My Family

The Story of an Immigrant Family



David Sheinbaum

AS THE NINETEENTH CENTURY drew to a close a mass emigration westwards from the Poland/Russia/Lithuania area of Eastern Europe took place. Most emigrated to the USA but some to England where they settled in the East End of London. This is the story of one such family.

The book describes their life during the latter part of the nineteenth century in `Der Heim' (The Homeland), and their trials and tribulations during the first sixteen years of the twentieth century when they settled in London, in a Jewish East End that is no more.

It is the story of our family, seen through the eyes of one of its sons. He tells us of their simple way of life in the primitive villages and towns in the wide open spaces adjoining the Pripet Marshes; of their hardships on the journey to England; and how they adjusted their lives to living in the cramped, dismal, slum streets of East London. And how his amorous adventures forced him to face up to the clash between the traditional religious and social culture of "Der Heim" and the new culture he met in England.

David Sheinbaum wrote this story so that "future generations will have some knowledge of their ancestral heritage".



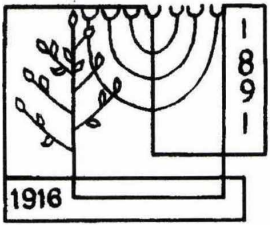

David's Route to London
Pale of Settlement
GLASGOW
EDINBURGH
DUBLIN
LEEDS
MANCHESTER
LIVERPOOL
BIRMINGHAM
LONDON
NORTH SEA
DENMARK
BALTIC SEA
ESTONIA
LATVIA
LIBAU
LITHUANIA
VILNA
GRODNO
Minsk
BUTEN
Gomel
PRUSSIA
BERLIN
POLAND
WARSAW
Pripet Marshes
RUSSIA
NETHERLANDS
GERMANY
ENGLISH CHANNEL
BELGIUM
PRAGU
Kiev
PARIS
FRANCE
SWITZERLAND
AUSTRIA-HUNGARY
ROMANIA
ITALY
SERBIA
BULGARIA
MEDITERRANEAN SEA

David Sheinbaum

My Family

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My Family

. . . that everyone should write

for his children after him the order

of the genealogy of his forefathers,

to be an everlasting memory.

TESTAMENT OF THE TZADDIK
REB SHEFTEL THE LEVI

January 21st 1961

Dear Nephew Cyril,

I am in receipt of your letter. I must confess that I was considerably embarrassed by your request that I send you a copy of "My Youth in Poland", and my excerpts of "How the Jews came to settle in Eastern Europe". As regards the latter, it was extracted bodily from historical books and none of it is due to my credit. And as for the former, though most of it is of my own compilation, it deserves no more credit than the latter. It concerns the first twelve years of my life, much of it is imaginary and partly novelised in order to enchant the imagination of my children for whom it was written.

In some of the incidents I mention therein I was not a witness as, for example, the former grandeur of the house I was born in, and the funeral of my grand mother Rivke Mariom. Also some are stories by my mother, others are hearsay from others. Consideration must also be given to the fact that my total English education comprised of fifteen months schooling in one of the poorest schools in the Bethnal Green sector of London, passing two of the lowest standards, and the following ten years behind a grocery counter in the East End of London did not enhance my English, therefore my typing with two fingers is poor, and the work as a whole is cramped with errors in spelling and especially in composition. Do you still want to see it?

However I did try to be realistic and most of the composition is true to fact.

I will however suppress my pride and send you the only copy I possess, in a faint hope that you may find some redeeming feature therein, by which my ego may not suffer too great an indignation.

I leave it entirely to your discretion as to whether you should show it to other members of our family...

David Sheinbaum

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Glossary of Hebrew and Yiddish Terms
(English spelling as in the book)

Cheder : lit. 'a room'; the room or building where children study.
Chol Hamoed : the four working days in the middle of the seven or eight day Passover festival.
Deiges : worries.
Farchaded : given a headache.
Haggadah : lit. 'story book'; the book that recites the stories and order of the Seder.
Havdola : the prayers said at the termination of the Sabbath.
Kiddush : prayer over wine and bread on Sabbath and Festivals.
Mezzuza : lit. 'doorpost'; the parchment scroll affixed to the door-posts of the house and rooms of a Jewish home.
Mishnais or *Mishna* : the collection of moral precepts and traditions.
Pilpul and *Hilluk* : methods of studying the Talmud.
Purim : festival commemorating the defeat of Haman's plot to massacre the Jews.
Seder : lit. order; the ceremony and meal at home on the first two evenings of Passover.
Shabbas or *Shobbus* : the Sabbath.
Shamas : beadle.
Shiva : period of mourning.
Sholem Aleichem : 'peace be with you', a greeting.
Shool : synagogue.
Succoth : Feast of Tabernacles.
Talmud : lit. 'learning'; the body of Jewish civil and ceremonial law.
Teitsch-Chumash : same as Tzeno Ureno, see below.
Torah : lit 'teaching'; the Pentateuch, commonly called the Five Books of Moses.
Tzeno Ureno (Ze'enah u-Re'enah) : selected passages from the Five Books of Moses translated and interpreted in Yiddish, written for women.
Yachne : A female gossip, a busybody.
Yeshivah : institute of Talmudic study.

Yichus Brief: document setting out family genealogy.

Food

Blintze: thin pancake, usually served with sour cream.

Chale or *Challah*: traditional bread, usually braided for Sabbath, and round for Festivals.

Cholent: made with beans, meat and potatoes, etc.; cooked in advance and kept hot over the Sabbath.

Chometz: leavened, e.g. bread unfit for Passover.

Gefilte fish : chopped, stuffed fish.

Hommentaschen: poppy seed cake.

Kneidlach: (Kneidel) dumplings.

Kosher: 'fit' or 'proper'; usