town. Ultimately her name became a synonym for sin, she divorced her husband, left Eperjes in disgrace, and ended up in America married to a rogue whose mistreatment brought her to an early grave. The foolish practice of her parents wrecked not only her life and the boy's, but a good part of their own.

In general, however, the results of the Shadchan method were neither more nor less unhappy than those of any other. In Hungary people adhered to it because it fitted into the whole formal social pattern. Being a devotee of convention, I naturally adhered to it also.

When it came to choosing a wife in Hungary, therefore, I never dreamed of going outside the pale and falling in love on my own. I was gay and mischievous but I was no Lochinvar. There wasn't one within a hundred miles. All I could do was let it be known through casual conversation that I would no longer turn down any suggestions of marriage without at least a careful look, and wait for word to seep around.

Though I was almost illiterate in a cultural sense, still I was not altogether unpresentable. I could keep beautiful books, write a fine hand, speak a fluent Polish, German and Slavisch. I didn't have a gulden to my name, but I had a fine job, a Prince Albert, a high hat and a cane. Besides, I was a top-notch dancer. If I was not the best bargain on the marriage market, I was not the worst either. Several quick proposals testified to that.

There was a neighbor who returned from the United States with fifteen thousand dollars and a clumsy daughter. There was a niece of my employer's, who carried a five thousand dollar dowry. There was the young cousin proposed to me by an uncle who promised to set me up in business. That all three girls needed every cent they could command was the only honest estimate I could make. After that I

danced and went to parties and strolled with a dozen other young ladies. Somehow I couldn't get interested enough in any one of them to make a lifelong contract look attractive. Gradually the Shadchans, both professional and amateur, began to lose interest in me. I was beginning to feel like a hopeless bachelor when one day I met a friend on the Promenade.

This Shapiro was a decent fellow, a grain merchant and an old customer of mine. On this particular Sabbath he turned and walked with me. I suppose he had heard of my general attitude, because it wasn't long before he popped the question. Why didn't I get married—what did I have against marriage as an institution?

"Nothing at all," I replied, laughing. "As a matter of fact, I'm in favor of it. There's only one small difficulty. I can't seem to find the girl."

"In all Eperjes?"

"I promised my parents," I explained, "that I would marry only a girl of character and strong religious inclinations. To my father I gave a special promise that she would come from a learned house. And to myself I gave an even more special promise that she would be good-looking. *Such* girls don't grow on every bush!"

"I know *one*," said Shapiro. "The very girl you describe. And her father's learning is a matter of pride even to his own rabbi!"

I was skeptical.

"Her name is Reich," he added.

"David Reich's Regina?" I snorted in amazement.

Shapiro nodded.

"Not in a million years!" I roared. I stopped the poor man dead in his tracks, refused to hear another word. And that was the end of it.

That was the end of it for about two hours. Then I began to think. After all, when a girl is proposed to you for mar-

riage, you can't just put it out of your head like that. You can't help wondering—well, suppose I *should* marry her? No, it was impossible. Not after the encounters I had had with her.

This Regina was an old customer of mine. I knew that her father, a handsome, bearded, ruddy man dressed in the modern fashion, was in the cattle business. In Hungary it was the practice for wealthy lords to keep stables for the fattening of cattle over the winter months. Reich secured orders from these large estate owners for numbers of bulls and oxen. Then he made the rounds of the Jahrmarkts, picking up one animal here, two there, from peasants who never had enough reserves to carry all their cattle over the harsh cold spells. These animals he delivered to the landowners, who in turn fattened them and sold them to the city slaughterers at fancy prices. From his commissions Reich made a decent living.

Nevertheless, Regina felt it her duty to supplement the family income. There was nothing unusual about that. In Europe, except among the leisured aristocrats, idle hands were not admired. Regina had learned to sew and sew well at the age of twelve. With her plentiful confidence she had solicited orders and, at sixteen, she had enough patrons for custom-made dresses to keep her busy six days a week. She used to bring these customers into the nearby store of Herr Zeilendorf, where I worked, to choose materials.

At the time of her very first purchase from me I had been annoyed by her haggling and had vowed secretly never to wait on her again. Somehow, however, when next she entered, Zeilendorf was nowhere to be seen. In response to my merchant's blood, I had to try and make the sale myself. Afterward my employer came out of hiding, clapped me on the back and told me that from then on Regina was mine—for a customer. I handled her much better than anyone else, he insisted happily. No matter how I protested

and threatened, I remained stuck with her. Try as I would, I couldn't break her of her bargaining. The fact that in the end she always bought did not soothe me. I put her down as one of those rare Hungarians who were not characteristic of that sunny land.

To complete the barrier between us, she was of the more orthodox group in town. There was a mild schism in the Jewish community of Eperjes, with a synagogue for each faction. Characteristic of the rift was the fact that in one synagogue the women's gallery had curtains, and ceremonies were held in the open court in front, while the other allowed the women to be seen from below, and permitted its weddings and other activities to be held within the building itself. The point of difference that concerned me, however, was that the conservatives frowned on dancing and parties. Regina was consequently one of the few girls with whom I had come in contact with whom I had never waltzed or strolled. That made any thought of marriage with her even more absurd.

No, I repeated to myself after due deliberation, the match was impossible!

On the following Saturday afternoon I put on my Prince Albert and top hat as usual, and swung my cane jauntily as I walked with my friend and colleague Biern on the Promenade. Suddenly, on the other side of the street, I spied Regina and a younger sister, walking in the opposite direction. I bowed and smiled. She returned my greeting, but a little brusquely, and walked on. Somehow I found myself, arm in arm with Biern, turned about and walking back the way we had come. Pacing along in leisurely style, I glanced across the street and looked Regina over appraisingly. She must have known she was being watched, for she marched with her head up and never a backward glance.

I had to admit she was a cute trick. I had always liked tall girls. Regina was not over five feet and weighed per-

haps ninety-five pounds. There was something about her, though. Then and there I knew the match was made, if she would have me. Why, I could not have explained. But when Biern confessed that Regina had been suggested to him and that he had replied he was not yet a candidate for marriage, I was profoundly glad of it.

It didn't do to rush things, I realized. The following week I met Shapiro. We engaged in the customary long beatings about the bush until finally he shrugged and asked me, "What do you think?"

"I don't say no," was the answer I gave him. "But I think you should talk to her parents first. They might not accept such a happy-go-lucky son-in-law. What's the sense in my losing sleep over the girl if I can't have her anyway?"

The next step was Shapiro's announcement that the Reichs had not collapsed when informed of my suit. Indeed, I was invited to visit.

That Saturday evening Regina was dressed up in her best when I called, and she looked even better than I had anticipated. After a brief conversation the parents left us alone in the parlor. With our dealings at Zeilendorf's as a starting-point, we sat and talked for an hour, after which I kissed her hand and went home.

The elaborate reception I had expected had dwindled in cold fact to a cup of tea and a piece of cake. Regina had been reserved and undemonstrative, as usual. Nevertheless I walked with my eyes on the stars. The graveled pavement meant nothing to me. I had found my wife.

Three times that week I visited. Each time my first impression was strengthened. Every possible social and personal barrier stood between us. They meant nothing and less than nothing when I sat with her.

Once my mind was made up, I saw no point in going into agonies over it. Whatever the answer was, I wanted it im-

mediately. Dressing with special care, I called on Regina and let no time pass.

"Fräulein," I blurted out, "you must know the reason for this visit."

"If you'll tell me," she smiled, "then I'll know."

"It isn't posible that you don't guess!" I insisted, angry that even at that moment she wouldn't give me the slightest unnecessary satisfaction.

"Do you doubt my statement?" she asked.

She had me beaten down by her haggling, as always.

"This time, yes, I do doubt it," I replied. "But if you will have it that way, very well. Here it is. Without fancy words, without ceremony, I'm asking you—dear Fräulein, may I have your hand in marriage?"

"Such directness!" she commented coolly.

"Dear Fräulein," I hurried on, "we know each other. Not socially, perhaps. But in business we come to know each other better than any other way, I am sure. Your answer is important to me. Don't hurry, but consider giving me one as soon as you can!"

"I'll have to talk it over with my parents," Regina informed me, without much enthusiasm that I could see. "I respect their advice."

That was the most I could squeeze out of her.

Next day the hours were painfully long. The store window looked out on the street and I watched anxiously for a sign. It wasn't until evening that my friend Shapiro bustled in, bursting with news. The Reichs would be pleased to have me for a son-in-law!

When I called formally on Mr. Reich, he looked me up and down.

"You're asking for my daughter's hand?" he began abruptly.

"If you have no objection, sir."

He told me he had made inquiries about me, and that he was more than delighted with my family background.

There was one hitch. How did I expect to support Regina?

"Well, sir," I replied, "I have a trunkful of stiff high collars. I have a dress suit, a—"

I could see the thought dawning in his eyes: this playboy is not for *my* daughter! Hurriedly I grew serious. I stretched out my hands.

"God blessed me with ten fingers," I told him. "I have my merchant's ability. I have letters from my employers from the time I left home as a boy. If you entrust your daughter to me, I know that with God's help I'll support her!"

The answer pleased him. He extended his hand. In those days a father gave his daughter to her intended in the most literal sense. Knowing how precious Regina was to her father, I took it upon myself from that moment on to be worthy of the gift. Always in the back of my mind thereafter was the thought that I would justify his confidence in me.

To break the news to my own parents was also essential. On arriving in Zacliczyn, I found that I could have brought them no greater gift. Both were in pathetically feeble health. Immediately, however, my mother rallied, weeping with joy as she assured me that no matter how great the physical distance she would always be with my wife and myself in spirit. My father, more practical, asked questions first.

I had promised, he reminded me, that my wife would come from a good family, that she would uphold the Borgenicht name.

"My intended's father," I explained, "is a well-known Hebrew scholar. And his father was before him."

Pleased, Father inquired about the girl herself.

"She's beautiful," I hastened to inform him. "And religious. And able."

There was one further question. "The dowry?"

That wasn't a mercenary question. Everything must be seen in relation to its time and surroundings. It was customary in Europe to deal with dowry considerations.

"The dowry," I said, thinking fast, "is a thousand guldens."

"I believe," nodded my father solemnly, "that the father is a scholar. And the grandfather also. And that the girl is beautiful, and religious, and able. But the thousand guldens?"

"Well, what are a few guldens more or less?" I asked lightly, and quoted the German verse:

Das Gelt ist verganglich,
Das Prinzip besteht,
Gluck ist bei Gott.

Money is transient,
Principles are permanent,
Fortune is in God's hands.

Father gave me one of his rare smiles in token of approval of my choice on the basis of my own report. It was a great compliment.

Three days later, back in Eperjes, Regina and I concluded our marriage contract in the presence of witnesses, by taking hold of opposite ends of a handkerchief in the traditional ceremony, and then signing the document which set the date for the wedding. The delay of a year, which we felt was necessary in order to save up a "stake," was the source of our only unhappiness in that wonderful time. Regina's father eased our sorrow in short order.

Returning after a brief business trip, he asked my mother-in-law-to-be whether I'd been visiting often.

"Often?" she laughed. "Every night!"

"Oh ho!" exclaimed my wise father-in-law. "Then we must hurry the marriage!" He quoted the precept which, translated literally, suggests that, "When a good deed ap-

pears ready to hand, don't wait till it sours." Three weeks was the maximum time he would consider.

Throwing all qualms to the winds, I prepared to rush back to Galicia for the papers attesting my exemption from military service, papers which I needed in order to obtain a marriage license. Before I left, I remember, my wife made a characteristic gesture. Aching at the thought of even so brief a separation, I had asked tenderly for a parting kiss. Astoundingly, she refused. In explanation she cited the case of a Galician who had come to Eperjes not long before, courted a homely old maid, become engaged to her and then taken over her money on the pretext of using it to build a store for the two of them to operate after their marriage. Of course the rogue had disappeared one morning with all the movable stock and the remainder of the poor spinster's two thousand guldens. Thereafter, in Eperjes Polack suitors were practically tabu. Regina was engaged to me, she admitted wryly, but she wouldn't give me so much as a kiss until we were solidly married.

"At least give me a picture," I begged.

"Take a good look at me and carry the picture in your heart," she replied.

There was no moving her.

"If you come back," were her final words, "all blessings on your head. If you don't, may I never see your face again, may I never hear your voice, speak your name—" She stopped only because she was out of breath.

Her words lent wings to my feet. In Galicia I plagued the officials ceaselessly. Then a couple of guldens dropped into the right palm cut through red tape and quickly produced the certificate I required.

On the way back to Eperjes with my father—Mother was too ill to attend the wedding—I stopped off at Krynica to pick up my brother Marcus and his wife, and to chant in synagogue on the Sabbath the chapter from the prophets

which traditionally concludes the Bible reading in Jewish services. The honor of reading the particular chapter scheduled for the week of his marriage is always accorded a bridegroom. As I was accustomed to doing in Hungary, I donned my Prince Albert and top hat for the occasion.

In that Polish town my appearance was a wonder. The ten- and twelve-year-olds—replicas of myself at that age—who swarmed in the synagogue, could not seem to have enough of staring at me. I should have thought back and been forewarned. But I was in my glory and paid them no attention.

To the boys my top hat was natural prey. I didn't notice when three or four of them slid into the pew behind ours. I didn't notice when one of them demonstrated a carefully cupped hand to his neighbors and then leaned forward. My first intimation that anything was wrong came when I rose to go up to the platform. I heard a gasp of mock horror from behind me, and felt a tap on my arm.

"Herrleben," said the leader of the grimy group solicitously, "you've got something creeping on your 'smokestack'!"

My Galician blood gave me a flash of insight. I covered my head with one hand, with the other I whipped off the tall high hat. There, rambling around its brim, was the biggest louse I had ever seen.

The people roundabout stifled grins in their beards and prayer-books. The brats roared openly. I stood like a dummy for a moment. Then I recaptured some satisfaction. Turning straight to the boys, I balanced the hat on my knee and flicked the insect right into their faces before turning and stalking majestically up to the platform.

Father, Marcus and his wife, and I arrived in Eperjes without further incident. It was Sunday morning, the day of my wedding. I remember now that I didn't think about it. My mind was numb. I just wanted to see Regina. That would have restored my morale.

According to custom, however, the bridegroom was not permitted to see his bride before the actual ceremony. I had to remain with Father. To make matters worse, food was forbidden me on the day of my wedding, so that I could only dawdle away the time miserably in watching my family eat with what appeared monstrous relish. It seemed hours before we were called to the synagogue.

Even the pleasure of riding there with Regina was denied me. I had to ride with my family, she with hers. Arriving early, I looked longingly at the lawn in front of the building —where the ceremony was to be held—but there was much to do yet.

First I was hustled into the building for the appropriate prayers. Afterward I was led to the room set apart for the bride. There I saw Regina for the first time since leaving for Galicia. Whether it was because she looked so beautiful, or because I had not eaten since the night before, my head swam dizzily. To me she looked like a princess in her bodice and full skirt which she had designed and made herself. Her gorgeous Hungarian headgear only enhanced the effect. I was allowed only to look, however—no more than that. With parents and relatives watching, I approached and dropped over her head a white veil, meanwhile murmuring the blessing: "Our bride may you be for ever and ever!"

Immediately I was recalled and made to don, over my dress suit, the "Kittel"—white robe—which is worn both as a symbol of purity and, according to old ritual, as a shroud-like reminder that man is mortal and owes his existence to God. Even on the festive day we must remember who we are and of what we are made.

Seemingly far away, the wedding music was begun. My father stepped up and loosened my tie and collar—that the path of my life might be free and unhindered. Then Reich and a cousin of his started escorting me toward the "Chupeh" —canopy—made of silk and inscribed with Hebrew blessings,

which was held for me by Biern and three other friendly Kommis. This escort, by the Hungarian tradition, is by the fathers of the couple involved, while the bride is escorted by the mothers. Accompaniment by two complete couples is intended as an augury for a happy future. In our case, as a result of my mother's illness, the cousin and his wife were pressed into service.

Reaching the canopy, I stood with knees tingling, waiting for my bride. I must have loked pale, for Reich's cousin leaned over and whispered that he was delighted with Regina's selection of a man of the world rather than an unworldly scholar. That perked me up a bit. Then Regina came toward me.

By contrast with me, she appeared calm and lovely. Whatever nervousness she felt she concealed beneath her usual impassive expression. With the older women flanking her, she marched seven times around me under the canopy, for luck, and then stood beside me to receive the benediction.

I didn't hear a word of the blessings. Because I happened to glance up once, and I looked directly into Biern's face. That started me thinking. There was my dearest friend, the steady, solid Kommis, ready for marriage if ever I saw a man ready. And he was holding the canopy for me, the happy-go-lucky spendthrift! Around us I saw the townspeople. Somehow they turned my mind to the fact that my well-tailored pockets were completely empty. With the dowry I had paid up old debts and bought a stock of fine linen shirts and other clothes which, in those days, had to be made to order. Suddenly I got panicky about the whole thing. Myself I had always taken care of. Now there was someone else to worry about also. And there would be children, God willing. A whole new vista opened up. It was not reassuring. Flashes of doubt pricked me. Had I gone into this business too hastily?

I had always insisted that when finally I married, my wife

would be my "Abgott," my idol, ideal, inspiration, "ganzes Herz." Was Regina the one?

Suddenly I thought of a German story, one of the few with a flash of humor: "As the man said when the two gendarmes finally caught up with him—'Don't drag me, boys—I'll go willingly!'" I grinned. I was in it now. That was that. Immediately I felt the load lift. I came to in time to hear and nod brightly at the rabbi's closing admonitions. And to smash under my heel the glass which is, traditionally, a symbolic memorial of the destroyed Temple in Jerusalem.

After the ceremony the party repaired to Reich's house. Without the knowledge of our parents—who would have been shocked—Regina and I sneaked off to get our pictures taken. It was half dark already, unfortunately, and in those days there were no photo-flood bulbs or wonderful lenses. We had the pictures taken, but probably only we could have identified the happy couple that emerged on the blurred print.

The ride to the photographer's, and from there to the Reich home, were the first moments we had had alone. We did our best to make up for lost time. Arriving at Reich's, we found one more golden moment when we were left together in another traditional ceremony called, obviously enough in the Hebrew, "Alone." We took our bite after having fasted all day, drank a toast "To Life"—the Hebrew "Le'chaim!"—and then were surrounded by laughing and back-slapping guests.

Before sitting down to the feast, I was proud to note how respectfully my father was treated. After all, he and Marcus were the only representatives of mine present. In the end it was just as well that my father and brother were there to uphold the family name for scholarship. For after the dinner was over, it was customary in Central Europe for grooms to deliver a "Drasha"—a speech elaborating some Talmudic point, and displaying virtuoso-like intellectual bril-

liance. I failed my guests miserably. I gave no speech. First, because I did not know enough Talmud. Second, because I saw little point in such an empty display of knowledge.

Regina and I had agreed on this beforehand. My wife and my father-in-law approved of me as I was. But the relatives felt cheated. From the start they had made no bones about expressing themselves. A week after the engagement, in fact, an aunt of Regina's had come into the store, taken one look at me, and moaned, "He walks around bare-headed!" Ignoring Regina's calm assertion that I could expose my head while working and still be a righteous man, the elderly lady had predicted the worst. More than a few of those at the wedding had warned against the event's taking place. They felt it was a "seven days' wonder" for a sporty modern dancer to be marrying a girl from so orthodox a family. They would have preferred a "Yeshivah buchar."

I could hardly blame them, for it was the accepted ambition, especially of extremely religious families like theirs. This desire was the basis of a story circulated, perhaps for the last thousand years, by those with slightly more materialistic standards. I thought of it as I watched the disapproving frowns of Regina's aunts and uncles and cousins.

It seems that a certain Meyer met an acquaintance he hadn't seen in years, and inquired about the latter's children.

"I tell you, Meyer, it's good and it's bad," replied the father. "My son," he explained proudly, "is a real man of God, sitting all day in the study hall and knowing so much Talmud that people come from miles around to ask him questions. My son-in-law could be a rabbi. When he delivers a lecture about a complicated point of law, the synagogue is so quiet you could hear a pin drop. I have another son-in-law—a real saint! He goes to synagogue Monday morning and doesn't come home again until Friday night!

If it weren't for his prayers, God knows what would happen to our community!"

"Wonderful!" said Meyer. "But tell me, didn't you have another boy?"

"Ah, Meyer," sighed the father, bowing his head, "I told you it was good and also it was bad. I'm ashamed even to talk of my younger son. He never amounted to anything. Before he was even Bar Mitzvah he went to work in the markets, and he hasn't studied an hour since. All that ignoramus ever thinks about is how to make money to support the family. And so he brings shame on all of us!"

For a moment I was tempted to make a little speech embodying the story. One look at Regina's radiant face and I subsided. I managed to keep silent even when the relatives' disappointment showed itself concretely in the giving of presents. One cousin was so incensed "because all the grooms in our family have made wonderful speeches and this one has made none at all!" that she gave us nothing but a wooden cooking spoon—we weren't worthy of more. To even the score, however, an ancient grandmother so far forgot herself and her ritual as to kiss me, a male. The family couldn't get over that, especially since this worthy lady had never allowed herself even to shake hands with a man other than her husband.

This triumph set the stage for the dancing, in which Regina startled her staid family anew by displaying a light toe. I swung her with more pride after each step of the difficult six-step waltz. That evening altogether my feet flew, and gypsies played as they had never played before. The only objection I could find was that the speeches were too long and the dances too short. But there was a way of doing these things, and we had to be proper and in good taste.

At one in the morning, when the party broke up, my father-in-law brushed aside the arrangements we had made

for a honeymoon and insisted he would save us the needless expense by putting us up in his own house. Unluckily, we agreed.

The house was in two wings, divided by the wide hall where the tables had been placed for the guests. Reich rented one side, a baker, the other. The only room left unoccupied in the house was a small chamber at the back of the baker's section. I didn't know until afterward that just the other side of that bedroom wall was the baker's huge oven. The date was August 7, 1887. It was by all odds the hottest part of the summer. I am one hundred per cent certain that that baker could have used our bedroom for an oven, if he had wanted to. This was our honeymoon.

To complicate matters, when Regina climbed into bed the mattress seemed to explode and she found herself sitting on the floor in the middle of the debris. Afterward we learned that a practical-joking cousin had thoughtfully removed the slats supporting the mattress. Fortunately there were two beds in the room. It was only that that prevented me from dragging my wife out into the night.

The next day was ours. There was only one untoward incident. In the Jewish tradition hair was associated, through Biblical references, with a woman's vanity. As a mark of the putting aside of this vanity, it was the custom for the bride to have her hair clipped, and to don a wig over her bare skull. Regina had long, silky, blonde hair, piled up like a crown on her head. For a long time I had been preparing to make a fight about it, finding it hard to understand how anything so beautiful could be sinful. When the time came there was nothing I could do. My mother-in-law was on what later proved to be her deathbed, after having been an invalid for a year with a heart condition. Two of her sons had died, and the third was seriously ill. It was im-

possible to jeopardize her health by the shock of resistance to what was to her an essential rite.

When they took Regina in to cut her hair, I fainted. She, on the other hand, refused to rebel blindly. Managing to save a few strands at the front of her head, she put on the wig, combed these hairs of her own back over the others and did not look so very different after all.

For my sentimental ideas Father had nothing but contempt. Hair or no hair, he found Regina completely charming. When he was about to leave next morning, he assured her she would be my salvation.

"You're getting a good husband," he said in my presence. "He's able, hard-working, good-natured. But he's a little crazy. You've got to watch and to guide him!"

With which he gave us his blessing from the steps of the carriage and went off, carrying with him to my beloved mother our warmest wishes. I sat down to talk things over with my father-in-law.

It was his idea that we should celebrate the Seven Days' Feast which is customary in old Europe. I couldn't see it. Seven days! There were two Jahrmarkts I could get to during those same days. I was a married man now. I had to think of supporting my wife. Reluctantly my father-in-law agreed to my leaving.

It was with almost equal reluctance that he heard my rejection of his offer of "Kest." Sometimes a marriage contract included a guarantee of board and lodging for the son-in-law for one, two or more years. Some, it turned out, were for life. This arrangement was meant for those aloof students who, it could be depended on, would never earn a livelihood themselves. I was happy to be able to tell my father-in-law that I wished no gratuities, that I could stand on my own two feet.

Of course I had not a gulden to my name. This slight

difficulty I overcame by making a deal with a friendly merchant. On my pledge to return what I had left unsold, and to pay a good price for the rest, I obtained a caseful of staple goods—linens, bedding, shawls and percales. Next I hired a wagon, complete with horse and peasant driver. The price was ten guldens a day, but the joker in that handsome wage was that the day extended from three in the morning until ten at night, and that that peasant was lucky who had five days' work in thirty. Finally, long before dawn on the second day after my wedding, I left my reproachful wife, climbed onto the high seat of the old wagon and told the peasant to whip up his horse.

At the Jahrmarkts we managed to reach by hard driving, my peasant invariably left me to put up my tent alone and disappeared into the nearest inn. After dark he reappeared, condescended to help me lift my case of goods back into the wagon, and drove on, mostly in silence. Nevertheless, my spirits were high. And with reason. For when I returned to Eperjes before the Sabbath and measured the goods remaining, I found that I had netted twenty-three guldens. Regina was proud of me.

"See," she boasted to her parents, "Borgenicht can do more without money than others with it!"

It was a pleasant tribute from my bride. It seemed to presage great happiness. That evening, at a gathering of kinsmen from roundabout, Regina and I chanted the Seven Blessings which are said after marriage:

Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who createst the fruit of the vine.

Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who hast created all things to Thy glory.

Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, Creator of man.

Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who hast made man in Thine image, after Thy likeness, and

hast prepared unto him, out of his very self, a perpetual fabric. Blessed art Thou, O Lord, Creator of man.

Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who makest Zion joyful through her children. May she who was barren be exceedingly glad and exult, when her children are gathered within her.

O make these loved companions greatly to rejoice, even as of old Thou didst gladden Thy creatures in the Garden of Eden. Blessed art Thou, O Lord, who makest bridegroom and bride to rejoice.

Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who hast created joy and gladness, bridegroom and bride, mirth and exultation, pleasure and delight, love, brotherhood, peace and fellowship. Soon may there be heard in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem the voice of joy and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the jubilant voices of bridegrooms from their canopies and of youths from their feasts of song. Blessed art Thou, O Lord, who makest the bridegroom to rejoice with his bride.

To the heart-filling contentment which these blessings conveyed, it seemed to us in the flush of newly-married excitement, everything in the world simply had to contribute. All Hungary was our oyster. We would open it with consummate ease and delight.

The means was, of course, a business of our own. I never stopped to think that there was only one business I could go into. It was the business I knew and *wanted* to go into. Regina and I were going to open a piece-goods store. It seemed logical, inevitable, wonderful.

True, Zeilendorf, my former employer, had exacted a promise that I would not open a competing store in Eperjes. He was afraid that I had a following and would take customers from him. Grateful for his fine treatment, I had given the promise with a light heart. It seemed such a small thing, for all Hungary lay before us, broad and rich. One town was pretty much like another, we said.

Regina and I took a map and looked over the names within a generous circle around Eperjes. Twenty miles away and a replica of our own town, except that it was smaller, Nagy-Mihaly seemed as good as any.

"Nagy-Mihaly it is!" we said, and smiled at each other.

CHAPTER III

In which my wife walks out on me once, a daughter is born to us, and I find a perfect life unsatisfying.

FOR a little time we continued on the upward road. On the first Monday morning I found a store in the Nagy-Mihaly business district and rented it for a year. My next problem was to obtain goods with which to stock the empty shelves. With nothing but my letters of recommendation from past employers, and a confident smile disguising a fluttering heart, I set out on a buying trip.

In those days the province of Moravia turned out the finest bedding and linens in Europe. Vienna was the clearing house for shawls and ladies' dress goods. Budapest furnished the best percales for peasant dresses. I made Moravia my first stop.

With me it was make or break. I stalked into the office of Joseph Munk, linen manufacturer of note. Introducing myself, I informed him I was ready to buy merchandise.

"Capital is of little consequence," I assured him. "My success I am basing on business ability and qualifications!"

The words were brave and must have startled him. He listened for more.

"I have recommendations from every employer I've worked for since I was twelve," I added quickly, and fished them out of my pocket. "Here they are, sir—from Klapholz, Epstein, Brandstatter, Kannegieser, Bloch and Zeilendorf!"

The machine-gun clatter of names impressed him. Each one he knew as a merchant, and a couple of them he knew

as merchants of more than local reputation. He glanced through the letters, then took out Brandstatter's and studied it carefully. After an interminable reading and re-reading, he looked up, his eyes keen, appraising.

"This letter speaks well for you, young man—coming from Brandstatter. Therefore," he continued, smiling suddenly, "we will change your name from Borge*nicht* (literally, "Borrow not") to Borge-*ja!* You may have whatever goods you need!"

Munk's credit was all the capital I needed for the other Moravian houses also. At the close of the day, over two thousand guldens' worth of goods was being shipped to Nagy-Mihaly.

Vienna was even easier. There I was recognized by the representatives of some of the firms which had dealt with Brandstatter. My reception was a friendly one, and I left with another eighteen hundred guldens' worth safely on its way.

Budapest yielded fifteen hundred guldens' worth of stock, which I thought adequate for my immediate needs.

I came home in triumph.

"Buying goods is only half the battle," my father-in-law reminded me drily. "Selling them is also a matter to be attended to."

His mild sarcasm bounced off my light heart. The world was practically at my feet. I was married. I had a store. And I was taking my wife into her own house.

First I had to make that house and store ready. For ten days I worked in Nagy-Mihaly, checking and arranging the goods. I rented a room and kitchenette for living quarters. When everything was in order, I wrote to my father-in-law to bring me my wife. Packing Regina and all her belongings in a carriage, Mr. Reich made the twenty-mile trip by early evening. Together we examined every inch of the new establishment.

It was a small store. Shelves had been put up by a carpenter along one wall, and on them I had arranged all my stock. Probably it was not a very striking place, but the name, LEP. BORGENICHT, on the sign over the door looked wonderful. In the single show window I had draped a few pieces of bedding and linen, after the fashion of Central Europe. There was then no artistic window dressing. What you had to sell you put neatly in your window space, and the prospective customer saw and entered.

Both my father-in-law and Regina were duly impressed with the store. Puffing up like a pouter-pigeon, I led them next to the room-and-kitchenette.

It was not a modern, dropped-living-room affair. It was a tiny cubicle in a house three blocks from the store. The "kitchenette" was a wood-burning stove in the corner, with a couple of iron sheets laid across the top for cooking. I had brought in a little barrel and had bought water to fill it, and had set out a little glass with which to dip it up. The bathroom was an outhouse in the back yard, and for tubs I was depending on the Nagy-Mihaly public bathhouse. There were nine thousand people in the town, compared to Eperjes' thirty thousand, but I found the facilities essentially the same.

When my father-in-law left the next morning, and Regina and I were left to our own devices, I realized for the first time what marriage meant. I looked at Regina with new eyes. This was the woman with whom I had elected to spend all the years God granted me. I sat back and let deep satisfaction soak through me like a sponge.

The first meal Regina cooked was magnificent. Soup, meat and potatoes cooked in the most severely simple style tasted like the finest Hungarian feast. Later I had occasion to admire my wife's art in the kitchen. Her cheese cakes, prune cakes and round hard cookies—in Hungarian "Pagacsa," in American "sinkers" from their dunking destination

—are still incomparable. But that first meal sticks in my memory. A crude wooden packing case served as our table. The only other furniture we had was the bed Regina had brought with her in the carriage. We were deliriously happy.

We had decided to open the store on the Friday following, which was the weekly market day. In the three or four days intervening, I had to teach Regina to be a saleswoman. She had everything to learn—how to handle materials, how to display them, how to build up their strong points and, not least, how to watch for thieves. The Slovakian peasants were far less sneaky than their Galician cousins, but still losses from theft had to be included regularly in figuring your costs.

We started with Regina playing the customer. I waited on her, displayed goods, removed them, displayed more, removed the new materials. Regina herself knew how to drive a hard bargain. In that field there was little to teach her. Soon I was able to take over the role of customer myself. From behind the counter my wife repeated her lessons. She was perfect—even catching me red-handed when I tried to "lift" a stray piece of material.

I kept her at it until the actual opening. She proved her worth the very first day. That evening we exchanged without words the thought in each of our minds—we were perfectly matched.

There was still a lot to learn, I found. But not about the store. And it was I who had to do the learning. The following Monday a young matron came in for a piece of Rumburger linen. We had two qualities—one expensive, one cheaper. Search as I might, I could find only the one. To Regina, who was at the front of the store, I called, "Where is that Rumburger linen?"

"Where it belongs," came the calm reply. "Look again."

I looked again, and again—and once more. There was

only one bolt of linen. The customer was waiting. I saw red.

"Donnerwetter!" I roared. "Wo ist das Stück Leinen?"

There was no answer. When I looked up, I saw Regina walking out the front door.

In my amazement I realized suddenly how roughly I had shouted at her. I stood stunned. There was the customer waiting, baffled by the whole performance. But there also was my wife, halfway down the street toward the depot!

Without a word to the customer, I dashed down the roadway. Fortunately the depot was a little way off, giving me a chance to explain my abject abasement, and to promise never to lift my voice to her again. Of course, when I returned to the store—with Regina—I found the Rumburger linen exactly where she had put it, in its proper place.

It was perhaps this stubbornness of Regina's which came in time to teach me to curb my temper. That stubbornness was aroused, I learned early, only through a slip on my part. For herself, she would go along in her own quiet, efficient way. The very next week after the grand opening I had to go to a Jahrmarkt in another town, and left with considerable misgivings over leaving Regina alone in the store. When I returned, I found that she had had a fine day and that her sales compared favorably with my own.

More and more she became invaluable. Her fluency in talking to the peasants carried us splendidly. We prospered on every side. Customers came and went and the store buzzed from morning to night. From the Friday markets we used to take in sometimes as much as a hundred and twenty guldens, never less than eighty even on a stormy day. After six months plans began to take shape in my head.

"You can hardly turn around when three people are in here," I scoffed. "With a bigger place we'd do ten times the business!"

Regina raised her eyebrows. To her it seemed wiser to put aside a reserve, to build on a solid foundation before attempting to expand. I was cleverer. I pictured a larger place, painted in glowing colors the wonderful display of goods, told Regina how our following would come to the new store and bring us fresh groups of customers. I was the merchant, and Regina bowed to my superior knowledge.

It was easy to find a bargain—a large store at a cheap rental. True, it was a little removed from the heaviest business traffic, but once we got our goods moved and our furniture placed in living quarters I had obtained in the same building, I knew it wouldn't be long before we would have to expand again.

I knew it, but apparently I had neglected to tell the rest of the world. Eager and ready to serve, we waited in our beautifully equipped store. As time wore one, the aisles looked wider and wider. Customers looked lonesome in them. For the next half year we had about enough trade to keep one of us moderately busy.

I could scarcely look at Regina, for shame at my stupidity. On her part, she never opened her mouth to criticize. Nor did she ever hint by the slightest gesture that she was triumphing in my mistake. Obviously, nevertheless, we had to move.

Before we made any change, I followed my father's example and sought the advice of the nearest noted rabbi. I had been on the point of consulting him before about Regina's failure to become pregnant a few months after our marriage. With her usual common sense, she had counseled patience and in due course had announced that there was to be an addition to the family. In this question of business, however, Regina agreed that it might prove fruitful to consult the rabbi.

In Hungary faith in the power of the local rabbi was widespread, and implicit. There were some cynics who claimed

the rabbi couldn't lose. If his advice turned out well, his intervention had been effective; if it didn't, then the supplicant had been at fault, sinful. To me equality before God has always been a basic tenet of Judaism, and perhaps its most exalted one. Even in those days I did not quite believe that the rabbis had a more direct approach to the Almighty than any humble penitent. I did know, however, that from the constant stream of businessmen who appealed to them the rabbis necessarily accumulated wisdom and developed judgment. It was to take advantage of this experience that I went to see Rabbi Greenberg, my father-in-law's teacher and the celebrated scholar to whom all problems in our district were brought.

Once in his presence, I told him eagerly of the little store and the big one, of our good luck and then bad.

"Change place, change fortune!" he replied, in a Hebrew phrase.

It was the answer I had hoped he would make. Happy to have the rabbi's competent advice confirming my own inclination, in accordance with custom I placed two guldens on the table—as my offering for the poor—and hurried home to tell Regina to pack our things.

Our next choice was Hommona, a town about eight miles from Nagy-Mihaly and very much like it in every respect. With a fresh start, and the lessons learned from our experience, we expected easy sailing. In a week we had settled in a medium-sized store, occupied a couple of rooms and opened for business.

Trade came in. While it was not the hectic adventure I had expected, it was still enough to keep us going and perhaps to push us a little further ahead of the game at each inventory. For excitement we looked to the baby which was almost due.

Toward the end of Regina's term, an important Jahrmarkt was to be held in a nearby town. Though I had made

preparations for this market long in advance, I was concerned about my wife's obvious condition and announced grandly that I was staying home. To the American father that may seem an obvious remark. Not to travel out of the city at such a time seems little enough of a sacrifice to make. In Europe things were very different. Business—and most especially the Jahrmarkts through which people came to know your enterprise—was the thing to which all other considerations had to be sacrificed. My proclamation was almost sacrilege. Regina labeled it as such and chased me out of the house without ceremony.

All day at the Jahrmarkt my handling of goods and clinking of coins in the coin-bag around my neck was shadowed by my anxiety. Doubtless I gave away many yards of goods at half price, and overcharged by as much on others. Suddenly, toward evening, a neighbor from Hommona rushed in.

"Mazel Tov, Borgenicht!"

I stared in amazement. Not only was my wife in labor, but she had given birth already and here was a stranger wishing me luck—and I was miles away! Forgetting even to find out the sex of the child, I tore down my booth, dragged my peasant away from his beer and, throwing all my gear helter-skelter into the wagon, I committed the unpardonable sin of leaving a Jahrmarkt while it was still in session. On the way home the horse seemed to find my excitement contagious, for it fairly flew. I burst over the threshold of my home and found my wife keeping herself awake against my arrival. A moment later she was sleeping and I was dancing around the cramped quarters with my new-born daughter, laughing and singing.

To me the birth of this first child seemed the finishing touch to the fulfillment of my dreams. In Hommona we lived a perfect life. We didn't work too hard. We had no terrific problems. Regina and I loved each other, and had a lively little daughter. Evenings and Saturdays we spent

in leisurely fashion. There was no more wild dancing for me, certainly. Instead we walked, in the town and in the beautiful countryside. We went to synagogue. I studied on Saturday afternoons, still chasing after the learning I had not been able to acquire in my youth. Occasionally a troupe of actors came to town to give a performance of vaudeville in the city hall. Trained bears and monkeys were the usual stock-in-trade of these actors. Sometimes there would be a trapeze artist or a tight-rope walker, generally a spieler with a line of jokes which convulsed our provincial audience.

It was a quiet, natural existence. I should have been ideally happy. Somehow I wasn't. Increasingly I grew restless, irritable.

I never spoke of it to Regina, for I wouldn't have known how to tell her. I didn't even know myself what was eating into my contentment. On her part, my wife saw only too clearly that I was losing interest in the work we were doing, but she kept her peace and waited for me to broach the subject. We kept up the pretense that all was well until one sunny morning an executive of a fine Moravian linen house with which I dealt dropped in to see me. I listened in amazement as he offered me the post of his firm's representative for all Hungary!

Regina welcomed this flattering offer like a Godsend. To her it meant a handsome salary. It meant traveling in style through Hungary as the representative of a noted house. It meant finding everything at my disposal in every town I came to.

To me it meant these things also. But it meant one thing more. It meant that I would be only a representative. I would be working for a firm managed by someone else. No matter how high I might climb in the organization, God willing, I would never have a voice in its control. My own

determination, in one of my few defiances of the admonition of the ETHICS—which notes that "It is better to be the tail of a lion than the head of a fox"—was to be owner of my own small outfit rather than a cog in a larger machine.

All my life I had worked for others. Needless to repeat, I had worked hard and long, putting the interests of the business ahead of my own. Now that I had begun to control my own destiny to some small degree, I wanted fiercely to continue. The Moravian offer held no attraction for me. Not if they made me representative for all Europe!

"No," I had to tell my visitor, "I'm sorry. I cannot accept your generous offer!"

"It makes no sense to me," Regina shrugged with a hint of anger when the man had gone, "your turning down this wonderful opportunity. Well, at least now you have no complaint any more. You can forget your nonsense and buckle down to work here in Hommona!"

"I won't do that either!" I replied explosively.

With a hurt look Regina turned away to wait on a customer. Meanwhile, on my stool in the back of the store I sat and pondered my own astonishing words. I had spoken them quite without thinking. Now I recognized them as true even while I had to admit that, as Regina had just told me, they didn't make sense.

How *could* they make sense? In Hungary I had expanded my life into the three realms in which I was to pursue it for the rest of my days. In business, on which everything else depended, I had worked for noted merchants. I had learned my trade from the ground up. I had opened a store of my own. In the realm of family, which could make or mar my happiness, I had married and had become a father. In the realm of the community—activity in which seemed to me to round out a proper man's existence—I had escaped the desperate poverty of my native Galicia. I had enjoyed pleasant years in Golden Hungary. I had, in short, fulfilled

every step of my youthful dream in turn. Now that that fulfillment was complete, I found it empty! It was a shocking conclusion, one that cried out for explanation. Bewilderedly I started to examine my three realms to see wherein they had failed me. And then my folly dawned on me.

CHAPTER IV

In which I take stock of myself and my situation, and decide to move on.

In Galicia I had accepted poverty, hunger, disease, because they were the only things I knew. It had taken my father's arbitrary command to make me sit down and think, to push me into Hungary.

In Hungary, having learned nothing, I had again accepted the world I found, I had lived from day to day, had battled my tiny problems, had never dreamed except in terms of the land I lived and worked in. It took the Moravian offer to give me the bump on the nose I have always required. Nine years earlier I had appreciated only half the truth which drove me out of my barren homeland. Now for the first time I saw the whole of it, and that it applied with equal force to Hungary.

I was disappointed in my routine business. Well, what else could I expect? At last I had the wit to realize that I could not hope to have a career very different from those of the men around me. And, looking back over the path I had come, I saw with shock that not one of the merchants I had known or heard of had achieved the kind of life I wanted. Brandstatter was perhaps the single exception, and his success he won at the price of atheistic frustration. The Lion on his sign should have had a cage painted around it.

In Galicia the unlucky men swarmed in every corner, "Schlemiels," paupers because of the economic system. I saw suddenly that the lucky ones were caught in the rat-trap

also. Their only prospect was to open a store, and there was almost no choice as to the kind of store they could open. Piece-goods, tobacco, liquor, notions—these and the stamp and lottery agencies kept most traders going.

The deadly monotony was only an added burden, however. The *real* rub was that to open any kind of a store you needed capital, no matter how little. Wages were too low for saving, though I do remember my father telling of a pimply Russian boy who worked for him for years, then put in perhaps another five years working as a waiter in Krakow, and finally managed to open a little wine shop which proved the nucleus of a hugely successful business later. For most Galicians wages were sufficient only to live on, and to send a little home to the folks. The only way to acquire capital enough to open a store was to marry it.

That was literally true. Dowries were the foundation of ninety-nine out of a hundred Polish shops. Or perhaps nine hundred and ninety-nine out of a thousand. My father I saw as an object lesson.

He was brilliant and respected, but all his life his destiny seemed governed by extraneous forces. As a boy he had been married to the daughter of a wealthy distiller. The father-in-law set him up in business and saw him through his immature years when he preferred studying and carving figures out of wood to attending to his inn, his wholesale liquor store and his farm. Once attaining maturity, Father had built up a flourishing enterprise. In later years, however—the years I knew—when Father was beaten down he could not regain his feet no matter how desperately he tried. He had no capital left—and his father-in-law was no longer there to aid him.

That was Galicia. You had to marry money to get started, and if you lost out once, you lost out for all time. There was no word for "comeback" in Polish.

The term was unknown in Slavisch also.

If I had been an analyst, I would have known it from the start. As it was, I didn't need to analyze. I lived it. My own experience showed me that no more in Hungary than in Galicia could I gain better than a foothold in the piece-goods trade. True, I had not found lack of capital fatal. But with the credit I could muster I had been able to open only a tiny shop. We had enough trade only to nudge us a step ahead every once in a while—if we lived cautiously enough. Always one crop failure, one famine, and we would be wiped out as thoroughly as by fire. If, contrary to the law of averages, every "break" came our way, we might, by pinching pennies and agonizing over every peasant customer, in the course of a lifetime build up a business which our children could expand, which our grandchildren could develop into an important concern.

Perhaps I was selfish. I couldn't wait for my grandchildren to see results. I wanted them for myself. The simple truth was that in Hungary, as in Galicia, I couldn't have them!

This sour vision I stared at in frank disbelief. At first I refused to admit that all my work and ambition and hope had led me only into this blind alley. Then I swallowed the truth, in a difficult session, and emerged with an understanding of why that truth existed.

The secret was that the Machine Age had not yet reached Hungary, any more than it had reached Galicia or any other part of Central Europe.

Of course I didn't phrase it that way. I saw, rather, that we were living in an ancient feudal society. The nobles owned all the land, hunted, courted and gambled. The peasants slaved in the fields for their masters just as surely as they had done before they were technically emancipated. The Jews, too many of them, took care of the scanty commerce in staple products. There was no manufacturing, there was no production of anything save crops and hand-

worked articles. Clothes, furniture, the bare necessities of life were supplied by individual artisans and craftsmen who passed their trades on down from generation to generation. There was no demand for anything else and no way, under that rigid system, of ever arousing any, or of satisfying it if it were aroused.

That was why in Galicia people lived in primitive style and, heads bent, waited only for sunrise and sunset. Now I saw that—for the same reason—Hungary too was static, frozen, almost dead. Towns of three, five or ten thousand people were major cities. Most common were groups of ten or twenty houses clustered around a central market-place and called villages. Fifty houses made an exceptional village. In the larger ones there might be a schoolhouse with a single teacher. In the village or in the town, like Eperjes, there was still no one with whom to come in contact, no one from whom to learn. Since there were no easy means of transportation or communication, and practically no means at all, each community remained a closed circuit, with little or no fresh blood from year to year.

People got up early, sat down young and old together to breakfast, scattered to their routine work, returned at lunch and again at supper and bedtime. They knew nothing but that life, wanted nothing but that life.

Perhaps that sounds idyllic, pleasant. To me it was a placid hell. I discovered in Hungary that I wanted more than just contentment from life. It boiled down to the same question propounded by the ancient Talmudists and by my youngest snip of a greatgrandchild, probably by the first caveman and very likely by the last survivor of the human race in the days to come: Is it better to be an animal or a man?

In Hungary I had a fair chance to sample the existence of the one. Dogs wagged their tails and scratched at fleas, cows chewed the rich grass and revolved it endlessly on

their tongues, geese stretched their long necks to the pleasant sun—and the human beings around them embraced, ate, slept and enjoyed that same sun on their midday promenades. Were they happy?

If you had asked the dog or the cow or the goose—or the human being—the reply would have been an unhesitant "Yes!" I had all the same opportunities for enjoyment. My answer was an equally unhesitant "No!"

Happiness is not lying in the sun and feeling a lazy pleasure—not to me. Not that I don't like it, as a respite from life. But to me happiness is a positive feeling, probably more than anything else a sense of achievement.

In my own field housewives had for generations bought materials and fashioned dresses and other clothes at home. For generations they had been using substantially the same cloths. Once I learned that basic trade, I realized at last, there was nothing more for me to discover. I missed that sense of discovery.

As in piece-goods, so in every phase of life Europe seemed only to be carrying on what had been done before. We were following patterns laid out for us from the cradle to the grave. We were making no progress toward a better life. I missed that sense of progress.

Perhaps because on that sodden continent there is no other field for enterprising spirits to invade, Europe blows up periodically in social and political upheavals. Yet of the conflicts which were tearing Hungary to shreds there was no echo in our even existence. I missed that sense of struggle.

We were *too* occupied with the problems of eating, drinking, loving. These comprise the basis of human living, certainly. But a full life demands more than bare fundamentals, it demands a little trimming, the same small touches which make one dress different from another, not just dull gray sacks hanging in endless rows.

That was my quarrel, as I finally understood it, with the uneventful, leisurely business life of Hungary.

It was not the poverty of Galicia that had driven me out, I saw now, because the prosperity of Hungary did not satisfy me. It was, rather, the lack of opportunity in both places that lay at the heart of my trouble. Poor in Galicia, well-fed in Hungary, in a business career in either land there was no breath of life.

In the realm of family the future was as unpromising. Since I could never amount to more than a little merchant myself, alongside my own disappointment loomed the fact that I would never be able to be of any real help to my parents. All my promises to my mother, all my words of comfort, would be reduced to so much empty wind.

Closer to home, I had brought in a wife to share my days of dull work. I had brought one child into the world and, if God was good, would bring more—only to find that I was unable to give them the advantages I had desired vainly for myself, and which I was grimly determined to have them enjoy. In the end I would see them scattering over the face of the earth to seek the same foothold in search of which *I* had left home.

That last prospect was the worst, for I have always taken for granted, and needed for my happiness, a large, warm, closely knit family circle. Early I had learned that in Galicia families disintegrated because of the prick of poverty. Now I saw that in Hungary they scattered also, because the old order could absorb only a little new blood at a time. The young people had to seize niches where they could find them. In the struggle to gain and maintain a hold, the niceties of family life had to take second place. I needed no better example than that of my own brothers and sisters.

My oldest brother left home in his early 'teens, and had been back to visit us perhaps half a dozen times altogether

before he died, on the eve of marriage, of a spinal infection contracted when he was called up for army service.

Both my sisters went far from home in marriage, one to a distant part of Galicia, the other to America.

My brother Marcus, who exacted tribute from me in my youth at Cheder, married and went to live in Krynica, the Carpathian resort. During all the rest of his life, he saw the members of his family perhaps ten times altogether.

My younger brother, Moische, I didn't see from the time I left home until years later when I was able to bring him to the United States. He had wandered the length and breadth of Central Europe meanwhile, in his search for a career.

My last brother, Albert, disappeared completely after having completed his studies brilliantly in Hungary. For sixteen years we heard no word from him. Finally my parents' grief-stricken plea at least to find his grave moved me to institute a search in Hungary through the agency of officials and influential rabbis. Eventually I found him in a desolate corner of Hungary's single poor section. His life, I learned, had been bitter and lonely. In Hungary, for all his brilliance, he had found only the frustration of an insignificant post in an obscure village.

To look around the circle of my own brothers and sisters I had to glance into every quarter of the compass. To assemble any other clan would have required the same effort. Projecting the future of the family I hoped to raise, I saw only an interminable repetition of my own experience, an endless chain of heartbreaking separations. Of this unhappy fate I wanted no part.

Finally, if the future was uninviting in business and depressing in the family realm, it was nothing short of frightening in the third sphere, the community in which I would have to live out my life.

In the Jewish community itself there was a static order.

In it the local rabbi was dictator and from his decision there was no appeal. Once in Brzesko the father-in-law of my employer, Klapholz, decided to build a house. It was to be a two-story affair, which was in itself a wonder in our district. The whole town was guessing about the lucky contractor who was going to get the assignment, when the job was suddenly let to a Christian. That was the source of the difficulty, for naturally this good fellow worked Saturdays and took his rest on Sundays. At once the rabbi came to see the owner.

"You will have to suspend work on the Sabbath," he said.

"Not I," replied the owner firmly. The Jewish law was specific on the issue, he pointed out. "So long as I give no direct order to work on the Sabbath, I am not responsible. I'm paying for a finished job. I'm not accountable for what the contractor does!"

"Technically," admitted the rabbi, "you are right. But there are other considerations."

He went on to enumerate them. The Jewish tradition, he reminded the old man, is that every community is responsible for all its members. The action of any one member reflects on the entire group. "Strangers will see the construction work going on during the Sabbath, and will carry away the impression that Brzesko is an irreligious community. For the sake of appearances, therefore, the work will have to stop!"

"I am within the law and you know it," countered the stubborn owner. "The building will go on!"

On the following Saturday the rabbi pronounced from his pulpit the dread words of "Cherem"—utter excommunication from every phase of Jewish life—against the offender. To be excommunicated from the community meant ostracism so complete from religious, economic and social life that the man was walled in as securely as if he had ten feet

of concrete all around him. From the rabbi's curse there was no escape.

The week after, we were all in synagogue when the doors opened and Klapholz's father-in-law entered. His head was not up. He was not wearing the clothes of a dandy. Instead, bare-footed, shabby, chin sunk into his chest, he shuffled up the aisle toward the platform where the rabbi sat. There was dead silence in the hall as he reached the foot of the three steps and slowly, with great effort, first knelt down, then stretched flat on his face on the carpeted floor.

"I repent," he whispered painfully, in a trembling voice. "I repent for my sin against the Lord Almighty. I repent for my sin against the rabbi. I repent for my sin against the community."

For sentence after mumbled sentence, his face in the carpet, he abased himself. The rabbi sat above him unmoved. It seemed an hour before he finally made a sign and permitted the humbled man to rise. Thereafter the construction work was stopped every Friday at sundown. The forces of the religious community had won. They always did.

Certainly a rabbi with courage and high principles could be the saving of a community. During his tenure, the entire local life was on a higher plane. The power of the rabbi was so great, however, that less majestic figures tended consciously or unconsciously to abuse it.

My old employer, Klapholz himself, was a victim. He was married to the elder of two sisters; the other girl was married unhappily and finally obtained a divorce. When, not long after, Klapholz's wife died, grief drew him and the divorced woman together; after a decent passage of time they expressed a desire to marry. Both were fine, honest people, and they loved each other sincerely. Out of sheer spite, however, the first husband immediately claimed that Klapholz had stolen the woman's affections while she was

still married. The case was taken to the court of local rabbis, who ruled for the allegedly offended husband, and the impending wedding was proscribed. Every appeal was futile, the decision was final. Delighting in his triumph, the first husband promptly took a young girl to wife, but soon tired of her and received a divorce. Wishing to end the turmoil, the rabbis hit on the novel idea of forcing the unhappy sister to remarry her first, brutal husband. This they did, holding over her head the dread threat of excommunication.

Happiness was not the concern of these particular rabbis. Order and discipline they considered important, and the meticulous observance of law and ritual. Of the gentle scholars I was privileged to know nothing could be further from the truth. It was not too unlikely, though, that in whatever community business might lead me in Galicia, Hungary or any other part of Central Europe, I would find myself confined by conventions I would consider too old-fashioned, binding.

Not only did a Hungarian future threaten perhaps to trap me in a religious community of the type in which I did not want to live my life, however. It would also have definitely entangled me in the *social* web in which all Jews were caught.

Most obvious aspect of this confinement was the mob spirit which incited pogroms, anti-Jewish riots. Trouble for the Jews was ordinarily an off-shoot of peasant revolts. My father often told me of uprisings he had witnessed. In the inn which he operated after his marriage—according to one of Father's favorite tales—a peasant girl who did housework was always singing the praises of her sweetheart, one Jashek. Young and very naïve, my mother took a look at Jashek one day and later confided to the peasant girl that she was not impressed. The girl left without appearing to notice the comment. But when next the peasants rose and

started on their tour of murder and rape, Jashek gathered his friends, armed them with scythes and pitchforks, and made for the inn to show Mother how handsome he was. Luckily my father spotted them on the way. Dashing back to the inn, he hid my protesting mother in a trunk in the darkest store-room. When Jashek led his mob into the place, Father insisted that Mother was visiting relatives in a distant town, and invited them all to have a drink—"on the house." The peasants made a search of the premises but the liquor proved too great an attraction. Abandoning the hunt just short of the store-room, they drank up all Father's stock and resumed their travels without further ado.

These peasants had no special hard feelings for the Jews. They marched only against the aristocrats and the high clergy who ruled the country and owned all the land. More often than not, however, the rulers contrived to turn the wrath of the oppressed people against that most convenient of scapegoats, their Jewish fellow-citizens.

Though this threat of violence lay dormant, so far as my own experience went, it was ever present around us in bloody Russia, and at intervals in Germany. And to it I had to add the tacit understanding of the place the Jews occupied in Central Europe, the place they were not encouraged to stir from.

In Galicia a Jew was a Jew and he minded his step. In Hungary the Jews were more emancipated. We had a few representatives in the Chamber of Deputies. Even in that freer land, however, ours was not the life of free citizens. I recall an election in the district around Eperjes. A Jewish attorney decided to run for the Senate against an opponent who was the district landowner and feudal aristocrat. For a time everything went well for the attorney, with his aides campaigning up and down the district and staging enthusiastic rallies in every town. The aristocrat did nothing—until the day before election. At this psychological moment

he announced calmly that if the attorney was elected, he personally would shoot him down on the street. Fortunately the barrister was not voted in, and was saved for a useful life in his profession.

This was only a superficial instance, not without humor, of a profoundly tragic situation. True, I had known it as a condition of my life from birth. I was half inured to it. I aspired to no political position, believing with the ETHICS that the proper course for any man is to "Love work, hate lordship, and seek no intimacy with the ruling power." Above all, perhaps because I was lucky, perhaps because my acquaintance had been only among gentlemen, my own relations with non-Jews had always been happy. Nevertheless, the knowledge that that Hungarian noble could campaign on the single issue that his opponent was a Jew rankled sorely.

Topping even mob and personal anti-Semitism among the evils I foresaw and feared, finally, was what I could have seen in Galicia, and what I did see in Hungary—that what might be called *economic* anti-Semitism had made its appearance in Central Europe.

Against this new foe there was no defense, for it marched with the weight of historical development. It was impersonal, it had nothing to do with right and wrong. It was destined within my own lifetime to sweep the Jews out of Central European life.

In Galicia the process was clearly discernible. With my own eyes I saw the humble herald of the new order that was to come. He was a judge in a small town. As simple as that. The point was that his mother was an old peasant woman who used to come to trade at our store. Just an old peasant woman!

I remember the excitement that kindled the people when that son of a peasant woman was named a judge and set up on the bench to dispense justice. Today I wonder a little

that I didn't sense earlier that that kindly man with the laboring mother might just as well have carried in his hands the sign: Jews, Your Time Is Up! Begin Your Wanderings Once More!

He marked for me the beginning of the great change in the medieval setup of Galicia. He demonstrated that the peasant class was beginning to respond to the public education which was at that time still optional. His very presence, proclaiming the slight opening of the gates which formerly shut the peasants into absolute serfdom, proclaimed also the end of the Jews as a functioning group. For in most of Europe the Jews were prohibited by law or by custom from working on the land. And now their historic European role, that of middle-class in an aristocrat-peasant society, was to be taken over by the rising peasants themselves. Galicia would no longer need the special services of the Jews. It *would* need, however, their facilities, their goods, their jobs.

In Hungary also—where the Slovak peasants were ruled by Magyar lords—even though there were only distant rumblings of the revolt that was to create a separate Slovak state thirty years later, the signs were already pointing. With eyes opened by a searching survey of my own chances for the future, I caught a glimpse of them.

I am not deluding myself with the notion that I saw in 1888 what I see today. But even then I sensed the truth. I feared it. I wanted none of it for myself and mine.

To this day Hungary, apart from its palace clique, is the most charming land in the world. At the time of my taking stock, it was, as it had been when I arrived, the land of beautiful plains, rich earth, fine wines, magnificent cattle. The Magyars still wore their hats askew and broke into dances at the slightest provocation. Gypsies still haunted the nights with their music. Manners remained the mark of the gentleman.

But now for the first time I saw beneath that glittering

surface. I smelled the rank odor of decay. I understood that the factors which underlay my leaving the land of my birth were present in my adopted country also, that Hungary was nothing more than a gold-plated Galicia. Neither as business man, as family man, nor as community member was there a future for me in either of them.

At eighteen I saw Galicia was not for me.

At twenty-seven I saw Central Europe was not for me. It was time to move on.

CHAPTER V

In which I depart for the Land of Promise.

FROM Galicia I had gone on a fumbling search. Leaving Hungary, I knew what I was looking for in concrete terms.

In the realm of business, I wanted a place where there were no economic classes, no nobles, no tradesmen, no peasants chained by accident of birth to a rigid system. I wanted a place where there was life, action, fluidity. I wanted a place where a man could fit into the niche which seemed to him proper, for reasons which satisfied him down to the depths of his heart. I didn't ask for anything on a silver platter. I wanted only the opportunity to achieve these things.

In the realm of family, I wanted a place where I could help my parents and relatives. I wanted a place where I could be happy with my wife. I wanted a place where I could be proud to raise children, knowing that I was conferring on them the greatest of all gifts, a place where no man and no law had the right to come into my home and tell me what to do with those children.

In the realm of the community, I wanted a place where all men were considered equal, where there was no such social caste system as prevailed throughout Europe. I wanted a place where there was no color nor creed, where a man was judged by what he did, not by who he was.

I could have pored over maps for a year. I would have

found only one land that even remotely approached this dream.

No doubt a great-grandfather of mine might have been stirred by the same impulse which moved me in 1888. For him there had been nothing to do about it. Happily for me, America had been discovered. And news of the discovery had penetrated even to the heart of Central Europe. Indeed I knew a few people from Eperjes itself who had found journey's end in the United States. One gentleman had developed a get-rich-quick scheme of investment with a promise of tremendous interest returns and, after collecting forty thousand dollars—a colossal fortune for Hungary—had put the money into his own personal investment: a one-way ticket to America and the foundation of a good-sized business. He drew tremendous dividends, I later learned, but kept them all himself, perhaps in trust for us poor victims in Europe. Another middle-aged merchant left his wife and children and went off with his attractive governess.

These examples I was not anxious to follow. I *was* interested in a fellow townsman whom I met just about the time I was trying to come to a decision about my future. An older person, he had left without a penny and had returned with a considerable sum of money, enough to keep him comfortably in Hungary for the rest of his days.

"You're still a youngster," he told me. "You'll sink your roots on the other side and you won't want to come back. But every day that goes by here is a day wasted. Pack up tomorrow and leave. America is the land for you. A new land, an open land. It knows no Jew or Gentile. A man with a brain and a ready hand can make something of himself there!"

Alertness and hard work—they were my stock-in-trade. The more I heard, the more they seemed the basis of enterprise in the new country. My head buzzed with tales of

more land than could be settled, of new cities being built—schools, hospitals, factories, farms. To me in Europe, on soil that had been settled and cultivated for two thousand years, the very idea of new land, land which had never known homes, nobles, lordship, was the greatest vision that had ever been proclaimed. Hungary and all the lands around it were traveling old roads, repeating old routines, smoldering with old hatreds. In America, I heard, new ideas were encouraged, not stifled. Experiment was welcomed, not crushed. Tolerance was admired, not scorned. Transportation, communication, eager interchange among peoples of every race, creed and color, a boiling stew of every conceivable kind of hash—with the fundamental eternal ideals of the American Revolutionists holding the whole together! What a dream for a man struggling in the toils of European inertia!

When such a dream takes possession of the mind, nothing can dislodge it. Some may retain the dream and do nothing about it, like a sad uncle of mine who yearned always to go to Palestine and died without ever getting beyond the borders of his little Galician village. I was more blessed than he.

Not that putting my decision into actual effect was so easy. I found my father-in-law a major obstacle. On hearing my plan to leave at once for America, he told me bluntly that I had gone mad. Probably a good part of his objection was hurt pride. After his boasts about the fine businessman he had welcomed into the family, he would have to eat his words, he felt, if I just picked up and left. His pride in the merchant would turn into shame over the simpleton who abandoned a good livelihood to chase after a will-o'-the wisp. Flatly he declared he wouldn't tolerate it. Especially since, in America—as everyone knew—people forgot their religion and became heathens in fact and spirit. Many re-

ligious parents I knew raised this objection. More than one family was split by it.

To all my father-in-law's arguments I interposed only my determination to go. With it I beat down every rational plea he made. Then I turned to Regina.

In tearing her from everything that was dear to her, I see now that I was cruel. The cruelty was so great that I am astonished that she endured it. She was only twenty-three, and looked fourteen. She had been born and brought up in the district. There had been her happiness. She had borne one baby, and was well on her way to a second. At a time like that I came to her with a hare-brained proposal to leave everything we had and to venture unarmed into a strange land.

"You're building air-castles," she wept, "just as your father warned me!"

"Air or brick, I must go," was my only reply.

She tried every argument she knew. If I felt enslaved by the little store, why didn't I accept the Moravian offer? Go to one of the larger Hungarian cities? Do anything—only stay in Europe!

Accusations of willfulness, sheer insanity, inordinate pride —"Is the world too small for you? You've got all of Hungary!"—nothing moved me. I had my eye on a distant shore. A golden shore. We were just wasting time.

Finally Regina yielded. She had no alternative. I sent her home to her father while I liquidated our little business. Realizing a thousand guldens, I suggested to Regina that I would take only seventy-five, just enough to land me in the United States. The minute I secured a foothold, I would send for her and the baby.

She was silent, weeping, while I outlined the scheme and tried to make my voice cheerful, convincing. When I was finished, she shook her head. With tears running down her face, she took my hand and sang a little German song:

Vater, Mutter, will Ich verlassen,
Und mit dir will Ich sein.
Vater, Mutter, will Ich verlassen,
Brod und Salz essen,
Aber nur mit dir sein.
Vater, Mutter, will Ich verlassen,
Auf einen Stein will Ich schlafen,
Aber nur mit dir sein.

Father and Mother I'll leave behind me,
And with you will I remain.
Father and Mother I'll leave behind me,
I'll live on bread and salt,
But only with you will I remain.
Father and Mother I'll leave behind me,
I'll sleep with my head on a stone,
But only with you will I remain.

Once recognizing my own iron determination in this one matter, she told good sense and caution to fly to the winds and cast in her lot with mine. Caring for one child, expecting another, she had no thought but to share whatever befell me.

Heedless of criticism, we abandoned everything we had known, cut loose every tie, and left. From beginning to end the whole affair didn't consume more than a week. After farewells to my father-in-law and Regina's scowling relatives, we were on our way.

It was wintertime. Regina was not too well. Yet she refused to leave without seeing my father. Two days of hard traveling by train and wagon brought us to Zacliczyn, to my father's bedside. My beloved mother had passed away more than a year before. Now Father was seventy, and feeble from long illness. His only nurse was the fine-looking middle-aged woman who had married him because, as she told me, she "wanted to be called the wife of Nathan David Borgenicht, the great Talmudist and disciple of the renowned Rabbi Halberstam." This splendid woman waited

on him hand and foot. It was she who made us so comfortable that we almost forgot the circumstances of our visit.

My father did not forget them. In the morning, while I was at synagogue, he discussed with Regina the problems she would have to face. Again he repeated his warning that, while I was diligent and enthusiastic, I was headstrong and impulsive, and never stopped properly to consider things. Of my present journey he did not disapprove. He saw, I think, probably much further than I did.

His reminder to me was more painful. After lunch I lay down for a Sabbath afternoon nap. When two hours later I awoke and came into his room, he administered a reproach I have not forgotten to this day.

"The natural life of man," he said, in the manner of a teacher addressing a pupil, "is seventy years. Of these thirty-five are spent in sleeping, thirty-five in working. Now if you take away from this latter short space of time a few hours for *extra* sleep, just think how you shorten your life!"

I must have looked puzzled, because suddenly his face softened and he spoke more emotionally.

"My son, you've lost such valuable time just now. You came all this long distance, subjecting your wife and child to discomfort, braving the freezing weather, just to see me and to say good-by. I appreciate that. Why then, instead of spending every minute with your sick old father—as your wife has done—have you slept and wasted the precious little time you have here? You're leaving the country now, to cross the great Atlantic Ocean and enter a new world. What would you give to have again these two hours you've wasted, if you knew you would never see me again?"

There was nothing I could say. Father went on gently.

"After all you'll be half a world away from us. Perhaps you won't have the means to make such a long trip. Per-

haps you will. But how can you be sure your father will still be alive?"

Humbly I sat down beside him, my face burning, my heart sore.

Old, feeble, in failing health, Father must have known he would never see us again. His blessing carried a great emotional weight as he spread his hands in prayer and chanted the traditional benediction over Regina, our baby and myself.

> The Lord bless thee and keep thee.
> The Lord make his face to shine upon
> thee and be gracious unto thee.
> The Lord turn his face unto thee, and
> give thee peace.

In tears we left Zacliczyn. The last tie was cut.

We faced forward thereafter. Wagons and then trains carried us through Galicia, Poland and Germany to Hamburg.

To Regina, who had scarcely been out of her native town before, the great port was a shock. As usual, however, she made no comment, but exercised her faculty of making herself at home wherever she went, and whatever the circumstances. Certainly Hamburg must have been enough to try her patience. The broker through whom we had purchased our tickets let us know that we would have to wait ten days for our steamer. Meanwhile we had to live in his cheap, dirty little hotel. Of course it was a racket practiced on the innocent, eager people who were willing to endure anything to get to the new land. It was essentially a kind of slave trade. That Hamburg hotel was about fit for pigs. Into it crowded more and more bewildered humans. Regina cleaned our room thoroughly and, happily for us, the proprietor took a liking to our little daughter. After that we were treated at least like cattle—which was approximately the standard the owner himself observed.

The day before sailing I developed a full-blown influenza with booming fevers, and kicked everyone out of my room except a certain Sauerstamm with whom we had made friends. This new-found but loyal companion applied ice compresses to my head for eighteen consecutive hours, and made it possible for me to board the ship next day.

We found ourselves herded, along with countless others, on to a dark deck of a North German Lloyd liner. I would have blown in half our capital on third class tickets, or perhaps even second. At Regina's insistence, we traveled fourth class—and that only because there was no fifth.

The voyage itself was a nightmare. The fifty dollars apiece we had paid for our tickets entitled us to two bunks on springs, covered with straw mattresses and placed in close-packed rows on the deck just above the engine-room. No one worried about privacy, because no one bothered to undress. Whatever you possessed, it was best to keep on your back or in your pockets. Because each time the ship met a wave, it curtsied. Each time it curtsied, we fourth class passengers rolled out of our bunks and piled up in the corners. Arms, legs, faces—you tried to pick out your own and those that belonged to your little group and stagger back to your bunks. No doubt many acquaintances were made and cemented in these informal wrestlings. We encountered only misery.

For thirteen days we lived in that hole. Our food—since we kept the dietary laws—was herring, black bread and coffee, for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Though Regina was pregnant, she refused to touch any non-Jewish food. She grew sick and weak, and the ship's doctor—whom I called in my anxiety—spent more time shouting reproaches at me for having dared to bring her on such a trip than in examining her. There was nothing wrong with her that a decent diet wouldn't cure, was his verdict.

The doctor couldn't help us on that score but, oddly

enough, our daughter did. For on the one or two sunny days we had, I took her walking in the tiny open enclosure set apart for us fourth class people and, to my astonishment, was subjected to a rain of fruit and candy from kind-hearted plutocrats on the decks above. I was grateful for Rose's sunny smile. The fruit helped tide us over the days; the candy made friends. Meanwhile, we could look forward to America.

From Hamburg I had cabled three hundred guldens to my sister Sallie, who had married and emigrated to America ten years before. She was to wait at the pier to greet us, and to take us to the rooms I had asked her to engage. I was determined to make a quick start. On the way over I began my training in English by having Sauerstamm teach me to count up to one hundred.

I could hardly wait for a glimpse of the new Statue of Liberty of which we had heard. It symbolized all our hopes and dreams.

BOOK THREE: *AMERICA*

CHAPTER I

In which I am downhearted, until a herring man makes me see the wealth around me.

THE Statue of Liberty was fine. Everything else formed a succession of hammer blows to the face.

Castle Garden—before the days of Ellis Island—was a madhouse. The passengers stampeded down the gangplanks like maniacs, and almost swept my poor Regina with them. We found a corner out of the howling mob and looked at each other in dismay. I could find no words of comfort. Clutching my baby in one arm, pinning my wife's hand in the other, I ventured off the boat.

All around us boiled excited groups of strangers. Kisses, embraces, shouts of welcome—but not for us. It was a Tower of Babel in which we recognized no single voice. There was no trace of my sister.

So deeply ashamed of this neglect that I could hardly face Regina, I waited until the pier had cleared somewhat, then took out the slip of paper on which I had written Sallie's address and approached a coachman.

As I walked toward him, I saw him take a newspaper from under his arm, unfold it and start to read. Perhaps more than anything else I witnessed in my first few days here, that stunned me.

Abroad, reading and writing were attainments of the few. Only people of means could acquire an education. I had prided myself on my knowledge of German, Polish, Slavisch. I had thought that this schooling would equip me for the

struggle in the new land. And now, at the very moment of landing, I ran into a coachman who could read. A coachman!

In later years I recognized compulsory education as one of the great accomplishments of the United States. I suppose it all depends on the point of view. On landing I saw it only as the pin which burst the bubble of my illusions. I was more illy equipped than the coachman who drove us through the streets to meet the challenge of the strange country!

As we rode up thronged, dirty, dizzying Broadway and then Grand Street, Regina sat silent. I looked about, still clutching the baby but hardly conscious of her. People ran in and out among the horse-drawn trucks and carriages. Pushcarts jammed the streets. Harsh voices shouted from every foot of space. Our greeting from New York seemed to be a raucous horselaugh.

At Sallie's house we found only a niece at home. It was late in the aftenoon before my sister arrived. Apparently the years had cooled whatever affection had existed, for she made no apology for having failed to meet us, nor did she attempt to make us welcome.

"I didn't rent any rooms for you," she said curtly, "but I suppose you can stay here till you find a place. There are auctions on Saturday, where you can buy furniture."

She knew very well I wouldn't buy anything, I told her, on the Sabbath.

"If you feel that way about it," she retorted icily, "you'd better take the first steamer back. We do things differently in America!"

At the moment I could make no reply. But on Friday evening, after I had found a synagogue and discovered inside a whole congregation engaged in the customary evening services, I suggested to Sallie that not everyone even in America did things differently.

"Those people have been here for years," she told me. "Landlords like them can afford to waste time."

As she turned away with a sneer, Regina took me aside. "Take me out of this hell!" she wept.

It was not the physical surroundings she meant. Sallie had four rooms in a dingy tenement in Suffolk Street, the very heart of the East Side, between Grand and Hester Streets. The rooms were smaller than those we had known in the primitive towns of Hungary. We saw no sign of the great things for which America stood. Yet all Regina wanted was a corner of her own, a refuge from the hard, mocking voice of discouragement.

At an auction Saturday night I bought a huge bed, a chair and a bureau. The following morning I found a "parlor" and bedroom at the rear of a house on Eldridge Street, and rented them for eight dollars a month, in advance. Regina had her corner.

January, 1889, was a cold month. All we had to warm us was a little stove which now and then gave off stray rays of heat. Around us in the tiny flat were grouped the bed—so wide you could sleep in it lengthwise or crosswise, as you preferred—the bureau, the chair, and a couch I had picked up along with a small stool. The whole business cost a little under fifty dollars. For another few cents we picked up a small crib for the baby and—for a month—we were settled.

Just as we were lifting our heads off the floor, we were smacked down again.

We had discovered at once that even in our dingy little tenement there was an aristocracy. It was composed of the front-room tenants. Our parlor and bedroom looked out on a back yard festooned with patched and tattered clothes and decorated with pails and boxes. We were looked down upon as poor workers.

To us now came an even lower form of animal life—a

boarder. Jim, whom we had met on the boat, didn't mind the darkness of the place, nor the fact that the bathroom was two flights down, and the sink in the hall on the second floor. He was a decent fellow, and starting from scratch like us. When he explained that he could pay us a tiny sum for boarding him temporarily, Regina flung a cover over the couch and Jim had a place to sleep.

Tuesday morning he shared our breakfast, and that evening he returned to sleep. Wednesday morning he was out of the house before we awoke. I admired his ambition. When I dressed and reached for my silver watch, a wedding present from Regina, I was moved by a different feeling. Regina and I searched every inch of the apartment, and every drawer in the place. No watch. I asked our next-door neighbor about it.

"You had it last night—and you had no visitors?" she asked. "It couldn't have walked off by itself."

"We *did* have a boarder," I admitted.

"Oh!" she exclaimed with an eloquent shrug, as if to say "Why didn't you tell me that in the first place?"

That was all the answer she needed. She knew her boarders. We did also, after that. But it was a costly lesson.

Wednesday night I waited for the visit which Sauerstamm, the fine chap we had met in Hamburg, had promised to pay us. On the way over we had talked frequently of joining forces in the United States. He had been over before and had gone peddling among the Slovak settlements in Pennsylvania. Having established a little clientele, he was anxious to resume the trade on a larger scale. I was his man, he assured me. After a couple of years of carrying a pack we would be able—through the wise economizing of our respective wives—to start a little dry-goods store in an industrial city like Scranton. After that it would be easy.

To me it was a fine proposition. After all, I was a com-

plete stranger. To be taken into a going concern—even a peddling tour in Pennsylvania—was more luck than I had any right to expect. It furnished the one ray of sunshine in the overwhelming gloom. I had asked Sauerstamm to visit us and present the proposal to Regina, for approval.

Arriving on schedule, Sauerstamm painted a glowing picture. As he talked, I saw in my mind the selection of items I would carry, almost felt the pull of the packstraps across my shoulders. I counted without Regina.

She put her foot down absolutely and finally. Bringing her to a strange country where she could not even speak the language—that she had allowed me to do. To leave her in the midst of strangers was something else again. I might never come back. We had been in America only a few days, but already we had heard enough stories of peddlers left dead on the lonely roads of mining and farm country, their packs stripped clean, their faces bashed beyond recognition. Regina was willing to share struggle, she insisted, but only if I remained by her side. Sauerstamm left to return to his peddling alone.

While I was moping about this thwarting of my plans, Sallie arrived with a brusque offer of a job.

"What sort of work is it?" I asked, already bristling at her contemptuous glance around our little room.

"Packing and sealing barrels in a sugar factory," she told me. "Anyhow—it's a job."

"I'm not ashamed of the work," I assured her. "You know that. But I won't take it. Since I was twelve I've been working for others. Now it's time to start on my own. That's why I came here!"

"I suppose," Sallie sneered, "you brought a few thousand dollars with you." She laughed. "You won't find it so easy getting along by yourself."

No one has ever succeeded in making me feel small intentionally. Sallie was no exception.

"I have my wife," I told her proudly. "And I'm calling on the Almighty Creator to come be my partner. With Him I won't fail!"

Brave words didn't augment our dwindling funds. As I explained to Regina again and again, perhaps in an effort to justify myself *to* myself, I would not work for another, except as a last resort. My motto for the emergency I took from Jacob's preparations to meet his brother Esau, when the latter advanced with a huge following. Jacob was ready to meet him "With gifts, with prayer, or with battle." I was ready to try anything, to go through anything, if there was the least promise of a future. Nobody knew me, I knew nobody. There were no standards I had to live up to, no occupation too low—if it was honest—for me to tackle.

Ten fingers and a willing heart were still my only stock-in-trade. I would find no use for them in our dark little rooms, I realized. Perhaps I hadn't seen the gold in the streets because I hadn't looked for it. Leaving Regina to make preparations for the first Sabbath in our own home in the new land, I went out into the snow-covered city.

The succession of unhappy incidents which marked our arrival had been completed by the little contact we had had with local merchants. In Hungary, the shopkeeper was invariably delighted to see you. "Kuss die Hand, gnadige Frau," was his elaborate German greeting. Or it was "Caluje raczki" in Polish, or "Kezet chockolom" in Hungarian. A million regrets were offered if by some unhappy chance the stock was depleted. Every effort would be made to procure the item at once, you were assured. You were bowed out in style.

In New York Regina entered the corner store unsuspectingly. In her polite German she asked for a spool of thread of the particular shade of blue she needed.

"We ain't got it, greenhorn!" growled the storekeeper and turned away to the next customer.

When Regina came home and cried over the wild animals that paraded as humans in this city, I went out myself to buy what she wanted. I didn't cry, on my empty-handed return, but I shared her feeling. Gruff, crude barbarians seemed to inhabit the place.

Walking the streets now, I could only admit that Regina was right. These were not people—polite, quiet—but ravening wolves, lost to all decency as they snarled over bones. Had Regina been wise in wanting to stay at home? The very idea that I had brought a loyal wife over a thousand miles of land and three thousand miles of water to face this disillusionment chilled me. I looked for consolation in the sights around me.

It was bitter cold, but Hester, Eldridge, Grand Streets were all jammed from curb to curb. European cities I had known were built around a central market place. In New York there were just streets. Those I walked recalled the worst slums of Vienna or Budapest. Not the place for me. Certainly a rotten joke as the rainbow's end I had sought.

I tramped the cobblestones, looking, smelling, listening. On every side stood ragged people. Each was a man like myself, or a woman—people who had come to this new world chasing a hope and a dream, aching to sing a new song. You could see it in their eyes, as it must have been in mine.

Their eyes held the dream. But I saw that their bodies were thin and tired, wrapped in shapeless bundles to keep out the cold. Around them rose filthy firetraps. In the streets lay stinking garbage. Packed up like chickens in piled crates, these people lived and worked.

"They worked!"

I repeated the word silently, in thought. The casual phrase suddenly assumed meaning. These people *worked.* That's what I had come here for—to work, to slave. Per-

haps I had let the obvious sights and sounds drive understanding out of my head. Perhaps my revulsion at what I saw was just a hangover from Hungary.

Standing in the midst of the shouting mob in Hester Street, I thought back to Eperjes. At the same moment a raucous voice—outstanding even in that confusion—smote my ear. I looked at a circle of struggling women around a burly aproned man.

Feine Herring!
Zum freien—
Zum backen—
Zum kochen!

He kept shouting his wares and wrapping herrings and changing coins all at the same time. The women swamped him. As soon as one ducked out of the circle, two more took her place. I watched the man's juggling with fascination. I listened to the shouts, the haggling, the tinkling of money. Automatically my mind leaped. Immediately I saw myself in this flourishing business. Only I would put on a *real* act. This fellow just cried his herrings. I would dance a Czardas and sing a lively tune. That would attract people. And it would keep me warm.

For the first time in America I laughed. Out loud. All at once I was cheerful, ready to plunge into the evil-smelling herring trade. Without thinking about it too much, I could see why my gloom was routed. Because the United States *was* the Promised Land. The gold *was* there in the streets, and now I had the wit to see it.

The foul sights and smells no longer sickened me. The shouts and trampings no longer confused me. The thought of that uncivil notions-man popped into my head. No wonder he hadn't bothered about the thread Regina had wanted. He didn't have to. When she went out in anger, three new customers hustled through the doorway! America

was rough. America was crude. But only because there was so much to do. You may not like it, but the fact remains that most men are polite only when they have to be. In Hungary you had to please the customer. In America you didn't.

Again I looked down the street. Almost at my feet sat a little old man with a tray across his knees. From his sitting position he cried his knives and scissors, and people stopped to do business with him. Two feet beyond him was a push-cart piled high with fruits. The owner kept bobbing around, trying to keep up with his customers. Next to him a man stood with a pack on his back and a handful of samples held out to the passing crowds. Another man held a sack in his hand and fished in it for novelties. Still another folded remnants of all kinds of materials over an outstretched arm and offered them to passers-by. Wherever I looked now, I saw little men—surely with no more money or initiative than I had—crying any one of a thousand different wares, and each one making enough to live on, and perhaps to finance a slow graduation from pack to tray to pushcart and in time even to a little store with a glass front.

In Europe a peddler was a rarity. Except for the Jahrmarkt days no goods were offered, business was slow, small. Here in one single street I saw more people offering wares than in the largest Jahrmarkt, and more different items than in a hundred Jahrmarkts. Many of the things I saw on sale were simply not to be had in Galicia, or even in Hungary. Some I had never seen before at all. Fruits, for instance. Bananas were new to me, and peaches. Other fruits were unobtainable in Europe. Here they were thrown half-eaten into the gutter. In the filth of the East Side I suddenly saw wealth, teeming life. Chances wide open. It was vulgar and dirty but it was alive.

Inwardly I shouted a psalm of praise to the Almighty, and ran home to Regina.

CHAPTER II

In which I become a herring man, and after that a Prince of the Pushcarts.

HERRING was to be my first venture.

I explained why to my wife. Regardless of my sister Sallie's hostility, I would be able to "strike" her for goods on credit from her fish-store in Ludlow Street, and perhaps even for a place in front, on the sidewalk, in which to stand. That would really be a concession, I added, because in the crowded streets of the East Side, every inch was worth money—and got it.

"As for the stink of the herring," I asked, "who am I to be fussy?"

Still Regina turned up her nose.

"I don't know the language," I urged. "Nor the people, nor the city itself. Until I learn my way around, I need only something to keep us going. Besides, we can always eat up the stock if it doesn't sell!"

My enthusiasm swept away Regina's objections. To her I was still the smart one, the merchant. She deferred to my superior talents. The herring business was mine for the taking.

Though Sallie was sarcastic, she advanced me goods and permitted me the use of the space in front of her store. Monday morning I took up my stand, flanked by two barrels of herring. To attract attention, and to offset the particularly wintry weather, I started to hop around between the barrels. Once my feet started moving, they formed the

pattern of a Czardas. I broke into a lively Hungarian tune. Stopping with a staccato clap of my heels, I halted the passing women in their tracks with the cry:

Zum freien,
Zum backen,
Zum kochen!
Geschmack auch zum essen,
Zu jeder Mahlzeit tun die Herring passen,
Und fur alle Klassen!

For frying,
For baking,
For cooking!
Good also for eating,
Herrings will do for every meal,
And for every class!

In German it sounded exciting. I must have gotten the herring trade from all up and down the block. My two barrels sold out quickly and I had to get more. The free entertainment attracted strangers, and more often than not they took a couple of herrings home with them. In those days you could always use a herring.

By the end of the week my profits had pyramided to eight dollars. A second week brought in thirteen dollars. Nevertheless, though that was a huge sum to net, somehow it wasn't the answer to my seeking. My hands stank from herring. My clothes stank from herring. From hall to back yard window, the house reeked with the pungent odor. Regina pleaded with me to enter some less obvious line. And I myself had begun to have doubts.

It was all very well to prance around in the street and cry herrings to passing women. But it did not seem like the pathway to a constructive business. After all, I was a merchant, I had had my own store, and had been offered a commission for the whole of Hungary. Herring was hardly a step in the right direction.

Eagerly then I entered upon a Grand Tour of the push-carts.

My first move upon throwing my herring-odored overalls out the window was into towels and tablecloths. Finding a wholesale place on Hester Street, I bought a bundle and tossed it professionally over my shoulder. The higher-priced goods I might have found in the better stores on Grand Street, or the really upper-crust places on Fourteenth or even as far uptown as Twenty-third Street, I left strictly alone. Cheaper goods were my stock, goods easy to dispose of. At seven in the morning I was out on Hester Street, walking down Grand, strolling the Bowery. In my best German I proclaimed the superlative values of my towels and tablecloths. At noon I still carried pretty much the same load.

Naturally the afternoon would bring better luck, I hoped. I found a place to sit, and munched the rye bread and hard-boiled eggs which Regina had wrapped up for me. Bananas were my dessert. I couldn't eat enough of these wonderful new fruits. Not only because they were delicious. They were cheap and filling. A couple of glasses of beer—not to-day's thimblefuls—washed down my meal, and I was off again. I can recommend no better lunch, incidentally, to-day. I wish I could still eat and digest it. For a couple of years I relied on it then, sometimes varying the dessert with peaches, which were also a tasty novelty, though hardly as filling as bananas. If I worked hard, then a good part of my energy must have come from that diet.

That first day my towel and tablecloth venture brought in a total of only forty cents. When the end of the week saw a profit of less than six dollars, I decided that I was not cut out for the line. Unable to return my goods, I sold them at a thirty per cent loss to a man with a regular stand.

Next I was attracted to a young man on the Bowery. He carried a small black valise which he placed between his

feet on the sidewalk while he held three or four little books. I listened for his patter.

"Ten cents—only ten cents apiece. Buy a notebook, handy little notebook. Only ten cents apiece. Ten cents—ten cents!"

With his small black valise, he might almost have been a doctor. The books were small, the line clean. As for calling out wares, I recalled my herring days.

A wholesale stationery store provided my stock. Soon I too was crying out the virtues of the little notebooks.

"Piece—piece—piece. Ten cents—ten cents—ten cents!"

The words meant little to me, but the books sold. In three hours I had to go back for more. At the end of the week I had gained eight dollars.

Two weeks of notebook selling found us ahead of the game. Eight dollars every Friday was plenty for rent and food, which were cheap. We were living more comfortably, used to the constant din. Still I was unable to come to grips with the trade. It wasn't mine, I could sense. I disposed of the last of the notebooks and looked around for something better.

That afternoon my usual dessert of bananas, after lunch, sent a purposeful thought flashing through my head. An hour later I was out on Hester Street with a pushcart, dispensing bananas to a hungry public. The public wasn't hungry enough, though. In the evening I had a good half of my stock left. Part of the surplus I ate myself, thereby consuming whatever profit I had made. The rest, naïvely, I left for the following day's trade. In the morning the bananas were all spoiled. I sold them out for little more than a song, and after that preferred to buy rather than sell fruit.

Again I was idle. My idleness didn't mean, naturally, sitting on my hands and whistling. There was plenty to do around the house. The rule of the place was that each

week a different tenant had to clean the stairs and the lavatory below. When Regina's turn came, I brought in a woman to do the job, paying her fifty cents. Fifty cents was a lot of money, however, so I watched carefully to see how the work was done. It seemed to me I would be able to master it myself, with a little practice.

Next time it was our turn, I armed myself with a pail and a brush and started out bravely. The stairs and the lavatory went famously. But I carried things a little too far. I set the pail down in our own little room, poured a liberal splash of water on the floor and started to scrub. For a moment everything was quiet. Then I heard a terrific shout from below, a stamping of heels on the stairs and a furious pounding at our door. On opening, I was almost knocked down by the downstairs neighbor, who was practically raving.

"Idiot, halfwit, lout!" she screamed in Yiddish vernacular. "Where do you think you are—the Fifth Avenue Hotel? Don't you know better than to pour water on *these* floors? I'm having a flood downstairs!"

Sleeves rolled up, perspiration streaming down my face and my shirt stained with it, I was hardly in a position to be lofty with the woman. I grabbed my pail and brush and raced downstairs. There was enough water to clean her floors as well. Mopping and wringing, wringing and mopping, I finally cleared up the mess. My one consolation was that I had saved the fifty cents. We learn by experience. After that first disaster, I became a master at the scrubbing job.

Saving half-dollars was all right. But it put no groceries into the box we used for a cupboard, nor into the windowsill we used in that zero weather for an icebox. I ended my idleness by adopting a new approach. Out all day with a pushcart—no matter what I sold—I had no chance to look around and become acquainted with the city and its needs and customs, I realized. Part-time work was the thing. It

came to hand with an offer from Sallie's husband, who suggested that he could use me as cashier in his fish-store during the high-pressure Thursdays and Fridays when his clientele stormed the place for their Sabbath supplies. Five dollars was the pay, and the work was clean and not long. I snatched at it. Soon I was working other days of the week also, at a dollar and a half for each session.

Prizing the money particularly at that time because Regina was expecting her baby shortly, I nevertheless found my fish-store interlude interrupted in no uncertain manner. One day there was a lot of fish left over. Afraid that it would spoil, Sallie and her husband cornered everyone they could who sold anything, and commissioned him to sell fish for the time being. Not to be outdone, I found a pushcart at a reasonable rental and went out with a goodly stock. It wasn't quite so smelly as the herring, but it was bad enough to make me jack up the price from fifteen to eighteen cents a pound, to compensate for the odor. I got the eighteen cents, too—cutting my brother-in-law's loss down to the vanishing point. Proud and happy, confidence in my ability renewed, I determined to get rid of the last pound of fish if I had to rope someone and stick the stuff in his pocket. Midnight found my hope almost realized.

The streets were emptying, though, so I cried my few remaining fish louder than ever. *Too* loud. A policeman sauntered up. He was called Zelig, and the sight of a Jewish patrolman was in itself a wonder to a recent immigrant. Foolishly I grinned at him, as he gave me the eye.

"I suppose," he suggested, "you could show me your license if I asked you for it?"

"License?" The word was meaningless to me.

"License, license, license!" shouted Zelig, turned suddenly into a regular Cossack. "Don't you know you can't peddle without a license here?"

The best answer I could give to his scornful tirade was that I was Scharf's brother-in-law and a recent arrival.

The first statement didn't seem to impress him; the second must have been self-evident. I was given a seat in the station house. Unable to explain intelligibly, much less provide bail, I spent the night there. Over and over I told myself to be calm, that this was my confirmation as an American Bürger—a real citizen.

That was the first and last time I ever saw the inside of a police station, as a prisoner. For me it was quite enough. For Regina it was more than enough. When I didn't get home, even after midnight, panic seized her and she knew I had been killed. A stranger in this terrifying place—certainly I was dead. Crying and wringing her hands, she awakened the neighbors.

Once they learned what I had been doing, they laughed off the whole matter.

"Every good citizen has to be picked up at least once for peddling without a license," one told her. The authorities didn't bother to teach the immigrants that, he explained. They wouldn't have understood. The police just let them go ahead and peddle, and then picked them up once. After that the immigrant knew. It was the best and most lasting kind of explanation.

The neighbors' laughter increased Regina's hysteria. Their explanations were just words. Finally she thought she understood.

"My husband a criminal—in prison!" she shrieked.

There was no peace in the house until I came back in the morning, grinning from ear to ear and proclaiming to one and all that now I was truly an American. That night in the station house was a kind of baptism of fire, a stamp of authenticity. And the day's fish-peddling had brought in three dollars, which would go a long way with us, especially with the new baby coming.

The newcomer arrived ten days later, to find—in spite of the dingy room in which she lay—a handsome layette left over from the first child. The midwife who attended Regina —we knew no obstetricians and hospitals in those days— admired my wife's wise and cleanly preparations for the childbirth and expressed the wish that all her clients might be so handy.

The new daughter only increased my eagerness to dig my hands into this land and to get settled solidly. For two weeks I helped around the house, until Regina could get back on her feet. We couldn't afford to indulge ourselves. The minute she was up and around again, I took once more to the streets.

In Zacliczyn there had been an innkeeper named Brauner, who had entertained the village officials the night the snow-man substitute for the real cholera victim was buried. In Hungary I heard that this Brauner had lost his inn and had gone to America in late middle age to work—in the peculiar turning of the wheel of life—as a laborer in a sugar factory. Now I met him on the street. Joined by our common background, we combined for the time being and bought a huge stock of socks and stockings from a wholesale house. My Galician friend was confident that this was the key to the door so far barred to us.

One day with the pushcarts was enough for him, and I was left with the entire stock. A couple of days after his withdrawal, I was displaying my wares at the curb when a large woman came over and started to examine them.

"Socks for men, stockings for ladies!" I continued to chant, keeping an eye on her.

Methodically the woman picked up every pair of socks in the cart, examined it and then tossed it back in such a way that the mates fell far apart and were lost in the disordered heap. There were no helpful bits of thread holding those socks together, and there were dozens of the same

color which differed only in size. As I watched her wreaking havoc, I thought of how I would have to stand for an hour after she was gone, trying to match up the mates again. Finally I couldn't stand it.

"Madam, please!"

She looked up, with eyes like a cow.

"For Heaven's sake, Madam—don't buy anything, only leave those socks as they are!"

I still don't know why she did it. She was bigger herself than I was. Nevertheless, calmly and without emotion, she screamed. Passers-by looked at us curiously. I stood speechless. A moment later I *lay* speechless. For a burly figure had loomed up behind the woman. In that split second I had recognized him as the owner of the saloon across the street. No doubt she was his wife, and from her outcry he had thought her in some kind of danger. He was one of those who believe in asking questions afterwards. My jaw still aches when I think of it. Without even the most informal preliminaries, he knocked me cold. Leaving me flat on the pavement, he walked off with his wife—I was told.

My friend had been canny in abandoning this field, apparently. To this latest and most obvious hint even I tended to lend an ear. Socks and stockings were not for me, after that. When my legs stood firmly under me again, I trundled the cart home, buried the remaining stock in a corner of our room, and forgot the whole business.

Almost immediately I noticed that a large Columbia Street store was being sold out. Thinking that this would be a fine chance to buy some goods with which to do business, I sought my brother-in-law's advice.

"Greenhorn!" he scoffed. "You've got to be in America five years at least, before you dare to go to an auction!"

I needed no further suggestion. Looking up a young man whom Sallie had mentioned as American-born, and taking

a hundred and twenty-five dollars of the little hoard remaining to us, I went to the auction. That same evening I spent assorting a hundred and twenty-five dollars' worth of crockery of every shape, style and color. Next morning we piled our pushcarts high with the dishes and started out in opposite directions.

Hester Street was again my bonanza, and my voice my only advertising. I studied each pot, pan, glass and dish, and then proclaimed its peculiar virtues. At the end of the day I had lost my voice and had sold thirty-four dollars' worth of goods. It was a fortune. My American partner had grossed only eight. That sweetened the triumph.

My sole regret was that I couldn't obtain more stock. It wasn't every day that I found an auction, and it would not have been profitable to buy from the stores at regular prices and re-sell on the streets. On the night before Passover we sold the last of the dishes, and settled up. I came home to Regina with forty-eight dollars' profit in my pocket.

It was with lightened hearts that we sat down with our little family to enjoy the traditional holiday of liberation.

CHAPTER III

In which I conduct a primitive sit-down strike, and discover my business.

THE first Passover in America!

On that holy day in 1889 we had no more than a few dollars between us and the street. We had no special enterprise to look forward to. Still I could repeat the prayers humbly, fully conscious of their personal meaning. "He hath brought us out from bondage to freedom—from agony to rejoicing—from mourning to a festive day!" Looking around the table at my wife, my daughter and the new baby, I could feel like a king in a great land.

But even kings must work.

I had made no progress toward finding my real field. That much I knew, even while I recognized my increasing acquaintance with the city and its manners. The holiday week with its enforced idleness made me think, in spite of myself. And thought brought a touch of alarm.

It was Regina's obvious unhappiness that set me racking my brains for the proper solution. She never complained to me, though Heaven knows she had every right to. Neighbors assured her I was industrious and would find myself. Still she cried, when she thought I wasn't looking. She cried because she was homesick, because she was among strangers whose language she didn't understand, because while I was out all day she was locked in the cells the landlord called two rooms.

Finally a bit of a scene with a cousin convinced me of the

unwisdom of having installed my wife among Russian immigrants. The next morning I rented a front room, bedroom and kitchenette on the first floor of a Ridge Street house, and Regina's alarm at the added expense was eased by her delight at being once more among Hungarians.

To me this was soon to appear a masterly bit of strategy. For, concerned over the dwindling account and driven by the slightly greater expense we were incurring, my single-track mind returned once again to the Pennsylvania peddling expedition. With Regina able to visit friends and neighbors of common origin, I decided that she would keep happy enough during my absence. I mustered up my courage and broached the delicate subject.

I marshaled every argument. I argued, pleaded, commanded, threatened.

On the proposal to travel to the Slovak country Regina remained adamant. When once she set her mind, it stayed set. I recognized the symptoms. The word was "No." Once and for all. No!

I was ready to weep with frustration. So sick was I at not being able to march away with a pack on my back that I even declared a strike. If I couldn't go to Pennsylvania, which any reasonable person could recognize as my own personal gold mine, then I wouldn't do *anything*, I announced.

Mine must have been one of the early sit-down strikes. But Regina could out-sit me any day. In a couple of hours I was itching to be up and on the pavements again. It took me that long to submit to her will in the peddling question. Having leaped that hurdle at last, I knew I had to get busy. Since I couldn't go to Pennsylvania, fortune obviously couldn't be mine. Still I had to bring in a few pennies.

Dully I trudged the streets. Regina's insistence on my staying within the city limits restricted my field disastrously,

I felt. What was there for me to do but find another push-cart?

This, from some obscure obstinacy, I refused to do. I felt familiar enough with New York and its people. I wanted no more reconnoitering. I wanted action. I wanted to get my teeth into my destiny, to start to plug.

All day I walked up one street and down another, looking, looking, looking—and not knowing for what. When I came back to the house in the late evening, Regina scrutinized my face but she saw nothing there. The next day, and the next, and the next, I spent on the streets. Money was flowing in only one direction, but my mind was numb. I felt that I had to look, I groped and groped even though I could find no sense in it.

Toward the end of the fifth day I sat on an upturned box and made a belated lunch of the sandwiches Regina had given me. People brushed past, hurrying about their business. Enjoying the bustling spectacle, I forgot about my troubles for a moment. In that same moment I realized what an utter ass I was.

I was tramping the streets with roving but aimless eyes. As if I were starting out fresh in life! Certainly I was starting in a new country. But I had been a Kaufman—a merchant—in Hungary. There I had been a master of the piece-goods trade, I could spot the origin of any cloth by the feel of it on my fingertips. Tramping the streets of New York was all right—but tramping them with a purpose, a direction! Translate my piece-goods training into the commercial language of America, think "If I was a piece-goods merchant on the other side, what should I be here?"

Simple, obvious? Stupid of me not to see it immediately? The answer is "Yes" to each question. But I had to push half the carts in New York down all the streets of New York before it came into my head.

Once it *was* in, nothing could dislodge it. It gave me a

starting point. It put me on the trail of what I was looking for. Though I didn't stir from the fruit crate on which I was sitting, I lost no time in seeking it out.

In Europe I had been proud to be a piece-goods man, because piece-goods was the aristocracy of trade; in backward Central Europe the piece-goods man was clothier to the people, he was of the foundation of his society. In America my old trade was out of the question. Not only because a moderate capital was required for it, but, more important, because in this land of increasing varieties of ready manufactured items, the piece-goods man no longer had any contact with the people who purchased the clothes. He was not a producer in the sense in which I understood the word.

But if the piece-goods man was not the producer of clothing, I asked myself, who *was*?

Once I had the question clearly in mind, the answer was equally plain. It was written on every street where I saw new stores opening, stores with suits and dresses draped on hangers, overalls, shirts, skirts, blouses, trousers—every conceivable article of wearing apparel—made up and ready to be taken out and put on. To me the greatest wonder in this was not the mere quantity of garments—though that was a miracle in itself—but the fact that in America even poor people could save all the dreary, time-consuming labor of making their own clothes simply by going into a store and walking out with what they needed. *There* was a field to go into, a field to thrill to!

To my natural impulsiveness was here joined a deeper conviction. In Europe you had to go to the great capitals to find any "Fabrikanten"—manufacturers. Even there, there were few enough of them. They were at the very pinnacle of the commercial world, they made something out of raw materials, they supplied the world's needs. Here I had seen and heard of the opportunities open to the

smallest man to go into manufacturing. In the clothing trade—the trade I knew—there was so voracious a demand for garments that all you needed was a couple of yards of goods and a knowledge of how to make them up into ready-to-wear items. All my life, it seemed to me now, I had been heading for this goal. My business was to make something for people to wear—it was to buy material and to start manufacturing!

At once obstacles leaped to confront me. I had no money. I had no item. And if I did have an item, I didn't know how to make it. I had never made anything in my life.

Excitedly I disdained these objections. I would buy goods on credit, I told myself. I would select an item. I would *learn* how to make it!

A new bar fell across my way. Through my training as a businessman, I knew that to go into an already established trade would be suicide. Making an item unknown to me, but already furnished by others experienced in the line, would produce only an initial loss—while I was learning the technique—which my tiny capital could not bear.

Again my brain raced to answer. Discover a new item! Its novelty would carry it, and the lack of competition would give me time to learn the art of producing economically.

It was a mad idea altogether, and I gave it up.

Ten minutes later I was walking down Hester Street, stopping at every stand, pushcart, shop window and pack-carrying peddler. Continuously I moistened the tip of my pencil as I jotted down in a little "piece, ten cents" notebook everything I saw. I was studying the market, hunting for that novel item.

I began with men's wear. From head to foot I examined the average New Yorker, and the clothes which he considered necessary or desirable. Hats, collars, ties, shirts—down to socks and shoes—everything went into my book. On another page I listed the articles I saw for sale. Hats, collars,

ties, shirts—and all the rest—appeared on my duplicate page in due course. Everything that a man could ask for was his for the buying, in New York.

I repeated the process with women's wear. Getting assistance from Regina, I made up my list of necessities, then wandered through the streets once more, looking, asking. Again the items were duplicated on the second page. Hats, ruffles, blouses, skirts, stockings, underthings—all the way down the line the New York woman was being well taken care of.

Boys' clothing was no better. My last chance was girls' clothing.

As I spent the ninth "idle" day on it, my quest looked less and less purposeful. My original list was matched item for item by the articles I found on sale. Toward evening I had checked off the last possibility. My fond hopes were leveled. Bitterly I started home.

On the way I passed through a Slavic settlement. In the narrow, dirty street I saw a half-dozen little girls, playing hop-scotch. Five of them wore conventional dresses or skirts and blouses. The sixth wore a simple dress, with an apron over it. It was a tiny apron, cut low in front, with a tie behind. Adorning it was a little embroidery, probably strained over by a painstaking peasant mother. It touched off the costume in just such a way that in that group of six girls the eye was attracted to *her*.

I had seen these little aprons before, in Hungary and elsewhere abroad. They were useful, tidy, decorative. Almost any mother might sit down and make one for her daughter—a plain one for every day, a fancy embroidered one for holiday outfits. They were as common in Central Europe as bread and water. Yet with a sudden thrill I thought back and couldn't recall having seen a single such apron on sale in all the nine days I had been scouring the streets!

The tenth day I spent repeating my journey. Grand, Hester, Canal, Fourteenth, Twenty-third Streets—into every shop window, tray, pushcart and peddler's pack I poked once more. Excitement mounted in me as I made the rounds. Finally I could assure myself that in all the city of New York there was no one making children's aprons!

This momentous discovery I revealed to my wife.

Because she had looked on it as my compensation for staying in the city, Regina had been patient with me during the ten days of my search. Now, however, she made no secret of the fact that she found this fruit of my wanderings discouragingly puny. Completely "sold" already myself, I pooh-poohed her fears and concentrated on winning her consent to a trial.

I needed that consent, because it was Regina who would have to do the manufacturing—at least until I learned how. My idea was simple. Regina was a wonder with a sewing machine, an aged model of which we had bought soon after our arrival so that she might make clothes for herself and the children. With a few yards of material, she could sew me up some aprons, and supervise my sewing of still more. Then I would be off to the streets to test them. I was confident that they would sell out at once.

Once I was swept up by this passion, there was no stopping me. That I couldn't even sew on my own buttons didn't bother me. That I knew nothing of production methods didn't worry me. I would learn. In a week, I promised Regina, I would be an expert manufacturer. With a shrug to express her doubts, she agreed to help.

Her word was all I needed. Early the next morning I ran down to a Hester Street store and bought a hundred yards of gingham and fifty yards of white crossbar. When I got the goods laid out at home on tables, chairs, anything that came to hand, Regina took a scissors and started to cut. I watched breathlessly. First she snipped out tiny patches

which would be made up into aprons for tots. Steadily she widened the circles of gingham, for larger sizes. One at a time she cut them out, painstakingly. As I stood and admired her skill, her sure hand and flashing scissors seemed to be cutting out the pattern of our lives.

When she had the goods all cut out—there were forty pieces—she showed me the rudiments of sewing. The first lesson was threading the needle, the second, operating the machine. I marveled at the ease with which she worked the pedal up and down while paying undivided attention to the cloth she ran under the needle.

At the start my own fingers were all thumbs, and extra-clumsy thumbs at that. Again and again Regina showed me, and again and again I fumbled it. Finally I managed a straight seam. Still the bias armholes baffled me.

Ordinary sewing is with or against the grain of the cloth. Cutting and sewing on the bias means cutting and sewing *diagonally across* the grain of the cloth. It is one of the technical points of clothing making that goods cut on the bias, because of their quality of "giving"—in contrast to the rigidity of straight-cut goods—are better fitting, adapting themselves to the required difficult shapes, like armholes. The trouble in sewing on the bias comes from the same quality which makes it finer once the sewing is done. The material pulls and stretches as you work. To a man with as little serenity as myself, this kind of sewing is the best possible course of training for a sanitarium. Sitting at the machine, remembering to pump up and down with my feet, and trying at the same time to sew armholes on the bias was my nearest approach to undiluted H—. But it had to be done.

That day comes back to me now. It seemed compounded of endless yards of gingham and white goods, of the feel of the stitches under my fingers, the sound of the needle making its million darts, the smell of the oil churned up by

the whirling wheel as I slammed away at the pedal. Lunch, tea, dinner—all were forgotten. Toward midnight Regina suddenly threw down the apron on which she had been doing small corrective sewing.

"This whole thing is crazy!" she said.

I don't know what I answered, if anything. But I know, from the next morning, that I must have sent her off to bed. She was exhausted. For myself, I stayed at the machine. In the little circle of yellow light from the oil lamp, I worked the cloth under the needle. In the early hours of the morning my eyes were blurred, but I could feel that my hand was firmer. The cloth began to move faster, more confidently. The hum of the needle was more even, almost cheerful. The gingham looked pleasant, the white goods smiled.

At five o'clock Regina awoke with a start. She called in to me to come to bed. I laughed.

"You and your impatience!" I shouted. "All the armholes are hemmed. Every one!"

At six-thirty Regina got up. Without a word she looked over the armholes. If they had been poorly done, she would not have let me go out with them. I hung on her expression. Still she said nothing. Then abruptly she picked up her scissors, cut out buttonholes and started to show me how to set on buttons.

She sat cutting, I sat sewing. Three buttons went on the back of every apron. When she finished her task, she joined me at mine. By ten in the morning our aprons were finished. There were forty of them. I picked up a long piece of string, threaded it through the armholes of the aprons and slung the batch of them over my arm. We didn't dare invoke assistance aloud. I kissed Regina and walked out.

Whether it was because I was fortified by the knowledge that no one else in New York was selling the same item, because I wished so desperately to sell my goods, or because I was simply so tired that I wanted to get home in a hurry,

I never bawled out my wares as inspiringly as that morning.

"Children's aprons—little girls' aprons. Colored ones ten cents—white ones fifteen cents. Little girls' aprons!"

Into those prices I had figured only the cost of the materials, not labor. I wanted to see if aprons would sell.

By twelve o'clock I knew.

Hester Street was taken by storm. A little before one I slipped the last apron off my string, jingled the change in my pocket once for good luck, and raced home.

"Ma, we've got our business!" I shouted as I burst into the house. "We've made two dollars and sixty cents in three hours of selling!"

I grasped her round the waist and, ignoring her protests, swung her in wild circles.

"You've got to help me," I cried. "We'll work together. Ma, *this is our business!*"

CHAPTER IV

In which I hire my first employee, thank God for Italians, and get too big for my hat.

BEGINNING with a capital of exactly one hundred and twenty-five dollars, we set out to conquer the commercial world. Clutching my fortune, I visited H. B. Claflin & Company—a large wholesale piece-goods house of the day—and found a salesman who spoke German. My English, I explained, was not adequate for the things I had to tell him. The net result was that on that same afternoon we received a hundred and twenty-five dollars' worth of ginghams and white goods. That was the foundation of our business.

Quickly we repeated the routine of the day before. Regina cut out the aprons, while I watched every move. Before long I tried the scissors myself and, after a few ludicrous mistakes, got the hang of it. Once I had cut out a correct size, it seemed a terrible waste to me to cut out only one apron at a time. By experimentation I discovered I could cut up to six thicknesses of material with one stroke, and the work went faster.

Since those aprons had to be turned out as quickly as possible, there were no union hours for us. We worked late into the night, and stopped only when we could no longer see the cloth in front of us. When the cutting was finished, we sat to the sewing. Finally we had ten dozen little aprons. I slung them over my shoulders and arms and took to the streets again.

Beginning in Hester Street, I moved through Eldridge and on to Crosby Street, the heart of the Italian neighborhood, where at once I found a great demand. Into the yards and alleyways I went, shouting and displaying my stock. Within two days the last apron was sold, and we had a fine profit. Without letting a moment slip by, I spread out more goods and Regina and I sat down again to our "manufacturing."

If ever there was a better soldier than my wife, I have never heard of her. Brought under terrible conditions to a strange land, imprisoned in a dark and cell-like room, burdened with housework, afflicted with a throat ailment arising from the bitter cold of that winter, she never murmured nor slackened in her work and encouragement. Once I demonstrated that I was staying by her side, she marched ahead without faltering or questioning. When I insisted on bringing in a "green" young girl from the other side—who was tickled to get six dollars a month over board and lodging—she spent the time saved from the housework at the sewing table.

Coming one day across the pile of socks and stockings I had thrown into a corner on abandoning my pushcart, she stuffed them in a basket and stood out on the sidewalk offering them for sale. Having disposed of all of them in a couple of sessions, she surprised me with an unexpected addition to the family treasury.

Every day she pulled at least her share of the load, and generally more. An average morning found us up at six o'clock. After prayers, we had our breakfast. At seven I was out on the road. While I was away, Regina took care of the household, cared for the children, and then concentrated on sewing the goods we had cut the night before. Invariably when I got home, at seven in the evening, the children were washed and cleaned and put to bed, and my supper was on the table waiting for me. When the dishes

were finished, Regina joined me in cutting and sewing, to made ready for the next day's peddling. Between ten o'clock—when I sent her off to sleep—and twelve-thirty or one, I generally managed to finish off two or three dozen aprons myself. Then I too hurried to bed to snatch the few hours of rest which seemed to be all I needed.

Those days were hectic, but happy. The wonder and sweetness of them I cannot explain. It was all struggle and sweat. Work with the heart and work with the hands. Slaving without sleep. My own shoulders aching and welted, Regina's hands as well as my own rough with calluses a quarter of an inch thick, from the cutting. It was sweat and struggle. But the worst of it was fun, because everything was ahead, because great days were coming. It didn't matter then whether they actually did come or not. We *knew* they were coming.

We ate, drank and slept only for the work. We saw it growing under our hands. We came to realize how for us this was in the most literal sense the land of opportunity. We were starting from scratch, yet almost at once we understood that there were no boundaries to the progress we could make!

Sales in our immediate vicinity were so easy and so rapid that very soon it was impossible to "manufacture" and still keep on the road myself at the same time. With a unique thrill I hired my first employee.

Mike was a boy of eighteen. At first glimpse he looked ordinary enough. He was of medium size, with a common face. He wasn't with us long, however, before we found out that he was about as filthy as a human being can become by constant effort, and that he ate like a horse. His capacity for work was equally enormous, though. We overlooked his other excesses. We paid him the magnificent wage of six dollars a week, which he was delighted to get, and watched him with constant amazement. For the first time

I encountered someone who could work me under the table. Enough food didn't exist for him—but neither did enough hours. From morning to night, with time out only for meals, that boy pounded away at the machine. With Regina directing him, and helping him during moments left over from housework, Mike sewed the goods we had cut at night. Each day he caught up on the previous night's prepared work, so that I was free to be on the road constantly.

For the first time I began to see a little of New York. My experience of America had been restricted up to this time to a small section of New York's slums. I began to widen my tour.

Brooklyn was one of my earliest discoveries. Having found that Italian settlements were the best markets for my goods, I sought out the community centered in Catherine Street and almost had to fight off customers. Catherine Street presented a splendid market, but it had its drawbacks, too. Nearby was a section inhabited almost exclusively by Irish immigrants, or second-generation families. One day my market-place was invaded by a gang of little toughs. While making my way along the street, I was suddenly confronted by ten or twelve of them.

"Look at the Jew!"

The cry stunned me.

"Jew with the whiskers—Jew—Jew—Jew!"

They nudged one another, winked and shouted with laughter as they danced around and chanted their slogan. One picked up a piece of ice and threw it at me. The others admired his ingenuity and followed suit. I was pelted with sharp-pointed ice-lumps. One hit me in the eye.

For a minute they had me off guard. I had had to come from the intolerance of Europe to hear the cry raised in the Land of Promise! The sudden rage passed over and instead of fighting back blindly I called the boys over. That must

have surprised them. They didn't know quite what to make of it, and approached warily.

Slowly, trying to pick out the proper words, I explained that I was trying to make a living. As their fathers were trying, as they themselves would be trying soon enough, if not already. In no way was I interfering with them or theirs. I had something to sell. Their mothers and sisters might want to buy my goods. If not, no harm was done on either side. In closing I fished out a dime.

"Here, go buy yourselves some candy," I told them. "And try to remember the next time you feel like plaguing some hard-working man!"

Puzzled, the boys snatched the dime and ran off. I went through the rest of the day with an eye swollen and blue. Explaining it to Regina that night as the result of a fall, I looked at it later in the mirror as I applied cold water to it before getting to my cutting.

The eye looked puzzled, it seemed, and probably hurt. I looked at the beard which had aroused the comments. It was the same small Van Dyke which I wear today. It was neat, trimmed evenly. But it marked me for a Jew, evidently. Suddenly I knew why most of the peddlers avoided the streets bordering on the East River, where the loafers sat in the sun or brawled on the docks. Apparently the messengers had been a little optimistic in their reports to us back in Europe. America was not quite the land of the free, the land where there was no color or creed distinction. For a while it hurt, that knowledge. And then came a new and greater knowledge. That we had not attained an ideal society was not the fundamental fact, I understood. What *was* the essence of America, to me, was that freedom and tolerance were at least held up as the ideals to strive for, where in other countries they were deliberately scorned. In the United States good people were fighting more and more successfully for right and justice

and fair play. And the *government* itself was the first in the world to devote itself openly and proudly to establishing true democracy for all its people.

It was therefore no coincidence that the day following my encounter with the toughs I saw the better face of the coin. At that time no bridge or subway was available to Brooklyn. I had to take the ferry. Arriving at the pier after walking all the way across town from home, I fished in my pocket and found that I had gone off with only a penny to my name. To have gone home for money would have cost me the whole day's tour. In desperation I looked around.

Nearby stood a priest, in round collar and long black gown. He must have seen that I was troubled, because he came over suddenly and asked, with a pleasant smile, whether he could help me. I explained my difficulty. For lack of two cents I would have to lose my whole day's work.

Smiling again, the priest dug under his cassock. Not only did he furnish me the two cents I needed to add to my lone penny for ferry fare, but he was concerned about my having something to eat later in the day, and my fare back at night. I explained that I hoped to have sold some goods by then, bringing in some change.

"If I haven't," I laughed, "I don't deserve to come home anyway!"

Refusing to give me his name or address, the priest insisted I keep the money—the amount was not important, it was what it did for me that mattered. He suggested only that perhaps I too might someday find occasion to help a stranger.

During my tours I had opportunities aplenty to become acquainted with the various nationalities that had sent contingents to New York. And the more I saw of them, the better I liked my new country. After Brooklyn I discovered Hoboken, Jersey City and Newark, across the Hudson. I

met Irish, Czech, Italian, Spanish, Russian, a dozen other "brands"—and all of them just plain Americans. Each day found me in another district. To Regina I gave evasive answers, knowing that she would raise the devil if she knew I was venturing out of town. After exploring all the downtown section, Brooklyn and the west shore of the Hudson, I heard of Harlem. I girded myself for the new expedition.

The trip up I made by horse-car.

Cross-town cars ran on Essex, Grand, Delancey, Third and Fourteenth Streets, making connections with the up and downtown trolley. I used to climb aboard the uptown car as near the driver as I could manage, so that I could watch him handling the four horses out front. His was no simple job of twisting a lever. He had to keep four animals under tight rein, starting and stopping them at every intersection to take on or let off passengers. The maddening stopping and starting kept the horses in a constant tension, and the driver—after an hour or so—in a constant swearing. In rain, snow or sleet he had to stand exposed at the front of the car, maneuvering up and downtown on the slippery rails. No doubt he wasn't sorry when electrically-powered cars came in. Occasionally I would ride on the steam-driven "El," but the horse-car was better suited to my needs and finances.

Generally the trip uptown took about an hour. It was practically a survey of the city. Near my home the streets —Ridge, Hester, Essex—were poor. Tenements and shanties rose on every hand. Plumbing was unheard of. Pushcarts and wagons cluttered the pavements, peddlers with their little stands obstructed the sidewalks. Grocery and fish-stores dominated all the rest, as their odors dominated the air. In front of them stood hawkers selling pickles and fruits. Dirt piled high in the gutters, and a veneer of manure overlaid everything.

Rivington and Houston Streets were more residential, and

hence cleaner. The numbered streets, from First on up, saw fewer and fewer stores, more and nicer homes. Still further uptown the swanky residential section was not far from the line. Elegant houses looked down on us. While there were few really open pieces of land left below 149th Street, vacant lots with trees and shrubbery were not too uncommon. From First Avenue over to Park, the city was built up only in small private homes. No skyscrapers crowded out the sun. Sheep frisked everywhere in Central Park, and the green of the leaves was a healthy color. On the fine streets we passed, splendid Victorias rolled behind spirited bays and prancing blacks. Gentlemen in top hats, ladies in fashionable clothes bowed and nodded graciously.

Gradually we drew past these finer sections. Again ramshackle wooden huts and disheveled tenements lined the streets. Around 100th Street I saw pigs in the gutters, rooting in piles of garbage. Then we were in Harlem.

Around me, as I got off, were only tenements, three and four stories high, hung with wash, bedclothes, pots and pans and drooping plants. There was no glamor in these mangy firetraps. If I had been a rebel, I would have torn them down with my two hands. Instead I searched them for customers.

The best way to do it was to probe through the black halls into the back yards. Taking a position in the center of the refuse-littered space, I used to uncork a terrific shout and follow it with as musical a crying of my wares as I knew how. When heads popped into window-frames, I repeated the cry. The housewives sometimes came down into the yard and bought there. More often they beckoned from the windows, and I had to plod up three or four flights of quaking, groaning stairs, ready always to brace myself if the rotten wood gave way.

To be surrounded by haggling women on the top floor of a dank tenement may not seem appealing. I found it

exciting. I found it exciting even when I counted my losses from theft. I used to carry girls' aprons on a string around my neck, petticoats on a string slung over my left shoulder, women's aprons in a bundle in my right hand. My left hand I used for making change. What with all the weights and fluttering pieces of cloth on me, I couldn't tell very well whether an apron or petticoat or two disappeared while I was changing a fifty-cent piece.

Once in Hoboken all the women of the neighborhood were gathered in one house at the time of my visit. From under my very nose one of them snatched three petticoats. I was looking right at her when she lifted them off my string, and she knew it. There was nothing to do but ignore it. By the way she did it I knew they would all scratch my eyes out if I dared to accuse her. Or their men, lounging in the flats, would slit my throat.

I wasn't imagining things. It had been done to too many. An unidentified and unidentifiable body lying in an alley attracted little attention in those days. Into the warrens which housed much of the city's population the police scarcely dared to venture. I had sense enough to keep my mouth shut, though I flamed inside. It was a question of getting out with as small a loss as possible—just that and nothing more. There was no stopping to argue right and wrong. I flourished the few Italian words I could recall and escaped from the section with the loss of only a few more aprons. Next time I came around, everyone smiled, and nothing was stolen. That was the way it went.

One day in Brooklyn a woman whom I knew as a sort of social leader in her neighborhood tried an apron on her daughter. If she bought it, all her friends and camp-followers would flock in to buy similar garments, so I was particularly anxious to make the sale. I racked my brain for the proper, delightful word to clinch it. Somewhere in the dim

recesses of memory I thought I caught it. I had heard a woman use it as she hugged her child.

"That apron looks beautiful," I told the little girl. "You look just like a—a monkey!"

"I do, huh?" The girl turned on me furiously, wiped off my fatuous grin. "If that's what it makes me look like, keep your old apron and try to sell it at the zoo!"

As she tore off the garment, her mother started screaming curses at me. My pleading explanations only provoked new outbursts from an expanding circle of menacing women. I retreated in haste. Later a friend told me what a monkey was, and it was a long time before I could face that mother again.

Another time I blundered into a tenement on 110th Street on a high Italian holiday. A housewife called me to come up, but as I reached the top floor a burly digger blocked my way.

"Get the hell out of here or I'll knock you through the side of the house!" he roared.

There was nothing to do but turn around and get out fast. Which I did.

In those peddling days I learned every trick in the bag. And every one came in handy. These twists were in selling, little ways of intriguing the customer, *not* of deceiving him. Mine was a one-price policy. No haggling. Cost plus a small profit—take it or leave it. It was the honest way, the pleasant way, the way which made misunderstanding impossible.

It was also the profitable way.

As I roamed, business was always one jump ahead of me. People began to look for "the apron man." Housewives recommended me to friends, praised my goods. It was at their suggestion that I began making women's aprons and petticoats. The new stock went as fast if not faster than the old.

Our problem became one of production rather than of selling.

Technical difficulties blocked us for a time. Sizes were a problem. It was all guesswork and too often when a customer wanted an 8, I had a 6; when she asked for a 3, I had a 4. I wrestled with the situation. In those days of less ready-to-wear goods, I knew nothing of patterns and "marks." Other people had the then up-to-date ancestors of modern automatic devices but I, fresh from Europe, had only my eyes and a yardstick. I had to improvise my system.

I began to carry a little book around with me. In Catherine Street an Italian mother tried an apron on her daughter. The child was four. The apron hung down to the ground.

"Why you no got the sizes?" asked the woman. "I like the color. What's the matter with the size?"

I murmured an apology, in German, grinned at the woman, and whipped out a tape-measure. While the astonished child stood too frightened to move, I measured her from neck to waist, then from the waist down to a proper length for the skirt, and finally around the waist. I jotted down the measurements, made certain that the girl was neither tall nor short, fat nor thin for her age, and made a check next to the dimensions I had inscribed. Size 4 was born.

To appease the mother, I took down the number of her house. On the doors of the separate apartments in the firetraps there were no numbers, however. I wrote down "Third floor, second door from the stairs." Once again I grinned my thanks to the woman, and moved off.

To have tried to explain to that mother what I was doing would have been hopeless. Instead I returned the following week and sought her out.

"Here is the apron for your daughter," I told her. "This time it will fit."

Since I had cut the garment to the child's measure, it fit her like a glove. Delighted, the mother immediately brought me a host of new customers.

During those weeks I measured every child I could lay my hands on. I experimented on my own Rose at home, checking her dimensions against the figures entered for others of her age, in my book. I must have visited half the houses in Catherine Street, Hoboken and Harlem to bring surprised mothers the aprons I had cut to measure for their children, my unconscious models. With the final averages I struck, I felt I had the proper measurements for every age group from two to six. When I took to the road again, it was with garments cut, however roughly, for size.

Soon we found even this improved method of production —it was still, of course, actually as primitive as ancient handwork with the exception of the foot-pumped sewing-machine —no longer adequate to the demand. It was with a sense of tremendous pride that I insisted, and that Regina finally acknowledged, that our quarters were too small. We entered on a great undertaking. We stepped up one rung in the world. We rented a store!

Sheriff Street was the site. We had our store in front, with a couple of rooms for living, in the back. A place for our stock to be displayed a little, a place to work, and a *separate* place to live—it seemed a great deal and it was a great deal. Most thrilling of all, I had returned to my status as a merchant, I had even attained the lofty rank of "Fabrikant"—manufacturer. We were tearfully grateful.

Of course we had only two hundred dollars in the world. And every morning I was still out with my pack, treading my route. But Regina, I knew, was in the store, our store, supervising the sewing and handling the customers who were coming in in ever increasing numbers. Women brought children, tried on aprons, and bought. Peddlers got wind of the apron trade and bought supplies. Storekeepers from

roundabout dropped in, picked up a few items to put on their counters for testing, and then began to come back for more. Retail and wholesale, we handled all comers as fast as we could produce our goods.

Gradually I spent a little more time on selling to stores. After two months I found it impossible to pay sufficient attention to this wholesale trade and to my peddling at the same time. Reluctant to abandon routes which had been netting thirty dollars a week, I tried to break in a brother-in-law who had come over six months before. I felt very big-hearted about being able to hand over a nice business and a steady income to a recent arrival, after the struggle I had had to build it up. I might have spared myself the fine emotion, for the first day I let him go out alone, he didn't come home and his wife accused me of causing his death. After a hectic all-night search, we finally located him in Brownsville, Brooklyn. I still don't know how he got there. After one more desperate week I bade farewell altogether to the road. It was always there if ever I had to take to it again. In the meantime I was needed in the store.

There Regina sold goods out front, while I cut material and tried at the same time to keep the girls occupied at their machines. Unable to carry on with Mike alone, I had hired three girls and had bought machines for them. A hum and a buzz filled my ears pleasantly from eight in the morning to six at night.

From aprons I branched into dresses for children.

From my study of the market I knew that only three men were making children's dresses in 1890. One was an East Side tailor, near me, who made only to order, while the other two turned out an expensive product with which I had no desire at all to compete. I wanted to make "popular price" stuff—wash dresses, silks and woolens. It was my goal to produce dresses that the great mass of the people could afford, dresses that would—from the business angle—sell

equally well to both large and small, city and country stores. With Regina's help—she always had excellent taste and judgment—I made up a line of samples. Displaying them to all my "old" customers and friends, I hammered home every point—my dresses would save mothers endless work, the materials and sewing were as good and probably better than anything that could be done at home, the price was right for quick disposal.

Though no particular style distinguished these early efforts, at the time they were novelties. In a day when there was no competition, it was perhaps only natural that the stores should have snapped them up and commanded me to go home and make more. I obeyed with delight.

Dresses afforded a far greater thrill than monotonous aprons. They were of course only staple models that we put out, but at least they presented more of a problem, they were more exciting to work with. I enjoyed a fierce pride in producing them. Every time a piece of material flowered in a completed garment, I looked at it with jealous eyes. It was something I had made. Something added to the world's goods. Something to make life richer, and easier. Then forget such nonsense and plunge into the next piece of innocent gingham. Cut, sew, twist—and a new creation. Sleep was time wasted. I lived at a peak.

The girls caught our fire and worked like beavers. Money was certainly not what drove them. I paid ten and twelve dollars a week. In those days we paid only by the week, so that there was no speed-up like that of piecework, where the worker is paid by the amount he turns in. Between myself and the girls there was no barrier. They worked as hard and as fast as they could. Many men in other lines, taking advantage of the constant flood of immigrants and the resultant unorganized, cheap labor, took in learners, at two and three dollars a week. They kept them as "learners" long after they had grown skilled. I found, on the other

hand, that able girls, decently paid according to the level of the times, gave better work and friendlier work.

Those girls were, to all intents and purposes, members of the family, although they were a little better treated. Upon Regina they looked as a mother. Many a night they stayed overtime and shared our supper, willing to plug along for the good of the struggling business. They got paid for it, certainly, but there was more than that in their co-operation. We, in our turn, felt the same way. Occasionally we would manage to knock off and, for a thrill, pile into a trolley and go for an exciting ride to the ferries and over to Hoboken. Whenever the circus came to town, we were always there in the gallery, howling with the best of them. Kids, girls and myself—Regina never cared for it—we screamed ourselves hoarse.

Our toughest problems seemed to melt away in those wonderful years. 1891 saw us abandoning the Sheriff Street store for a larger place on the intersection of two busy streets, Essex and Hester. Our wholesale trade mounted steadily. Under Regina's hand, the retail sales followed. By January, 1892, we had twenty girls working in the back, and among our customers were such outlets as Ridley Brothers on Grand Street, McPartland and Flaherty on Eighth Avenue, and Bloomingdale Brothers on Fifty-ninth Street.

A year later I was forced to abandon aprons altogether by the pressure stores put on us to make dresses. Month after month of this constantly expanding business induced us to move again—this time to the better retail section of Hester Street. There women thronged our shop from opening to closing. Buyers from the stores visited once and again. The sewing quarters we continued to maintain on Essex Street hummed steadily. For the first time Regina began to feel that I had not been just a dreamer for leaving Hungary.

Because of these continuing marvels, it was perhaps not a matter for wonder that my reach exceeded my grasp, that I grew impatient and tried to cross to the day *after* tomorrow without going through tomorrow first.

When Dan Wallach came to me and suggested going into partnership, I jumped at the chance.

CHAPTER V

In which my hat grows too big for me again, and an angel comes to my rescue.

DAN WALLACH had been a clerk in a peddler's-supply store where I bought lace for trimming.

I had met him not long after beginning to make aprons. More and more friendly, as time went on, with this stout, light-hearted Czech, I had stood up as his best man when he married his employer's daughter. I saw him often while he operated a dry goods store, and envied him his greater degree of Americanization. When he confessed one day, that he was tired of dry goods and that he would like to go into strictly wholesale dress manufacturing with me in the downtown business district, I saw the gates to "big-time" enterprise opening.

"Downtown" was the new magic word in my vocabulary. I was working like a dog and living up to the hilt, but always on the next block, across the river, over the hill, was something bigger and better. It was not that I was not contented with my lot, that I didn't enjoy every minute of every day, no matter how depressing it was. I was infected with an enthusiasm for new things which has never left me. This time was no exception.

I suppose it was because the idea was new that I went for it, hook, line and sinker. I had no trouble, however, in finding plenty of good reasons.

I would have the satisfaction of moving out of the East Side and into the downtown district peopled exclusively by

businessmen, by true merchants. In my mind I had already brushed off the clogging dust of Hester Street with its hangovers of Europe. I wanted to be a true American, in thought and speech and action, and Dan, with his greater degree of naturalization, would help me to that goal.

More important was the fact that new money would come into the business. With nothing more than my own puny reserve to fall back on, I did not dare expand as I wanted to. With Dan investing his larger capital, my fears would be set at rest. We could secure credits from banks. We could speed up our business to take full advantage of the growing market opportunities.

The Panic of 1893 was just on its way out. For a year there had been literal panic among the poor. Everywhere lines of people had swung out over the sidewalks—lines for bread, for soup, for coal. On the East Side people starved. Families huddled around empty stoves, ached for something to eat, waited for miracles. One miracle did occur when Nathan Straus sent out a fleet of wagons with free bags of coal, and established centers where the first pasteurized milk ever made available to the masses was doled out in sanitary containers to every poor child in the city, regardless of creed or color. Such benefactors were not numerous.

With 1894, however, stoves were beginning to be stoked, cupboards to be filled anew with groceries. For men found jobs once more, money returned to circulation. I saw a clear field ahead for a product which was at once good, cheap and unique.

"We'll be in the wholesale trade," I cried enthusiastically. "We won't have to slave night and day to sell to single customers. We'll sell to stores. We'll sell in dozens and even bigger lots. With the same effort it takes today to sell one dress, we'll sell a hundred!"

To my great surprise, Regina opposed the whole project.

"I don't like it," she said. "I can't tell you why, but I just don't like it!"

Refusing to yield to so irrational a prejudice, I marshaled further arguments. I cited the chief point in the project's favor, over and above the simple business reasons. It would enable us to move out of the slums!

We hadn't had a decent home since we had been in America. On Rivington Street we had had two little cubby holes in the rear. I was peddling aprons from morning to night so I had not minded it. For Regina and the growing children it wasn't happy. In front of us was a barber shop. In the flat there was perpetual twilight. Life centered around the stove, which we used for both cooking and heating. That stove, I remember, had to be kept spotless and shining. Many a night I came home to find a rag and a bit of grease waiting for me, so that I could rub and scrub after Regina had given out from sheer exhaustion. It was her pride and joy, and little enough she had then. That shining stove was, I suppose, a sort of symbol to her, it enabled her to retain her self-respect. For other comforts were few. It would be simple enough to check up, for the house is still there, although by this time the altruistic landlord may have installed gas jets.

Moving to Sheriff Street was a help. We had a whole bedroom to ourselves, and the three children had a fairly large room next to us. Of course we cooked and ate in this second room also, but at least there was space to breathe.

Essex Street marked our rise into the front-room aristocracy. The two rooms we occupied were no more each than ten by twelve, but they were as light as any up and down the block. We had running water, too. If we boiled it, we had hot water. We bathed the children in the wooden basin the girl used for the family clothes, and Regina and I went to the bath-houses usually run by the Chevrah—

Association. Most important, we had real gas light. But still behind our living quarters was the working room.

Moving the store to Hester Street was another step forward, though even that was hardly a decent location. New York's extremes of weather—cold as the North Pole in winter, hotter than H— in summer—made my family suffer visibly, in those mean little rooms. In those days health was an even more precarious proposition than in the slums of today. Vaccinations, injections, serums and tests were all in the future. On the East Side and in every other poor section children especially died by the scores. Dysentery alone, unchecked by proper care and proper education of mothers, used to snuff out the lives of two thousand babies a week during the unbearable hot spells.

I was never one to confuse a hard life with an unwholesome life. Certainly it's good for children to come to grips with life early—but a life made tough by hard work, not by hard living. I can't help getting angry at people who look at other people's children growing up meagerly in poverty-stricken tenements and say it's good for them. It is not good for them. It wasn't good for my own children.

Our second daughter's ordinary measles, for instance, was fanned by drafts and polluted air into throat and lung complications. As always I called the finest doctors I knew, and called them at once, but as if to mock their best efforts, she died in pain. Even after the first bereavement we were not immune. Toni, a two-year-old baby with smiling eyes, was attacked by a respiratory infection, again attributed by the doctors directly to the ramshackle quarters in which we were obliged to live. Her pitiful death left me with the burning determination that my children would have every opportunity for normal growth that I could gain for them —and that they would have it at the very earliest possible moment.

Up to this time we had been obliged to live in or near

our place of business because Regina was such a vital part of it. For almost five years she had been doing double duty, acting as my assistant with one hand, governing the growing household with the other. Now Rose, Max and Will were a full-time job, and it looked as if there would be another addition to the tribe. If transferring my family to a healthier atmosphere meant releasing Regina from the demands of business and carrying on myself, well, it was only time anyway, and past time. I was prepared to make the break. With my business shifted to the reputable district downtown, I explained, I would establish my home uptown, away from the stench of the tenements.

To me this seemed the unanswerable argument in favor of the Wallach partnership. Still Regina shook her head.

"Stay on the East Side a while yet," she begged. "Do things slowly. Build on a solid foundation. If *I'm* content to live in a mean way, to drudge day and night and keep a smiling face, why should you complain?"

The fact that her words were true only stiffened my resolution. I looked elsewhere for approval.

"Your wife is right again," smiled Adolph Gluck, a friend and good customer who had a retail shop on Grand Street. "Move slowly but surely," he advised.

Still another consultant was Joe Meyers, nephew of, and buyer for, Bloomingdale's. He couldn't see my point of view either.

When, with all my searching, I could find no one to tell me what I wanted to hear, Reason told me to forget all about Wallach and to pay attention to the business under my fingers. Reason is a great thing, but it is not all-powerful. Two weeks after I gave up my grandiose dream, I was in the depths of a nervous breakdown.

I wanted to grow, to employ crowds of people. And here I was, cramped in a little retail-wholesale shop, dealing with customers who wanted one dress or two petticoats! At

night I lay awake and thought of my frustration. During the day I couldn't stand to look at the patrons barging in and out of our little shelf-encircled store. It made me sick to see them, and the puny little place that was mine. I began to stay in the house more and more. Looking through the window I saw strange sights, I heard strange sounds. I liked to be alone.

How my wife managed during those weeks I have no idea. Work, home, children—she kept everything going, yet contrived to be around me every minute of the day and night. She walked with me, took me out to the Seventh Street Park to sit in the sun, talked by the hour. It has all faded into a blurred impression of endless arguing—Regina trying to spur me on, to build up my confidence, I insisting that I was through, useless, derelict. For six weeks my depression continued. Gradually, under pressure of Regina's protestations and assurances, my ego began to recover. Then came her final concession.

"If a partnership with Dan Wallach will bring back your health and happiness," Regina vowed, "then that partnership you shall have!"

My melancholy was erased almost immediately. Eagerly I joined forces with Dan and plunged into the new work.

Overnight I became a big man. We had a loft on Canal Street, near Broadway, in the real downtown merchants' district. We had forty girls working for us, each making a complete dress at a time. Making all the patterns and designs myself, I gave them to the cutters who in turn handed the cut bundles of cloth to the operators. A good girl could make three or four dozen dresses a day. The work was long, six days a week from eight to six, and the pay was moderate—an average of sixteen dollars a week, with extra for overtime. I handled every inside detail of buying, labor and production, while Wallach did the selling. We did well from the start.

At home we did equally well. Moving out of the deepest slums and drawing twenty-five dollars a week from the business, we raised our standard of living. In those days a pound of meat cost twelve cents, potatoes could be had almost for the asking, and a quart of milk, unpasteurized and probably buzzing with bacteria, cost all of six cents. On our income we lived better than we had been doing, and saved besides. In the summer we took rooms for a few weeks on Long Island. Though I used to leave home at seven in the morning and come back at eleven or midnight, life looked bright. My family's complaints at not seeing me except on the Sabbath I waved aside with a lordly gesture. At last I was a real manufacturer, a man of standing, selling to big stores.

Commercial problems then were not what they are today. There was no competition. That may sound like a manufacturer's paradise. It was almost that. The only hitch in our workings was the very virtue which made them promising. We had a new product. In itself that was a huge advantage. But we had to create a demand for that product. Mothers of America were accustomed to the buying of cloth and the laborious sewing of dresses. We had to overcome the force of habit of generations, to demonstrate to skeptical women that they could buy good, stylish dresses for their daughters for as little as a dollar apiece.

We seemed to be making fine progress. Stores began to send in larger and larger repeat orders. I foresaw a greater and greater future. I watched our little capital expanding slowly as we plowed returns back into the business, and could hardly wait to turn it over again and again in the course of the year. On the one hand the days flew in my work, on the other—in the slow pyramiding of our available funds—they dragged exasperatingly.

For two years I watched on pins and needles. I might just as well have sat back calmly.

At the end of the second year a customer on Hester Street failed, taking two thousand dollars of our money down with him. Immediately after him, as luck had it, other stores "folded" to the tune of another couple of thousand in unpaid bills. As creditors clamored around us, Wallach and I faced the fact that our capital was wiped out in one stroke, all our careful accumulation leveled and made ridiculous. We were holding the bag for forty-nine hundred dollars, and we had no cash at all. There was no recourse but to bankruptcy. The world crumbled away under my feet. The clever manufacturer was left without store, customers, capital, or good name. A clean sweep. And a family waited confidently at home for food and shelter.

While I moped Regina never said one word of reproach, though the disaster had been brought on by my ignoring her advice and pleas. Then abruptly, without making speeches, she produced five hundred incredible dollars which she had saved from the weekly money I had given her!

"I noticed a store on Rivington Street," she said. "We'll start all over again—making dresses and selling them."

Even then I had the audacity to protest.

"Make dresses to order, like a tailor?" I demanded, bitterly.

The whole thing was fantastic, distasteful. I went off on a new tangent. California was the golden land! After all, why did we have to stay in New York, where we had landed? There was a great continent stretched out before us. The old itch to be up and away stirred again.

Regina squelched it abruptly. I had had my innings, now she would have hers. There were four mouths to feed besides our own now, and it was she who would have to see them empty if my rainbow-chasing brought a deepening of disaster. If she couldn't do it with my help, she said flatly, she would do it alone! Deliberately she rented a

tiny cubicle on Rivington Street, with a couple of rooms overhead, and settled down to her sewing.

I hated every minute of it. In Essex and Hester Streets we had sold chiefly to Russian women, women who knew what they wanted, picked out what they liked and bought it without fuss. On Rivington Street we were exposed to Hungarian immigrants, women who sniffed at every item and turned a dress over and over and inside out sixteen times before rejecting it with a sneer.

"What terrible buttonholes!"

"Why are the stitches so big in this hem? Can't you make small, neat ones?"

"That price is too high. I'll give you a quarter less!"

Endless comments. Endless haggling. It was more than I could stomach. Once again I walked out and roamed the streets. Mulling over the unhappy twists and turns of fate, I avoided friends and acquaintances. Dreaming of California, wondering only how I could ever induce Regina to leave, I stayed out of the lighted streets, sneaked along back alleys, walked with head down and shoulders bent. I was profoundly ashamed of the mess I had made, sick to death of the stigma I carried as a bankrupt, hopeless of the future. Then one day I came face to face with Adolph Gluck.

The son of a gentleman highly respected for his culture and learning in Hungary, Gluck had been helpful to me from the day I met him. He had been an integral part of my local telephone system. Still a rarity in those days, telephones were few and far between. Nevertheless, Joe Meyers, Bloomingdale's buyer, frequently managed to save himself a trip down to the East Side by calling me and giving his order over the wire. Not quite so simple as it sounds, however. For the only phone in the neighborhood was in Silverman's Silver Dollar Saloon. When the call came in for me, the bartender would come out on the sidewalk and bawl

down the street, "Borgenicht!" I never missed that friendly voice. Scooting out of my own little store, I would run to get Adolph. Joe Meyers talked no German, and my English was not equal to the test of the telephone. Gluck took the order in English, and translated it to me.

Even after I had disregarded his advice and gone in with Wallach, this friend had remained loyal. More than once I had borrowed small sums from him to tide over a perilous credit situation. On Saturday afternoons I had dropped into his store to chat with him.

Now, after my crash, I couldn't face him. When I saw him on the street, I turned away hastily, hoping he hadn't recognized me. Suddenly a voice called out.

"Borgenicht!"

Then a finger prodded me on the shoulder. Gluck had pursued me down the block.

"How are you?" I mumbled, head down.

"I'm fine," he smiled. "But how are *you*?"

There was no sense trying to put a fine face on it to so good a friend.

"Just the opposite," I confessed. "Bad. Rotten."

"What are you doing?"

"What *can* I do?" I asked hopelessly.

"It serves you right," Gluck said, shaking a rebuking forefinger. "Your wife has more sense in her little finger than you in your whole head. She advised you against that fool partnership. Joe Meyers told you not to touch it. *I* couldn't see it. But you were smarter than all of us!"

I shrugged miserably. "That's all very well, but what can I do now without a dollar?"

Quietly Gluck put an arm around my shoulder.

"Being a dear friend—not so much to you but to your clever wife—I'm going to help you!"

As I stared at him blankly, he smiled and went on, getting excited as he spoke.

"Listen, you've got one asset left—your ten fingers. And you still know how to make a dress. Go down to H. B. Claflin, Lee Tweedy, Lawrence & Company, James Dunham. Buy goods—on my name! Open a place somewhere and start over again!"

I shook my head to clear it. The voice beside me mentioned the names of the leading jobbers and commission houses and told me to buy goods on its account. It was such a nice dream, and I was so reluctant to let it go. No sense prolonging things, I thought finally. I turned toward the voice, to get the cruel disillusionment over with.

Adolph Gluck stood there, grinning at me cheerfully.

"Well?" he asked.

There were no words for the occasion. To be hopelessly lost one moment, and to be rescued by a man out of nowhere, a man who had no reason but plain, pure, personal friendship—it was almost too much.

"Don't talk of repayment," he insisted angrily, when I stammered some jumbled thanks. "Just start over again, Borgenicht—fresh and with new inspiration!"

As he wrung my hand, tears of gratitude streamed down my face. I stood in the street and wept without shame.

Given a new lease on life, in the self-same moment I began thinking, seeing, planning. Before I knew clearly what I was doing, I had ordered goods and was looking for a place. I tore over the East Side like a madman till I found a spot in Division Street. In front was a store, with a basement handy for storing stock. Over it were four rooms, tiny and without plumbing, but enough to sleep and cook in. Across the street was a shop. For store, rooms and shop I agreed to pay a hundred and fifty dollars a month. I had the gall to run back to Gluck to borrow a hundred dollars to leave as deposit, and signed the lease with a leaping heart. If I had approached Regina for part of her nest-egg of five hundred dollars, she would have

quashed the whole scheme. I didn't approach her until after I had taken the plunge.

On the way home I bumped into Jack Handler. To this friendly dealer in peddlers' supplies the Wallach crash had left us fifteen hundred dollars in debt, which we had partially compensated by returning goods and assigning accounts. Now Jack stopped me. The news of Gluck's amazing generosity, and the fact that I was back in business, bubbled out. Jack held me off at arm's length.

"Count me in," he said. "Go to any house, use my name, and buy up to five thousand dollars' worth of goods!" He laughed at my dropped jaw. "No," he added, "I don't want a thing out of it—not even a discount!" He slapped me on the back and pushed me on my way. Just like that. No tricks, no strings, not a single mirror.

I was still dizzy when I burst into the Rivington Street store where Regina held sway. She sobered me up in a minute.

"You're crazy again!" she cried, and burst into tears.

I cared for no protests. "Do you want us to slave in a hole all our lives?" I shouted back. "I've got my ability. With such friends and you to stand alongside me, I'll become Borgenicht the merchant again!"

The next morning carpenters were working in the store. The basement was filled with tables for cutting. The shop across the way glistened with thirty sewing machines, the down payment on which I had made with still another five hundred dollars borrowed from Adolph Gluck. When the goods began to arrive, I fell on the cases like a starved wolf. Getting the goods into work at once, I ran the circuit of my former customers.

Bloomingdale's wanted to be the first to see my line. McPartland of the large Eighth Avenue store of McPartland & Flaherty, wished me luck, and hurried me on to my friends James Healy and Charles Lyons, both big Brooklyn store

owners. By letter I notified Lit Brothers of Philadelphia and the oddly-named Boston Store of Chicago that I was in business again. From each I received a kind word and a request for a sample line.

Our helpers caught the fever. From six in the morning until two the following morning, for twelve solid days, with only Saturdays excepted, the girls, the cutters, Regina and I worked in our basement and shop. In return I kept the conditions as decent as possible—the floors clean, the windows large, the wages at the twelve to eighteen dollar a week range which was good for those days. At the end of the fortnight we had fifty samples made up. That day was like the first day I had gone out with little girls' aprons. It meant as much or more. In that initial venture I had been unknown, and therefore free of any self-consciousness. This time I had already had a good business in New York, I was trying a comeback. It meant life or death, in a business sense.

I looked over the lot once more—wash dresses for school, woolens, a few silks. They had style and were sewed like quality goods. I packed two sample cases and staggered under the heavy weight of them. But I intended to carry them myself, and to put their contents back on the market!

The first stop was Bloomingdale's.

Mrs. Meyers herself, sister of the Bloomingdale Brothers and in charge of all merchandising for the store, walked in to look over my goods. I held my breath as I awaited her verdict.

"A splendid line," she said quietly, after a careful inspection.

Unable to speak my appreciation and relief, I smiled as a poor substitute.

"When can you deliver some of this goods?"

"It took us two weeks to make the samples," I replied.

"My help have promised to work day and night, so the time would be dependent only on the size of the order."

I hadn't counted on the amount she mentioned. Her pencil kept going over one, two, three order sheets. I stared at the figure at the bottom of the list and could scarcely believe my eyes—$4,800! Gathering up my samples in a daze, I floated out.

Outside I was hailed by a salesman from one of the two early manufacturers in the field who had built up a downtown firm. This man had come in with two trunks of samples and had corralled only one skinny little order. Taking a look at the three sheets in my fist, he stepped alongside.

"My boss said," he began, speaking confidentially, "that may everyone remain in business—but may you go point blank to H———!" His voice rose to a shout. "It's a damn lucky thing you haven't got a plant to turn out volume or you'd kill the whole business!"

That the successful downtown businessman feared the little East Sider's competition was the highest form of compliment. It capped the Bloomingdale order to perfection. I smiled in the angry salesman's face.

"I'm *not* going to kill the business," I assured him. "And I *am* going to work up a plant that will turn out volume!"

Immediately I tackled the task of making these predictions come true. At my first stop after Bloomingdale's, James Healy looked at my samples and then grinned and slapped me on the back.

"You damn Polack," shouted this peppery Irishman, as he sent me out with a three thousand dollar order, "you've got the whole lot licked to a fare-thee-well!"

Later that day Charles Lyons welcomed me back into business with a fatherly embrace, and followed it up with an even more concrete expression of his friendship—a two thousand dollar order.

Finally, toward evening, I was stopped on the street by

a boy who had been my first salesman. After the Wallach disaster he had found a position with a large house in the kindred garment industry, but now, he insisted, he wanted to come back.

"You're working for a big house now, Sam," I protested. "I'm just starting over!"

"I still want to work for you, Mr. B.," he repeated doggedly. "Healy told me what was in those valises you're carrying," was his only further explanation.

"How do you like that?" I cried to Regina that night, after telling her of Bloomingdale's, Healy, Lyons, and finally that our salesman was starting work again in the morning. For a man on the verge of despair—penniless, nameless, hopeless—that wonderful day, made possible by amazing friends and by fine business people, had been one long joyous spree. I waited for my wife's happy outburst.

She shrugged.

I have found that shrug one of the driving forces in my life. It has always been the pin that pricked my ballooning ego, the calm word that helped reduce my grandest hallucination. To make her smile and admit I am wonderful, I would move mountains. I have seldom won the smile, but in the attempt to capture it I have made at least little hills teeter a bit.

That shrug pushed me on through the weeks following. I had a promise to keep. My father used to say, "Consider, then consider again before you promise. But when you *have* promised, see to it that it is fulfilled!"

I had promised to have dresses ready. Time was short. Day and night our machines buzzed. The cutters bent over the goods, the girls' hands flew over the sliced bundles. At the outset I had promised my wife I would not work myself into the grave. As the work went on, however, I spent longer and longer hours at it. Midnight was time for a

breather, rather than for bed. One night the law was laid down.

Well after one o'clock there was a knock at the door. I wondered what intruder was banging there so angrily. In order to get to my basement it was necessary to come down into the street and make a turn down the steps, yet when I opened, it was Regina who stalked in, in her bathrobe, her eyes blazing. Without a word she backed me up to the counter, reached up and nailed me with a stinging slap in the face so hard the sound echoed upstairs.

"What kind of business is this?" I shouted. "I'll give you two in a minute!"

"You will?" She just stood there, watching me.

My temper died, strangled at birth. There was nothing to do about it, I could see. I went home, upstairs, to bed.

Despite Regina's anxiety we managed to put in enough work to get our goods out in six weeks—record time. Paid on delivery, we plowed the money right back into new manufacturing. Orders had come in from the Boston Store without even a glimpse at the samples. They simply sent specifications and amounts and left the rest to me. More than anything else, that boosted my ego, made me feel that perhaps my slate was not entirely stained by my failure.

Heaven knows I tried to wipe it clean. When, at the end of a year in Division Street, I found that our hard work and skimpy living had enabled us to scrape from the business a saving of three thousand dollars, I took a morning off and went to visit the people who had lost money on my former venture. It was a proud and happy day for me when I paid off my portion of the debts—the fifty per cent which I considered my responsibility. In debt, it seemed to me that the first dollar over and above the barest living expenses belonged to my creditors. "Without a shirt, but with a name!" was the standard taught to me by my father. With the sages I believed that "There are three crowns—the crown

of the Torah, the crown of priesthood, the crown of kingdom. But the crown of a good name excels them all!"

Honesty, I soon found, was the best business as well as personal policy. It was no coincidence that after my repayment of my creditors I found new avenues open for the purchasing of goods. Through this easier credit, and rigorous pruning of the home budget, we managed slowly but steadily to overcome our chief difficulty—lack of capital with which to finance expansion. By the end of the second year in Division Street we were forced to seek larger quarters. On busy East Broadway we found a good-sized store, basement and loft, and across the street a four-room flat for the family. We signed leases for the year and looked forward to bigger and better things.

Almost at once they came.

CHAPTER VI

In which I acquire a title, and become the happiest man in the world.

FOR me three events marked the year that followed. Not the Spanish-American War which came and went so quickly as to leave us completely untouched, except that at the time we had an increased admiration for President McKinley. The three things were close to home, well within the little circle in which, while we struggled to put distance between ourselves and the wolf, we lived all our waking hours.

In that year I opened up the piece-goods "commission houses" for the first time to what is known as the "cut-up" trade.

A commission house is a sales organization which contracts with a mill to sell the entire product of the looms and to take all the credit risks involved, in return for a certain agreed commission on total business. In those days the commission houses sold only in big lots to jobbers, from whom, in turn, the manufacturer had to buy his smaller lots of goods. With this jobber middleman in the picture, the manufacturer naturally had to pay a premium over the mill's original price.

One day I realized that if I could manage to buy directly from Lawrence & Company, which represented one of the most important mills in the east, I could cut out the jobber's profit and produce my goods for that much less. A simple proposition—but it was a novel adventure at that time.

Brash, and perhaps naïvely so, I visited Mr. Bingham, the all-important credit man of Lawrence & Company. I took one look at this tall, gaunt, white-bearded Yankee with the steel-blue eyes, and knew that I would like to deal with him. I made my proposal bluntly, therefore—I wanted to buy forty cases of cashmeres directly from Lawrence & Company. I would pay cash on delivery, in three shipments.

Bingham sat holding a pen in his hand and staring at me from under raised, bristling eyebrows.

"You have a H—— of a cheek coming in here and asking me for favors!" he said. "Why should I do it?"

That was the question I had hoped for.

I launched into an explanation of my position and prospects. Honest, hard-working, dealing with fine customers, I was a cinch to make good if Bingham would help me. I put every ounce of conviction into my plea, I spoke from the heart.

Bingham stroked his long white beard as he listened. When I had finished and was waiting for his verdict, he looked me up and down without apparent enthusiasm.

"You still have a H—— of a cheek," he said—and then he smiled. "We'll do it!"

That simple speech was, to my knowledge, the first break in the solid front of the commission houses. The sale of those forty cases of cashmeres was their first direct transaction with the cut-up trade. On it I was quoted the same inside, wholesale price as was offered to the jobbers. For the fledgeling industry it was a tremendous advance. For me it was a great victory, and a sign for the future.

The second event which made that year memorable for us was the inventory we took on February 1, 1900. It was long after midnight when I came home. Regina was asleep, but I had to wake her. She sat up in alarm.

"Ma, I have news for you," I whispered, so as not to wake the children. "Wonderful news!"

"You and your news!" she shrugged, and lay down again.

"But it *is* great news!" I insisted. "We have made a profit of ten thousand dollars!"

"Zehn tausend dollar!"

It was a colossal sum. After years of enterprise, Brandstatter—the richest man in his Galician city—was worth perhaps eighty thousand dollars in all. Here in this magnificent country, starting with absolutely nothing, I had made in one year a *net profit* of ten thousand dollars!

Next day we reached the third milestone. The morning mail brought a letter from a man who was traveling as a salesman for the same competitor with whose representative I had tangled in the Bloomingdale office. This Mr. Simon had approached the Boston Store in Chicago only to be told that much as they would have liked to buy from him, they were making all their purchases from a little man on East Broadway. This merchandise was beautiful, they said, and it sold like lemonade on a hot summer's day. Nothing like it. Simon wrote that the buyers had advised him to try and connect with the newcomer, Borgenicht.

"Get his line and we'll give you our business," was the way it had been put to him.

The proposition Simon offered was that he would represent me in the larger western cities, working on a commission basis, to be paid *after* the goods were sold. No drawing, no expense for me at all!

At about the same time I heard from a salesman in San Francisco, a city of whose existence I had hardly been aware, so completely had I been immersed in work from the start. A Stockton, California, buyer had come all the way from the downtown district usually frequented by out-of-towners over to my East Side place to look over my line —in itself an unprecedented move—and had almost cleared my shelves. Returning to the west coast, he had advised his salesman friend to write to me. The salesman was work-

ing at the time for one of the houses which had sprung up since the field was opened, but he wanted to transfer to my staff as agent for the far west.

Both these offers I had to decline. Warned by the Wallach crash, I wanted to go slowly for a while. I could only promise to inform these correspondents as soon as my capital and production facilities were adequate to the demands they insisted they would make on them. But, coming on top of the opening of the doors of Lawrence & Company and the startling result of inventory, these letters bowled me over. That I should be in a position even to *think* of a representative in San Francisco! I had to get used to the idea gradually. I have never lost the thrill it gave me.

So wildly was the demand for our product expanding that it wasn't long before I swung intoxicatingly around another full turn of the upward spiral which manifested itself in commission house dealings, inventories and salesmen's applications.

Lawrence & Company had already sold me for cash. Now I went up to tackle the proposition of purchasing on credit. That would enable me to treble my business, or perhaps even to turn it over more than that. I put forward a concrete offer in the form of a twenty-five thousand dollar order for the cashmeres which had taken so well.

"How will you pay for this goods?" asked Bingham curiously.

"When the bill falls due, I'll pay it!"

"And what makes you think I'll extend the credit?"

"When I explain my position," I replied with apparent confidence, "I'm sure you will!"

I presented my case. I understood my line thoroughly, I explained, and he knew it. Hard-working and honest, I was anxious not only to support my family but also to prove myself worthy of the citizenship papers I had taken out in the country which I had chosen, deliberately and not by

accident of birth. Finally, I added, I was prepared to sign a statement of my financial status in black on white, with the understanding that Bingham would come up to my lofts to check it for himself. If my statement deviated by one hair from what he found, I would let him kick me out of his office personally. If, on the other hand, he found that everything tallied, I wanted him for a friend.

Before he decided, I recalled to his mind, as man to man, the story of Hillel and Shammai, the two great rival rabbis of ancient days. A heathen approached the latter, an irascible, strict interpreter of the Law, and asked him whether he could teach the whole Bible while his heckler stood on one leg. Enraged, Shammai shouted that he had devoted his entire life to the study of the Bible and still didn't know it thoroughly. The heathen laughed and went to the academy of Hillel, where he repeated the question.

"Stand on one leg," said the gentle Hillel, "and listen to the whole Bible." Then he spoke the Hebrew words which can be translated most appropriately as the English, "Love thy neighbor as thyself!"

"Grant me this one favor," I begged Bingham, "and I will remember it for a lifetime!"

On a hot July day—at the end of the same week—a tall, white-bearded Yankee walked suddenly into my office. Within five minutes his coat was off and his blue eyes were peering into my books. For three hours that fine gentleman and businessman roamed through the place like a hungry tiger, poking into every corner. Finishing with the books, he jotted down a few figures of his own, then stalked through the raw materials and the ready dresses. He thumbed the pages of our lists of customers, nodding over the names he found there.

When he was quite through, beads of perspiration stood out on his high forehead under his white hair—but his face

was flushed as if he was pleased with what he had found. He stretched out a massive fist.

"Borgenicht, let's shake hands," he boomed. "Everything is as you said down to the last 'T.' Buy what you need, and when you need it. The house is open to you. Let *me* worry about the credit!"

When, a week later, I successfully braved the wrath even of Mr. Brew, fiery Irish credit man of the flannel specialists, Faulkner & Page, the ranks of the commission houses were smashed, so far as I was concerned. Not only could I buy directly from the largest houses at the inside price, but I could buy on credit.

As the second step along the circuit I had traveled before on a lower plane, we found at the conclusion of the next year's inventory that we had done a total business of nine hundred thousand dollars, and had made a net profit of eighty thousand. To a man brought up to think in terms of a pocketful of guldens, these figures were nothing short of staggering.

They only paved the way for the completion of the circle. This time when letters came from middle and far west salesmen asking for our line, I could reply eagerly. Almost overnight I built up a sales staff of fourteen men covering every section of the United States. Fine gentlemen, most of them, they did me proud. The Mr. Simon who had been the first applicant made good on his boast that he could get me all the business I could handle. During the very first year he represented me he turned in a gross volume of over three hundred thousand dollars!

Other signs of progress were not lacking as the months rolled by. Always I have tended to measure success by the number of people I could employ. In my business on East Broadway a hundred and fifty men and women were occupied from morning to night. Seventy machines hummed steadily. I even engaged a designer, my first—and for years

regarded her less as the loyal associate she was than as a symbol.

I stopped selling to individual peddlers as uneconomical, since the largest and best stores were emptying my shelves as quickly as the operators filled them. Hearn's, Macy's, Gimbel's, Bloomingdale's, Marshall Field in Chicago, Filene's in Boston—these were among my customers.

I was still making popular price goods, which sold to the middle and working classes. But less and less was it cheap stuff. My dresses boasted good materials, good finishing, good pressing. Increasingly they had fit and style in a day when a good strong bag was the usual formula for a child's garment. Little touches—tricks, tucks, pleats, shirring, Eton effects—made them attractive. Hand embroidery caught mothers' eyes. A few items I invented on my own—among them a pattern which permitted the customer to make three outfits with a single set of skirt and blouse.

At the end of 1901 I had the thrill of discovering that we were tops in the field of children's dresses. Our business of a million and a half over the course of the year put us far ahead of the rivals who had sprung up on every hand. Our dresses appeared on the streets of every city and town from Maine to California.

In that era of gaudy titles, it wasn't long before some bright gossip dubbed me "King of the Children's Dress Trade."

Perhaps I should have sat back and worn my title with becoming dignity. But idleness didn't appeal to me. I did knock off work at ten instead of at midnight. I left some of the designing to the gradually expanding group of professionals. But I continued to attend myself to the selling in the showrooms, to the buying of raw materials and trimmings, to the supervising of the cutting and general manufacturing. The sample line was my special charge. I meant

to keep this foundation of our business solid as rock itself. And, with luck, I did.

When healthy expansion forced us out of East Broadway, I was enabled to realize my old dream of moving downtown while transferring my family out of even the marginal slum districts. On Wooster Street I found the loft I was looking for. The rent of eight thousand dollars a year was steep, but happily the building was owned by the Bloomingdales. To this day I recall how I went up to the home of Joseph Bloomingdale, that famous merchant, to plead for the lease.

I met a man of fifty-five or so, a tall, heavy gentleman with a gray mustache and a pointed beard which enhanced his impressive appearance. The question uppermost in his mind, I found, was how with a capital of twenty-two thousand dollars—all I had—I could undertake so heavy an obligation.

"I have a fine handwriting," I smiled. "I can sign checks."

He was skeptical.

"Perhaps I could explain in German," I asked, for my English was even then still inadequate to important occasions. Bloomingdale nodded courteously.

At considerable length I explained my position. Finally I labored the point that his sister, Mrs. Meyers, had been buying goods from me for five years, since I had been a struggling little merchant on Essex Street. A call to his sister followed at once, in my presence.

"Do you know a Mr. Louis Borgenicht?"

I was standing near enough to hear the reply.

"A fine fellow. And he makes splendid goods!"

Joseph Bloomingdale turned back with a smile. "Now I know you better," he said.

His next question was enough to startle me once more. "How many children do you have?"

I blinked, but the query had been perfectly serious, and friendly.

"Six," I told him warmly. "Every one a jewel. Just to look at them adds years to my life!"

His smile broadened, and he called in Mrs. Bloomingdale to introduce me.

"This gentleman here is to be our new tenant," he told her. "We've been buying goods from him for five years. Started on Essex and now he's on Wooster! And the special beauty of him is that young as he is, he's got six children already—what a record!"

He turned back and clasped my hand in his.

"Choose a loft—make a lease—and may God's blessing be yours!"

God's blessing was indeed ours. Aside from all other manifestations, I recognized it in the friends with which He surrounded me. In Europe I had made only one true friend; all other youthful relationships seemed to break as easily as twine. I had to come to the United States to find friendships which never ceased to astonish me in their unquestioning loyalty and depth. Most of them I made in the course of my business dealings in those early years. Bingham of Lawrence & Company, Brew of Faulkner & Page; Adolph Gluck, Jack Handler, Harris Siegel—East Side merchants; Greenberg, Klingenstein, Bauman—uptown merchants; Wolf of Einstein, Wolf & Company, noted importers; Bremen of the world-famous woolen goods house of A. D. Juilliard—these were the leaders of a score and more of gentlemen to whom I could never express fully what was really in my heart. They all knew it, though, those friends who stooped to lift me when I most needed help. Ask me today why they did it and I will still be able to offer you no explanation. At least no rational businessman's explanation. Because there was no business in it. They were simply kind, true, generous friends. Since not one lives outside

my memory today, it is in the hope that their names may be kept green a little while yet after I am gone that I record them here. In them Joseph Bloomingdale's wish that God's blessing might be ours found its finest fulfillment.

With that blessing so abundantly manifesting itself, a man would have had to have been an idiot not to have achieved something. For around us in that first decade of the new century the country was prospering. It built steadily, it multiplied its wealth not on paper but in material goods. All we had to do was to swim along with the tide.

Granted that once my personal swimming apparatus broke down, and I was ordered to take a complete rest from business. When I protested that it was impossible, the doctor only shrugged.

"If you don't arrange it yourself, it will be arranged *for* you," he told me quietly. "You'll be buried!"

Yielding, I went on a sort of triumphal tour of the countryside in which I had spent my youth in Europe, and returned refreshed.

Granted that on my return I found the line made up in my absence was worthless. About that time we had—the first in the field—begun to use little round-skulled models in the showroom. Each in a niche by itself, affording a view from every angle, these figures showed dresses off far better than you could by draping them on hangers in the old way. Even the new models couldn't disguise the truth, however. During the next two weeks we worked day and night to rip apart sixty thousand dollars' worth of dresses and put them together again. Though we had to abandon the road for that year, we managed to attract incoming buyers in such numbers that the season was salvaged.

Granted even that in 1907 we ran into really serious trouble. The Panic, depression, recession—whatever the books call it—of that year was not of long duration. But it hit us harder than a correspondingly short blow would today. In

those days of commission houses monopolizing the piece-goods field, a manufacturer had to contract six or nine months in advance for his goods, or run the risk of being caught short at the height of the season. Since there were no rapidly changing styles, it was usually safe to buy huge quantities of materials and to make them up as the demand warranted. The only standard for one year's advance purchases, however, was the sales total of the previous year. 1906 was a good year—which is enough in itself to explain why 1907 plunged us into very hot water. Loaded up with goods we couldn't use, we were nevertheless under contract to buy even more materials, and at prices which ran thirty to fifty per cent higher than those on the collapsing open market.

Urgently I made the rounds of the commission houses to explain that I did not want to renege on my orders, but I simply had to have postponement of delivery. Under the circumstances they had the choice of meeting my request, or of shipping the goods, finding me unable to pay for them, and forcing me to the wall. One way, I pointed out, they would put me out of business and definitely lose their money. The other, they would help me to maintain my firm and their money would be secure, if delayed a little.

Most houses were co-operative. The single house which was actually, due to a personal grudge, ready to leap in for the kill, I battled with polite backmail by threatening to proclaim its pettiness and lack of commercial sense throughout the business world. Happily my friends were legion, and the warning carried weight. In the end this company also fell in line and I received the re-written delivery schedule I so desperately needed.

This postponement of disaster gave time for my friends to come to my aid. Though their loans did not save us either, they gave us the opportunity to save ourselves. Work from seven in the morning to midnight came back into fash-

ion for me. New samples, new garments had to be made up to compete with the best bargains in that cheap market. More for the money was the first law of that difficult year. Then gradually the country rallied and our business showed its mettle. Orders came in, dresses went out, and checks began to travel in both directions instead of only outward. Soon the worst was over, and we could think again with confidence of the next season, and the next year.

Granted that we had to face all these difficulties—but, no matter how important they seemed at the time, our direction remained consistently upward.

In 1911 we reached a new peak.

After fine progress on Fifth Avenue and Fourteenth Street, we had just moved to a brand-new Broadway building when I was enabled to fulfill a dream I had nursed secretly during all the years we had been struggling first for a foothold, and then to survive.

It was to further that dream that, when my oldest son was graduated from high school, I had drafted him into the business. Friends and customers had called me cruel when, after Max consented, I had subjected him to a rigorous course of training. To the foreman of the cutting room I had given simple instructions:

"You don't know this boy's last name. He's starting by sweeping and running errands. He has the same hours in the morning and for lunch as anybody here. Now he's in your hands!"

The policy had borne fruit. Starting from the bottom, Max had learned every step in the production of a dress. He had learned to design, to make patterns on heavy cardboard, to grade the patterns for size, to "mark" the patterns on raw goods, to cut the goods, to sew the goods at the machines, to trim. Mastering production, he had learned to differentiate between qualities, names and places of origin of every piece of material we used. Sent to the front office,

he had been taught how to give information to customers, so that he would never be dependent on a bookkeeper. All these things I had picked up by experience and necessity. Into two years Max had packed all the training that had taken me twenty.

When Will, my second son, was graduated from high school, I had put him through the same course. While the rest of the family escaped to the mountains during the summer heat, Will had sweltered at his machine and needle and knife. Never a slacker, he had grumbled a little but had paid attention strictly to his practical education. When it was completed, after three years, I boasted two sons who at twenty or a little over were my equals in their grasp of the fundamentals of our business.

When both boys had reached their majority, I considered it only natural and fitting to re-organize the firm in recognition of their ability. On the doors of our offices appeared a new legend—BORGENICHT & SONS COMPANY, INC.!

A year later, as an expression of the happiness which was so great as to make the heart ache with wonderful pain, Regina and I celebrated our silver wedding anniversary. 1913 was a poor business year, but for me it was the top of the world in human happiness. From my pinnacle I looked down on my fellow-men and felt only sympathy. Why I had been chosen for such fulfillment I did not know. But I ached to convey some of my own joy and thankfulness to wider and ever wider circles of people.

This is not rhetoric. In the simplest possible language, I was the happiest man in the world.

It is equally simple to see why.

CHAPTER VII

In which I am the happiest man because of my business, my family, and my community.

ALL my life I have been governed by three aims. I have never been able to list them in the order of their importance. To me they all seem essential to a full and worthwhile life.

One is to be an honest, progressive and successful businessman.

The second is to be a happy family man.

The third is to be a worthy member of the community.

In business—in 1913—I could survey the ground behind and around me and feel that everything had worked out for the best.

Starting from scratch in a strange land, I had established what was to all intents and purposes a new line. In twenty years I had watched it develop into a significant industry. From two or three, the number of manufacturers in the trade had leaped into the scores. From a day when a ready-to-wear dress for a child was a novelty, I had come to the time when a home-made dress for a child was a freak. By constant plugging through every consequential store in the country—and a good many cross-roads establishments as well—the ready-to-wear child's dress was presented to the mothers of America as a help and a necessity. We had both educated the demand and produced the garments to satisfy it. From our machines alone we were turning out between three and four million dresses a year. The concept was

overwhelming to a man who had come to the United States with bare hands.

Not that my experience was unique. In other divisions of the garment manufacturing field I saw it duplicated more than a few times. Frequently, indeed, I puzzled over the fact that Jews so completely dominated the garment trade. Once I looked into the matter. I found that, although the first advertisement for ready-to-wear goods appeared in a New York newspaper in 1845, the field remained limited for almost forty years because of bad workmanship and lack of attention to fit and style. In the early Eighties there were only a few hundred men in all the garment trades together.

It was at that time that there began to come over from Central Europe the huge wave which was the second of the three great immigrations of Jews into the United States. I suppose they drifted into clothing-making in the same groove that I did—abroad many of them had perforce engaged in the small middle-class occupations, notably piece-goods. Finding the great waiting market here, and the stirring of change, they bit deep into the welcoming land and worked like madmen *at what they knew*—to justify and maintain their position.

In 1880 Irish predominated in the cutting rooms of what garment trade there was, the technical processes were in the hands of the Germans, and Englishmen controlled the commercial aspects of the industry. Between 1880 and 1900 the trade passed almost completely into the hands of Jews, so far as the cut-up or production end was concerned; the commission houses remained in the hands of English and Germans. By 1900 New York was putting out the finest ready-to-wear garments not only in the United States but in the world. These clothes—for men, women and children—were distinguished for good materials, standardization of measurement, and skill in design and workmanship. In total value they topped all other New York products. In

total employment they gave work to probably more people of every race, creed and color than any other industry in the city.

In the years up to 1913 I watched ready-to-wear items become a staple in American homes, and a good provider of a livelihood for thousands of citizens. I watched and marveled at this change even while in my own field I helped bring it about myself. What made it possible was the happy revolution in the methods both of production and distribution.

On the one hand we had new materials, new sources of material, and new machines to work with. Most notable of the changes in materials demanded was the rise of white goods. As Catholics in particular bought more and more ready-to-wear white dresses for confirmations and other sacred occasions, instead of sitting over needles at home, this department became one of the most important in our business.

As a result of the cracking of the front of the commission houses, a great change came about in the purchasing of goods. The jobbers lost out more and more. The manufacturers found themselves able to cut costs proportionately as goods began to move directly from the mills to our machines. Hard as it was on the middleman, this change was economic. It made for cheaper and more efficient production. I have always had faith in progress. The failure of H. B. Claflin & Company, for instance, a company which had occupied a square block and had done a business of over a hundred millions a year in the heyday of the jobbers, may have been sad to me personally. I recognized it, however, as a result of its neglect to adapt itself to the times.

Along with changes in types of materials and their sources came changes in the physical methods of work. Up to about 1900 the only mechanical part of production was the actual

sewing on a foot-pumped machine. Everything else was done, laboriously, by hand.

The cutting of goods had been done with a pair of scissors in the days when I first started. When I tackled the problem of cutting greater thicknesses, I switched to a heavy knife and dug into the cloth with such pressure as to raise huge calluses on my fingers. It was a primitive method, but it was the only one available. The Eastman Machine came into use about the turn of the century, slicing into cloth like a knife into soft butter, and immediately the whole production aspect of the industry changed. Crude by present standards, that first machine marked the initial step in a process which was to transform the manufacturing of dresses from an individual, handwork method to a collective, highly mechanized one. By 1913 the indications for the future were apparent.

Every change in production was matched by one in the selling end. The most striking feature to me was my introduction to what has in the years between come to be known as "the loss leader" device extensively used by modern department stores.

I learned about "loss leaders" while I was on Wooster Street. Mrs. Cox, buyer for James Hearn, who then conducted the highest type of quality business, came in one day with a strange order.

"How many wool dresses do you have on your shelves?" she asked. At that time dresses were folded on shelves, not hung as they are today each on a separate hanger.

"Three hundred dozen," I told her, puzzled by the question.

"I want two hundred and fifty dozen at once. To hurry them up," she added before I could catch my breath, "don't bother to pack them in boxes. Just tie them up in bundles and send them over!"

With James Hearn it was best not to ask too many questions. I sent out the order on a Thursday.

On Monday I received a re-order for another hundred and fifty dozen. Completely baffled, I shipped out the re-order also, and waited for an explanation. It came quickly, but from an unexpected source. Out of a clear sky officials of four large stores which bought from me came storming into my office.

"How much did Hearn's pay for those dresses?" they demanded.

"Thirty-six dollars a dozen is the price," I replied, wondering at their tone. "You know that."

"We don't believe it!"

That charge meant war to me always. It was my turn to demand an explanation.

It was then that I learned that on Saturday morning Hearn's had put those thirty-six dollar a dozen dresses, wholesale, on their counters at a dollar ninety-eight apiece —with each customer limited to two. By one o'clock they had sold out amid riotous scenes. Since we were, according to our custom, closed on Saturdays, we knew nothing of it until the beginning of the next week.

"And we don't believe," my visitors insisted furiously, "that they paid thirty-six. They'd be losing a dollar a dress, not to mention overhead! If you're pulling dirty tricks, Borgenicht, we won't handle another piece of your goods!"

"I don't know a thing about Hearn's business," I shouted back, flying off the handle for a minute, "but I do know my own! All I can do is show you my statement—Hearn's paid thirty-six dollars a dozen for those dresses, the same that you or John Jones of Oshkosh pays. And if there is anyone here who doesn't believe it—" I glanced challengingly around the group.

We parted friends, but a sorely puzzled group.

On Tuesday Mrs. Cox was in again, and I couldn't long restrain my curiosity.

"If I'm not too inquisitive," I asked her, "may I know the secret of this business?"

"Mr. Borgenicht," grinned the buyer, "I've worked there for twenty years and I still don't know how James Hearn runs his business. I do what I'm told!"

Gradually, nevertheless, it dawned on me what the game was, and how it could be profitably played—if only by the big department store owner. Those dresses were "loss leaders," practically given away in order to get the public into the store. The consumer thought he was picking up a bargain, and he was—if he stuck to the advertised item. But the mark-up on other items to make up for the loss on the "leader" took good care of any possible savings on the part of the purchaser. For the manufacturer, of course, it was a vicious idea altogether. It cheapened his product, antagonized other customers, and killed the market for a good item by overplaying it at the start and satiating the demand.

Hearn's stunt was a sign of the times, though. Soon I found that new methods of selling to the public were matched by new places in which to sell.

Fifth Avenue was opened up as a fashion center in that decade. I remember how people called Franklin Simon a madman and a dreamer when he opened a huge, fine store in 1902. Fifth Avenue was strictly residential, they said, and it was miles uptown. Within the next ten years I saw Fifth Avenue dictating fashions to the whole country and—not long afterward—to the world. Every name famous in department stores was really "made" in those years. With a leap and a bound America became clothes conscious.

Whether entrepreneurs created the demand, or simply stirred it out of its latent stage, I never knew. The demand was there, suddenly and hugely.

It required no special gifts for me to see that the same

demand was spiraling in every other field. The revolution in our own trade, and in the clothing field generally, was only a reflection of major alterations throughout the nation.

On every hand I saw the signs. The entire face of New York was changing. The building boom which brought tall, solid buildings to every corner and inch of space and made the city's skyline famous was still in the future, but the finger was already pointing. In 1889 I had marveled at the first building based on a steel-girder skeleton, a ten-story giant at Number 50 Broadway. The invention of the elevator encouraged the architects, I suppose. By 1903 we had the twenty-two story Flatiron Building, with its wonderful sextet of elevators. A few years later the Singer Building leaped forty-seven stories into the air. And in 1913 the Woolworth Building took over the title of world's tallest structure. These monsters were still isolated from the lower buildings around them, but clearly they foreshadowed the new. And the new was wonderful and promising.

Everything was new, and promising. When I arrived, the population of the city had not touched two million. In 1898 the consolidation of the outlying counties into Greater New York brought it up to three million. The Bronx was made an independent borough and New York was on its way. By 1913 *five* million people jammed into its narrow streets. The old leisurely transportation systems couldn't accommodate them. Which came first, the population or the transportation, is a question for sociologists. All I saw was that abruptly the population was there, and so was the new transportation.

Linking the parts of the city in the Nineties had been only the Brooklyn Bridge. To get to any other point outside Manhattan, I had had to use ferries. Between 1900 and 1910 the Manhattan, Williamsburg and Queensborough Bridges were all thrown over the East River. The Brooklyn Rapid Transit Company tunneled under it. The "El's"

which had been operating on steam since 1876 were electrified in 1902. At about the same time the old four-horse teams were taken out of the shafts and retired to the barns, and the Broadway surface cars began to experiment with the new power. At first we all laughed at them. Soon we would have laughed just as hard at a horse in front of a trolley.

Some lunatic applied similar principles to underground travel, out of a conviction that in the time to come the streets might be too crowded for getting around quickly. Despite hatred and ridicule, by 1904 the first subway was running between City Hall and Fifty-ninth Street. By 1913 I was riding that same subway out all over the city, under the rivers, over the bridges, and wondering how I had ever gotten along without it. The Pennsylvania Railroad got tired of loading its passengers on ferries and tunneled under the Hudson to bring them into mid-town New York without a stop. The Hudson & Manhattan tubes were a novelty at the time of my silver wedding anniversary.

When I first went peddling in this country, I was bewildered by the maze of masts at the river fronts. Alongside the wharves I saw sailboats, schooners, clippers—every kind of a boat that moved with a pole and a piece of cloth to catch the wind. The Bay was dotted with them, the Hudson gave them safe harbor. By 1910 I saw mostly scows and barges where the trim sailing boats had been. Tugs and freighters puffed black smoke as they pushed their way upriver to their moorings.

The smart bays and blacks that had strutted the streets in the Nineties had disappeared for the most part. The hansom cabs which did the personal transporting were being chased off the streets by the smelly automobiles. I remember a foolish statistic to the effect that in 1899 there were thousands of hansom cabs in the city and only six hundred of the dangerous new motor cars. By 1913 the positions

were reversed. The Harlem Speedway, running from the sparsely settled section around One Hundred and Fiftieth Street up toward the open country at what is now Dyckman Street, was built in 1900, and I used to ride up to see the thoroughbreds racing there on Sunday mornings. The great names of New York Society turned out in force to display the latest styles, while the rest of us watched the races. Ten or twelve years later the horses were frightened over to the curbs by the cars. Even the bicycles were pushed into the early morning hours before the fumes began to drift too thickly.

Building and transportation were making life easier and quicker, but the fundamentals were not neglected, either. I remember the beginnings of sanitary street-cleaning in New York in the last couple of years of the last century. It almost caused a revolution. People couldn't see why garbage and refuse shouldn't lie in the gutter. Paying workers to trundle it away was a shameless waste of the taxpayers' money. In the decade following, street-cleaning became an important function of the city government and you could rouse the citizens in a minute by pointing out any failures in the line of even this duty.

Electric lights appeared on corners, making the night almost as safe as the day so far as strollers were concerned. I have always been a stroller, when I had time, so I didn't mind paying for this added security against prowlers. Another serious problem for the growing city was water supply. The old reservoir at 42nd Street and Fifth Avenue gave way to the New York Public Library about 1911, and New Yorkers began looking further and further afield. Croton Dam thirty or forty miles up-State was completed, and New York's water was piped down to it for drinking, bathing and flushing of streets and sewers. Ashokan Reservoir (I loved these lakes and watched for them on the road to the mountains)

was begun. The city began to draw water from as far away as ninety miles.

Everywhere you turned you saw new building—progress. If you've ever watched a new house go up, and smelled the new paint and plaster, and envied the people who were going to move in, you can get the feel of New York in 1913. The old city lay in its tracks, with the slums and the filth and the poverty. But on every hand we saw the new age dawning.

It was not the vast material changes alone which filled me with emotion. At the time I welcomed those material changes, as did everyone around me, for their human values. They forecast a wonderful future in which labor-saving machinery would raise living standards to heights almost impossible to picture, and would free the great masses of the people for more dignified pursuits than struggling to pay the landlord and the grocer.

I saw this future in terms of the people I knew and worked with.

Even at that time my personal relations in business were of the best. With the great houses that I dealt with, and the fine merchants who were their executives, I knew only friendship and mutual respect. With my customers I maintained similar relations. And on the inside, in my own plant, I found everything conducive to the highest satisfaction.

I was happy with my salesmen. Fine gentlemen, most of them, they were treated like lords on the road. They represented Borgenicht, they had standing. Averaging five to ten thousand a year, the best of them ran up to fifteen thousand dollars. Loyal, they were proud to carry my line, as I was proud to have them carry it for me.

In my plant, when I walked down the aisles between the machines and stopped to chat with this operator or that one, I was happy that my employees were satisfied and hard-working. Sweatshops had never been my field.

That vicious system had begun with the victimizing of immigrants. Coming from Europe with nothing but bare hands, "foreigners" were suckers for the bait handed out by unscrupulous profiteers. Around 1880 people worked sixteen hours a day and then, to make a few extra pennies over their paltry wages, took more work home with them. From these mean beginnings, they began to impress their families as well, putting wife and children to work to turn out more and ever more goods. The next step came when the promoter found it more profitable to dispense altogether with overhead items like rent and machines, and told his workers to take *all* the work home with them. Every two-room cubbyhole in the tenements turned into a plain undiluted Hell as father, mother, sons and daughters all labored over needles and battered machines in dim light and foul air. The final step was taken when these slaves brought in still less fortunate souls to toil alongside them, for a percentage of *their* wages. The horrible picture was complete. The sweatshop was in full swing.

Around 1890, I remember, a seventy-two-hour work week was the absolute minimum for sweatshop workers—if you could find even that. As for working conditions—there were none. Not until the turn of the century was there a law prohibiting the employment of others in tenement shops. Even this law was honored only in the breach until the unions in the field were strong enough to compel observance.

There were competitors in our field who started with the apparent financial advantage of cheap sweatshop labor. We never would touch sweated goods. From the beginning I had been careful of working conditions, and, as we employed contractors later, equally careful of theirs. There is a common saying to the effect that that employer is hardest on his employees who is a former employee himself. No one could ever level that accusation against me. Not from any

high-minded motives, to be frank. I just wasn't built that way.

Between the girls who worked for me and myself there was a fine relationship. We used to like and respect each other. In the earlier days the girls used to eat with the family more often than not. As the plant grew, we dropped some of the intimacies for reasons of practical impossibility. The spirit remained. The harder we worked, the more we pulled together. Recesses for sandwiches and beer were not too uncommon. A little singing never hurt. In the later more formal days, the girls continued to visit the house on Saturdays. Regina and I came to know the parents of most of the girls in the place. We visited them, mourned at their funerals, helped celebrate their weddings and births. In return we received their loyalty. I enjoyed a genuine sense of co-operation between every man and woman on the pay-roll and myself.

In 1913, even with its occasional difficulties, I saw only happiness and great promise in the things around me. Our business was tops in the industry, running upwards of two and a half millions of dollars annually.

I was making it possible for twenty-five hundred people to live and work. My old standard remained—to be a producer of goods and an employer of people was the greatest thing in the world. I was just that.

Finally, I saw in the material changes about us only better and better conditions being achieved by my own workers and by hard-working people everywhere. I was living in the dawn of a new and wonderful day for all America. I was proud of that day that was coming, proud that I had a part in bringing it along, proud that it was my chosen country in which it was dawning.

From every sign and omen in the business world, we were on a one-way trip to the Land of Promise.

To me the very crowning touch of my happiness in business was the recent addition to the firm name. My two sons were my partners.

That fact linked my business with my family. Entirely apart from financial or commercial considerations, however, was the feeling which for me can be expressed only by the Hebrew "Nachas"—the swelling positive contentment which brings a lump to the throat and a tear of joy and gratefulness to the eye—which I experienced every time I sat at the head of the huge dinner table at home. On looking down the line at Regina, my twelve shiny-faced children, the guests and strangers, I felt that every prayer had been answered, every blessing granted. Only a gracious Lord could have bestowed such happiness. Any other feeling would have been the rankest blasphemy.

Of my second aim—to be a happy family man—I enjoyed a threefold fulfillment. I was happy in my relations with my wife, with my children, and with my relatives and friends.

The mainspring of this happiness was of course the fact that from a desperate homesickness for Hungary Regina had come to an appreciation of this wonderful new land, and a passionate attachment to it. Regina was always like that—she had to be "shown." By 1913 she had been "shown" a dozen times over—from the early purchase of a horse and carriage to the buying of a country estate in the Catskill Mountains and a beautiful winter home in the New York suburb called Borough Park.

This last was a proud house, but we were humble. Just before the building was completed, Regina informed me that the daughter of one of the small contractors who handled work for me was being married.

"She can't afford the kind of a wedding she'd like," said my wife. She hesitated, then went on firmly. "Couldn't we have it here, as a sort of housewarming?"

To me it seemed no festive occasion could match that wedding as an expression of the joy and gratefulness in our hearts. The ceremony was held in the living room, to the music of fiddlers banked on the gallery above. Dinner was served in the sun porch, and the dancing kept up half the night. When the guests were gone and the house was closed for the night, it was warm and friendly. We felt that it had been truly dedicated.

It was in that house that—the same year—we celebrated our silver wedding anniversary.

Both of us were in excellent health, and there was every reason to hope we would continue to be so. The life we were leading was the life we would have led if we had been granted the fulfillment of our fondest wishes.

There was nothing exciting about it, I suppose. I was never a "joiner." For the most part I adhered to my routine. I rose early. In New York I walked to business every morning. From Borough Park I rode by subway. On the infrequent occasions when the car wasn't busy delivering the children to their several schools, Regina insisted that *I* take it. My only consolation was that I stopped on every corner to pick up passengers until the car was jammed; I hated an empty car, which seemed, in view of the people trying to get to the same place as I was, ungrateful, if not downright sinful.

At business I worked like a beaver, bearing in mind the answer I had once heard given by a fine gentleman in one of the largest commission houses—a gentleman well on in years, a stock-holder in the corporation and a man of considerable wealth—to a stranger who asked him why he persisted at his age in retaining active control of his department. "You're an elderly man," was the form of the question. "But you work as if your life depended on it. Your children wouldn't do it. Why do you?"

The wealthy old gentleman looked up with an utterly un-

troubled smile. "My dear sir," he said, "if my children enjoy spending my money half as much as I enjoy making it, I'll be more than satisfied!"

The little recreation I needed I found in the company of my wife and children, who were quite a social group all by themselves. My chief delight in this connection was the country estate in Hunter. More than anything else, these sixteen acres symbolized to me the difference between Europe and America, as reflected in my life. Business, expensive city apartments, money, flattery—these were all very well. But Hunter, the houses, the stables, the laundries, the pastures, gardens, orchards, chicken coops, and later the tennis court and the swimming pool, with the friendly green mountains all around us—for the immigrant who gasped for a breath of air free from feudal tradition and prejudice, it was Eden. Arriving of a week-end to find first a horse and carriage, later a car, waiting at the station for me with a dozen kids screaming a welcome and telling me of the week's events—that was driving straight through the front gates of Heaven itself

In summer Hunter was my recreation. During the rest of the year any spare time I had was packed full of activity also. Saturday mornings I spent in synagogue, of course. Saturday afternoons I devoted to study—first myself, then listening to the children run through the week's lessons—and to walks with Regina. Sunday mornings I generally spent at business, though the plant was officially closed Sundays as well as Saturdays, in going over work I had to handle myself. All other times were available for the benevolent institutional work, the demands of which on my leisure were the only bone of contention between Regina and myself.

Looking back at it now, it was a full life. There would have been no time for practicing the art of a "joiner" even if I had had the inclination.

In my own personal sphere and in my relations with my

wife I could acknowledge my blessings. When I looked at my twelve sturdy sons and daughters I had to acknowledge that those blessings had been multiplied. Healthy and rosy-cheeked, they surrounded us at our silver wedding anniversary like an army of contentment.

To have brought that army safely along the road we had come, through the dark spots on the way, was in itself no mean achievement. With our shift out of the disease-ridden slums, however, the health of all the children had picked up noticeably. Almost mathematically the later children were taller and stronger than their older brothers and sisters, with the youngest son the biggest of the crowd. A pretty good-looking lot—if I say so myself—they were always Regina's pride. From the day we came out of the red the best was always theirs. With the two older boys she was especially careful. Each Saturday she dolled them up in little blue pants and jackets, with starched white collars and tiny plug hats. Neat and crisp as if they had just come out from under the iron, they marched down the street flanking her. Almost fanatic about cleanliness, Regina never permitted any maid to touch the children's clothes. She looked after every stitch, ironed and hung up every garment herself, separately and carefully. Later, with the girls, she was equally meticulous. Pairing each two in similar outfits, one pink and one blue, she appeared to have three sets of twins, though there was a year or two between each girl and the next. They were the talk of the neighborhood.

But clothes were the least of my concerns for them. That my children should be given the education I so sorely missed was the wish fundamental to my existence. To further that aim, every one went to school at an early age. Not one was permitted to attend a private school, no matter how wealthy we became. That my children were perhaps missing some special development in public school, I knew very well. But I felt that "What's good for everyone is good for me and

mine!" was the basis of the American way of life, the way of life I desired for myself and my children and for all those who came after. While I wished to spare them the mean hardships of struggling for bread in the midst of poverty and disease, I wanted them to have a full knowledge of the world and its ways, to disabuse them thoroughly of any notion that money meant privilege. They had not made the money, I wanted them to understand, and the money was no credit to whomever *had* made it; God was good or not, as He saw fit, and we were all—rich, poor and in-between—children of the same Father. My children would mingle with every class and creed, and learn to appreciate them all.

Another point on which Regina and I agreed was that, unlike parents in Europe, we would provide our girls with the same educational opportunities as their brothers. This we were happily able to do. While we put the two older boys into business as soon as they were graduated from high school, we had learned enough later to urge the girls to attend college. From my third daughter on to the eighth they all did so, numbering, however, only the more democratic schools among their choices. Adelphi, Hunter, Barnard, Cornell and New York University enrolled one or another of them as the years went on.

Along with the secular education which was the basis of their training, I wanted my children to have a sound course in Hebrew also. "If they are good Jews," I insisted, "they will naturally be good Americans!"

I bent every effort toward that end. At six, Max, Rose and Will began to study. Max's experience was typical. In the Nineties the only school available to us was one on East Broadway conducted by Russian immigrants. The Russians I liked, but their Yiddish I did not. Max was learning English in public school and in everyday life. He was learning Hebrew in the religious school. And since he had to translate the Hebrew into another language for teaching pur-

poses, I wished him to learn German rather than Yiddish. For days I was upset about it, until a teacher from the school came to see me.

"The boy grasps everything quickly," he complained, "but he can't speak the Yiddish we require for translation."

That clinched it for me, and I hauled him out the very same day. I would search the whole city if I had to, I promised myself, but I would find someone to teach the boy German or nothing as his "second language."

Finally I found my man. As a scholar he was of the highest standing in both religious and secular knowledge. Goethe, Schiller, Heine flowed from him like water from a wholesome well. It was intoxicating to listen to him. And the Hebrew classics were his bread and wine.

Every morning he used to come in at six-thirty, to study with Max until eight—time to go to the public school. Many a morning Regina got up to light the gas-heater—after we had advanced to a flat with a gas-heater—so that the room should be warm enough to sit in without blankets. With this teacher Max flourished wonderfully. The Bible and the Prophets were the books I wanted my children to know; to me they contained the essence of Judaism, and indeed of all ethics. Max went through Bible and Prophets both like an Eastman machine through three inches of goods. He had them at his fingertips almost before I could turn around. At ten he knew more than I had ever known, and was delving into Talmud.

The Talmud is of course nothing more nor less than the rabbis' commentary on the code of laws which guided ancient Jewish life. It might well be compared to a collection of opinions and dissents on Constitutional questions handed down over the years by our own United States Supreme Court. "I can find in it nothing but perplexities and paradoxes," a friend complained to me once. I was never sufficiently learned to debate the point. I did know that a

great core of wisdom bound the Talmud together, though any critic could find in its multitudes of legal discussions passages in support of any position he wanted to take. "The Devil can quote Scripture," is no idle saying. Personally I was interested in the Talmud because it represented an important record of the Jewish past, its beliefs and customs.

Taking at face value the admonition of the sages that, "It is not incumbent upon you to *finish* the work, but that does not mean you are free to desist from it!"—I took to getting up early to join the pre-breakfast study sessions. I never became an expert. As I soon perceived, a young mind is a quick mind. "If one learns as a child, what is it like?" asked Elisha the son of Abuya—as quoted in the ETHICS OF THE FATHERS. "Like ink written on clean paper. But if one learns as an old man, what is it like? Like ink written on already blotted paper."

Discovering the truth of the observation through painful experience, I had to content myself ultimately with the knowledge that Max grasped what at forty I could not even begin to fathom. That he was an apt pupil was made amply clear at his Bar Mitzvah—the Jewish confirmation at thirteen years of age—when he amazed his hearers with a brilliant discussion of a passage so deep and difficult that scholars scurried to their books to try and follow him. At that time, I recall, friends came to plead with me to send the boy abroad, to Frankfort in Germany or Presburg in what was then Hungary, for further study in Hebrew.

"Have I come to this blessed country only to send my children back to Europe?" I demanded with considerable heat. "Anything he wants to learn he can find in this land. My only regret is that *I* wasn't born and brought up in this country. My only desire is that my children should have that gift. He will stay in the free air of America and, God willing, will go on to learn and to do!"

The younger children were even better equipped, ma-

terially, than Max. Will and several more followed in his footsteps and learned German as their second language, through its use in translation. With the youngsters, the new method of teaching Hebrew like any other modern language began to be introduced. I seized upon it with delight. Lessons were given entirely in Hebrew, so that soon the children could carry on conversations in the ancient, yet modern tongue. Hearing the language of the Bible and my fathers spoken at my own table by youngsters hardly out of their diapers made me feel that my greatest hopes for their education were being fulfilled.

In one respect alone were these hopes dashed. From my earliest days of dancing madly before the galloping horses on the way home from successful Jahrmarkts in Galicia, I loved music and gaiety. Over that came the one real difference of opinion in the house.

"They'll never sing or play a note," Regina said grimly. "They take after me—in that."

I couldn't believe it, of course. When times were good, I remember two pianos, three violins, and a scattering of mandolins and guitars around the house all at once.

"Perhaps," I ventured optimistically, "the children will take to the instruments from becoming familiar with them."

Regina just shrugged. Lesson upon lesson, dollar after dollar I tossed into the fruitless quest. Of twelve children only one ever sang and he—my third son—did so only out of a sense of duty.

With their health and education going without a major hitch, however, there remained for Regina and myself anxiety only over their choice of life partners. Even that was being happily dispensed with. Three of the children had married early. To our original circle of twelve we had added a son-in-law and two daughters-in-law at the time of our silver wedding anniversary. Nothing more serious than ordinary domestic spats disturbed the even surface of our

family pool. It must have been with the greatest effort that we avoided—and I think we really did—the final sin of smugness, self-satisfaction.

For ourselves and our children, Regina and I were happy. The final family aim alone remained—to lend a hand to our relatives, to heed the rabbi's adjuration, "Don't conceal yourself from your own flesh and blood."

Even in the early days, six months after our arrival, we sent money home to our parents. When we didn't know where the next meal was coming from, we nevertheless managed to keep from suspending the monthly remittances. My father was still in his brokerage business in those days, receiving occasional fees from aristocrats and landowners in return for advice and activity. Naturally he made little more than enough for the barest sustenance, and he was a man who liked his food. Even when he was well up in the eighties, I recall, he breakfasted on nothing less than four hard-boiled eggs and an enormous cup of black coffee. Regularly every month we sent him what we could. Though unhappily he died before the years of our prosperity, at least he was never in need.

The rest of the family we kept close track of. Two brothers I managed to bring over. The third, Marcus, was happy with his hotel in the summer resort in the Carpathians, though for his children he wanted something better. A son and a grandson of his found places in our business organization. My widowed sister of the beautiful face and majestic stature took quickly to the ways of America and was sorry she hadn't come sooner. Before long she herself was working, and spurring on her children. For Regina's family we were able to do perhaps more. While we were still on Essex Street my father-in-law had developed such confidence in my future that he sent two young daughters over for us to care for and guide. Other relatives followed in an ever-increasing stream.

Those were the days when every immigrant worked all day for himself and then worked an extra hour or two for the benefit of those he had left behind. English, Russians, Germans, Italians, Irish, Protestants, Mohammedans, Catholics, Jews—every immigrant I ever met was slaving to bring somebody over. If there were exceptions, I never came across them. In that day of no union in our field, we had little trouble fitting the new arrivals into our expanding business. There wasn't a day when I couldn't stand at the front of the sewing room, for instance, and see some degree of relative in any direction I looked.

Nor did I restrict myself to America. Even on the European trip I took for my health, I was unable to resist butting into family affairs a little.

Chief among my accomplishments on that tour I considered a lecture I read my assembled relatives on the glories of the United States. True, as our train puffed through Germany and I saw its spic and span lands stretching away on either side, its tidy people and clean towns, I couldn't help hanging out the window and shouting praises to the bewildered peasants in the fields. Hungary too looked beautiful, the rich grain lands of Eperjes at their best at that summer season. I wasn't there long, however, before the old rebellion at its ancient ways and deadly inertia overwhelmed me. Even then I could no longer abide its excessive politeness. Oh for America, I sighed, and its Joe and Jim and Charlie! And so, after my first surge of delight in seeing once more the land of my young manhood, I devoted myself almost entirely to demonstrating by appearance and conversation and action the wonders of the United States. The more I could dazzle them, the better I liked it. It was more than "Local boy makes good." It was "Local boy makes good and is damn proud of his adopted country!"

"Amerika uber Alles!" I explained at the slightest provocation, and repeated it often to the family gathered to see the phenomenon from overseas. "No country in the world offers such freedom and such opportunity to men who are honest and willing to work. Over there we have no counts, no barons, no lords—only businessmen, creators, inventors, who employ thousands of people in following the slogan, 'Live and let live.' Rich man, poor man, middle man—all work for mutual benefit, practicing the rule our sages laid down—'Man is born to labor!' I'm proud to say that today I myself provide work and a livelihood for a thousand people!"

To the general benefits which this information brought to my relatives I was able to add a few concrete items, which were no doubt better appreciated. Naturally we had our share of disappointments and unpleasant experiences, not only abroad but here at home. At the time of our silver wedding anniversary, however, every rebuff slipped off us like water off the feathers of a duck. Every aspect of life otherwise was too pleasant, and the good we could do far outweighed the evil that was sometimes returned to us. Perhaps I did things, as a critic once charged, because I derived happiness and satisfaction myself from them. I did not deny it for a minute. But I could not see that there was such great harm in feeling pleased that I could help others out of misery and suffering, or even plain embarrassment. And I wondered whether the analyst was not trying perhaps to explain away his own lack of social feeling or energy. In any event, I enjoyed being able to help, and I helped.

Wife, children, relatives—taken all together, they rounded out my family life into a complete and satisfying whole. They gave me my second reason for being the happiest man in the world. There remained only my life as a member of the community to fail me.

In Galicia and in Hungary it had been impossible for me to become a really self-confident citizen. Always I had had the consciousness that my Judaism was something more than a matter of individual belief. The very word Jew had a history in Central Europe—immediately it involved race, economic position, ignorant prejudices. Its influence hung in the air even on the sunniest days.

In 1913 I could hold up my head and breathe deeply. I was an American citizen!

I think I was always an American citizen, even when I lived in Galicia, or when I slaved in the slums of New York before I knew anything about first papers. To me citizenship is not something to be won by taking an oath or signing a paper. It is a matter of feeling in the blood, outlook on life. When I received my final papers in 1898, I was not conscious of any new cloak of Americanism on my shoulders. Those papers, given me by the clerk at City Hall, certified only what I had known long before. In America alone was it possible to live as the citizen I wanted to be.

Theodore Roosevelt said, "A good citizen shall be able and willing to do his share in the work that each generation of us finds ready to hand." In 1913 being a good citizen meant to me to be honest in the day's work; to be helpful to my fellows; to inform myself on all public issues; to be a responsible voter; to obey the injunctions of my duly elected representatives, reserving only the right to put them out of office if I disapproved of their policies; to work at least by the ballot on Election Day for the extension of freedom and equality to every American regardless of race, creed or color; and aggressively to uphold the glories of our democratic system as an example to the world and the hope of men of good-will everywhere!

In 1913 I was fulfilling every one of these duties, enjoying every one of these rights.

Along with most of my fellow-citizens, I felt that I was

a member of another community also—the narrower circle of my particular church. By birth and upbringing I was a Jew. The duties incumbent upon me as such seemed to fall into two categories—religious and social.

In the first, I thought my duty lay chiefly in conducting myself according to the lights I held proper, and in bringing up my family—the first unit of Jewish life—according to those same lights.

Among the earlier immigrants of my faith I saw some attempting to rear their children in an Old World manner. In Europe, where agriculture and indeed any work with the hands was denied them, the Jews had turned to work with the head. The majority of them went into the secular division of trade and commerce. The rest sat and studied, piling up a monumental sum of wisdom. In some of the members of this second class, however, learning was restricted to book knowledge and common sense was blunted. "Good is the Torah," says the ETHICS, "when combined with a worldly occupation." Scholarship is the highest ideal, provided the scholar has an occupation which enables him to live a useful, normal life. Ignoring this wise precept, the European mystics strenuously avoided contact with the materialistic world outside the study-hall doors.

To carry on this tradition in America was to me a kind of sacrilege. To be granted the privilege of coming to this country only to toss all that went with the physical action into the ashcan was as unthinkable to me as selling a birthright. My children would be raised differently, I swore. And they were. From the earliest days, when my daughter was impressed into household service and my eldest son into business, they were taught the meaning of work and usefulness.

In religion I tried to guide them by example rather than by discipline. Around me I saw many immigrant parents making one or the other of two equally serious mistakes.

On the one hand were the extremely orthodox who insisted that their children maintain the same rigid standard as they themselves, with the result that the youngsters born in free air revolted. On the other hand were those parents who leaned so far over backward in accepting new values that they broke their backs altogether and let their children run wild.

I hoped to avoid both extremes. Orthodox to the last degree myself, observing the practices of traditional Judaism and seeing Regina even more meticulous than myself, I nevertheless attempted always to recall that children raised in a new land might see things differently. Principles are, ultimately, more important than the ritual which expresses them. With minor clashes now and again, we and our children came to substantial agreement on everything. I was so happy to find common ground on which I could stand with them that I tried never to intrude on other people's spiritual domains.

In New York, in the first decade of the new century, that was not so easy. For between older and younger folks, between immigrants and earlier settlers, even between immigrants from different sections of Europe, arguments over variations in religious ritual often flared fiercely. Of course all these vigilance attempts were inspired by the old Hebrew tradition that "All members of Israel are responsible one for another." This was an outgrowth of the defensive proposition that the action of any one member reflected on the entire group. I could not extend it into the field of ritual. Rather I preferred to see it operate in the social sense—for the maintenance of standards of conduct, the fostering of religious and moral education, the relief of suffering, and even the futherance of individual happiness.

Contributions to the general welfare always appealed to me as a source of pleasure as well as a citizen's duty. I tried to make it my business to help to whatever extent possible

the many worthy causes which could not depend on government for support. These causes never found me "out" or "in conference." Contributions to them I considered like the gift offerings my forefathers brought three times a year to Jerusalem as symbols of their gratefulness to the Almighty for all His blessings. At the same time, since every church member's social activities center around his church and its leaders, mine fell to a considerable extent into Jewish channels.

"Man is born to labor"—the first law of life—and "Don't conceal yourself from your own flesh and blood," I was observing. In attempting to achieve my third aim, to be a worthy member of the community, I tried to follow the precept, "Love thy neighbor as thyself."

This idea Regina shared to the last degree. It was her ability to answer the call of the needy which contributed in large measure to her boundless devotion to this country. For here in a day she could do more than she could have done abroad in a year, even granting me the greatest European business success. From the moment she could escape the deadly routine of housework with a spare nickel in her purse, she was practically a one-woman philanthropic institution. When we had only our basement, parlor and first-floor on Seventh Street, Regina was already providing meals for a few of the poor people of the neighborhood. The food was good and one customer recommended another. It wasn't long, I recall, before they caused a family disturbance.

It was the custom at that time for the businessman to come home for lunch, the biggest meal of the day. Dinner, we called it then. That was a hangover from Germany, where all business used to stop from noon until three to permit the merchant to return home for a few hours with his wife and family.

"My carriage is waiting, my family expects me," said one Berlin gentleman when I called on him around noon one

day, on my first trip back. "You'll have to come again at three!"

To my startled protest he answered with a smile.

"You Americans hustle and bustle too much. If a customer comes in between twelve and two, you over there forget about lunch. You get his order—but you also get constipation and headaches. We want business. But we want to live too!"

In the Wooster Street days I still came home for lunch, for all like a German lord. But when I began to find dining-room, kitchen and halls thronged with Regina's proteges, I found it time to call a halt. There was no place for me to sit down in peace and quiet, and my wife, who had in service a cook, a governess and a domestic girl, couldn't sit with me anyway because she had to serve her guests!

"I'm happy that you can take care of so many people," I told her carefully. "But after all, when I come all the way home to have dinner with you especially, I like to dine with *you*—not a regiment!"

The dilemma was solved by changing the time for feeding the guests, although for a while it looked as if I would have to alter my business hours.

Not satisfied with helping those who came to her, Regina sent out for trouble. From her guests she learned of families in need, whom she promptly visited to see for herself whether or not they were honestly worthy. Once certain of their need, she would send money, food and clothing to them as often as she could. Generally my eldest daughter, Rose, was the messenger and package-carrier. That girl must have trodden up and down more rickety stairs than any tenement-section rent-collector, and the experience taught her early that there are many sides to life.

Not a few times Regina was grossly deceived. One little fellow with a pathetic face came around regularly, starting with begging pennies and working up to old clothes in what

he represented as an attempt to start a little business as a "buy cash clo' " man. His story was moving and his face appealing. Regina continued to help him until the day when by chance I happened to discover that he owned four tenement houses and was a landlord with a heart of flint. In this company belonged the poor woman who was an expert at phony epileptic fits, induced by a fine brand of soap slipped into the mouth and worked into a lather. Regina even came across a racket posing as a kitchen for hungry children, to which many soft-hearted and soft-headed fools like us contributed handsomely, never thinking to inquire into the authenticity of the rabbi's credentials which its conductor displayed—up to the day of his exposure.

Not even these incidents disillusioned my wife, however. In Borough Park our facilities were more ample, and her happiness more complete. There we had a special dining-room for the poor, at my insistence; I wanted sometimes to be able to dine alone with my family. This special room was always full, so far as I can remember, and our guests received the same food and service as we did. Upstairs two rooms were kept ready for occupants, and piles of bedding were stored in closets against emergencies.

Friday nights were our particular pleasure. It is the traditional night for the taking home of poor strangers. During the week they are supposed to be able to get along somehow, but on the Sabbath it is the duty of the religious man to provide the underprivileged with the makings of a worthy feast and day of rest. Our home became known throughout the community, and not only in Brooklyn. Strangers passing through would drop in during the course of the late afternoon to inquire for a night's lodging. For the old-timers even the formality of asking was dispensed with. Many of them used to arrive late, not long before sundown. Without a word of explanation they would scoot in,

drop their bundles behind the nearest door, and scoot out again to the synagogue for services. After services they would march home with me in leisurely style, licking anticipatory lips over the good dinner Regina was accustomed to provide. In the synagogue, more often than not, a couple of people would slide over to me and ask whether we had room for them. On the way out the sexton usually presented a couple of new candidates whom he had been unable to place elsewhere. We were the local last resort, I suppose. As a result, few Saturdays and Sundays saw less than fifteen or twenty guests in the special dining-room.

Some of these were no doubt professional paupers, drifting from haven to haven. Most of them were poor struggling people, on their way to look for jobs, or Europeans trying to collect pennies for obscure academies on the other side. All were welcomed. The invocation on the first night of Passover—"Let all who are hungry enter and eat their fill!"—Regina extended to every day in the year. Indeed, in such fashion did she attend to that vicinity that the poor of the neighborhood assembled in the street and wept when in later years she moved her household to Manhattan.

If Regina operated in and around the home, my field lay outside. First, with business expanding constantly, I tried to distribute necessities and perhaps even comforts as far-reachingly as possible to those who had left their mark on my early life. Zacliczyn, my home town in Galicia, probably received more mail from me than from any ten other correspondents.

Closer to home, the furtherance of happiness through matchmaking was my chief and festive pleasure. Perhaps because my marriage made my own life, I found myself almost excessively anxious that others should marry. On Seventh Street, I recall, we had a cook who kept company with a pleasant-looking young man for a year, and then another year. Just about the time that I was preparing

to ask why they didn't go ahead with the wedding, she developed circles under her eyes and a habit of crying in corners. The resultant investigation—I was never unduly reticent about prying into other people's private affairs—revealed that for two years the suitor had been siphoning money from the hard-working girl on the promise of marrying her as soon as he had established himself a little, and that more recently he had disappeared without a trace, taking with him the girl's money and her broken heart.

Regardless of the desertion, the girl still wanted him, I learned. The next day found me inquiring at his lodging house. He had skipped, leaving no address. There followed a few days of intensive search, and then I stood before the startled young man in his little room.

"This girl's father is not in America," I warned him like an avenging angel, "so I'm taking his place. Don't doubt that I'll see justice done here!"

From this wholesome beginning, which put the fear of God into him, we progressed so nicely that soon he confessed his sins, vowed eternal repentance and agreed to return if the girl still cared for him. Which she did. And a particularly happy couple they made, as I saw for myself when, a few years later, I went to congratulate them on the birth of their second child.

Getting married late I thought better than not getting married at all. My activities were therefore not restricted to the young. Even when a man reached middle or even greater age, there was still hope if I caught sight of him. Delightful as were my sporadic attempts at playing "Shadchan," however, more important communal affairs made the greater inroads on what time I did not spend at work.

In those days maintaining community standards of conduct was no problem. Few of the immigrants I knew or heard of went in for liquor or cards or women. Naturally there were exceptions. Russians were said—in our Hun-

garian circle—to spend their evenings in the back rooms of saloons, shuffling and dealing interminably, raking in and doling out coins, squabbling over pinochle and poker. No doubt the Russians said the same thing about us. Yet existence even on the hectic East Side was actually more respectable than in the blue-stocking districts. For the most part the immigrants worked hard, scrimped and saved to bring their fathers and mothers, their sisters, brothers, children, out of darkness and into the light of America. Their Sabbaths they spent in synagogue and in study or pleasant strolling in the little clear spaces that still remained in the lower part of the city. There was nothing which demanded the energies of the more socially-minded among them except strictly local problems—establishing Hebrew schools, organizing Old Folks' Homes, attempting to care for sufferers.

It was in these activities that I came into my own, especially during the Borough Park days. Hebrew schools I labored for unceasingly. Since, very properly in our democratic country, public schools restricted themselves to general subjects, it seemed essential to me that the various religious communities inculcate sound moral principles in their youngsters. The child whose parents could afford to pay for tuition did not concern me. The hundreds of boys in the East Side and Brooklyn slums did. I knew they were seeking an education and seeking it as a privilege not very likely to be granted. It was my great happiness to be able to found two Hebrew schools, and to nurse the larger one along from the day when it opened in a rented flat with fifty pupils to the time when it occupied a building of its own and afforded an excellent five-day-a-week education to four hundred underprivileged children.

In those days of less far-reaching government, it remained for the religious communities to come to the aid of the suffering also. We Jews tried, I know, to see to it that our

co-religionists did not become public charges. I believe the same thing held true of the Catholics.

My own time was claimed mostly by orphan asylums, hospitals and old-age homes sponsored by immigrants of Galician origin like myself. Not out of my own preference, but because of the caste system among Jews which had not yet even begun to lose its hold. Far from holding an international outlook, of all national groups in the various European countries the respective Jewish communities were the most locally chauvinistic. I found very early that many of them had carried this burning nationalism right into America itself. Highest in their scale stood the Jews who came from Spain and Portugal, mostly in Colonial times. Next came the Germans, with histories stretching hundreds of years into the Teuton past. The Hungarians, reputed to be the most orthodox in their observance, followed; after them the Lithuanians, noted for being hard workers; the Russians of agnostic leanings; the Poles and Galicians, fosterers of Chassidism; and finally the Rumanians, in a class by themselves.

In New York I encountered almost as much of this regional feeling as I had abroad. Immigrants tended to mingle only with others of a common background. Not infrequently the differences between the various groups flared into open bitterness. A Lithuanian would be admitted to a Hungarian old-age home, but sometimes the service would not be as gracious as to a "native son." In the hospital financed by people of German origin, a Russian would be accepted but not always welcomed. I even saw marriages opposed because the parents of the two youngsters had come from different lands!

Drily my father used to point out that the characteristics attributed to each group were only those of the people among whom they had settled, characteristics which over the centuries they had inevitably acquired through evolution. He derided their sectarianism without mercy. "When

Ferdinand and Isabella drove us from Spain," he liked to say, "those with the lighter packs settled here, those with the heavier packs there. We all come from the same source!"

My own friends were a divergent lot. Harris Siegel was a Lithuanian. Greenberg of Yonkers was a Russian Pole. Klingenstein of the formidable mustache was a German. Bauman was a Hungarian. I was a Galician. All of us felt that one of the chief problems facing us in America was the smashing of these artificial barriers so that we might all consider ourselves only Americans, free and equal in a nation of free and equal men.

In principle, therefore, I always battled for the abolition of nationalistic lines among recent arrivals. In practice I did not always enjoy the success I had in establishing free schools for boys of *every* divergent background. Sometimes I was forced to obey the Talmudic dictum—"Between the needy of your own city and the needy of another city, the needy of your own city take precedence."

I was a Galician. Not only were my fellow-Galician immigrants pretty near the bottom of the heap socially, but, coming from a barren land, they were generally economically handicapped as well. I was proud to have a hand in the founding of what was known as the Galician Federation, and to work hours and days on end for those institutions which catered, in self-defense, chiefly to newcomers of Galician origin. Because of my devotion to the rabbi of my synagogue, the saintly Dr. Philip Klein, I later made time for Hungarian institutions also.

In all these activities my role was generally that of a "Schnorrer."

"Schnorring" is a peculiarly Yiddish word. It has shades of meaning all the way from begging for alms to the opposite —collecting funds for others. There is no exact rendition outside the original tongue, but the word expresses a deep appreciation of the nuisance value of the activity on either

score. Starting with the advantage of the feeling of mutual responsibility so widespread in the Jewish community at that time, I became a "Schnorrer" par excellence. Surely the intended victim of the "Schnorrer" is the most elusive creature alive. But I found that, like everything else, soliciting funds for any type of organization—religious, fraternal or social—also had its immutable laws, observing which insured success against no matter what odds. Four of them were preliminaries.

1. You must be honest in business.

The victim could not excuse himself to his own conscience by saying, "The old crook, I wouldn't give him a nickel!"

2. If you are blessed with substance of your own, you must give of it freely.

The victim could not excuse himself by saying, "Easy enough for him to come around and bother *me*. Why doesn't he put in a couple of pennies himself, the old skinflint?"

3. You must not give money alone, but also of your time and energy.

The victim could not say, "A cinch for *him*. All old Mr. Moneybags does is sign a check—the easiest thing in the world—and he's a public benefactor!"

4. You must be convinced of the worthiness of the institution.

The victim could not say, "I give to two dozen worthy causes. But to this fraud—never!"

If these four were the prerequisites to a career in "Schnorring," the other three I found to be the rules which made that career successful. They pertained to the qualities of the individual career man, rather than to his background.

5. You must always have a ready answer.

The victim could not escape with a clever alibi.

Into "Schnorring" I put as much effort, as much alertness, as into trying to sell a buyer a dress. The approach was the same. Every prospect had to be tackled in a way fitted

to his personality, with emphasis on blocking off possible arguments. For there always *was* an argument.

"I'm supporting seven relatives," pleaded one man I visited. "It's enough to break your heart."

"Don't plead to me that you support relatives," I replied. "That's a duty, not something to your credit. I'm collecting for people who *have* no rich relatives."

A few handy Bible quotations drove home the point.

Others were more direct in their refusals.

"Is this another hold-up?" stormed one gentleman.

"Absolutely," I retorted. "And this is my ammunition!" I ruffled through the envelopes of my letters from needy children. He grinned, and was lost.

"My rabbi has forbidden me to give any more," was a novel complaint made to me once. "I've given too large a percentage of my income to charity already!"

"Perhaps the small twenty-five and fifty dollar donations are as important as the thousand dollar ones announced publicly in the synagogue, with your name attached," I suggested.

The victim sat down to write me a check.

The only argument to which I had no reply at the moment was advanced by a gentleman who kept up a fine pose of philanthropy.

"I keep a separate bank account for charity," was his astonishing statement. "My bank has warned me that I've already overstepped my year's limit. I can't give you anything without depleting the funds for the next twelve months!"

I was so flabbergasted I walked out before I knew it. That defeat rankled. With such a customer I should have heeded the next rule on the list.

6. You must know how to be tough about it.

The victim could not outbrazen you.

"Chuzpah" is the Yiddish word for nerve, gall, de luxe audacity. Whatever the exact shade of meaning, you had to have plenty of it.

I had. I shall never forget the wealthy homeowner who used to drive around Brooklyn in a tremendous limousine. When the Chairman of the Borough Park Federation couldn't worm a contribution out of him—ten dollars was his insulting offer—I went over to tackle him myself. The man repeated his picayune figure.

"Verdammt!" I shouted promptly, seeing what kind of customer I was dealing with. "We don't want people like you in Borough Park. A beautiful home and an expensive car—and all empty inside. For this great cause you have nothing? Very well, get out!"

I don't know whether he was more amazed or angry. He could hardly order me out of the house, but he did lift his hand to slap me. Then he thought better of it and tried to get rid of me with a twenty-five dollar bonus.

"Two hundred and fifty dollars!" was my ultimatum.

Again he flared up. I received a flat refusal and the door yawned for my exit.

"All right," I said. "If that's the way you feel about it. But tonight five cars filled with helpless orphans and old folks are going to stage a demonstration in front of your house. I'll lead them myself. We'll tell every passer-by about the niggard who lives in this home with the beautiful façade. And we'll continue to tell them!"

That brought him around in a hurry. To be perfectly truthful, in my heart I regretted losing the opportunity to picket him. His check helped alleviate my sorrow.

Finally there was the one rule violated by almost every organization and almost every "Schnorrer."

7. You must not come too often.

The victim could never say with justice, "What, again?"

In 1913 I observed my seven rules and became a master

"Schnorrer." So much was I feared for my zeal in soliciting for worthy causes that generally my victims took only one look before starting to compute the minimum amount which would start me on my way again. Supremacy in this field may have been a dubious social asset, especially in tight-fisted company. But it helped make me feel that I was living a full life in the realm of the community, as well as in those of business and family.

At home and abroad we could feel, in 1913, that our dreams were being fulfilled, our duties carried out.

It was during an argument in that same year that a brother-in-law once accused me of being a sinful man.

"I get up in the morning," I replied to the best of my ability. "I make my prayer—longer if I have time, shorter if I'm late. I drink my cup of coffee and go down to business. I conduct my business in a straightforward way. When I get home again there is a line of people waiting for me with all kinds of troubles for me to solve—they come to sell me books, to beg help for children, to solicit funds for charities. Not one goes away empty-handed. The evening I spend either going to a meeting of a committee handling some worthy cause, or with my wife and children, whom I am trying to bring up as God-fearing Americans. Tell me, when do I have time to sin?"

I thought of that incident while I sat at the table during the celebration of our silver wedding anniversary.

The ordinary gamut of sins of omission and commission I no doubt ran in full. Mistakes, follies, stupidities—these I had made, and made to the hilt. But in looking back and around me, I could see nothing I had done that I really regretted, no step I had taken that I would have liked to retrace. On looking forward, I was possessed of a desire to get up and sing the praises of the Lord in the choicest lyrics of the ancient Psalmist.

"How wonderful are Thy works, O Lord!" could never have been uttered from a heart more fervent than mine.

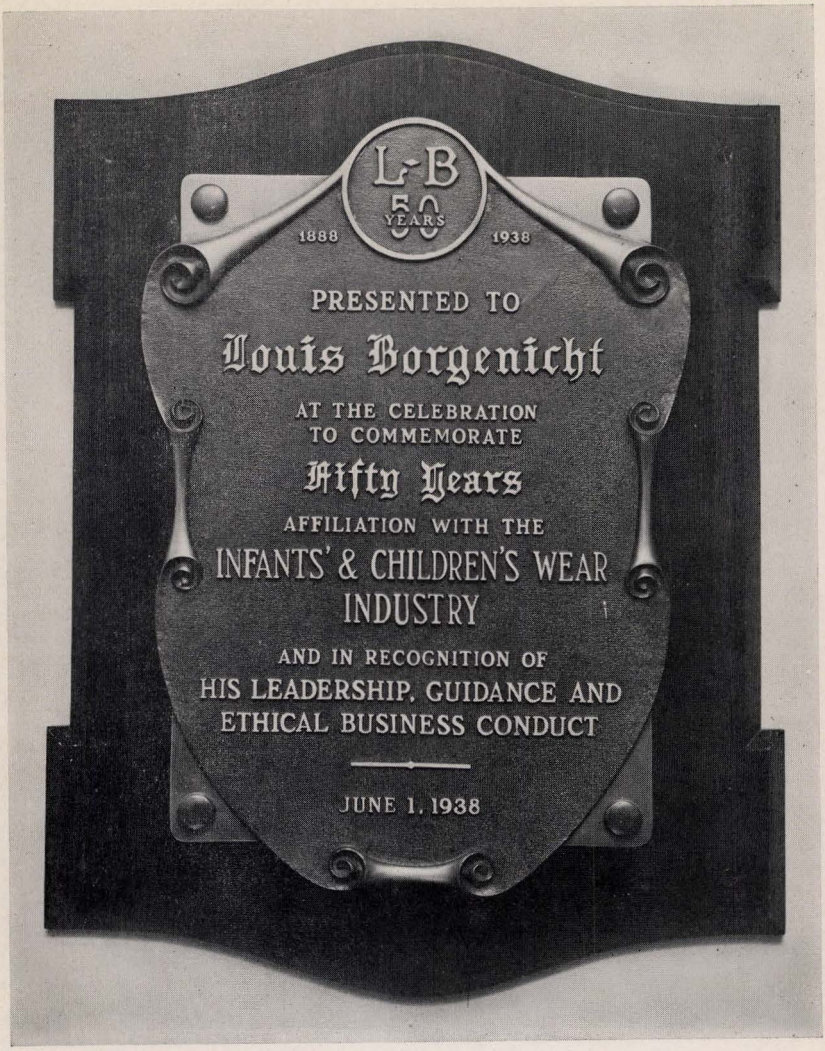
The three aims of my life I saw realized at this milestone. Business, home, community—in each of the three fields my happiness was complete. Most of all, in each of the three fields was the promise of greater glories to come.

In business, machines and electricity had eased the burden of production. In 1913 I envisioned a day when every child in America would have one, two, three, a dozen dresses, as every adult would have also enough garments, enough food, enough shelter. That day—with the physical appearances of the city changing overnight under our very noses—seemed only just beyond our fingertips, not a Utopia away.

At home the children were all here, leaving Regina looking hardly a day older than when we married, her hair still pure blonde, her complexion perfect. Twelve sons and daughters, a son-in-law and two daughters-in-law lined our table. My elder sons were on the threshold of home and business careers. Just married, newly inducted into the business, they had the world open before them. Prepared as they were with advantages infinitely greater than any I had dreamed of, I knew they would make me ashamed of my puny efforts while I glowed with pride over theirs.

The same sense of expectancy, of even greater achievements to come, filled the community. America just before 1914 was a wonderful land. Thronged with enough different tongues to warrant a title of Babel, it was yet a magnificent and inspiring Babel. For there *was* a common language—tolerance—through which all words became intelligible. Freedom was a new and great thing to us Europeans, it was something we had heard of and dreamed about with vague yearnings. In actuality it was as heady as the dream.

Suffering, struggle, poverty—they were there, but they didn't matter, because all over the country they were being



THE PLAQUE PRESENTED TO LOUIS BORGENICHT BY THE UNITED INFANTS' AND CHILDREN'S WEAR ASSOCIATION

fought against, and conquered. The direction was upward. The banners were brave.

In the religious community the most striking thing was not the charitable or educational work which was becoming better and better organized. It was the fact that for the first time in two thousand years a sense of belonging had replaced the alien feeling forced upon the Jews by the peoples among whom they had lived. Always they may have ached to belong to the national group; they were never accepted. Until America opened her gates with the welcoming words engraved on the Statue of Liberty—

Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to be free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore,
Send these, the homeless tempest-tost, to me!
I lift my lamp beside the golden door.

In a nation formed of patches from every land and from every continent, the Jews for the first time outside their own country of Palestine felt at home. It was safe, by 1913, for a peddler to go out through Pennsylvania. His wife no longer had to worry lest he disappear, or come home with an eye bulged out by a thrown rock. It was safe for a Jew to walk through the heart of the Irish or the Italian or any other district. He no longer had to worry lest he be mocked at or assaulted. And the Irishman and the Italian were as safe in the Jewish district. The venom which had once been vented on Catholics, and afterward on Jews, had been exhausted, we saw. We were past the crude days when the last touches of the barbarism which goes with actual frontier fighting were still apparent. We were on the high road to the greatest civilization the world had ever known.

It was a privilege to be alive in that world.

At our own table Regina and I saw our circle of good

and true friends. Before us stood a handsome resolution of thanks and good wishes from one of the schools we had founded, from another a huge silver cup to which students, teachers and trustees had contributed—and with which I would never part. On a stage set forward my nine younger children were performing a playlet composed for the occasion. At its conclusion my two older sons marched forward with a pair of silver candelabra as a token of family affection. Nearby sat Rose, happy in the knowledge that she had provided us with our first grandchild. A lump rose in my throat and hung there, as I know it rose also in Regina's. Under the tablecloth we clasped hands.

On our silver wedding anniversary we thanked God for having brought us so far, and prayed that we might continue on as happily to the fiftieth.

CHAPTER VIII

In which the happiest man is also the blindest man.

THAT our silver wedding anniversary fell in the year 1913 turned out to be a grim coincidence. For apparently that date marked America's silver anniversary also. Then I and everyone around me felt happily that we were on a one-way trip to Utopia. A year later came the Great War, the First Great War.

To one so pro-German as I was, it was a time for tears. Soaked with German language, I had been reared to look upon "German" as the stamp of excellence in trade, science, thought. As the weeks went by, I found my love of everything that meant Germany beaten down by the evident desire of the rulers of that nation and its high command to swallow the world. "Deutschland über Alles!" became suddenly a reality. People sat up and took notice that no other nation had for its national anthem so blatant an announcement of its aim to conquer. The transition from spiritual to military conquest the German soldier mind seemed to make with consummate ease. And then, in 1917, I read President Wilson's War Message to Congress.

After that money alone—I received all kinds of citations for purchases of Liberty Bonds, and for their sale to others —seemed a small sacrifice. Although my own two sons were deferred at first because of their families, I still suffered immediate personal losses. Having been taken into our organization at fifteen as an errand boy, Jack Spiro had moved upward steadily to become foreman of our entire stock room.

In 1917 he was courting one of my daughters when, suddenly, he was called to service. At the same time one of the young nephews of Regina whom I had managed to bring over from Eperjes astounded us all by volunteering without telling a soul. At sixteen he gave a false birth date, dropped a nonchalant word to his overwhelmed mother, and went off to fight for the greatest country on earth. Friends and the children of friends followed, they were caught up one after another in the war machine.

To me, to whom all war is a crime and a perversion of everything mankind is meant for—and to the principles of both Judaism and Christianity it is repugnant, according to the plain words of the Ten Commandments and of Jesus Christ—this war was the worst I had known. Yet clearly we had to fight. I could only pray that the victory would be swift, the peace enduring.

It was not to be. The blood bath continued with mounting fury.

The fever ran a parallel course in business. Not that business was bad. On the contrary, our firm boomed sky high in a crazy rush on the blood and bones of men, women, and children shot, maimed and starved in Europe. All over America the "Business as usual!" sign was hung out. I hated every minute of it.

In the midst of the Great War I made little children's dresses.

They sold as they had never sold before. At prices they had never touched before. Our sober garment district turned into a little Wall Street. Gambling madness swept the trade, and it was a kind of gambling at which no one could lose. With the labor shortage, wages rose. With wages rising, merchandise was snapped up. There was no question of selling or prices—the only problem was to produce. Whatever you asked, you could get ten per cent more. Goods you bought one day doubled in worth the

next. All around me I saw dubious-looking people flashing bankrolls. I saw merchants turn into sharks overnight.

Manufacturers contracted with mills to buy goods at seventy-five cents a yard, and accepted orders from retailers on that basis. By the time the goods were delivered and ready to be cut, the price had soared to over a dollar.

"To H— with the customer!" was the cry.

"Why bother with manufacturing? Why bother with labor trouble?" shouted men on all sides.

Ignoring the retailers left stranded without their ordered garments, these manufacturers just turned their piece-goods over again, at a higher and ever higher figure, and made fortunes.

To see a world set on solid rock washed off its base in a day or a week or even a year is an awesome thing. Every ideal, every standard seemed to have dropped out of existence.

Some of us tried to continue living in the old world we had known. I remember in 1916 a contract for five thousand pieces of serge. At the time we contracted for the goods, the price was eighty cents a yard. We sent out our salesmen and placed our estimates on incoming orders at that figure. By the time delivery was made and we were ready to cut up the serge, the price had leaped to a dollar and forty cents a yard! We sat down and figured it out. We stood to make a profit of sixty cents a yard by just reselling the goods. Each piece ran sixty to seventy yards. And we had five thousand pieces! Two hundred thousand dollars net profit was in our pockets, for the trouble of shipping the goods out again to the people who clamored for it. And for the trouble of telling my customers, who had placed their orders and were counting on me, to go jump in the lake. My dresses went out on time, at the prices we had contracted for, in 1916 and 1917 and every year.

Single gestures couldn't hold back the hands of the clock.

Lack of principle was a sign of the times. There were others as the War dragged on.

There was competition.

I have never been afraid of competition—honest competition. Under equalized basic circumstances, either you have the business ability to stay afloat or deservedly you go under. In those hectic years the competition was not always honest. The ranks of manufacturers swelled bewilderingly as small man after small man pitched into the wide open field. A substantial portion of our own staff left us to start in business in a dozen one-man ventures. Some cut their ties without notice, and wielded a two-edged sword by both leaving me vulnerable in the midst of a season, and augmenting the ranks of my competitors. They made the going stiffer, cut the margin of profit, put a premium on alertness in the field where earlier we could have gotten by on sheer lack of opposition. We still dominated the trade, but the fiercest of competitions was driving us now.

There was labor trouble.

It was during the mad War years that I encountered a union for the first time. The International Ladies' Garment Workers Union was already a powerful organization in 1916. It had unionized many branches of the industry, but somehow it had, up to that time, left children's dresses alone.

During the War wages were high and hours were low of themselves, owing to the labor shortage. At the same time a spirit of progress pervaded the industry, so that when a manufacturer introduced his brother-in-law as the attorney-spokesman for the union, we Children's Dress Association members assembled to listen. We were told that to "avoid animosity" between capital and labor, we should sign up.

Between my workers and myself there had never been any trouble, or even hard feeling. But it seemed reasonable to me that if they wanted to join an organization it was their right to do so. The Association concurred on this point at

the open meeting, and promptly I signed up. Afterward I learned that while I, the biggest man in the line, was fairly hooked, the other manufacturers had almost all backed out. Convinced, nevertheless, that soon the whole field would be unionized, I undertook to go along.

I had always made it a point to try and keep in step with the times. During the War days, faced with this new situation, I tried to adapt myself rather than to block change. I had always paid wages a little over the average for the industry, because I wanted the best men and the best girls for my firm. My working conditions were always up to the best in the industry. Nevertheless, once the union was admitted—and cheerfully—I found a new spirit undermining the old sense of co-operation. Hard feelings for me were encouraged as a deliberate policy. If a cutter did a good day's work—as some bewildered old-fashioned workers reported—new employees approached him with warnings that he was setting too high a standard of work for the rest.

The first time I heard myself depicted as an enemy of the workers, I laughed. I was a worker myself, and always had been. But it was no laughing matter, I soon learned.

Over the year's time during which we held conversations with the union delegates, our relations were not always cordial. In the midst of one conference, I recall, one of the delegates suddenly started to sneer at me for my religious observances and interests. His words were not especially delicate. Perhaps that was the straw which broke the back of my tolerance. I picked up a heavy glass inkwell and rushed at him. Luckily for both of us, I suppose, a friend pinned me from behind. The delegate apologized and I sat down with him again. But our tempers were beginning to flare.

When a check-up revealed that, paying the same wages and working the same hours as previously, we had fallen far off our production schedule since signing up with the

union—in some departments we were getting only sixty per cent of the quota of work—it was time to call a halt. I delivered a kind of ultimatum.

"Either get the other manufacturers to sign up," I insisted to the union leaders, "so that our labor costs are equalized, or I will have to dispense with the union myself!"

Receiving a negative reply, I called my people together by departments. In turn I spoke to the sewers, the cutters, the patternmakers, the finishers and the rest. To each group I announced that I was no longer recognizing the union, and explained why. Those who wanted to continue working were free to do so. Those who wanted to quit were equally free. In either case wages and hours would remain the same as always.

About seventy per cent of the employees voted to continue working.

Within twenty-four hours a picket line was thrown around the plant. As if to lend spice to it, it was led, actually, by a young cousin of mine whom I had brought over from Europe at his own piteous request. I had reared this boy in my own home and, when he asked for a job, I had placed him in my own office. It was hardly a pleasant feeling to have to pass him every morning, and to listen impotently to his denunciations of me as a swine and an oppressor.

After the first few days "gorillas" visited the homes of the people who were still at work. Our resort to keeping our employees in nearby hotels, or in the plant itself, was no more than a makeshift. For six weeks I held out, always with the condition that I would sign up again if the other manufacturers did. The union was not concerned with the others. Threats to life came with increasing frequency; our business was reduced to running on one wheel. We gave in.

Again there was no change in wages or conditions. It was purely a matter of union recognition. All the strikers came back, even that fine lad from abroad. This time, with

a victory under his belt, he ran riot through the place, assembling people in the washrooms to urge them not to work their heads off for the monster Borgenicht.

People came to me to complain. Some were trying to curry favor, but others were people who had been with me a long time, who looked upon our association as a species of partnership in which they prospered when I prospered. The stories they told were all the same. Typical of them was the complaint of one spreader who informed me that my relative had warned him to go slower at his work. When the spreader retorted that the boy should go to blazes, the latter had threatened him with union trouble, which threat was later supported by official confirmation from the local delegate.

I didn't need these reports. Nor would I ever hire what has come to be known as a "labor spy." I wouldn't have believed his tales anyway, for I felt that any man who made a business out of being a liar and a traitor was certainly not to be trusted by a responsible citizen. The business *results* indicated everything I needed to know.

When a few more months rolled by and still the union made no headway with the other men in the field, we looked over the books again and agreed that there was no point in attempting to continue. Once more I called together the various department staffs and informed them that I was dispensing with the union.

There followed two months of heartsickness and anger. One Saturday, for instance, a delegation of twenty or thirty pickets encircled the synagogue where I was attending services and started chanting: "L. B. Is a Bastard! L. B. Oppresses His Workers!"

The chief usher walked into the street. "We know L. B.," he shouted. "We know his shortcomings as well as his virtues. You can't tell us anything new about him, so get out!"

In reply the pickets invaded the synagogue. The President had to threaten to call police before they would withdraw. And when I left the services, they closed in after me like a funeral procession, telling every passer-by what a terrible character I was.

To some people this sort of goings-on would have been amusing. Others would have made a hard face and said to the devil with it. To me it was a nightmare. For two months there were fights and sluggings, though, thank Heaven, no actual bloodshed. Then oddly—whether outside circumstances were different in 1918 or its organization was weaker, I do not know—the union withdrew completely from our field, and every worker but that singular relative of mine resumed his post.

As if to cap this minor miracle came the Armistice. Relatives and friends returned from service, and those who didn't I pushed back into memory. My world resumed, at least on the surface, its familiar shape. The larger nightmare seemed over also.

An old Yiddish story tells of the scholar whose wife bore him twins. All day and all night thereafter he had to listen to the screaming of the babies and the cries of the mother as she cared for them. The constant tumult in the tiny hut in which he lived maddened him more and more until finally, unable longer to concentrate on his studies, he rushed to his rabbi for relief.

"Take a cow into your house," suggested the rabbi.

The scholar gaped. "Already I'm going mad with the excitement and now you tell me to take a *cow* in?"

"Do as I say," replied the rabbi.

A week later the scholar returned, in anguish. His wife shouted at him twenty-four hours a day to get the cow out, the cow bellowed, the babies cried continuously, and the scholar could stand no more.

"Take a goat into your house," said the rabbi.

Again the scholar gaped at this piling of trouble on trouble. Again, in the end, he obeyed.

In the following weeks the process repeated itself twice more as the scholar brought a sheep and then a rooster into his house to keep the cow and the goat company. When he returned to the rabbi at the end of the fourth week, he was almost frothing at the mouth. Piteously he declared that he could not, would not return to the madhouse which was his home.

"So now you have a cow, a goat, a sheep and a rooster in the house, eh?" mused the rabbi. "Well, take them all out!"

Gratefully the scholar ran home. When a few days passed without incident, the rabbi paid the man a visit. In a corner of the hut the two babies were screaming at the top of their lungs. Over them stood the mother, shouting at them to be still. But, at the table in the center of the room, the scholar sat serenely studying his deep volumes.

"You know," he beamed when he saw the rabbi, "since I got those animals out, it's been so quiet here it's a pleasure!"

Perhaps that scholar's example explains my own. So happy was I to see the War over, our labor troubles eased, that I looked at the "chiseling" competition which had enraged me before and called it healthy rivalry. I looked at the hardening of hearts which had sickened me and called it a hardening of heads, a polishing up of business brilliance. So confident was I that I stepped out again on the road I had been traveling in 1913. As the first step along that path I turned anew to an experiment in which I had failed in the early 1900's.

In those days our production problem had become so great that we were able to handle only a fraction of the manufacturing ourselves. Only the delicate white goods had remained in our plant from start to finish. The rest we had had to give out to contractors, who did everything

but the original cutting and the final trimming, folding and pressing. For a long time I had nursed the conviction that if we could make all our goods on our own machines, under our own active supervision, we would make a more uniform product and, in all likelihood, a better one. Certainly a complete factory of our own would mark a further advance in the direction of a modern, forward-looking business. In 1906 we had finally undertaken the experiment.

Instead of starting small with fifty machines, to learn the technique, we had splurged with two hundred and fifty. Those were satisfying months, I remember. Two floors in a Williamsburg building, twenty thousand dollars' worth of machinery, foremen, foreladies, operators galore—we owned our own complete factory! My chest had expanded a couple of inches. After six months, however, the figures had come in. We had lost between twelve and fifteen thousand dollars. Sub-letting one floor, we had tried it again with a hundred machines. Long after the period allowable for learning the method of production, we had still continued to lose money. When finally we were considering abandoning the project, the Panic of 1907 had arrived to make the decision easier. Faced with a desperate struggle to save our whole organization, we had had to let the experiment go by default.

In 1919 I felt the time was ripe for a new trial. The jobbers were out of business by then. Our buying we were doing in the best economic manner—direct from the mills. But we were still giving out our goods to fifty different contractors. In conference with my sons, I suggested that we do our manufacturing also in the best economic manner—in our own factory.

"Young blood" was one of the cries brought out of the War. All around me I saw babies hardly out of their diapers making fortunes. Accustomed to the slow, solid pre-War days, I believed readily that these youngsters knew

more than I did. When my boys approved the new project, the matter was settled. We plunged into work.

Our white dress department was the first we concentrated on. Pennsylvania was a labor Heaven, peopled by immigrants of quiet, dependable types, and eager for work. Not that we intended to sweat them, for we never paid less than tops in our line. But for the same wages we would get in Pennsylvania honest, willing work, instead of grudging, shirking work.

So we located our factory in Atlantic City, New Jersey!

When the head of our white dress department put in a strong argument against Pennsylvania, we allowed ourselves to be persuaded. In the Jersey summer resort we erected a building on a rental basis. When we saw the completed place, we were so delighted that we paid for it outright, and equipped it with twenty-five thousand dollars' worth of the newest machinery. Of course we had some trouble in locating employees, and ultimately we had to teach those we did find. But after six months we had five hundred people working with reasonable efficiency.

The following year we decided to locate our other departments—colored goods, wash goods, woolens and silks—in Scranton, Pennsylvania, where we could employ the Poles, Italians, Russians and Slovaks who lived in that neighborhood. Promptly we built a new building at a cost of two hundred and fifty thousand dollars. Another ninety thousand took care of the machinery. Fifteen hundred operators worked in that factory alone, bringing the total we employed to a little over two thousand souls.

Intoxicated with these figures, and with this wonderful fireproof factory, the finest in that section of the state, I agreed enthusiastically when the boys suggested that to top it with the proper touch we hire an efficiency expert.

"Scientific management" was another slogan to emerge from the War. The old method of working hard was no

longer fashionable. Tests were made, expensive tests, and new ways of applying skills and energies devised, mostly by people who could not have buttered a slice of bread if bread and butter stood before them on the table. To me it was all fascinating. All my life receptive to new ideas, now I was awed by their magnitude. Out of my depth, I went along with the tide, my eyes wider every day. The boys were certainly outstripping me. If I didn't feel quite at ease in this new atmosphere, I was that much prouder of my sons, who did. Max was active in the New York office; Will moved to Scranton to be Johnny-on-the-spot, along with the scientific engineer. In three months we were moving along at what looked like a steady pace.

And then, on a sort of personal relief mission to the places I had known as a boy, I went to Europe.

CHAPTER IX

In which I find Europe a lost world.

My first and overwhelming impression of Europe was of physical devastation. Ruthless destruction had combined with the stoppage of all normal labors to bring about a poverty worse even than any I had known in my famine-ridden youth.

In Vienna Regina and I looked at each other and wept. The name of the city might have been Shantytown for all the resemblance it bore to the crown of Europe as we had known it. I remember sitting in a restaurant with an open courtyard. As we ate, men and women drifted through, carrying little baskets of pins and notions, trying to peddle them to the few diners, all of whom were foreigners. These people shivered with chills, huddled in torn thin dresses and no coats. Underneath the rags and the discolored faces, we saw with horror, these were no paupers by profession. When they spoke, it was with the accents of Vienna's inimitably cultured middle class.

Three people stopped at our table—two women and a man. They must have been in their late forties, though they looked twenty years older. I fished out a half dollar, American. Suddenly I asked them whether they would care to have dinner.

"I wish it!" said the man with a bitter, unbelieving smile.

The waiter protested. "These people are not permitted to sit at table with regular customers," he explained. "It would give the place a bad name!"

I had just finished my soup. Now I laid down my spoon and plucked at Regina's arm.

"Let's go elsewhere to eat," I said in a choking voice. I was afraid to look at that supercilious waiter for fear I'd murder him.

The proprietor rushed out. Apologizing profusely, he explained over and over again that much as he would have liked it, he simply could not permit it. Of course he was right, but I pleaded an exception and finally he yielded. Tentatively, as if ready to run in the event somebody ordered them out, the three poor souls sat down.

Not since the day in Galicia when Mother and we children hadn't touched food in forty-eight hours had I seen people eat like that. They gulped each course as if they would swallow the bowls themselves. Regina and I watched in sick silence. When they were finished, there were tears in our eyes, as in theirs. The two women patted Regina gently, in blessing. The man could say nothing. Then they were gone. Pins, notions and tattered clothes.

All through Austria we found conditions the same. From overrun countrysides people swarmed to the cities and towns on foot. All rolling stock of the railroads had been destroyed with few exceptions. What trains there were, running once in a while, were jammed to the rooftops with local passengers—there were of course no tourists—trying desperately to find a place to stay, a meal to eat.

Despite the fact that in Austria there was no bread, no milk, no work, it was still not until I reached my native Galicia, part of reconstructed Poland after the War, that I encountered the most profound depths of despair.

Galicia had always been a poor land, under-fertile and over-populated. In the old days it had been livable, though, it had had its own color and gaiety. Now it was a hellhole. Its people waited for miracles, not to help them but to keep them from dying outright. We were besieged from dawn

to midnight. I recall leaping out of bed one cold morning even before the sun was up, to answer a knock at the door. Prepared to find a burglar or a thieving gendarme, instead I was confronted with the outstretched palm of a dignified old scholar who was ashamed to come during the day when the crowds gathered. Much as I had intended to contribute to the people of my old town and district, I was constrained constantly to add to it. Not even a heart of stone could have withstood that fire of pathos.

Each new experience was worse. In Gdow, to which I went to visit the only survivor of my mother's family—an aunt of an authentic hundred and three years—I found not one of the villagers able to support himself. Aunt Rachel was a bent little old lady who shared her slender stipend with a nephew. Son of an aunt who had rebuffed my mother in the days when they were rich and we were poor, in 1921 he lived from hand to mouth, an utter dependent. Even more unhappy was the lot of his sister, a girl I recalled as snippy, conscious of wealth and position. For forty years she had lived in Gdow, from the day when she thought herself secure to the day when I saw her living in a house with rotting planks for a floor, windows shattered, closets empty and cupboards bare of everything, even hope.

In Neusandec I found a gathering of Borgenichts to the tenth degree. One needed money for a dowry, another to redeem mortgaged furniture, a third to rescue his tiny shop from creditors. Each had a request, and each request was bona fide. Though there was only one family of our name, and my sense of kinship was strong, still I was no multi-millionaire. To my father's cousin, who was a sort of presiding elder, I gave a commission to handle the division of funds. Receiving from him a list of the most urgent needs, I changed my money into Polish marks and, of the three million I received, left one million with him. The other two I kept, anticipating further sessions. I was not wrong.

One dawn, on a trip to correct passport difficulties, I limped—and limp is the word for the dilapidated wagon which was the only available conveyance—into a place called Lobowa. In Galicia one town looked pretty much like another, but in this one, I recalled, lived a daughter of Alter Brand, old friend of my father's and mine. I couldn't pass through without seeing her. Perhaps I could stop a moment, wash, pray and even have morning coffee. I found an early riser to direct me to her house.

The woman was awake. She opened the door without any change of expression, and I stepped in. There was no floor, the mud of the ground squinched under my shoes. There was no furniture, just a table made of a plank resting on two uneven boxes. Beside it was a short bench. I looked around for a bed. There was none. I took another look at the woman.

I had known her as a baby. Now she was about thirty-five. She was tall, taller than I. But she weighed less than ninety pounds. Her hands were all bone and nail, like claws.

"For God's sake, what's happened here?" I asked.

She wept, apparently for the first time, because it came hard to her. Slowly I got the story. In desperation, thinking she would be better off, Brand had married her to a widower with two children. Now they had a child of their own also.

I looked around for signs of this family.

"My husband has been out peddling for two hours," she said. "If he looks long enough, perhaps he'll find somebody to buy something for a few pennies."

"Where are the two boys?"

"At Cheder, studying. It keeps them from thinking how hungry they are."

"And the infant?"

She opened the door to a second room. At first I saw

nothing. Then in a corner, half-buried in a pile of straw laid over the mud, I suddenly made out the figure of a baby, perhaps two or three years old. Some of the straw was pulled over her, in place of a blanket, to try and keep out the chill and damp.

In a daze I dabbed up some water, washed and said my prayers.

"Can you give me any breakfast?" I asked, finally.

"We have nothing," she said. A fresh torrent of tears poured out. "There's just an old end of black bread in the house. We starve three times a day!"

"Can't you borrow something from a neighbor?"

"The neighbors have nothing to give."

Perhaps she hadn't understood, I thought. "I mean I'll give you money. Can't you *buy* something? For yourself and me, and for the baby?"

"The baby and I are used to the black bread," she said. "I'll see whether I can find anything for you."

She returned with a few hard rolls and a cupful of milk —that was all that money could buy. She set the rolls and the milk before me on the plank and brought the baby in, to wrap her around with her scrawny arms. The little girl's face was like paper. Her stomach bulged with water from starvation.

I watched that baby take the old black bread and try to bite into its iron surface. Suddenly I couldn't stand the idea of breakfast any longer. I pushed the rolls and milk over to the woman and told her to let the child eat for once. As I did so, the mother cracked wide open and fell at my feet, weeping.

"For the sake of your dead parents," she pleaded. "When I wrote to you, you sent help. Now that I kiss your feet and appeal to you in person, is there nothing you can do?"

The only thing I could do was to leave her some money. I would send more from America. Beyond that—and I had

to tell her—there was nothing. The gates to America were closed after the War. I knew no other Promised Land.

On the way home that night after completing my errand, I had to pass once more through Lobowa. I was greeted by the entire population of the town, brought out by the word spread by Alter Brand's daughter. All the hundred families appeared to have assembled in the square. They surrounded my carriage and made the road impassable.

It was impossible not to weep with them. Not one had a complete set of clothes. One had no shirt, another no shoes. Coats and hats were altogether unheard of. Faces pale, faces with festering sores, faces shrunken to tight masks over the bones beneath. The old men were bent and feeble. The young men were maimed, gassed, shell-shocked. Between the old and the young women it was hard to distinguish. The children were a sight to make the heart burn. I thought of Max and Will when I looked at the men, of my younger children when I looked at the rest.

While I sat there, the rabbi of the town sent for me. I drove to his home, which the crowd allowed me to do, and found him sitting at his window. My heart bled for his people, I told him, but my own life was in danger from bandits if I didn't get back to Regina and our lodging before dark. There was again only one course open. I went into the rabbi's house and gave him one of my two remaining millions of marks. Behind locked doors I told him he knew the needs of his people as no one else did. He would have to dole out the money according to the status of each applicant, keeping enough for himself and his own family as well.

The rabbi settled himself and signaled to his "Gabe"—beadle. The latter opened the door and called out the first name on the list. This first man entered the house, received his share, and withdrew. The Gabe then let in the next man.

I watched the doleful procession for a minute or two. Then I went to a side window and slipped out. I made a

dash for the carriage, hoping to get away. The crowd caught me and milled around the horses again. Fishing in my pockets for the few coins I had left, I flung them to both sides. The crowd parted to struggle for the money, and the cabby seized the moment to whip up the horses. Through the open lane we beat our hasty retreat. My last glimpse was of bent figures scrabbling in the mud, shoving and fighting, for the few pennies I had thrown. To this day it is a sickening memory.

Less obvious, perhaps, but ultimately more dreadful even than this physical suffering was the moral degradation I encountered as I traveled on. "Poverty," observed one of our sages, "turns men away from knowledge of the Lord." In 1921 I saw that it had turned them from law and order.

Chaos prevailed in every country we passed through. To venture off the railroad line was to risk your life. In Czecho-Slovakia, where Eperjes now stood, the danger was chiefly from Czech soldiers. To the natives, even familiar as they were with the ferocity of the old nobles, this Army of Occupation was known for its savagery. Under the Hapsburgs the Czechs had been persecuted. The Germans later dubbed "Sudetens" had bossed the land with intolerable arrogance, treating the native population more often than not as the most bigoted Southerner treats his colored fellow citizens. After the War the situation was reversed. The Czechs swept through the country like a new broom. From government office, from business, from agriculture, from everything which they had formerly controlled, every German was summarily ousted. In later years the Czechs established a government on noble principles like our own and tried to adhere to these principles until they were suppressed by Hitler. In 1921—with the population around Eperjes, Jew and Gentile, looking down on them as cultural upstarts and hating even their harsh-sounding language—they were avenging angels. An old Hebrew saying has it that "Once you give

free rein to The Destroyer, there is no discriminating between the righteous and the wicked." I saw the ax fall on the heads of the innocent and the guilty with equal finality.

Elsewhere in Central Europe roaming bands of famished men robbed and murdered every unwary traveler. So completely had civil authority collapsed in Poland and Rumania, for instance, that we were refused visas to these countries on our first application. It was only through ostentatious display of a letter of commendation from Governor Strong, in charge of Liberty Bond Sales, that we finally secured them at all.

Only a little while before we had received news of the disappearance of Rabbi Friedlander, one of the brightest lights of American Jewry. On a relief mission in the Ukraine, he had been abducted with his companion while en route from one center of misery to the next. The body of this compassionate man was found afterward, brutally mutilated. This tale fresh in her mind, Regina kept me rigidly in hand. She would tolerate not a moment the thought of my traveling to Zacliczyn to visit my parents' graves. That was in the interior. My territory, was her dictum, was the marginal areas alone. Friends from Galicia had to come to me at the border mountain resort of Krynica.

Poverty had turned men away from the old Hungarian hospitality.

No experience was more typical than that of our first night off the train.

Our "express" was late, as usual, approaching Eperjes. It happened to be a Friday and, unwilling to violate the Sabbath, we got off hastily at a town called Wallendorf. Our bags were thrown after us and the train pushed on, leaving us to the tender mercies of a station master who was as friendly on that over-heated plain as an acetylene torch. Locking our bags up for safety in his little cubicle, he closed the place for the night and stalked off with the curt comment

that the only possible lodging was in town—which, like all European towns, was some three miles from the tracks. The plain between was scorched, radiating a whole day's sun. The cowpath before us—there was no road and most roads had been destroyed anyway—was ankle high in dust. But we had no alternative. We took the cowpath.

To come from a lovely home in New York, complete with every modern convenience, in order to walk three miles on a Hungarian cowpath in the heat of a parching afternoon seemed to me slightly comical at first. The advent of a herd of cows, kicking up clouds of thick gray dust over us as they passed on their homeward way, removed the humor at once. We struggled along in the wake of the cattle.

"Stadt Wallendorf!"—the city of Wallendorf—said the sign. Perhaps two hundred people lived there, at the very most. As hot and dusty as was the plain, so was that village square slimy with mud into which we sank to our knees. Wading through it, we found the inn. The large, hard-faced woman innkeeper almost closed the door on us. To our request for lodging over the Sabbath, she replied that she had no accommodations. No doubt she had her troubles. Czech soldiers were billeted all over the region. They swarmed in her inn, using her rooms, eating what food it was possible to round up, and leaving her in doubt as to ultimate payment. Still we couldn't stand there and be turned into the night. Regina offered the woman five dollars.

"Only give us a corner somewhere in which to lie down," she begged. "And use this to go buy some milk and eggs."

"Milk?" sneered the woman. "Go out and find milk yourself!"

I stifled my temper. "After all," I told Regina, "this is Hungary—our Hungary with its golden hospitality. Surely I'll find someone to welcome us!"

Running out into the square, I found four men on the nearest corner. I explained our predicament.

"We would appreciate it if one of you would provide food and lodging until tomorrow night," I finished confidently. "Whatever the price, there will be no dispute."

"We have neither the food nor the room for guests," said one coldly. The others nodded.

After a moment of amazement I blazed up in anger. "Verdammte Bengel!" I swore. "If a man came to my house at no matter what ungodly hour, I would offer him my own bed and share whatever food I had. We've traveled all day in this heat, we got off the train to be able to keep the Sabbath, and now we come among people who call themselves religious and find this reception! You should be ashamed of yourselves. You are as hospitable as your verdammte innkeeper. Donnerwetter!"

The sparks fluttering from my mouth must have shamed one of them for, no matter how reluctantly, he agreed to put us up. Once in his ramshackle hut at ground level, we learned that our host was actually the father of a boy who had worked under me long before in Eperjes, a boy whom I had trained to be a full-fledged Kommis in two years instead of three. In those days the mother had come often to shower praises on me. I felt confident that our Sabbath would be a pleasant one. Instead, when it came to reimbursing our host for his trouble, and Regina and I had agreed to pretend we were stopping at the Astor in New York and to pay accordingly for the bare floor on which we had slept and the two eggs we had eaten, our "friend" put up a nasty argument and ended our visit by denouncing us in blistering terms as American dollar-chasers!

Poverty had turned men away from the wholesome personal pride characteristic of the true Hungarian.

Less than a week after I arrived, people who had scorned me when I was a poor Kommis came crawling to beg for favors. People who had been decent, upstanding souls demonstrated over and over again that they were now lost

to all sense of shame. Our own relatives were among the worst offenders. What remained with me out of a dozen shocking experiences was not the magnificent effrontery of these "rascals," however, but rather a sense of the conditions which moved ordinary, decent people to such excesses. They were simply victims of the new forces operating in Europe.

Poverty had turned men away even from common honesty. Bribery was having a field day. In the poor countries —Russia, Galicia, Lithuania—the practice known in the succinct Yiddish as "Schmiering" was prevalent always. In the more advanced lands—Austria, Hungary, Germany—it had been a rarity. Far stricter standards of honesty were adhered to. With the smashing of all standards, however, every position of whatever authority at all became a source of private income. Perhaps these little men did not know whether the next paycheck was coming through; perhaps that paycheck was so small they had to implement it with underhanded tricks. In any case, the new system of borders and passports combined with the complete breakdown of transportation, communication and accommodation to round out the opportunities for the grafters.

Representative was our experience when we needed a passport for Regina's brother, whom we wished to take to Vienna for an operation. Ordinarily we would have had to wait five or six weeks. But in post-War Europe every rule was made to be broken, under pressure of the proper "donation." Snooping around, I found the man who seemed to be everything I was looking for. Visiting him in his delicatessen store, I met a little fellow in a long Beckische, with the twisted sidecurls which marked the old-time religious Jew. Though his store was scarcely big enough to slice bread in, he apparently wielded great influence with the local Czechs. While he took me to headquarters with the greatest good humor, he warned me repeatedly that

under no circumstances did I dare offer any money directly to the police.

"These Czechs are very finicky about that," he added, explaining away my amazement. "You must give only 'for the poor!' "

To the police assistant in charge I made my plea, with a hurried suggestion that in return for so great a favor I would be only too happy to donate three hundred crowns —at three crowns to the dollar—"for the poor." The assistant promised immediate action on the passport, but added that I would also have to see the revenue office people and secure a statement proving that Regina's brother was free and clear of tax debts.

At the revenue office I was given to understand that they had no idea how much taxes my brother-in-law owed the state.

"You can get a pretty good idea," I suggested, "by stopping to consider that his entire business, stock and all, is valued at five hundred crowns. How much in arrears can he be?"

The revenue officers went into a huddle. They were an independent office and they made an independent decision.

"We cannot give you the statement you need," they declared, "unless you leave a deposit of four hundred dollars in American currency to cover any possible arrears that may be listed. You won't suffer any loss," they hurried on to ward off my apoplexy, "because after we check and find how much he actually owes, we'll return the surplus. After all," was the conclusion, by way of apology, I suppose, "we are a young country, taxes mean a lot to us."

There was nothing to do but leave the money. I requested that the surplus—if any—be assigned to my brother-in-law. Of course neither he nor I ever heard of the matter again. But within forty-eight hours we received the pass-

port. Ten repetitions of the experience, with minor variations, made the lesson clear.

While political and military officials were perhaps the most voracious bribe-takers, bribes were also woven into every petty detail of life. On a railroad trip from Bratislava to Eperjes, I overheard an argument at one of the third-class carriages. With my customary diffidence I intervened, and found the train conductor browbeating a fine-looking gentleman who introduced himself to me as the Hungarian Rabbi Englander. The rabbi and his wife had been taking the cure at a nearby health resort, saving only enough money for their train fare home. Now the conductor was demanding extra fare for their baggage, which consisted in toto of a worn straw basket which they carried on their laps while riding. The conductor had the upper hand; an appeal to higher officials would have produced either a demand for further fees or insistent annoyance from the conductor himself throughout the trip. There was nothing to do but pay the parasite for permitting the rabbi the privilege of carrying his basket along with him.

In every hotel, restaurant, bath house, I found the same necessity for "Schmiering." I couldn't go to bed, buy a ticket, take a drink, without paying something into an outstretched hand. Being an American, I bore the brunt of this attack of corruption. For an hour's ride along a road pitted with shellholes into which my driver steered with uncanny accuracy, I remember paying thirty dollars. Afterward I learned that I had escaped paying double that figure only because my German had deceived the cabby into thinking me a European.

Poverty had turned men away, finally, from the most sacred human emotions.

One night, in the midst of a sudden stifling heat, we were traveling from Vienna to the spa of Gastein. There were no compartments in our train, but only long seats with an

aisle at one side, instead of in the center as in American trains. Our car was so crowded that people packed like sardines into the seats and overflowed into the open aisle. The best I could do for Regina, despite our first-class tickets, was to find a tiny space in which to turn up the end of a valise for her to sit on. We steeled ourselves for the long ride.

Suddenly, near us, we saw a drooping mother, an infant in her arms, a little girl of four clutching at her skirt. As we stared, the infant began to cry and the mother, beyond awareness of the passengers around her, wearily gave it the breast. The infant was quiet.

I remember breaking out in a cold sweat. The woman was almost dropping with exhaustion, swaying with each lurch of the train, yet she stood there in silence while strong men sat in half the seats in the car!

Approaching the nearest husky fellow, I asked him politely whether he wouldn't consider letting the mother have his seat for a little rest at least. To my amazement and anger, he shook his head.

"Have pity on her!" I burst out.

"Mitleid?" came the stunning reply. "Wir haben kein Mitleid! Jeder Funke des Mitleids wurde durch den Krieg erloschen. Die Schlacht hat uns zu Tiere verwandelt. Es existiert kein Mitleid!"

"Pity?" would run a rough translation, into which it is impossible to instill the spirit in which that man spoke. "We have no pity! Every last drop of it was crushed out in the War. The fighting has turned us all into wild beasts. There *is* no pity!"

All night that burly passenger, and those around him, watched the mother. They watched while Regina sat her down on the valise and cradled the infant for her, to keep it quiet. They watched while the little girl slept at her feet. But she might have been a cockroach for all the expression

her misery brought to any face in that car! It came to me only afterward that to men who had seen fathers, brothers, sons blown to bits and spitted on bayonets, mothers, sisters, daughters hunted, starved and raped, the sight of a single mother on the verge of exhaustion must have been a little thing indeed.

"Poverty turns men away from knowledge of the Lord." The sages spoke better than they knew. In the fantastic, incredible poverty to which the War had reduced Europe, I found knowledge of the Lord completely obliterated.

The only thing I saw on the whole continent free from suffering and despair was the ship bound westward—for home.

CHAPTER X

In which figures lie, and I return to the business wars for a thrill.

I KISSED the ground when I stepped off that ship on to American earth.

I looked around once and I said, "Europe is three thousand miles away and it might just as well be three million. Europe and America—they are two different worlds!"

How could I have said anything else? Throughout the United States business was booming. All that was necessary, according to the belief and in many cases the reality, was to find something in which to invest and promptly you received dividends tenfold. The wilder the project the better, was the rule. I discovered the wildest.

Oil was comparatively sane.

There was a time when we were convinced that we had only to stick a twig in the ground and oil would gush out to make us multi-millionaires. Four of us, true believers, went to Oklahoma on a train crowded with similar seekers to find oil. Oklahoma was checkered with newly-discovered fields at the time, and the cities were so jammed you could hardly get a room. For a week I ate fish and vegetables, and got myself covered with the oil which stained and smelled up everything in sight. Even with the liquid gold all around us, however, we couldn't find a well of our own. Where there was no oil we didn't want land. Where there was oil, or could be oil, the prices were for the one hundred

per cent sucker trade. We were only ninety-nine per cent pure. We departed.

Escaping without being hooked was too much for us. Two weeks later we went down to West Virginia and bought a piece of ground for two hundred thousand dollars—fifty thousand apiece. There wells were flowing already. Our plan was to sink new ones. Our guide and expert was a young and thoroughly-referenced young engineer who, I afterward concluded, knew about as much of oil as I did. Perhaps. For two years we suffered from that oil field, with meetings, conferences, arguments. Finally we realized a gross return of five hundred dollars apiece on our investments. The new purchaser, I have always been given to understand, intended to farm the ground and raise vegetables.

An idea which at least bordered on the realistic was a project to develop a sort of A & P chain-store in clothing.

Each of us had a gilt-edged business of his own, but that wasn't enough. We had an idea that we would open up a few stores with our ladies' suits and coats, and customers would flock to us. We opened up our first store on the third floor of a giant building at Thirty-eighth Street and Fifth Avenue. We fitted out the place beautifully, installed a splendid stock, and advertised profusely. After that we waited for the customers. We are still waiting.

"This is my future," said a friend to me one day at luncheon. "I'll be able to do great things for people."

He had been introduced to a patent for making briquettes out of coal dust. Just like that. It was a wonderful invention, a boon to people in need of cheap fuel. Capital had already been collected, a building equipped with machinery. It was a great favor to me to be allowed in. In a few months it was perhaps a greater favor to be allowed *out*.

The very zenith of my flights of fancy was attained by my snowplow venture.

That was a magnificent machine altogether, I thought—guaranteed to clear the snow off streets and roads in an efficient, rapid-fire procedure. Besides, some pretty smart people were in it. I tried an initial investment of moderate proportions, and then witnessed a demonstration. In the middle of the summer the inventor imported snow from Canada for the great event. That is the solemn truth. Up to then the device had worked only on paper. In actual trial the machine was impressive, I must admit, except that it didn't function with absolute precision. Now it stirred up the imported snow, now it didn't.

"Merely a matter of adjustment," the inventor assured us. "We are going to revolutionize the snow-clearing business!"

We dug into our pockets again. Not long afterward we gathered anew to witness the mechanical miracle. With twelve thousand dollars sunk into it, I watched the machine struggle manfully and then barely ripple the surface of the most recently imported snow. That one, too, I put down to experience.

Even in real estate I went wrong.

"This once," Regina pleaded one day when I told her of a handsome lump sum I had realized in a business deal, "take your money and lay a stone on it. Don't speculate!"

"Speculate? Me?" I demanded indignantly. "I am *investing!*"

Along with conservative friends and the credit man of a widely-known bank, I went into the financing of mortgages on suburban cottages. That was hardly speculation, I insisted. It wasn't, as it turned out—for apparently there had never been the slightest chance of a return. It was only divine kindness that I came out of it with my shirt in one piece.

Though every time I stuck my neck out I got hit with the ax, times were such that I was always able to fill up

my pockets with money and come back for more. In my regular business the boom tided us over even greater follies.

In 1921 the first thing to greet me on my return from Europe was the news that our Atlantic City factory was a washout. Delightful in superficial appearance—a fountain in front, plenty of sun and air, well-equipped rest rooms—it held, inside, a hundred thousand dollars' worth of useless goods, and a manager making panicky excuses. It didn't take long to learn that his original reason for plumping for Atlantic City in preference to Scranton was his wife's refusal to bury herself, socially speaking, in the Pennsylvania town. Over the summer, when every available person entered the more lucrative hotel trade, he had been unable to recruit labor. To top it all, he had—while collecting his salary as usual—been working steadily with a brother-in-law in the manufacturing of boys' clothing!

To save a remnant of our investment, we sold the building for a non-manufacturing purpose, and transferred the white-goods department to the Scranton factory. Soon we realized, however, that even an efficient plant in Pennsylvania was no solution to our troubles. For the children's dress business was simply not what it had been. In one of those sudden developments which take place periodically in every industry, pressure had increased all around.

Banks of course extended credit only in proportion to capital invested. After the War "factors" invaded our trade, prepared to extend new and greater credits. Instead of having to wait sixty days to collect on bills, the manufacturers found the factor ready to advance from seventy to eighty per cent of the cash value, in return for the bills which the factor then collected himself. The rest of the amount due the factor returned after collection, retaining the small percentage which enabled him to take the credit risk. The manufacturer, with a ready supply of cash, found himself able to multiply volume and more than make up

for the small amount charged by the factor. Offering space and expressing services also, in return for two and four per cent charges, factoring gave tremendous impetus to the drive of small men into the field. They could start on a shoestring. Most of them did.

With the increase of competition, prices naturally came down. With the margin of profit on each item cut, it was necessary to do a larger volume of business. Restricting ourselves to the volume permitted by bank credits based on capital structure would have meant ruin. Pressure from the factors made us play into the hands of the factors.

Each new development provoked another. To provide the larger volume now so essential, the old staple goods were inadequate. There was simply not enough trade in them to accommodate all the newcomers. New goods had to be invented. The "converters" provided them. Appearing suddenly in those post-War years, converters bought plain "gray goods" from the mills, turned it over to their own plants for printing into novelty patterns, and sold it to the manufacturers—who, in turn, made up dresses of this multi-colored, variously-woven stuff and presented it to the public. So enchanted was the public by the new patterns and styles that customers bought five dresses where one had sufficed before.

While they gave us the volume we so desperately needed, at the same time the new developments played hob with all the old rules and regulations of the industry. In the old days there had been one fall and one spring line of samples made up, with minor improvements and changes now and then between times. Year in and year out children's dresses had retained approximately the same general characteristics. After 1920, however, when the need for volume made novelty and style prerequisites overnight, the public—exerting its influence through the store buyers—became the capricious

dictator of our field. Not that we objected to this. It was simply not what we were accustomed to.

We had to forget our old schedule of two sample lines a year. We had to put out five, six and sometimes seven. The days when buyers came in and bought for the entire season were over. Instead they bought for two weeks. When next they came in, we had to have a new line ready to show. Gone also were the days when we could buy our own raw goods six months in advance. Someone might bring out a new pattern that would take the market by storm and we would be left with a loft full of worthless stock. We had to keep our eyes and ears open and step softly twenty-four hours a day.

Adjustments were necessary also to the new way of distributing our goods. Salesmen were no longer representatives. They had to be go-getting pushers and shouters. They had to drink with the crowd, step out with the crowd. With scores and then hundreds of manufacturers to deal with, buyers became wary. They had to be. For the manufacturer the problem of attracting the buyers' attention to his own stock, as opposed to that of his swarming competitors, became an increasingly complicated one. Sometimes, so great was the profusion of goods offered that it was a hit or miss proposition.

With every condition conspiring to push our business onto the downgrade, we actually gave it the crucial shove ourselves.

In those years the catalogue mail-order houses were enjoying a huge prosperity. We found that their orders, placed in November and December, gave us practically no profit; but they did provide us with a return large enough to meet expenses and to keep our organization intact and ready to go again when the wholesale jobs came in. Kept at that level the catalogue trade was a boon. But it developed a habit of encroaching. As a result, in January and February,

when we were supposed to be busy with regular orders, we found ourselves burdened with postponed catalogue deliveries. Often I'd seen a man allow this catalogue trade to monopolize his plant, naturally alienating retail customers. When suddenly the large house switched its orders to someone with whom it made a better deal or from whom it obtained a new mode, the manufacturer was left stranded high up on the beach. This difficulty began to loom for us.

Of course the orders should never have been accepted. But I had neglected my responsibilities and they *were* accepted. Especially in those changing times I should have remained firmly in command of the business. Instead I had let the control lines slip more and more out of my hands. I was past sixty and did not work as I had done for the thirty years previous. In summer I took ten days in Saratoga Springs. Occasionally in winter I ran off for a fortnight with Regina in Mount Clemens, Michigan—as good a spa as any in Europe. My son Will lived in Scranton for the express purpose of supervising production. Max, in New York, had charge of sales. To them I had gradually relinquished most of the executive power. I saw that often they disagreed about policy, but I drifted along complacently, I did not act as umpire and compel a decision. "Eintracht baut Hauser—Harmony builds houses," says the German. "Zweitracht zerstort Hauser—Discord destroys them!" Discord was in a fair way to destroy *our* house, before the shock of discovering that our sales were dipping under the two million mark wrenched me away from chasing after harebrained notions and put my nose back on the grindstone of the business I knew. By the summer of 1923 my folly had brought us to the brink of business suicide. Desperately I racked my brains for a way of escape.

In this crisis, as so many times before, a benevolent Providence cast a pitying look in my direction. I was out walking on a summer day in the mountains when, for the sixth time

in six mornings, I saw an elderly neighbor leaving her house in a little Ford. This lady was a good friend, so I didn't hesitate to satisfy my curiosity.

"Certainly I'll tell you at what I'm so busy," she smiled. "I'm working. I'm selling corsets, in fact—straight to the consumer!" Securing orders from customers in advance, she then had the company mail out the goods, she explained. "And I'm doing a mighty nice little business!"

The possibilities for the dress trade of this direct selling were intriguing. When I talked it over with the boys, however, they weren't quite ready for it.

"Sleep over it," I suggested. "We'll talk about it some more."

As the months went by, I noticed how more and more direct selling was making inroads into every field. The Fuller Brush man was already, I think, a household joke. When toward the end of the year our wholesale business continued to decline smoothly, I brought up the subject of direct selling again. This time, after a survey of our condition, the boys agreed to try it. To avoid competition with the retailers to whom we were selling children's dresses, we started with ladies' garments. Renting a suitable factory, we organized a small sales staff and set out to test the market.

Overnight we caught on. Every customer recommended two others. We were flooded with orders and re-orders. With only one competitor, a western concern, we had a clear field. We made the most of it. Beginning with ladies' dresses, we expanded with the demand into misses' dresses, girls' and boys' clothes, blouses. Our product was tailor-made—the dresses, for example, selling for from one to five or six dollars apiece. Fit was our special pride; we carried all models, even stouts. Every stitch was like that in a high-priced garment. So superior was our product to anything sold in stores that everywhere our men went they found

fertile fields. Boston and the New England States were our first markets. Soon after, we penetrated into Pennsylvania. Later we pushed westward, and finally into the south. Within a year we covered every city and village in the country with our house-to-house canvassing. Direct selling enabled us once more to show our heels to the crowd.

By 1925 we found ourselves with two full-time businesses on our hands, and realized that we could hardly continue to run both of them. The direct selling outfit, under the name of Fifth Avenue Styles, boomed continuously. The wholesale business was sliding downhill. With the introduction into the trade of many one-price houses, competition had become even keener. Houses making only one-price goods had the usual advantages of mass production, and made it hard for all-price houses like ours to survive. Conference after conference brought the situation home to us. The choice we had to make was clear. For thirty-five years the name Borgenicht had stood for leadership in the wholesale children's dress industry. On June 1, 1926, we closed our doors.

Through that year we had worked up all the goods we had on our shelves, we had sold the garments and cleared up our liabilities of half a million dollars. When every inch of goods was gone, when every dollar of debt had been repaid, we sent each of our customers and creditors—ex-customers and ex-creditors now—an expression of our appreciation for years of happy business relations, and Borgenicht was out of the trade.

At first I had no regrets. I delighted in the economic procedure of our new business. We bought from the source of goods, and sold to the ultimate destination of goods.

And then, in 1927, I found I was visiting the Scranton factory only once a week. I went down the aisles between the operators, admiring every perfect stitch. I watched the girls in the shipping room as they packed one, two, three,

a dozen dresses in a box going to a single customer. I gaped at the figures I saw in the office books. I thought I was happy. And suddenly I was fretting, uncomfortable.

Tracking down the feeling, I found its root in the realization that, with operators making dresses to standard specifications and unknown salesmen in far states selling them to customers I never saw, all I had to do was to sit and supervise. And even that was not a man's job, when I looked at it squarely. For in Scranton one son ran the manufacturing end, in New York the other handled sales and correspondence. There was really nothing for me to do at all!

The boys were polite, respectful. But I knew it as clearly as if they had screamed it out—in that business I was a fifth wheel! The realization was such a shock that it made me turn with a panicky eye to the two other realms in which I had always felt I had useful work to do.

In 1913 I had seen my family on the threshold of life. I had been bursting with eagerness to guide and to help them. By 1927 I saw my two older sons as family men in their own right, and as the active managers of Fifth Avenue Styles. My older daughters were all married happily. Of the younger ones who were still in the house, one trained to teach school; another went to Barnard College and prepared to study law; a third read poetry and felt that her family didn't appreciate the finer things. My two youngest, both sons, contented themselves with high school in the winter and with being adolescent public enemies in the Catskill Mountains during the vacation season.

All in all, the daily routine seemed very much as it had been. Underneath, I realized abruptly, it was quite different. A year or two earlier we had finally given up the Borough Park suburban home; when we moved to an apartment in the heart of the city, our intimacy had lessened inevitably. I saw the children at meals, I walked with them

or studied with them in Hunter, I doled out their allowances, I listened proudly to their good marks, sadly to their troubles. But far more than my older children, these youngsters lived in a world I didn't know. It was a world of college and dates, of ideas and problems which, being not far from seventy, I couldn't fathom no matter how deeply I longed to. My children loved me, I am sure, and I know I loved them. I would always be there for them to call, for them to talk to, for them to depend on to the limit of my ability. But when I looked at it, the fact was there to see—time had marched along and all our love couldn't bridge the gap between us. In my family also I was a fifth wheel. There remained only the community.

As a citizen there was certainly nothing for me to do beyond voting and paying my taxes. In the Twenties the good American left public matters to his government. And "The best government is the least government" might have been said for the occasion.

The active part of my life as a church member had consisted in the main of zealous and successful soliciting. In those booming times private appeals for help had dwindled to nothing. And institutional appeals were being handled more and more effectively by Federation—the central collecting and distributing agency which had eliminated the waste, the duplication of effort of individual Jewish hospitals and Homes and asylums. Staging a single annual drive, working through existing professional and industrial and employee groups, Federation cut overhead to the bone, and made every philanthropic dollar go twice as far as it had ever done before. Though for the community at large Federation's mushroom growth was a blessing, however, for me —when I examined my situation—it had a personal meaning also. Proclaiming the abandonment of old, haphazard, inefficient methods of charitable work, it proclaimed specifically the ultimate retirement of the individual "Schnorrer."

Granted that needs remained which were not yet covered by the great association. I continued to work for the satisfaction of those needs. But I saw that less and less would the community provide me with a field of active and necessary operations. As a "Schnorrer" also, I was no more than a fifth wheel!

Business, family, community—in each of them I was, in 1927, only going through the motions. Really I was out, suddenly I could see that. Without anybody doing anything or saying anything, it had come about. Perhaps I laughed a little and cried a little when it came to me. I had been foraging for myself in this world from the age of twelve, and had earned my keep at home before that. Now I had to accept the fact that I had nothing important to do. I was retired!

For the first time in my life leisure was my problem. Believe me, it *was* a problem. It seemed such a foolish existence. At first I smiled wryly and told myself I would get used to it. For a month I continued to try and believe it. Then I exploded. Ready to fly into a thousand pieces, I told Regina I had to get back into active life.

At first she was insulted that I couldn't be content just spending all my time with her.

"Winters in Miami?" I asked. "Summers in Hunter and Saratoga? Sit in the sand and twiddle my toes?"

She took another tack. "You're not a chicken any more," she reminded me. "You're sixty-eight. Leave the work to the young ones now!"

"This month I've learned my lesson, Ma," I had to tell her. "When I retire, it will be time to bury me!"

She shrugged. Two days later I was talking to one of my sons-in-law about joining his new business venture. When our wholesale business was liquidated, Jack Spiro had decided that, rather than work along with Fifth Avenue Styles, he would go into the wholesale trade for himself; soon he

had joined forces with two nephews of mine. Just about the time I was beginning to chafe at my idleness, he came to me with the suggestion that I supervise the efforts of the new partners, undertake to secure credit for them, and back them generally with the prestige and good-will I had developed in almost forty years in the business. I jumped at the chance.

To have re-entered Fifth Avenue Styles actively would have meant upsetting the delicate balance there achieved by my two boys. It would have meant moving to Scranton, and I was too old, I felt, to exile myself from everything I knew and loved, and to make friends with a new environment—unless I had to out of grim necessity. Most important, Fifth Avenue Styles was too well established, it functioned too smoothly at the moment to furnish me with that feeling of conflict which I yearned for. I wanted to fight a fight of hard work and ingenuity, I wanted to create, to produce, to employ people, to come in contact with all sorts and conditions of human beings. At times the hustle and bustle, the dickering with buyers, the little vulgarities of the wholesale trade might have irritated me. Away from them, away from what I had known and delighted in all my life, I was lost, no more than a shadow on the wall.

Borgenicht and Spiro—the new partnership—appealed to me because it was a small business. There was need for fighting, there was room for growth. Before I had resented the changes in the wholesale trade; now they presented a challenge. In our old business I had quit under fire. Starting afresh, with no defective procedures or hifalutin ideas to overcome, I felt I could build for the new day. Even aside from my own reasons, finally, it was also an opportunity to start young men, close to me, on their way.

From the beginning—in November of 1927—we conformed our organization to the new conditions of the trade. Steadily we prospered during those opening months. Toward the

end of the first year my nephews withdrew and went into business on their own. Spiro and I continued to make the popular-priced, mass-consumption garment with which we had begun. Quietly we increased our business, at an accelerating pace. At the same time we built up our organization, into which returned many men and women who could point to thirty and more years of service with a Borgenicht house.

For me life resumed its old familiar pattern. Recognizing that the changes in the trade which I had not welcomed were nevertheless here to stay, I started from scratch this time, adjusted to them, and found that business is business, whatever the set of rules and conventions that guide it. Delighting in every moment, I looked forward eagerly to running up this business with my son-in-law, to becoming a leader in the industry once more, to topping anything I had accomplished before. That I could do it there wasn't a doubt in my heart.

All around me business was booming. Every newspaper recounted new miracles. Every financial page showed in fascinating graphs how great we were, and how much greater we were destined to become. In the White House was Herbert Hoover, symbol of Republican solidity, for whom I had voted with a full heart. The election had been placid, with no real arguments to confuse the public. No doubt Mr. Smith was a fine fellow, but why get excited about politics when the Golden Age, the perpetual boom predicted by every politician, was upon us anyway? Europe had been leveled, but America, was the cry, had shaken off the War. We were on our way up to the front porch of Heaven, and we were going to take over that place too. Business moved in a haze of profits. Labor made better and better wages. We coasted uphill in defiance of all the laws of physics, man and God.

True, I saw changes which disturbed me, changes which

I dated back to the War of 1914-18. I couldn't quite put my finger on it but people just seemed to do things differently. Before the War my children, for instance, had looked on the family as the center of life. Afterward my children, and the children of almost everyone I knew, started to fight against the family, to make bad jokes about it, to apologize in case they still loved it. In the old days we parents slapped down fresh youngsters. Now we patted them on the back and told them how clever they were. Some of us who had been a little slow, happy, who had tried to be decent and courteous, made fools of ourselves in trying to adopt the new language, the new way of looking at life. Others of us refused to become smart-alecs and were called back numbers.

In business I saw scoundrels making fortunes every minute. In the old days we had of course worked for money, for profits. Money had never been the end in itself, however, the one god above all other gods. It had involved responsibility, both toward those who worked for you and toward those who were afflicted with misfortune. After the War the newly-rich had no such foolish notions. Without hearts, without principles, they knew only how to make dollars and more dollars.

"You know how to count pennies," stormed one youngster I knew to his father who begged him to go more slowly, to soften up a little. "I'm making millions!"

That answer covered everything. The method was unimportant so long as you avoided the prison gates. Even those were not always too expensive a price for a million.

I saw the changes, certainly. But as certainly I misinterpreted them. Around me I saw a city which had come up like a dream of stone and steel. More of the people had more of the goods of the world than ever before. No question about that—we had more bathtubs, more cars, more telephones, more radios. And, finally, we had more figures.

In figures lies the master key to the world of the businessman; when his figures are written in black ink, he has the triumphant refutation of all criticism. In those years I wrote all my figures in black. Instead of sticking to my mental guns, therefore, I decided it was I who was queer, not the rest of the world.

"What you think is hard is only young," I rebuked myself. "What you remember as decent is only what's past, what you see through rosy memories. L. B., you're falling out of step with the times!"

So completely was I taken in that I plowed into business even more vigorously, in an effort to catch up with the crowd. As the months rolled by every new move netted a handsome return. There was no limit to the progress I saw ahead for our organization. For myself, I would glide down my remaining years without friction.

It was the eve of October, 1929.

CHAPTER XI

In which I get more than I bargained for, and, taking stock of myself and my situation, decide to move on.

IN MY life I have often speculated foolishly. Even in the nonsensical ventures I have recounted, however, I still dealt with concrete items. In 1928 and 1929 friends taunted me.

"Look at L. B.!" they laughed. "Slaving away at his business as if there were no stock market at all!"

"You're an old stick-in-the-mud," said one finally. "You're still living back before the War!"

That last was the one gibe which really hurt. Quickly I swallowed the bait, I jumped through the hoop with the rest of them. Now finally I played with paper. Not that I gambled. I invested. I invested in gilt-edged bank stocks which I bought outright.

"With these solid securities," every broker told me, "you can just sit back and watch your fortune grow!"

Never in my life had I accumulated a large cash reserve. Always I had turned profits back into business, spent them, given them away. With the liquidation of the wholesale business three years before, a large part even of the cash I did have had been buried in unused equipment. Now, however, I was going to have money in the bank, in a fancy assortment.

"I'm sixty-eight," I marveled, "but still the world holds new experiences for me!"

I didn't know the half of it. The market crash was one

of those experiences. Three months later came another. Not long after I paid up a debt of sixty-five thousand dollars to the Bank of the United States, I applied for my usual credit for seasonal operations. I was turned down flat. The bank was already toppling; before the week was out, it fell in its tracks and lay quite dead. We had no loan and, since it was the off-season, no bank account anywhere else on which to base a new credit.

We had one chance—our gilt-edged bank stocks.

"Prosperity," said the President and all the lesser prophets, "is just around the corner!"

We believed them. We borrowed against our stocks, and waited. When the loans became due, we bled our business in order to make repayment without sacrificing the securities. Ultimately we were trapped. The stocks were down to ten per cent of their original purchase price, and we had no more blood to squeeze out of the business. We had the double burden of selling the stocks at practically zero, and of making good our heavy debts. When we were finished, we were stripped clean of personal funds, and the business was milked nearly dry. In our efforts to avoid a smaller loss, we had incurred the greatest possible loss short of the loss of integrity.

At first my sons had helped. As the biggest outfit in its field, Fifth Avenue Styles had done well right into the first year of the depression. But the boys also held stocks, and they held them more precariously than I did. They had caught the contagion of the Twenties. They had made the rounds of the entertainment world. They had gone into the market to gamble, as they might have put chips on a roulette wheel. When the Crash came, they also believed the happy words and, waiting for the rise, kept borrowing to hold their stocks on margin. Finally, of course, they were sold out at the lows and their business was saddled with staggering debts. At the same time, with the continued depression

driving more and more of the merchants with little or no reserves to bankruptcy and suicide, chain stores multiplied and cut sharply into direct selling in the dress trade. Even this storm, however, Fifth Avenue Styles might have withstood, so solid was its foundation, if not for my sons' failure to readjust.

"Cut your staff!" I pleaded, when their volume fell to one-third its former total. "Cut to a skeleton. It will be easy enough to pad it up again when times get better. Cut now and you'll get through!"

The boys couldn't see it. Perhaps my argument was weakened because I was hardly at that moment an example of business acumen. Perhaps it was because during the flush Twenties they and their families had grown too attached to a standard of living which they would have had to modify. In the end they had to abandon it almost completely. When there was still time, they didn't cut their drawings, send away all but the indispensables, maintain a small solid business. In 1932 they had to cease drawings altogether, send away everyone, and remain without *any* business.

With their collapse, I was left strictly on my own. From earliest manhood I had been the provider in my clan. I had occupied that position for forty years. With my pedestal shattered, there seemed to be no one I could turn to.

As if to overwhelm me altogether came personal tragedy in the death of a son-in-law. His passing was a wound to all of us. I was older, and felt it more keenly. It seemed the culminating blow. Even in those black years, however, events conspired to make me retain my hope that all would yet be well. I had looked around and felt I had no one to turn to. I found out I was wrong. I still had the same triumvirate which had always stood by me.

First and foremost I had the Almighty.

For seventy years the Lord had spread His wing over me. Happily I had had sense enough to realize it. I had never

boasted with the Biblical braggart, "It has been my own strength and the might of my hand which hath wrought this wonderful progress!" Never having attributed success to my own prowess, I had little or no pride to swallow at the thought of having to start from near the bottom again. I could entrust my affairs to the Almighty with an untroubled heart. Since He had watched over me so long, I reflected, surely He would not desert me in my hour of need, if only I put forth a little effort.

I had Regina.

This struggle was as hard as the earliest one. Then I was thirty. In 1932 I was seventy. I could never have survived it if not for my wife. Every time my head sank toward my chest, she pushed it up again and held it there until the feeling once again became normal.

"Forget the past!" was her motto. Scorning my fears for her comfort, she insisted that under any circumstances I would somehow provide her and the children with a roof over their heads and a bite to eat. The bite might be stale, the roof might be leaky—that was not the issue. What mattered was to stop groaning and to get to work, any work! With a foundation like that to stand on, I could forget home and family responsibilities and concentrate on business.

I had friends.

The only chance in those years was to put out a line and to keep in business no matter how precariously, in order to maintain our position and organization. But I had no cash with which to carry on. My resources were exhausted. The Bank of the United States had "folded"; the fact that its officers went to prison did nothing to help me. No other bank could extend credit without a substantial deposit. My hand was a blank. And then to my rescue—in the same manner as had come Adolph Gluck, Jack Handler and others after the crack-up of my first partnership—came true friends.

If Regina gave me the moral substance with which to stand up, these friends provided the material wherewithal. Louis Cohen, Joel Wachman, C. J. Epstein—they and others dug deep into their own dwindling reserves to help me. William Egelhoffer and Sam Silver of the important piece-goods house of Henry Glass & Company extended favor after favor.

Buoyed up by their amazing generosity, we carried on. Because of the hard times the trend was toward cheaper goods than we made. We stood by the concern nevertheless—because two families, Spiro's and mine, were making at least a meagre living from it, at the cost of a loss of a couple of thousands a year; and because we were doggedly holding a skeleton staff intact for better times. Perhaps also we were standing by because we didn't know what else to do.

Indeed there was only one other thing we *could* do. That was to pray. We were not the only ones. Around us the nation lay, economically, on its back. No business functioned. Day by day we—all of us—went to our offices, chalked up our losses and hung on. Day by day one and another came to the end of the rope and dropped off. Day by day more men lost their businesses and jobs, faced despair without resources. Any man who was in business in that year of 1932 will remember with me the utter hopelessness which gripped the country's merchants and manufacturers.

"Our friends have saved us for the moment," I recall telling Regina. "Only a miracle will save us for the long run!"

A lifelong Republican, I voted for Franklin D. Roosevelt in November of 1932. I prayed for him when he entered the White House in March, 1933. And the miracle seemed to happen!

With a few bold strokes President Roosevelt shattered the gloom which had hung over us. We admired his audacity. We felt that the nation was saved. As baldly as that. We had been on the verge of panic, and we had been saved.

Suddenly the crisis was over. There was a stir and a bustle from coast to coast. Business picked up overnight.

NRA—the National Recovery Act—was enacted.

For us that was a wonderful day. The stabilization of conditions in our industry was a model to anyone familiar with the wild competition which had sprung up since the War. In setting minimum standards of fair play, the Blue Eagle went a long way toward solving the problems in our field. The days of the big money were over, that I recognized. But the days of honest competition and equalized labor conditions were inaugurated. With this equalization I was in Heaven. Trusting in sound business and a knack for my trade, I was eager to take my chances.

As outside circumstances turned to favor us, so did conditions within our organization as my youngest son came down to join us. During 1933 we swung up with the crowd. The solid base on which we had built showed its strength. Goodwill we had always had. An efficient staff we had held together. When things picked up, we were there to take advantage of the turn. In the first month of 1934 we sat together over a table in the showroom and stared like men possessed at our accountants' statement. Suddenly we whooped, for we saw in black on white that we had made a few thousand dollars' profit, the first since the Crash.

Everyone seemed to be in the same happy boat. The despair of 1932 had given way before the crusading spirit of the early New Deal. To me it seemed that perhaps the Depression, with all its misery, had been good for us. I felt an air of moral uplift in the country. The complacence and materialism of the Twenties had been wiped out by our ordeal. We had our feet on the ground once more.

Apparently, I laughed to Regina, my old age was not to be a mellow one. It was to be filled with conflict and excitement. But it was also to witness the blazing of a trail out

of the wilderness and back to the path we had been traveling in 1913. I could ask no more than that.

Then somehow, unaccountably, the motor stalled. Our business showed it at once.

Our experience in the children's dress industry duplicated in miniature what was happening the country over. NRA equalized labor costs within the trade and set minimum standards of decency in competition. It made it easier for the honest man to survive—but only while the elevated moral tone prevailed. The one great defect in NRA was that it left the ultimate authority in the hands of the businessmen themselves. I saw that our businessmen were not educated to this great responsibility.

NRA was supposed to protect the little man against unfair practices, and to protect the wages and hours of labor. Perhaps because it was written so hastily, however, perhaps because it tried to cover so much territory, the law was shot full of loopholes. Clever lawyers pointed them out, and the unscrupulous among our businessmen—of whom there were not a few—took advantage of them to pervert the whole purpose of the codes. Before long I saw the big men in our field using the very legislation which had been designed to protect the little man in a drive to chase him out of business!

To complete the confusion, in the midst of this battle which was tearing the industry wide open, the Supreme Court declared the whole statute unconstitutional. Overnight the trade fell apart altogether.

Steadily the chaos became more intense.

After we had signed up earlier for our New York factory and offices, in 1936 the International Ladies' Garment Workers unionized our Pennsylvania plants. Leaving other manufacturers undisturbed, they restored the old bogeyman of unequal labor costs. The introduction of the Federal Wages and Hours Bill helped by putting a floor under wages and

over hours. But the legislation only set minimums, so its help was limited.

With labor problems becoming more troublesome on the one hand, purely trade matters were a constant headache on the other. The ending of orderly development under NRA led to a tremendous speeding up of competition. An even more rapid shift in styles was one of the consequences. In the year that dirndls—those shirred-waisted, peasant-looking skirts which everyone from babies to grandmothers wore for their brief moment—were scoring, we were stranded with a stock of goods we had gambled on. The next year the firm that had started the dirndl craze was left holding the bag, while we reaped the profits of a happy buy. Luck began to play an ever-increasingly important role in the trade.

Sales methods also were becoming constantly more complicated. With styles shifting so rapidly, stores could no longer rely on their own buyers alone; they would have had to keep their people in New York the year round. Nor could they depend on our salesmen, either. As it was, my own men took to the road for almost every waking minute. In the old days they were gentlemen of leisure, by comparison, earning anywhere from five to fifteen thousand a year on their semi-annual rounds. Now commissions were eaten up in traveling expenses, and a salesman was lucky to clear three to five thousand a year. Nevertheless, even the combined efforts of store buyers and salesmen could not keep pace with the lightning shifts of public demand. As a result, the "resident buyer" appeared on the scene.

Every store which subscribed to the resident service paid an annual fee. The resident remained in New York the year around, "shopping the market," surveying the goods put out, noting good buys here and there. When the visiting buyers came to town for their respective stores, the resident told them where he had seen the finest product. Some-

times he did the actual buying for his subscriber, who thereby dispensed altogether with the necessity of sending a representative to the manufacturing center.

While the residents actually first appeared after the War, they received their chief impetus after the Crash. During the Depression economy and efficiency became the prime demands of stores, big and little. The residents furnished just those qualities. By virtue of the fact that they were buying for so vast a volume of purchasing power as their combined subscribers represented, they could knock prices down to absolute bedrock. By saving needless shopping of the huge market by individual store buyers, they increased the efficiency of their respective members.

To us struggling manufacturers the most significant issue was not, at the moment, this more efficient distribution of goods. It was, rather, that the development of the resident made us keep even more on our toes. Channeling the market into the offices of a handful of residents naturally cut down the available outlets for goods. The manufacturer had to cultivate the interest of the residents—"or else!" A word from a powerful resident could make or break a line. As a whole, we in the industry were therefore under greater tension than ever before, trying to outdo ourselves in ingenuity of workmanship and paring of prices, in order to capture interest in our products.

Even these great changes within the industry I felt competent to handle, after a period of adjustment. My nose was still keen to sniff out the direction the market was going to take. It was touch and go more often than not as the seasons rolled past, but somehow at the end of each one we were a little further ahead of the game.

The changes *outside* the industry, however, the changes in the world around me, I did not quite comprehend. It was not that to add to our difficulties Washington swamped us every day with new legislation, and extracted strange taxes

in painful pinches—the confusion in the industry itself had trained us to meet the unexpected. It was much bigger than that. What bothered me was the realization that not only had the panic of 1932 gone its way, but also that the fine enthusiasm of the early New Deal seemed to have followed it. I couldn't see what was coming next for the nation as a whole.

Every morning I went down to the office, worked like a beaver, and came home exhausted. I lived from day to day, never dared to plan ahead further than the end of the week. Uncertainty or expectancy—I didn't know which to call the atmosphere in which we were moving. Then I pushed my nose back down on the grindstone and forgot about the world's troubles in trying to solve my own.

That was the day in which I sat down to tell my story.

It was going to be a story for my family. In the old days I used to tell stories of my youth in Galicia and Hungary to my children. Later I told them to my grandchildren. I thought, if my luck held, to recite them to my great-grandchildren. When I found that my memory was beginning to play me tricks, I felt that it was safer to write down what, at seventy-seven, I could remember.

It was going to be a story for my friends. For the departed it was to be a kind of memorial, for those still happily my colleagues it was to be a belated expression of gratitude.

It was to be, for both family and friends, a record of a life spent searching for the things which I conceived to be America, and a reminder to them from one who had seen many lands and great changes that America was the Land of Promise.

Three years ago I had no perspective. Panic, enthusiasm, uncertainty—all were too close to me. I had not had the bump on the nose which I have always required to bring me to sober sense.

As I talked to my grandson, however, as I went down the years with him, things happened in the world. I did not understand these things. They puzzled me, they made me sick at heart. And then one day not many months ago I heard, for the second time in twenty-five years, a great humanitarian President of the United States address a War Message to Congress. A few days later my grandson brought me a picture of my first great-grandchild. That night I showed the picture to Regina. Together we looked at the laughing face.

"If there has to be a baby," I said, "I'm glad it's a girl, at least!"

Regina stared at me. I had spoken without thinking. But what I had said *made* me think. After fifty years in America I had come to a day when I no longer felt that to bring a man-child into life in this country was to confer the greatest blessing!

That realization stunned me. It gave me my bump on the nose. It made me sit up for the third and last time to take stock of the world in which I move, to survey each of the three realms in which I have lived my life. It was a survey quickly completed.

In Galicia I had only vague yearnings to guide me in appraising the circumstances in which I found myself.

In Hungary I was still dealing with dreams.

In America taking stock has proved easier. I have only to recall what it was I wanted when I took my wife and first child on a one-way trip to the United States in 1889, and what the future promised in 1913.

In the realm of business—"I wanted a place where there were no economic classes, no nobles, no tradesmen, no peasants chained by accident of birth to a rigid system. I wanted a place where there was life, action, fluidity. I wanted a place where a man could fit into the niche which seemed to him proper, for reasons which satisfied him down

to the depths of his heart. I didn't ask for anything on a silver platter. I asked only the opportunity to achieve these things I wanted."

In 1913—"It was not the vast material changes that filled me with emotion. At the time I welcomed them, as did everyone around me, for their human values. They forecast a wonderful future in which labor-saving machinery would raise living standards to heights impossible to picture; in which every child in America would have one, two, three, a dozen dresses, as every adult would have enough garments, enough food, enough shelter; in which the great masses of the people would be freed for a more dignified pursuit than struggling to pay the landlord and the grocer."

In the realm of family—"I wanted a place where I could be proud and happy to raise children, knowing that I was conferring on them the greatest of all gifts. I wanted a place where no man and no law had the right to come into my home and tell me what to do with those children."

In 1913—"Twelve sons and daughters, ranging in age from about one to twenty-five in even spacings, lined our table. My elder sons were on the threshold of home and business careers. Newly married, newly inducted into the business, they had the world open before them. Prepared as all my children were with advantages infinitely greater than any I had dreamed of, they would make me ashamed of my puny efforts while I glowed over theirs."

In the realm of the community—"I wanted a place where all men were considered equal, where there was no social caste system such as prevailed throughout Europe. I wanted a place where there was no color nor creed, where a man was judged by what he did, not by who he was."

In 1913—"America was a wonderful land. Crowded with enough different tongues to warrant a title of Babel, it was yet a magnificent, inspiring Babel. For there *was* a common language—tolerance—through which all words became

intelligible. Freedom was a new and great thing to us Europeans, it was something we had heard or dreamed about. In actuality it was as heady as the dream. Suffering, struggle, poverty—they were there but they didn't matter, because all over the country they were being fought against, and conquered. The direction was upward, the banners were brave. We were on the highroad to the greatest civilization the world had ever known!"

To state these hopes, these expectations, in 1942 is to make unnecessary any reply to the question: Have they been fulfilled? That reply is too clear and too close in every morning newspaper.

And thus the pattern of my life repeats itself once more. As in Galicia and in Hungary, so in America I have lived through enchantment to arrive in the end on the brink of bleak disenchantment. I am on the wrong side of eighty now, and this thing is hard to bear. But truth is truth, and no golden fog stands between it and me today. Now finally I see that in every sense the last twenty-five years have been fraudulent. Their success was a myth. Their foundation was sand. Because of them fulfillment of the hopes of 1889, the promise of 1913, hangs precariously in the balance. I see at the last that this America I have loved is not quite that Land of which I always dreamed, that realization of that Land of Promise is a question still terribly open.

It is because of this stock-taking, and this conclusion, that I would address this chronicle to a wider audience than family and friends. For it is time to move on. And I would ask that wider audience to move on with me.

CHAPTER XII

In which I look to business in the Land of Promise.

FROM disenchantment in Galicia I looked to Hungary. From disenchantment in Hungary I looked to America. From disenchantment in America, I can look over no more geographical borders, no mountains, no oceans. Today at last, however, I know where my Land of Promise really lies. I cannot travel to it by car or by train or by boat or even by airplane. It does not exist on the face of this present earth. It is over the border of the years that I must look.

Today I know that America is not yet that Land. I know also that only in America will it ever be found. America is the only soil and the only nation capable of creating it.

I shall not live to see that Land. At eighty I have not exactly all my best years before me. But I can look forward into it. I can picture it. Finally, I can with the utmost humility ask all people of good-will to look at that picture with me and to understand what America has meant and means to one poor immigrant—so that perhaps they will be moved to work for the attainment of that America.

In the realm of business in my Land of Promise, we will conquer the one chief difficulty common to every industry in the country.

Today we are fighting a great war. We have mobilized our industrial power along with our fighting men. Factory machines hum ever more vigorously, chimneys billow ever greater clouds of smoke. But someday—God grant it is soon

—the war will be over. As a counterweight to the blessing of peace, the great economic problem of our time will return to plague us.

That problem will be the problem we faced in the year 1940, before government started pouring its billions into arms. I can picture it most clearly in the familiar focus of the children's dress trade in which I have worked for over fifty years.

In that year of 1940 the materials we were using were better than ever. The machines that worked up those materials were miraculous in their efficiency. The selling and buying organizations that handled the completed garments were at a peak of development. Every change in the last thirty years had increased the capacity of the industry for swift, economic functioning. The consumer was therefore better off than ever before; he bought a finer garment than was ever made, for a lower price than was ever charged.

That is, he bought it—if he had the money. We all know he *didn't* have the money.

We manufacturers could have provided every child in America with six dresses apiece, inside of a year. In 1940 I didn't have to go far from my Central Park apartment to find a child without a single dress. In that paradox lay the secret of our trouble. Somewhere in the wonderfully progressive trade I work in, something had broken down. I never found a man who could put his finger on it. But there it was.

That was our industry alone. Around me I found the same trouble everywhere I looked. Everywhere I saw organizations capable of producing magnificent wealth—and millions of people suffering for lack of that wealth. Still the organizations stood motionless!

I knew simple want in the countries of Europe. I went hungry in time of famine, I went cold in winter. There it was a question of poverty, not only ours but the country's.

It was a question of inadequate production. In the United States, however, where I saw machines standing idle, cattle being slaughtered, wheat being burned, it was a problem only of distribution. To me personally that was a problem of morality. It cried out for a solution.

It will cry out far louder when the war is over. The nature of the peace no one can foretell. The shape of the post-war world no one can predict. But amidst all the uncertainties about the days to come, one thing *is* certain. We here in the United States will possess the greatest industrial plant of all time. We will have the most wonderful factories, the most complex machines, the most efficient production organization in the history of man.

Facing this magnificent production colossus will be the same problem of 1940, magnified ten, twenty, a hundred times. In a world of women fighting to hold positions gained during wartime, of men returning by the millions to claim a useful place in society, we will be confronted by the crucial problem of the Twentieth Century—the economic problem of distributing what we produce so that our system does not collapse; the moral problem of distributing the good things we make to the greatest number.

If we fail to solve that problem—no matter who dictates the peace, we will have lost the war. We *must* solve it.

Perhaps, after having been in business for over seventy of my years in Galicia, in Hungary and in the United States, I should be ashamed that I don't have that solution. Well, I *am* ashamed. But I am a businessman, I have always been too busy trying to keep a step ahead in my own industry to worry much about the problems outside it. So today I have no blueprint for humanity's salvation. I have only my faith that in my Land of Promise that blueprint will be found. And I have what I am sure must be the basis of that blueprint!

When I started out in this country, and for thirty years thereafter, I could take a young applicant for a job and lead him to a window of my showroom. I could point to the thousands of windows in the buildings around us.

"I'll give you a job if you want it," I could say. "But first look at those windows. Behind each window is an office. In each office a man is working, for himself and his family. Why don't you do the same thing? In the end you'll thank me for the advice."

If that young man was flat broke, he could start out with a pack on his back—filled on credit—and peddle. If he made a little headway, he could open a small store. From there he could graduate into a trade. I know, because I did that. Others did the same thing all around me.

Long before 1940 peddling was out. In outlying districts people did not even patronize the local store so much. They came to the nearest large town to do their shopping. Our whole economic situation had developed away from the era of the small man to which I came in 1889.

By 1940 it was hard for me to tell a youngster in my shipping room to go out and conquer the world. I could wish him luck, but I doubted his chances. When I heard great industrialists saying that there was as much of an open field as when they were boys, it was my feeling that either they were out of touch with the world of the average American, or they were simply not telling the truth. Only the fact that I had been honorable in business for fifty years had saved *me*. I knew what I was talking about. I could not talk nonsense to others.

In my own industry a man could still go into business on a shoestring. But his shoestring had to be considerably longer than in the old days, and at that it was only the exception who survived. Less and less could brains and talent find a useful outlet. That was in the children's dress industry—an industry whose dependence on fickle styles pre-

vented any monopoly from coming to power. In the heavy industries which are the backbone of America, the chances of a young man starting out and by integrity, ingenuity and hard work establishing his own outfit were almost nil. One figure summed up the situation: in 1840 four out of five Americans worked for themselves, in 1940, *one* out of five Americans worked for himself! The percentage will run steadily lower. That is the heart of our post-war problem.

To me that is the heart of our problem because I saw this country grow up. I saw *how* and *why* it grew up.

In the old days labor did not organize and fight for higher wages and shorter hours. Everybody *wanted* to work hard, and as long as flesh could endure. They wanted to because through this hard work there was for the humblest employee the chance of a great future.

In the old days businessmen did not sit on their hands and fear to invest their capital. I remember how I myself, though nameless and penniless after the crash of my first partnership, did not hesitate when friends stretched out their hands to help me. I clutched eagerly at their few dollars, I shouldered a burden of debt, I struggled back upward without regard for prudence. I had faith in the future.

This country was not built by labor's concern for hours or wages, nor by businessmen's fears for their money. It was built by work and faith. I saw it with my own eyes. And I saw that that work and that faith were based on one single thing—economic opportunity.

Despite this history, labor has been organizing by the thousands and hundreds of thousands and fighting only for wages and hours because, it claims, it *has* to organize and fight only for wages and hours—it sees nothing else to fight for. Businessmen have been looking only for few risks and have been content to cease investment because, they claim, they *have* to look only for few risks and to cease investment —they see nothing else to look for. Labor has fought and

business has been cautious for one and the same reason—because they no longer enjoy the economic opportunity their fathers did! In doing so, they have both been *accepting* the fact—much as the one deplores it, and the other attempts to deny it with empty words—that we are to have less and less opportunity, less and less incentive to work and to invest. Both labor and business have no longer been looking and fighting for opportunity. Instead they have been looking and fighting for security. That way lies disaster.

This is the fundamental fact which we must understand. The result of failure to understand it we see in the defeats democracy has suffered in recent years. France is a tragic example. I have heard people say that France was defeated because of Blum and his social legislation. If we come to believe this folly, then we are defeated also. For no man and no legislation defeated France. France was defeated because her workers fought blindly for nothing more than wages and hours, *and* because her employers did not understand that the real reason their workers fought for wages and hours was only because individual opportunity was denied them. Today the Vichy jackals are feeding on both workers and businessmen.

The jackals will feed on us also if we do not learn our lesson. That lesson is that security does not go hand in hand with opportunity, it is a *substitute* for it. Free men accept that substitute only when opportunity is lost, and lost completely. In the United States labor and capital, in fighting for hours and wages and looking for small risks, have consciously or not been seeking only security. They have been forgetting that in our time it is totalitarian dictatorship which has come to stand—no matter how falsely—for security. That is what lies at the end of the road they have been taking.

If we want our military victory in this war to bear its proper fruit, if we want to keep this country free, we must

turn back from this road. We must make it unnecessary to seek security. We must restore economic opportunity—the opportunity which makes possible social, religious and every other kind of opportunity. That restoration is the one way in which to set the wheels turning again, to solve our problem of distribution in the great democratic way.

We will not restore opportunity by economic planning.

To me it seems that this land has been made great by *not* planning. True, on the old East Side I saw human and material waste, I saw terrible suffering. I saw also, however, that we were advancing all the time, and today I know that, through what always looked like confusion at the moment, we achieved a better living for more people than any other nation in history. I am no economist, but I do not see how this could have happened by accident. More and more I have been feeling that this progress came not in spite of the system, but because of it. If this is so, then instead of transforming the system because of the suffering we do have, we should recall that we have reached greater heights than any other country, and put away even those modifications of the system which we have already accepted.

We will not restore opportunity either, as this might suggest, by simply turning the clock back.

To many people I have met, or whose words I have read, the cause of our troubles is the machine itself, the mechanization of our whole modern life. In the reaction after the war we will probably hear the voices calling louder than ever for the destruction of the machine and a return to "the old days." I know they are wrong and I want desperately to tell them so. It is not only that this is just wishful thinking, that today is today and you can't turn the clock back, that no one has ever done it successfully, that attempting it has never brought happiness in its wake. There are other reasons, positive reasons, reasons I have gathered from my own life.

I lived in the old days, the days of handwork. I did that handwork—first in the fields of feudal Galicia and Hungary, then in the violent slums of New York. I know handwork, and I know that there is no virtue in it.

I also know the machine.

Even at his wealthiest, my father lived in very much the same fashion as his tenth-generation grandfather. I have shifted my mode of living more in fifty years than my ancestors in a thousand. I have not only witnessed and enjoyed the change from handwork to machine work, however. I have played a part in introducing it, in transforming the face of America with it.

These are big words for a little man, and I have been smaller than usual since 1929. Nevertheless there is a germ of truth in them. When I first started in business here I had to create a demand for the article I was manufacturing. That article took the place of a home-made one. In the intervening decades, the children's dress manufactured by machine has become a fixture in the American home. During all these years I have continued to labor for the creation of a constantly expanding market for more and better manufactured goods. I have done my part in supplying that demand when once it has become articulate. I have a right to speak, therefore, if only in self-defense. And what I say of the machine is only what I have seen it do in my own industry.

The machine makes goods.

Cutting is the foundation of our manufacturing. When I started in business, I did the cutting of material with a scissors. The trick was to jam one blade under the piled-up cloth and to force the other blade down to meet it; to this day I wear a quarter-inch callus on my thumb from that struggle. After shifting to a knife, with which we cut three or four-inch thicknesses, we took in the early 1900's to the Eastman Machine, which in its present model slices neatly

through twelve-inch thicknesses. It has one edge for straight cutting, a different blade for curved or irregular lines.

Puncturing used to call for an awl, a hammer and good luck. Today a machine does the job without excitement.

Spreading the goods for cutting has been done by machine since shortly after the War of 1914-18.

In the old days sewing was the art of the housewife moved into the factory. The cut goods were handed to the operators, who proceeded to sew together the dress—one dress apiece. Today dresses are divided into twenty to fifty sections, depending on the garment and the material. One machine makes the collar, setting it into the waist and insuring a clean finish around the neck. Another makes cuffs, a third makes sleeves. A new development has given us a machine to pink and sew a seam in a single operation. Another new machine gathers in a sleeve at the shoulder, binds it around inside, and sets it into the waist with a clean finish. One machine binds in the hem and bastes the skirt. Another sets in the whole waist without a fault. Hemming, rufflework, buttonholes, buttons—there is a machine for each task, and together they compose nothing less than a mechanical miracle.

It is because of this miracle that our business has leaped from a volume of two millions of dollars at the turn of the century to a total for the industry of fifty millions; that the number of manufacturers has increased from one to hundreds, in New York and all over the country.

It is because of this miracle that besides the enormous increase in dresses, the "Peter Thompson" sailor suits of another day have given way to the shorts, slacks, snowsuits and other comfortable, smart sport goods which make life pleasanter, easier today.

The machine makes jobs also.

Granted that today six hundred workers in our industry can handle the labor of a thousand at the turn of the cen-

tury. I have seen the question and the paradoxical answer. Assume that in 1900 we needed a thousand workers for our two million dollar business. Today we would require only six hundred—for the same work. But in the meantime, with total business leaping to fifty millions, we have had to increase our staffs to *fifteen thousand* workers! In every trade and industry the story has been the same.

Finally, the machine makes happiness.

They tell us the old days were better, they were quieter, happier. I knew those old days. I lived in them on two continents, in three countries. Quieter they certainly were. They may even have been happier. Today, however, we have an infinitely greater *capacity* for happiness. We possess a thousand things our forefathers never dreamed of, and we shall have a million more.

There is nothing wrong with these gadgets. There is nothing sinful about spreading material goods around to the greatest number. My life has been devoted to that work. I am still for it one hundred per cent. I should like to see everybody have all the gadgets in the world, all the dresses, for example, all the food and all the shelter. Then, I think, we might forget about making wars for "living room" and mineral deposits and cash customers, and spend our energies on human and not jungle-beast activities. Then we might work out a system to take care of our physical needs and to leave us time—all of us—for spiritual pursuits, for love and sport and study. It is the machine alone which can give us that world.

That in our time it has given us neither goods nor jobs nor happiness is not the fault of the machine. It is only an inanimate tool. It cannot, outside of fiction, turn on its wielder. It can only be misused by that wielder. It is easy to blame the tool for our own clumsiness. It is harder, perhaps, to acknowledge that the fault lies really in us, the men who have failed to make it work properly. One kind of

scientists invented the machine. In the days to come we will confess our ignorance and new scientists will be given us, scientists who will teach us how properly to run the instrument their predecessors devised. We will not destroy our greatest asset, we will use it!

In my Land of Promise, then, we will not attempt to restore opportunity by planning our economy and regimenting our people. We will not attempt it by turning the clock backward.

Instead we will restore opportunity by turning the clock *forward.* We will regain faith and work. We will regain them by admitting honestly that in the coming industrial age—so swiftly matured by the present mechanized war—more and more of the American people will have to remain workers for others. By realizing that these workers *are* the American people, and that their interests are the interests of the American people. By understanding the obvious truth that a man working for a flat wage may not recognize the necessity for hard work, that certainly he will not recognize that he has an interest in the success of the business he works for. By understanding the twin obvious truth that a man with a direct and vital interest in that business, no matter how small to start with, will see with his own eyes that he gains financially as well as spiritually from his hard work.

In the days to come—if for no other reason than to avoid the collapse which would otherwise attend post-war cancellation of arms contracts, the end of the war boom, the demobilization of our armies—we will insist that every American *have* that direct and vital interest. We will insist that every American have a stake in America. He will have the modern, machine-age equivalent of the opportunity for individual enterprise which I found in 1889!

There seem to me to be three ways of achieving that restoration of economic opportunity.

Government regulation will come inevitably, in my Land of Promise. With the tombstone of NRA staring it in the face, any administration will advance cautiously in this sector. But advance it will. It will advance secure in the knowledge that the honest businessman would rather have elected public officials make the rules and act as umpires than the interested leaders in his own industry. It will advance secure in the knowledge that the honest businessman will not attack the Wages and Hours Law and similar labor-stabilizing legislation, but will be for them one hundred per cent because they will enable him to sink or swim on business ability alone. And it will advance secure in the knowledge that *all* the people, accustomed by wartime necessity to certain controls, will want to retain those controls which have proven useful and also consistent with enlightened democracy.

Profit-sharing is the second way. Though many great names have spoken for it, I do not know enough about its working to favor or condemn. If it is effective, I am for it heart and soul. I will gladly accept it on the day my colleagues do. I would even be willing to lead the way, if I had any assurance that they would not lag too far behind.

The third road, union development, is destined, I think, to be perhaps the greatest, and certainly the most delicate to traverse.

I am not a union-buster. I have been around too long. In my own lifetime I have had around me a group of people who were like my family, though I paid them wages at the end of the week. And I have lived to sign contracts with union delegates whom I had never seen before.

To me both pictures fit into the long line of history. Indeed they fit into my own history, and make me see things which perhaps are not so clear to others to whom labor strife is a completely unnecessary evil.

I did not always see so clearly. In the old days I could

have been called a "good" employer, I suppose. Chiefly I had the knack of getting along with people. My cardinal rule has always been that labor is not a commodity; labor is you and me and the next fellow—human beings. No one in those early days ever called me a dirty capitalist, no one ever accused me of oppressing the workers. It is understandable, therefore, that when we were unionized at the time of the War, when I was fully conscious of the fact that I had been singled out not only because I was a leader in the industry but because I was notoriously "soft" with employees, I rejected the principle of the union and accepted it in practice only as an evil to be tolerated for the sake of peace and health. The Twenties, during which the organization retreated from our field, only confirmed this attitude.

In 1934 the I.L.G.W.U. renewed its assault on us. NRA and its wonderful enthusiasm carried us along. The Children's Dress Association appointed a committee. An agreement was made. When at that time, I found men who refused to sign, men who stepped out of the Association so far as labor relations were concerned, I fought out the issue in my own mind and came to what I considered a rational conclusion. I pleaded for recognition of the union by everyone.

"Over a long career," I said, "I have seen it growing. You may fight it today and fight it tomorrow, but in the end it will win. It is here to stay!"

I was not conscious then of the full truth of the words I spoke. All I saw were the obvious facts. I saw that in the old days there was too much leeway for the inhuman employer. No one needs to describe to me the horrors of the sweatshops, nor the vicious tricks by which labor was defrauded. To this day I remember the greatest hypocrite in the world—the man I knew who made a big noise about a three thousand dollar contribution to the Red Cross, and

then turned around and took the amount back out of the wages of girls getting two and a half to four dollars a week! I saw also—and in this observation was more than a little enlightened self-interest—that "chiselers' " wages were the bane of the industry. At the time when I was suffering from the competition of these "chiselers," a strong, responsible union seemed to me a proper answer. With this understanding once reached, I was willing, even anxious, to go along with the union.

Since that time I have had my share of trouble with it. In New York I found that my girls, once organized, translated fear of losing a job into arrogance over being assured of one. I deplored the first attitude and tried always to discourage it. The second I find as obnoxious, and more costly to me as a manufacturer and a person. I don't enjoy employing people who feel I am robbing them by expecting a good day's work.

The difficulties have not been only intangible. In 1936 the I.L.G.W.U. organized our Scranton operators. Before the deal was made, a wall had been pulled down and more violence was in the offing. We signed.

Later we had further excitement. The girls decided that they were enjoying no new benefits under the union and demanded that the "check-off" system—whereby union dues are "checked off" the pay envelopes before they go out to the girls—be discontinued. When we agreed, the I.L.G.W.U. promptly warned us that they would throw a picket line around the plant if we altered our routine one bit. The girls, who had meanwhile formed a local union, countered with the statement that *they* would strike if we *didn't* alter it! In the end everybody suffered. The girls lost wages. The union had to engage in a fight. And we lost time and efficiency, because in the emergency we had to have our work done outside until the dispute was settled.

Despite the troubles I have known, however, and others I have heard or read about, my conviction has only grown with the clearing of the old gold dust from my eyes. If I had a little speech to make today about unions, it would run something like this:

"You may fight them today and fight them tomorrow. In the end they will be here to stay—because *the principle is right!*"

By that principle I mean that workers should have wages, hours and a share in profits not as privileges granted by a friendly employer—and revocable by an *un*friendly employer—but as rights.

Today I see not only the obvious facts, but also that this matter of rights is not a quibble or a hair-splitting. It has to do with democracy. It has to do with the discovery of a substitute for the individual opportunity of which America's millions are being inevitably deprived. It has to do also with the inauguration of that new kind of opportunity, I am sure. For it is by extension of the rights—and not the privileges—of labor that workers will achieve their growing share in the fruits of their work, especially in that day not so far off when almost all of America's people will be workers for others.

Our unions have won important concessions in wages and hours and working conditions. Their biggest job lies ahead. The troubles involved in labor development seem to me today, therefore, to be growing pains. They are a damned nuisance to me as a manufacturer, but I feel that in the end the solid establishment of unions on an orderly, responsible basis could be the most momentous step not only in my own industry but in every field in America. It *will* be, in my Land of Promise.

In that Land, the numerically diminishing group of employers will, I see, accept the fact that they must be content with smaller individual profits. They will come more and

more to recognize their social responsibilities. They will not hinder unionization, they will not be indifferent to it —they will, like their British and Swedish cousins before them, demand it. Perhaps most important, they will retain through the most troubled times the indispensable American sense of humor.

I am in no position to tell the unions how to run their business. Nor have I the inclination. I see clearly, however, four characteristics of the unions which will exist in the Promised Land.

Unions will be one hundred per cent honest, and democratically run.

It seems to me the tendency is already in this direction. The day is not far off when racketeering and bribery will be things of history and not vital issues. Union methods will involve less slugging and more persuasion. Leaders will be less concerned about memberships and dues, and more concerned with benefits for their members and improvement of the whole social setup. On a recent visit here a Swedish trade-unionist remarked that "A closed shop makes a union, but it does not make trade unionists." American unions will perhaps profit from the experiences of their Scandinavian brethren.

Unions will relieve manufacturers and merchants of jurisdictional disputes between rival labor organizations.

Having been the victim of more than one such dispute, I know whereof I speak. There is no sense to a situation where a manufacturer has to suffer while groups with avowedly the same purposes clash over details.

Unions will equalize labor costs for all employers in the same line of business.

To cut on materials, on machines, to compete in style and fit and salesmanship—these I consider the methods of the businessman. To cut on labor is the field of the "chiseler." Yet the only governmental regulation of the "chiseler" to

date has been the Wages and Hours legislation which sets minimums and tells the unions to go ahead and get what they can. As a result half a dozen competitors of mine enjoy labor costs far lower because they fought and licked the union while I signed up peacefully.

Unionization in name alone is no answer either. In Scranton I have signed an agreement calling for a weekly minimum for unskilled operators. In Newark, just across the river from my home office in New York, the same union has signed an agreement with a competitor of mine for a minimum three dollars a week lower! In my Land of Promise the unions will forego these opportunist demands and work for uniform conditions, with differentials for living costs only.

Finally, unions will listen to reason.

Provisions of the union in our field would prevent me from putting a son of mine through a course of training in my own business, as I did with Max, Will and my youngest, Jack. The boy would have to become a union member before he could move a finger in the stock room or on the cutting or any other floor, and the union's policy is to accept no new members while any old one remains unemployed. To me that is unreasonable. By preventing a man from training the people who will carry on after him, the union is damaging a thriving business. In the end it damages its own members also.

There are important examples. Paterson, New Jersey, was a flourishing mill center not so long ago. Then the unions put pressure on the mill owners. Demand was heaped on demand until the margin of profit was cut below the point where it paid the owners to continue. Paterson became a ghost city of idle looms. The union leaders were left with the satisfaction of having put the mills out of business, and having deprived thousands of workers of jobs.

In the future I envision, my books will be open at all times for union inspection. All I will ask is that before

making demands, the delegates consult those books. If I can demonstrate that their demands will throttle my business, I will think it reasonable to expect them to modify their ideas. And I know they will.

Today, as an employer who has enjoyed the best of relations with almost everyone who ever worked for him over a period of fifty years, I can't help recognizing that unions have done wonders for labor. In my Land of Promise they will accomplish the greatest wonder, and benefit the rest of us at the same time.

Government regulation, profit-sharing, union development —the method, if peaceful, of achieving for every American a direct and vital interest in the business for which he works, I leave to the experts and to the future. I know the objective must be attained. In my Land of Promise it will be.

Then labor, while enjoying the basic security today foreshadowed in all kinds of government-sponsored plans like those born under President Roosevelt and the Social Security Act, will have that more precious possession—opportunity. The opportunity which attracted millions of us from the old countries of the world. The opportunity which made this nation great. The opportunity which will make hard work come again into its own.

Employers will have relatively stable conditions in which to plan and operate. They will not object to heavier taxes, so long as they know those taxes will not be changed overnight, so long as they are spared the necessity of hiring extra bookkeepers to keep track of all the subdivisions. They will invest with confidence and return with faith to their business of making their country the goal and hope of the world, as it was in the years gone by.

The upper and lower extremities of living standards will draw constantly closer together as the great masses increase their share in America's goods.

The gap between producer and consumer will be bridged,

enabling us to make full use of the machine which has been given to us.

Finally, with the opportunities for individual enterprise being curtailed more and more, the opening wider and wider of the opportunities for sharing in the benefits of large, mechanized, efficient businesses will maintain and interpret in modern terms the great principles for which America has always stood.

Just before the outbreak of the present war, we were standing at the crossroads. When the war is happily concluded, we shall stand in the same place once more. We cannot stand there long. If we are not to decline, as the totalitarian dictators have predicted, we must go upward. In my Land of Promise we will take that road of progress. We will not curtail production, we will increase it. In belying the sneering charge that we no longer live on an expanding continent, that we have discovered, explored and settled every frontier, we will with faith and hard work discover, explore and settle the new frontier of abundance for all.

In that great work there will be a place for me and mine. "Man is born to labor," says the Bible. We believe it, my children and I. We are producers, all of us—not a parasite in the lot. And to produce is what I came here for. To produce, to be needed, and to fill that need as a free man.

This is no Utopian dream. It is a simple one, in terms of what I have seen and done myself. There is not a particle of it that, granted the good-will, cannot be realized.

CHAPTER XIII

In which I look to my family in the Land of Promise.

IN the realm of family also, the blessings granted in the Land of Promise will be simple ones.

This year I am eighty. I find the signs on every hand. Ten years ago in my office a brash youngster called me "the old man." I placed a chair in the middle of the floor and hopped over it lightly, then invited my friend to do the same. He couldn't refuse. And he fell flat on his face in the attempt. Today "the old man" is no longer just an honorary title, however. It's been a long time since I could jump over a chair. Even a low chair.

Up to the last year I could still tell my outraged children to relax when they reprimanded me for walking too much. I noticed the hill in Hunter brought them down to a snail's pace on their infrequent attempts to walk it. But I also noticed that I had to judge my own steps consciously if I wanted to take it without a pause myself. Now I cannot walk it at all.

From Borough Park I used to take the subway to business. Once I encountered an old man I knew.

"A rich man like you lets himself be pushed around like a herring!" he moaned.

When he refused to believe that I hated the austere loneliness of the car's back seat, and preferred to keep my feet on the ground, I stirred him up a little.

"The real truth?" I suggested, looking around as if to make sure we weren't overheard. "It's just this—on the other side

they make you wait until you're dead before they let you go to Heaven. Here in America they push you in among all these beautiful young girls while you're still alive!"

My friend gave me a wide berth after that. I continued to ride the subway. From Manhattan, later, I took the Sixth Avenue "El." By 1940 I was not sorry that the "El" was gone. The steps were getting a little too steep for me. I still enjoyed being pushed around like a herring, but I took my pushing on the new streamlined buses. Today? Well —I'm afraid I cannot be pushed any more.

The doctors tell me my heart is not what it was. I can tell my age in my eyes also. Reading has become increasingly difficult, even with glasses. I never thought how much reading meant until I could no longer do it. Now I know, and I don't like it.

I see it also in my memory, which is no longer the alert assistant it was all my life. More and more in recent years I have had to jot down things on bits of paper. I never did before, and I resent it.

That resentment is futile, of course. I cannot expect my senses to improve with age. For the little time that I may have left I shall have to accept what small gifts they still can bring.

"You'd better!" counsels Regina. As usual, she is practical about it.

At seventy-six she is the same Regina I married. Reserved, undemonstrative, yet understanding no formalities when one of her brood requires her assistance, she has been the same wife in bad times as in good. Her health withstood all attacks until very recently. It has not been so long since she lost her first adult tooth; her hair has only just turned gray. Today, retreating under the pressure of the years, she still governs her household and attends to her charitable activities. Each spring for a decade, as soon as the weather has permitted, she has traveled to the mountains and stayed

there, often without company between my week-end visits, until the frost set in in mid-October.

Five years ago we enjoyed our Golden Wedding together, conscious that not everyone is so blessed. Of course when I asked Regina whether she liked this fiftieth anniversary as much as the first, she replied, perhaps as I should have expected:

"Frankly, the first tasted better!"

Then she smiled and held my hand under the tablecloth.

She loves me, with all my faults. I love her, with all hers. If I were given a contract today, binding me to live the same life over again, I would sign in a minute. Except that I would marry younger.

No, for myself and for Regina I can hardly ask more, not even in the Land of Promise.

For the relatives and friends whom today, owing to the crash of my business, I cannot aid as effectively as my heart dictates that I should, there will be relief from the bitter suffering which is their lot in Europe, the anxieties and uncertainties which are the common lot of all of us today in America.

For the colleagues whom I am happy to see still around me, there will be long life, contented life, the fulfillment of whatever it is that their generous hearts desire.

It is as always for my children that I am most concerned.

In 1913 I felt I was giving them every opportunity—the opportunities I had not had—and that in my old age I would have the great delight of feeling that they had left me far behind in every field. I dreamed of watching them develop into scholars, musicians, professional people, great merchants, leaders in whatever enterprises their inclinations involved them. That those hopes have been in part defeated is no doubt more than a little my own fault.

One mistake I made was in not pushing my children further ahead in educational institutions. The younger ones

are all college graduates. Two are graduates of law school. But I had to learn my lesson at the expense of the older ones. Today I regret that. I know now that if a child shows interest in his studies, it is a crime not to exert every effort to enable him to continue. It is a lesson I hope my children will learn without unhappy experience. In those old days I was a businessman first and foremost. The boys have, I am afraid, followed very closely in my footsteps.

My greatest mistake was in confusing my dreams with reality. Today I see that the wishes I nursed in my heart were only a living out of my own desires. To be a scholar, a musician, a great leader—those were the things I craved for myself and knew I would never attain. I was foolish enough to want them for my children, and to base hopes on my own desires. At eighty I have painfully learned a second lesson—that you cannot live your children's lives for them. Nor is he the good parent who attempts even to guide them too much.

"Let them develop in their own good time," I was finally able to say to Regina, and understand what I was saying. "If God wanted them different, He would have made them different."

Today I am convinced of it. Having arrived at this understanding, I have revised my ideas. Now I want them only to be happy.

In business they will be happy in being useful, productive.

In the Twenties I was afraid that this second generation, children of immigrants, might be a soft lot, unwilling to get in there and pitch. No doubt it was the fault of us immigrants ourselves, who bent over backward to spare our sons and daughters the hardships we had endured. Today I see that the pendulum has swung back, that work is again a necessity and a habit. Today I look down the line of my family and see not one member idle, not one incompetent.

In these hard times I can offer them no easy words. Nor

would I, if I could. I can promise them only that in the days to come their diligence, their honesty, their courage will be rewarded. In that Land where opportunity will be restored to every American, they will have their portion also.

In family life my children will find happiness by continuing to live as devoted husbands and fathers, mothers and wives.

One of my daughters has lost her husband in an untimely death, and another has not yet married. Among the ten married couples, eight of which have children, there has no doubt been slight discord now and again, as there would be among any normal people. Today, however, I can sit back and rest at ease about them, while thanking them individually and collectively for having presented me with twenty grandchildren and three great-grandchildren—so far. In remembering always, as the humble sages suggested, "who you are, of what stuff you are made, and what your end will be," they cannot but find abundant personal happiness.

As community members, finally, in my Land of Promise, they will find happiness by remaining good Americans and good Jews.

At this writing no one of them has essayed great activity in any public movement, but all are sound and sensible. There are among them neither radicals nor reactionaries, but only good Democrats and equally good Republicans. In the days to come they will continue to be patriotic and peace-loving. They will work always for reason and justice and tolerance, and they will also be prepared, when the necessity arises as it has today, to fight for these ideals.

As Jews they have been true to the principles of the religion into which they were born. In common with men of every faith, I have noticed great changes in the practice of the ritual of religion even in my own times. While I exhorted my children to maintain *my* standards, I saw that

I myself was not living up to my father's. Reflection has brought with it the understanding that every generation works out its own slight modifications. Centuries ago among my own ancestors, for instance, there was a Sanhedrin—a court of rabbis—which played the role of Supreme Court in all matters of ritual. This Sanhedrin constantly amended the central body of laws to keep it abreast of the times. With the dispersion of the Jews after the Roman conquest, the Sanhedrin could no longer be convoked. Though later Rabbinic schools attempted some revision, the laws were arrested pretty much at the point of the abandonment of the Sanhedrin as an institution. Today there seems to me to be some reason in the argument that by this time the Sanhedrin would, if in session, have modernized many parts of the Hebrew ritual.

"It is not the preaching but the deed which is fundamental," said the rabbis. Regardless of the details of ritual, the essence of Judaism remains imperishable. Reverence for the one Lord God Almighty is the majestic jewel in its crown. The Ten Commandments are its lesser stones. And for its setting, the solid foundation of simple, everyday things on which it rests, there is the admonition of the Talmud: "These are the things the fruits of which a man enjoys in this world, while the stock remains for him for the world to come—honoring father and mother, the practice of charity, timely attendance at the house of study, hospitality to wayfarers, visiting the sick, dowering the bride, attending the dead to the grave, devotion in prayer, and making peace between man and his fellow. And the study of the Law leadeth to them all."

This essence my children will retain.

In business honest and diligent; in their families true and devoted; in their communities good Americans and good Jews—my children will reap to the full the rich harvest which life has to offer.

To see them happy, along with my relatives and friends, is a normal wish, I think—the normal wish of any normal man. I do not think it is asking the impossible.

I may not live to see it, but I know nevertheless that in my Land of Promise this wish will be granted.

CHAPTER XIV

In which I look to my community in the Land of Promise.

My final wish, in the realm of the community, is perhaps the most difficult of fulfillment.

Certainly the first essential of the community in the Land of Promise will be rational solution of economic problems. But there will be other essentials also.

We will have democracy, democracy strengthened and extended.

I have no illusions that our system is perfect. Once when I was young I joined a district club. When I found out what went on behind the club doors, when I discovered that a dollar carried its weight on Election Day as on every other day of the year, I walked out and never returned.

The dirty little ways of local politics find their counterpart, to an extent, in national politics also. Even the most scrupulously honest man cannot fail to be partial to the interests of those who elect him. To see in this evil of partiality a fatal flaw in the system, however, is to betray an ignorance which those of us who came from abroad do not share. As a matter of fact, we suspect that this may be the very thing which makes representative government work. We see that the clash of small, local partialities results in compromises which generally advance the welfare of the whole, while preventing any abuse of a single part.

It cannot be necessary today to explain the priceless virtues of liberty, equality, tolerance. It is enough to repeat that, politics-ridden as democracy may be, corrupt as are

some of its local or even larger manifestations, it is so far from the unchecked tyrannous systems and atmospheres of other continents that the distance between the poles is as nothing beside this divergence.

I not only see this difference. I glory in it. Because of it I understand that if ever I am not satisfied with the way democracy is working, I must not discard that democracy; I must raise the caliber of the men I am putting into office to operate it.

In my Land of Promise *everybody* will understand this. Then I will see in the White House, in the halls of Congress, in government office throughout the country, men of character and vision, men perhaps trained formally and well in administrative and legislative work, as their colleagues on the nation's benches are trained in jurisprudence. I will see supporting these men of principle a people which has been re-educated by toughening experience to a knowledge of its early Pilgrim traditions, to a recognition not only of its rights but of its duties.

In that Land where our economic problems will be rationally solved and democracy enriched, we will have the final essential also. We will have peace.

All the evils of the last twenty-five years I date back to the War of 1914-18. Over and above its cost in immediate suffering, it was that War which sent American farmers out to mortgage themselves to the neck in order to plow more land, to grow more wheat to send abroad; that War which, once over, let the Europeans return to their own farms and left our agriculture with huge supplies and no markets, a continual bondage of debt and low prices. It was that War which sent American manufacturers out to build new plants to supply soaring demands, which sent wages sky high, which started the boom that later exploded like a balloon blown beyond its strength. It was that War which stirred all Americans out of the sturdy, simple life they had known

—where right was right and wrong was wrong and no books were needed to confuse one with the other—to a dirty, heartless, money-grubbing existence. It was that War which, finally, brought in its wake The Destroyer created out of savagery, suffering and hopelessness.

No, in the Land of Promise we will not engage in war. But we will not be able to protect ourselves by verbally renouncing war. We will have to renounce the root of war. And to do so we will have to re-make the world.

Europe I know very well. I was born there. I was raised there. I have gone back to it a half dozen times in the years since I first escaped from it. As a child I learned that my continent had been tearing its heart out in every generation since it was first settled. In my middle age I saw that it had not recovered from the First Great War. Before that War the continent may have been sleepy, bound by tradition, living like a huge vegetable. But it was *comparatively* a peaceful land, a land living a natural life as far as the mass of the population was concerned. What hatreds there were remained for the most part below the surface, and even these were being slowly eased. The Europe I found in 1921 was a living, breathing monument to hatred. It was nothing but raw nerves. It knew nothing but passion and violence. It had kicked over all the old ideas and seemed to take pleasure in the lowest depths of viciousness, dishonesty, brutality. In the name of Democracy it elevated to important positions the worst scum of every nation.

Before that War the continent seemed far nearer the ideal of a United States of Europe than afterward. All you had to do then was to carry your passport as identification and buy your tickets. There were no customs investigations, no visas, no searches down to your bare skin. Only for entry to and exit from Russia, where four out of five inhabitants were potential revolutionaries against the Czar, were demands strict. The perverters of the peace changed all that.

They turned Europe into a country of small patches enclosed by barbed wire fences, guarded by vicious dogs, demanding tribute from every passer-by.

Everywhere I saw nations fortifying borders and provoking arguments. I saw dozens of restless national groups bickering, fighting, slaughtering for crazy frontiers and lunatic slogans. Czechs, Macedonians, Serbs, Croats, Slovaks, Poles, Ukrainians, Jugoslavs, Germans—on and on the awful list went, and never one to rise up and discover that they were all humans and brothers. The League of Nations, which was to settle all conflicts with peace and justice, I saw transformed into a League to carry on the War after the treaties were signed. "The War to End War" I saw distorted to leave the old brands deeper marked, more sorely festering.

The treaty-makers did more than produce cartoons of democracy. They did more than encourage national hatreds. They even perpetuated the poverty which lay at the heart of Europe's post-War chaos—that poverty which turns men away from knowledge of the Lord. On a continent where no country was ever able to stand by itself, I found air-tight borders wherever I went. The self-sufficiency which later became the catchword of every dictator was even then being born. Leaders were already talking about doing without necessities as preferable to trading with others. While the politicians and soldiers preached this madness and fought for the spoils, the people starved. What appalled me more than anything else was the inescapable conviction, even back in 1921, that for that knowledge of the Lord which is the basis of any human living, there was in Europe no hope of resurrection. The new continent, it seemed obvious to me from my knowledge of it as both peasant boy and businessman, was arranged not to abolish poverty and conflict but to perpetuate them.

And now, in my old age, they are at it again.

Doubly applicable is every one of these bitter truths to Asia and Africa, where each is complicated by the conflicts of color and race and religion, as well as by the tenacious grip of outworn imperialism. It is indeed the world, the whole world we know and live in, that we must re-make.

The ancient sages once offered their judgment that "Between the needy of your own city and the needy of another city, consider first the needy of your own city." If I thought, heeding this admonition, that we could build a wall around our country so high and so thick that we could shut out aggression, I would consign Europe and the rest of the world to the dogs and start making bricks for the barrier. But today we have been taught only too well that isolation is geographically, economically, militarily impossible. We have been attacked, treacherously, effectively. We have been forced into the greatest arms program in history. We have been compelled to go forth to battle.

Knowing these things, it is precisely *because* I consider first "the needy of my own city," because I wish to spare my grandchildren and the grandchildren of every other American the horrors of war, that I say we must re-make the world.

I say so because the voices are calling once more, to mislead us. They tell us that out of this war will come the democratic Federation of states which they promised us last time. I do not believe them. No one of the other warring governments has proclaimed this avowed objective. Indeed, quite to the contrary. This is only to be expected. For in America, where we speak a common language, enjoy a common heritage, we still needed the bloodbath of the War between the States to bring us to our senses. In Europe and Asia, where they speak dozens of languages, nourish dozens of cultural backgrounds, preach dozens of national hysterias, and where dozens of wars have taught the leaders but little, this bloodbath will not—*in the ordinary course*—

be the last one. If we participate on the same basis as we did in 1917, we shall soon be trans-shipping troops for World War III.

This time we must not intervene with blood and tears alone, we must not intervene with blind idealism alone. We must intervene with cold logic and ruthless determination. Our logic must be cold enough to expose once and for all the rotten core of Europe's and Asia's nationalistic, imperialistic politics. Our determination must be ruthless enough to render those politics impotent, to outlaw age-old hatreds, to make good our promises of twenty-five years ago, our promises not only to the common people of the world but also to ourselves and to our children—our promises to establish a world-wide association of peaceful nations so that we and all mankind may remain at peace.

To win the peace this time, we must both accept responsibilities and make sacrifices. Chief of the responsibilities is the one we evaded in 1918. Then it was possible for a war-weary United States to retreat into isolation behind its two oceans. There must be no repetition of that retreat. There *can* be none.

For, when this war is over, we will remain the greatest military power in history, supreme on the ground, on the sea, in the air. While the industrial organizations of Europe and Asia are ground up in the struggle, ours—far from the war theaters—will grow mighty. While the fields of Europe and Asia are torn by shells and tank treads and boots, ours will be golden with grain. While the bankruptcy of the leadership of Europe and Asia becomes ever more evident, the practical idealism of ours—which covets no booty, seeks no aggrandizement—will shine more brightly. We shall have power, food, moral prestige.

In that day when the war ends we shall either have world leadership thrust upon us, or we shall seize it boldly. For our own good as well as that of civilization, we must be bold.

If we are, then nothing can stop us from accomplishing the federation of the peace-loving peoples. Free idealists had to overcome the impossible to found this American republic. Free idealists had to overcome the impossible to found the tight little island of decency called Switzerland, that French-German-Italian standing reproach to their warring brothers. Like them and their fellows in all ages and all lands, we shall have to battle entrenched reaction, regional animosities, language differences—all the monstrous artificial obstacles which stand in the way of democratic progress. But if we, like them, have moral stamina to support our armed might, we shall prevail.

In attaining that victory for humanity we shall have to make first the sacrifice of pride. Like the States which originally banded together to form our Union, we shall have to yield up some of our sovereign rights as a nation, so that we may ally ourselves in a world union with other peoples similarly minded. In heeding the often-distorted admonition of George Washington, we shall remember that it was not alliances he opposed—indeed he accepted French aid to win his battle for independence—but *entangling* alliances. We shall welcome, therefore, alliance with and the support of every freedom and peace-loving people under the sun; in return for their concessions and trust we shall give concessions and trust.

We shall have also to make the sacrifice of comfort. So that we may raise the living standard of the rest of the world, we will have to accept a reduction in our own. To make possible the free interchange of goods, we shall have to smash our protective trade barriers, to give the whole world access to raw materials, to surrender willingly many of our hard-won gains.

We shall have, finally, to make the sacrifice of time, perhaps even of life. In keeping ever before us that "Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty," we shall carry intra-national

law and order into the *inter*-national sphere by maintaining an army to police the world. Recruited from every one of the United Nations, that army will call upon each of us for his allotted service. And in that citizen army, consecrated to world peace and justice, we shall never have a morale problem.

Accepting our responsibilities, making our sacrifices, in my Land of Promise we shall extend the four freedoms to every corner of the earth. The road will be long, the advances will be gradual, but we shall go forward.

In that day when, as a citizen, I shall see around me good neighbors of every creed, color and race, I will necessarily have reached my Land of Promise also as a Jew.

I will have reached it because in that Land all minorities will be liberated from the bondage of weakness in a world of force. Long ago we learned that the treatment accorded minorities is the barometer of civilizations. No better index exists to the Nazi-Fascist character than the degradation to which it has reduced Poles, Czechs, French, Chinese, Filipinos and their many-tongued brothers in every conquered land. No better index exists to the character of the United Nations than the zeal with which they are fighting for democracy.

For democracy rests on the doctrine of the dignity of man. Shield and buckler to that dignity are what we have come to call civil rights. And it is for extension of civil rights to all men that we are, in essence, fighting. In the day of our victory we shall restore to some, and grant for the first time to others, that priceless boon. In the great gift the Jews too, like their fellow minority peoples, will have their portion. That portion will have the same shape and the wonderful meaning for them that it will have for every redeemed nation.

As a children's dress manufacturer, I found it easiest to picture business in the Land of Promise in terms of my own

trade. As a Jew it is equally natural that I should picture the settlement of all minority problems in terms of my own co-religionists, whose difficulties seem to me to be at once the most knotty and the most representative.

As always, I see two fronts.

In Europe the Jews are, inevitably, through. In the old days they were able to support themselves even if, as in Galicia, it was only on a subsistence standard. In 1921 the War had hammered them down to the point where perhaps forty per cent were able to eat and find shelter without outside aid. Even before this Second World War a hundred per cent were helpless to provide for themselves.

I am no historian, but I think that in my lifetime I have seen the cause and the effect. In Galicia I learned how the Jews were fashioned into a trading middle class by the ruling feudal lords. In Hungary I sensed the beginning of the rise of the peasants into that middle class. With the new century and especially the last War, this peasant stirring finally became effective. It forced concessions from those feudal lords whom it did not destroy. By 1940 the peasants had schools. The sons of peasants attended universities. They left the soil, which they were never permitted to do before, and engaged in trade. They said, "Buy from a real Pole—buy from a real Hungarian—buy from a real Slovak!" And their relatives, friends, neighbors, followed the advice. When the child got sick, they called the new doctor—son of the peasant from over the hill. When they were troubled by a legal problem, they called the new lawyer—son of the peasant from over the hill on the other side. The peasants had a long way to go, it is true, before they approached even a minimum decent standard of living and opportunity, but they had made the start. As they encroached upon middle class occupations, they were slowly strangling the Jews—who were forbidden to leave these occupations for new fields.

That this gradual emancipation of the peasants meant the dispossession of the Jews was almost mathematically illustrated in the Hungary which, as a boy, I considered golden. Under Franz Josef Hungary was a great haven for the Jews. They were citizens with almost free and equal rights. Most of all, perhaps, they were permitted to own land.

Two years ago Hungary was already seething. Five thousand noble families still owned half the arable land there—the better half. But there were three million peasants with no land at all, three million peasants sleeping in the fields for want of a roof over their heads, three million peasants —and how big is the population of Hungary altogether?—who made an average of eighty filler, or fifty American cents, a day, when they were able to find work!

Those peasants were grumbling. Hungarian Nazis, seizing on the sore spot, promised them land through the splitting up of the domains of the feudal lords. In reply the government hastily put through a counter-program—without touching an acre of the nobles' lands, it expropriated every inch owned by Jews and distributed it to the landless serfs!

Since in Hungary, as everywhere in Central Europe, the Jews were the football of economics and politics, when the peasants rose, the Jews fell. Certainly the peasants were right, and their fumbling steps toward true, not technical, emancipation were centuries overdue. But the Jews were not wrong, either, and they still had stomachs. Dismissed summarily from the role they were called in to play,—in some instances forced to play,—and prevented by law and by custom from assuming any *new* role, they were suffering. In the old days they suffered from sudden pogroms incited by toppling governments. A "good" riot distracted the peasants for a while from their own troubles. A "good" riot also passed over, allowing the survivors to live something approaching a normal life, allowing them at least to hope for better days to come. The more recent one has been a "cold"

pogrom, incited by nothing but social and economic development. Even in the peace after the war, it will not pass over.

The confused 1918 system of borders trapped millions of innocent people in every corner of the earth. Hitler's and Hirohito's map revisions have only mired them deeper. Most of these millions have been trapped, however, only in the geographic sense. For them there is hope of liberation. For the Jews there is no such hope. They have been trapped economically as well.

Today, in wartime, knowledge of their plight is seeping into the obscure nooks of even the most unworldly-wise Central European Jews. They have been discussing the question. They have been suggesting solutions for postwar trial.

One is to do nothing.

Many ultra-religious Jews will sit in their crumbling homes and wait for a miracle.

" 'If the Lord doesn't build the house, they labor in vain who build it!' " they quote.

To this argument the only answer is that, "Torah is good, when combined with a worldly occupation." The Fathers never meant their disciples not to know how to make a living, how to get along in the practical world. The Lord likes to see a man try on his own, I am sure, to earn assistance.

A second solution will be to send relief from the more prosperous communities.

Relief will be essential to hold millions off the brink of starvation. But it will be only a temporary measure. They who wait hopefully for betterment of conditions in Europe will be waiting in vain. It will not come. Relief is a palliative, not a cure.

Still another solution suggested is local patriotism.

In the Europe of my youth the Jews were among the most ardent nationalists of the countries in which they lived. At

eighteen I myself was a passionate Hungarian. The Germans, I found, were sometimes baffled by the fiery chauvinism of the German Jews. The same thread wove through the fabric of every country.

The example of the son of Koppel Borgenicht, my father's cousin, is a grim reply to this blind jingoism. Koppel was the man who gave me the speech, when I was seven, which sent me out into the world. "Leave your little mudhole of Zacliczyn," he had said. To back up his argument, he had showed me birthday telegrams from his four successful sons. One of those sons was a Vienna lawyer. In later years he became a counselor of the Kaiser's and a very wealthy man. He owned a sanitarium which accommodated the finest names in Europe. At the time of the War of 1914-18 this man voluntarily turned his sanitarium over to the government for war purposes. His wealth he contributed to the same cause.

Just before the new war broke out, I received a letter from that man's daughter. She was fifty, she wrote, was married, and was a practicing dentist. She pleaded to be helped out of Vienna. She had no illusions.

"I am an excellent cook," she said, "a good baker, and capable at household work. If you can help me to emigrate, perhaps later I can send for my husband, who is not permitted to do such heavy work."

In Hungary I had a nephew who fought for four years in the Austrian army, struggled through imprisonment in Siberia and made his way back to his home country. In 1940 he was penniless, persecuted. I am not certain he is still alive.

No, to be a rabid patriot is hardly a solution to a problem posed by advancing history.

Finally, there will be the refuges to which European Jews could migrate.

The havens thus far suggested in far corners of the world have proven cruel deceptions. On the other hand America might be asked to admit large numbers of refugees. In the days before we entered the war, I myself signed the necessary affidavits for a score or more. Typical of them are two families who came over from Vienna; distant cousins of mine, they are all youngsters. Of one family the mother has maintained her home by skilled work as a designer. Of the other the husband has worked as a truckman's helper. The four young people and their bewildered children know nothing but this eagerness to work, and gratefulness for being able to walk the streets head up and without fear.

The Quakers who have done such magnificent work all over Europe, from Spain to the Russian border, if not further, have been most considerate to the refugees from Hitler's tyranny. Refusing to differentiate between Christians and Jews because they know that the latter form only a small part of the total of Nazi victims, they report that close observation of the progress made by refugees in this country up to 1941 revealed more jobs *made* by the new industries these immigrants brought with them than have been taken away by penniless newcomers.

Regardless of statistics, however, it seems clear that America cannot again throw open her gates to floods of outlanders. If she did, she would be swamped with refugees from every country in the older worlds. For all practical purposes of large-scale immigration, America's gates are shut.

Inaction, relief, local patriotism, refuges—there is not one among them to hold out a real hope. In the Land of Promise there will be a solution, however. That answer will be a genuine homeland.

That homeland can be built in only one place—Palestine.

To ask why it must be Palestine, as some have done, is to ask the Czech why it must be Bohemia, to ask the Pole why it must be Poland. It must be Palestine because Pales-

tine is the land of Israel's history from the dawn of Biblical times.

In New England every stick and stone recites forever the glorious tale of America. "Here Roger Williams strove for tolerance. Here Nathan Hale sacrificed for freedom. Here Washington rallied his ragged Continentals. Here Whitman sang of democracy. Here Webster set principle above the Presidency." In the Holy Land every stick and stone recites forever the glorious tale of its own faithful. "Here is the land on which Moses gazed from the mountain top. Here David composed his first Psalm. Here Ezra piled stone on shattered stone to rebuild Jerusalem. Here Jeremiah denounced the oppressors of the poor. Here Isaiah hailed the day when the nations would beat their swords into plowshares. Here Judah defied the pagan idolators of Greece."

But not only is Palestine the land of Israel's ancient history. It is the land of her present dreams as well.

During the decades of partition, the Poles never yielded up their yearning for their homeland; nor have they done so now under the new blow which has fallen upon them. During centuries of suppression the Czechs never renounced their claim to their own country. The Hindus, the French, the Chinese, the Russians, the Filipinos, the British—if the worst were to befall them—would not be expected to suffer in silence the loss of the lands hallowed by the blood and tears, the labor and joy of generations. The Jews have suffered perhaps more than most, certainly longer than most. In return they have clung to their vision the more devotedly.

The return to Zion is the vision around which their prophets and people alike have rallied through two thousand years of wandering. It is the one vision which can be counted on to unite opposing factions of the Hebraic peoples. It is, finally, the vision commended and approved by the nations of the world as recently as 1918 when, after the previous issuance of the Balfour Declaration, Britain was

given a mandate over the Holy Land until such time as the re-created Jewish State was capable of governing itself.

Under the protection and encouragement of the League of Nations, stalwart in those days, Jewish refugees flocked to Palestine, built new cities, made the desert to blossom like the rose. In those happier times the end seemed in sight of the long trail of agony.

Today the League is dead. Axis planes have cast their shadows over Jerusalem. Even before the war, entry of refugees into their land of hope was hampered and then cut off altogether by the rules and regulations Britain found it necessary to impose in order to strengthen herself for the impending conflict. Now, in her most critical moments, Britain has had to prohibit, because of Arab complications, the formation and equipment of a Jewish volunteer army to fight in defense of the Middle East.

Truly the treatment of minorities is the barometer of civilizations. These are perilous times, they bring strange painful sacrifices which we accept as necessary. But peace will come again. And then the treatment accorded the Zionists will provide an acid test of the United Nations' ability to make practical application of their ideals.

In my Land of Promise the Nations will pass that acid test. In that peaceful post-war world Palestine will be relieved of the status of a pawn in imperial struggles. Politicians who seek to divide and profit will be shamed and put to flight; extremists in both Arab and Jewish camps will be silenced. By direct, face-to-face negotiations, understanding leaders of both interested peoples will resolve their difficulties by compromise, by resettlement, by mutual concessions. With her gates then opened as they should be, Palestine will welcome the dispossessed Jews of Europe. To the defeatist claim that the land is too poor, she will answer in the words of the Reclamation Commission of the American State of California—that, irrigated, plowed, en-

riched by the same methods which have made Southern California into a garden spot, Palestine can quickly be made to support four or five millions of new population.

Developing Zion anew will be happy armies of young people with the courage and initiative of the American pioneers, young people who will be not only doctors, merchants, professional men, but farmers, mechanics, artisans. Financing it will be the Jews of all the more prosperous lands, and perhaps even governments interested in solving a question which has been vexing for two thousand years. Governing it will be its own people, by tradition and by grateful choice the most passionately democratic on earth.

Left to their own devices, the Jews and their Arab neighbors will discover increasingly their common interests. The Arabs will find—as so many of them have already—that with them the Zionists bring the blessings of modern science in agriculture, industry, medicine, the arts. The Jews will find —as so many of them have already—that the Arabs are able colleagues in exploiting the natural wealth of the Middle East for their mutual benefit, and for the enrichment of the world. Together they will make the ancient "cradle of civilization" into a useful, productive member of Twentieth Century society. And, with the opening, settling and developing of that Jewish homeland, the problems of the Jews in Europe will be finally solved.

In America, the Jews have a different history.

There were Jews among the earliest inhabitants. Old records list the names of Jews in Peter Stuyvesant's New Amsterdam, as far back as 1654. By 1656 there was already a burial plot hallowed for Americans of Jewish faith, and services were conducted in private homes. The first synagogue in New York was built, after constant representations to the Governors, in 1729. For purposes of suggesting by comparison the time-honored and Constitution-recognized status of the Jews in America, it may be noted that the first church

for the conducting of *Catholic* services in New York was opened in 1785.

Americans of Jewish faith were active in Colonial exploration and settlement. They devoted their lives and fortunes to the establishment of a free republic. They fought in the War for Independence and in every war thereafter.

The main factor concerning the Jews in America was not their patriotism, however. Jews in other countries have been patriots. In America Jews engaged in the same fields of enterprise as their fellows. They were not called in to form a middle class. They were not merely tolerated as traders. In the United States, for the first time outside their own ancient land, they were accounted from the beginning as just so many citizens—no more, no less. They enjoyed no special rights, they suffered no special handicaps. In that lies the great distinction.

More than anything else, as I have explained, it was that complete freedom to enter any field we pleased that impressed and delighted us immigrants. There was neither written nor unwritten law to say: "Stop, you can't do that because you are a Jew!" Prejudice existed. There were concerns which did not employ Jews. There were landowners who would not sell to Jews. But this was not a crippling widespread prejudice. It hurt, but it curtailed the field of activities practically not at all.

As a result, the Jews from earliest days entered into every phase of American life on equal terms with their fellows. When times were good, they prospered like their colleagues, when times were bad they suffered with them. Their Judaism manifested itself, not as in Europe in the field of economics, but only in worship, as did the faith of the Catholic and the Protestant and the adherent to any other Church. They were and they are in every way part and parcel of America, their destiny is bound up with that of all Americans.

Because there has never been any separate status for Jews, there is no Jewish problem in America. Immediately before Pearl Harbor there was, however, an attempt deliberately to create one. New prophets were abroad in the land. I heard on Times Square, the crossroads of New York and perhaps of the world, the cry "For a Christian America!" raised by the followers of a radio voice which preached the weather-beaten negative panacea of anti-Semitism to a sorely puzzled people. For fifty years I had blessed God for bringing me to a country where a Jew could bring up children and feel he was conferring on them a priceless gift. In my old age I saw the danger that the trend of those fifty years might be reversed.

I was no alarmist, but I saw that the times were out of joint. Today I see that after the war we might have to combat that danger, to combat it when it is young and vulnerable and not later when it might rise in times of economic readjustment. In my Land of Promise we will defeat it. Americans in general will defeat it with good sense—by reading in the history of other nations that tolerance means democracy and that intolerance inevitably means dictatorship, and by perceiving that anti-Semitism is the conventional entering wedge in any cynical Fifth Column campaign to undermine our basic freedom. Americans of Jewish faith, however, will bear the greater burden of defense. And before they do battle, they will have to gird themselves.

They will have first to dismiss the counsel of appeasement which suggests that Jews should retreat from public prominence, should not lead the fight against anti-Semitism, should let their Christian fellow citizens fight it alone. The appeasers think it more seemly for Jews not to assert themselves. They do not understand that the fight against anti-Semitism has always been the fight *for* freedom and democracy, and that no society where a minority is suppressed can

be a free society. They do not understand that you cannot expect your friends to fight for you if you do not fight for yourself.

They will have to become convinced also of the necessity of uniting for the common good. They will have to destroy even the remnants which still linger on of the old caste system based on the different sections of Europe from which their forbears came. They will have to resolve into peaceful co-operation the sectarian differences within their own faith.

I remember listening not so long ago to an impassioned speech inciting us to go out and fight a non-conformist rabbi who had devised a new formula for Judaism containing some variations from the traditional ritual. It was a great speech, until I learned that the defender of orthodoxy had overlooked paying the teachers in his congregation's school for more than three months. Religion, like charity, I thought, begins at home. The people engaged in promoting these sectarian divisions will have to be diverted into more constructive channels.

They will have, finally, to learn, along with their fellow countrymen, to assume more fully their obligations to their nation and to their co-religionists. The necessity for urging this acceptance of responsibility is a latter-day arrival. Sometimes, walking along the streets of our major cities, I feel like crying out for an Isaiah to pillory "The fat cows of Bashan, that pluck their eyebrows and paint their nails!" Today is a day for work. Today is a day for struggle. The fat cows will have to become lean cows, cows able to work and to struggle. They will have to remember that they came here poor, no clothes on the back, no food in the cupboard, and that here they found happiness, security, a chance to do good and help others. The merchants of my day were different. They remembered their past and were grateful night and day for freedom and opportunity. They were willing to sacrifice for that freedom, that opportunity.

The young will have to learn. And they will. Like *all* Americans, they are learning already!

Once they have learned, their weapons of defense will lie ready to hand. Truth is the name of the first and greatest —that truth about the Jews in America which, insofar as my life has been a part of it, I have tried to record here.

I have been only one of a group of men, however, men who lived and worked together for years. In our particular community we were the leaders. There were Joel Wachman, William Fishman, Samuel Rottenberg; a dozen more whom I know as I know my own brothers. Their lives are a part of the truth also.

In those lives these dear friends, escaped from the swamp of Europe, have demonstrated their gratefulness to the country in which they have been privileged to live as free men. True, each of them has taken from this country, each has enjoyed a full life. But each has *given* generously also. Each has contributed to the establishment of industries which did not exist before. Each has helped to make the routine burdens of life easier for our millions. Each has helped to build up America's economy and to maintain her principles.

The records of their careers can be duplicated all down the line of Jewish communities in America. I came over with the second wave of immigration of Jews. In the first years after 1900 the third great wave arrived, fleeing the Czar's persecutions. By 1910 there were four million Jews in the United States. It was my business, as an active member of that community, to know what my co-religionists were doing.

It was easy to find out. I didn't have to move from home to see the results of their work.

Right at my feet, in New York City, new industries had been founded. Vast factories had been built. Thousands of jobs had been made. In my own field alone, I saw that

Jews had educated America to an appreciation of clothes, and had learned themselves to supply the needs of the country on a scale never dreamed of in Europe. They had raised the standard of living, and opened huge markets for raw materials.

In my own field I could write a catalogue of the achievements of American citizens who happened to be Jews by religion. In other fields I saw their achievements also, as they fitted into the structure of American life. I saw immigrants slaving to maintain themselves, once here, and to enable their children to advance almost literally over their bodies. Sacrifice for children in this wonderful land—that was the keynote struck by every immigrant parent who dreamed dreams for his sons and daughters. It didn't matter that we ourselves had to struggle and slave. Our children would have what no Jewish child had had in two thousand years—those children would be free citizens of the greatest republic!

Out of those years of hardship came, along with the businessmen, doctors to make great discoveries, artists to make music and pictures and books, lawyers to sit on the judicial benches of the nation, political leaders to serve their constituents well. Certainly we have had our sharp businessmen, our gangsters, our hypocrites, our ingrates—just as has every other group. But in building and using the farms, the factories, the offices of America, citizens of Jewish faith have contributed their full and grateful share.

This is the truth which American Jews will explain to their fellow citizens. They will explain it with faith that those fellow citizens, moved as they are characteristically by common sense and decency, will understand it. And that faith will be justified.

There is a second weapon also. Stratification is its name.

Not so long ago in Europe—and again today, incredibly, in Hitler's "living room"—Jews were confined to ghettos and

forbidden to become farmers, plumbers, mechanics. Forced into trade and commerce alone, in defense of their pride they came in time to look upon manual arts and crafts as beneath them. They reserved their veneration for the man who worked with his mind. They were the People of the Book in business as well as in religion and philosophy.

It might have been expected that, released after centuries of bondage to middle class trading and commercial fields, Jews in America would have sifted quickly into other spheres of activity. That was my hope in 1913—that Jews would revel in the new freedom and display ingenuity in using it. I hoped that they would turn their backs on their grim, narrow European past and stream into every walk of American life. That hope has not been altogether realized.

In 1940 there were a hundred thousand Jewish farmers in America. There were Jews in the factories, on the baseball fields, in the great medical and industrial institutions, on the stage and in the movies, in the army and the navy. Everywhere there should have been more.

In my Land of Promise there will be. I will see them moving out of the outworn pattern of their urban existence, out of the too-pleasant familiarity of their middle-class communities to engage even more abundantly in every kind of enterprise in the country. If they have to conquer their own natural tendency to remain in the fields to which their forefathers were limited for generations, they will do it. If they have to overcome the inertia of the indifferent among their fellows, or even the passive resistance of people with a vague and unsatisfactory prejudice against Jews, they will do that also. This sifting of Jews into the tiniest stratum of American life will give them even deeper and more permanent roots. It will also, I am sure, give the American community as a whole a better understanding of its Jewish element.

Perhaps in the last analysis the twin objectives of a home-

land for European Jews and the stratification of American Jews are only the opposite faces of a single coin. Certainly the Europeans will never achieve their homeland without a secure Jewish community in the New World. They will need the material resources of the Jews in America to back their pioneering experiment. Almost as certainly, however, the Jews in America will not become completely stratified without the knowledge that there is a secure homeland somewhere. They will need the *moral* resources of that homeland.

The instinct to band together which marks the Jews to a certain degree is born of their desire to preserve their heritage. That they are a minority group is not what concerns them. It is, rather, that they are a minority group backed by no nation, no state, no country. For sixty successive generations they have been on the move. During any stop in that long trek assimilation would have meant the death of a culture which has now outlasted the blows of more than four thousand years.

Today conditions remain the same. A Frenchman in America forswears allegiance to the government of his old country but knows in his sentimental heart that the culture, the literature, the life of that old country will be carried on. A German marries an American girl and raises children secure in the knowledge that German culture, despite Hitler and his kind, will survive. The world needs those many cultures, is enriched by every new culture it can muster. In total they add up to what we call civilization. Yet the Jew has no assurance about his. Wherever he stops for the night, there he must carry the banner of his past. Since he has no homeland to fall back on, he knows—some of us consciously, others only intuitively—that assimilation means his death, culturally and religiously speaking.

Therein lies the basic tragedy of the unique Jewish situation. Therein lies also its solution.

Once a homeland is established, the Jew would be like the Frenchman, the German, the member of any national group. He would have standing. With a Jewish homeland established, Jewish culture would be carried on securely. Jews would be able to circulate with absolute peace of mind among the nations. The Jews in America would sift in even wider profusion through every field and community in the country, happy in the assurance that they are no longer bearing continuously the heavy responsibility of carrying on the ancient tradition in its original purity.

Just before the war Dr. Leo Jung, well-loved rabbi of my own congregation, returned from Jerusalem. He told me of meeting a bootblack, whose nationality he could not tell from his sunburned face.

"What nationality are you?" he asked.

"Yehudi, praised be the Lord!" replied the lad. He said it as an Iowa boy might say, "American, and proud of it!"

It is a reply that has not been voiced with sincerity and good cheer for two thousand years. There was no Jewish problem in those old days when my ancestors owned their country, not for them nor for the rest of the world. In my Land of Promise, where that reply can once again be made by more than a handful of Jews, there will have ceased to be a Jewish problem. It will have solved itself.

In that solution will be implicit the solution of every other minority problem which has plagued suffering humanity. In it will be implicit the ancient Hebraic vision of the overcoming of artificial barriers of language, creed and color, the recognition by all mankind of its universal kinship.

Today I understand that my dream for my family will be realized when my dream for the Jews is realized. My dream for the Jews will be realized when my dream for the nation as a whole is realized. And in that Land where my three dreams will become in reality only one, I know that that one will be fulfilled beyond our highest expectations.

CHAPTER XV

In which I come to the end of the trail, and conclude with a prayer.

AFTER making the long journey from Zacliczyn in Franz Josef's Galicia to New York in Franklin D. Roosevelt's America, I have, in these last few steps along the trail, venturned to look forward into a Promised Land I shall never see.

When we will actually reach that Land, I cannot prophesy. This I do know—that it will be only after we have conquered this crisis in which we find ourselves.

Once a hundred and sixty years ago, when the Revolutionary War was over, there hung in the balance the nature of the new nation that was to be molded out of the wilderness. There was a Washington, and around him giants, every one. The first crisis was overcome.

Eighty years ago a second crisis threatened to split apart the country, to wreck the bright dream of the founding fathers. A Lincoln arose. The second crisis was overcome.

Today we face our third, perhaps our greatest crisis. We cry out for a new Washington, a new Lincoln. And today I begin to wonder whether we haven't found our man.

In 1933 I saw the New Deal, whatever its economics, as a reawakening of the morality which had been clubbed into unconsciousness by the War of 1914-18. Then for a time I was confused, uncertain. And now today it has become clear again—all *too* clear—that the years between 1933 and December 7, 1941, were only the opening rounds of a struggle

between the essential morality so typified by America, the things that make America peculiarly American, and the forces of evil which threaten to sweep the rest of the world as they have swept most of Europe and Asia. Those years merely provided us with the small, local outbreak of the struggle between good and evil which has now broadened out to a world-wide front.

Not many of our public men understood *at the time* the events which have culminated in the present war. Franklin Roosevelt did.

His most outspoken critics have been obliged, even while they denounced his domestic policies, to hail his far-sighted wisdom in foreign affairs. Today I would humbly suggest that both his foreign and domestic policies are all of a piece. I would suggest that they both are moved by an understanding of the fact that tyrannous reaction must be fought at home *and* abroad. I would suggest that both demonstrate a glad recognition of the fact that this is indeed to be, in the words of Vice-President Wallace, "the century of the common man." With the continued intelligent support of the nation which was wise enough to re-elect him, President Roosevelt may well be the giant figure to march into history alongside Washington and Lincoln, and perhaps, in the eyes of the whole redeemed world, greater than either.

In the turmoil of the day, that is the sense I make of it.

Exactly how we are to overcome this crisis, the explicit directions by which we are to reach the Promised Land from the bloody morass in which we are now embroiled, I do not of course pretend to know. I have ventured to sketch only the crude outlines of that brighter world.

But I do know that America is unique among nations. She is the one great nation which occupies all the land naturally available to her, from one geographical frontier to another, from ocean to ocean. She is the one great nation which need not fear the presence of an armed, hostile neighbor

across a bristling border. She is the one great nation which has no history of tyranny or feudalism, no burden of evil tradition and background to throw off. She is the one great nation settled by rebels against despotism, ruled from earliest days by a free government.

Rich in every material and spiritual resource, America has done wonderful things under my eyes. It is not too much to expect that she will accomplish this most important miracle.

The sages tell a story of the prophet Jeremiah who, while the Babylonians were sacking Jerusalem, made his way among the rioting soldiers, went to a dealer in land, deliberately purchased a house and had the deed to this house placed in an urn and secreted in a crypt.

"Are you mad?" cried his companions. "The invaders are this moment burning the very house you are talking about. Yet you calmly pay out good money for it, and bury the deed as if it were the most precious thing on earth!"

"Faithless men!" replied the prophet. "To be demoralized by a single invasion, a single destruction of your homes! Know that your ancestors built these homes, this Temple, not once but many times. Know also that your children will *re*build these homes, this Temple. Have faith then, and go manifest that faith as I am doing!"

Today I have my home in Hunter. In New York, like other New Yorkers, I am an apartment dweller. But still I would like to buy a piece of ground at Broadway and Forty-second Street. I would like to take the deed to it, and the deed to the ground in the mountains, and put them both into the deepest, safest vault of the Chase National Bank. For with my homes the homes of America, and my Temple the Temple of Freedom, I proclaim the words of the prophet. I have faith.

Beside me, sharing that faith, is Regina, my wife.

Around me, sharing that faith, are my children, my grandchildren, my great-grandchildren.

At home and at business and wherever I have gone in my life, I have never ceased to call on the name of the Almighty. It seems fitting that I call upon Him now.

Almighty God, I thank you for the kindness and grace bestowed on me during a long lifetime.

You have blessed me with a true and happy life partner.

You have blessed me with children who have been brought up to manhood and to womanhood so that I can be proud of them.

You have blessed me with the privilege of coming to America, to live a free life and to achieve satisfaction and happiness.

Almighty God, grant that my children, and my children's children, and all those that come after them, shall be able—in *their* old age—to repeat this prayer with full hearts.

Amen.

THE END

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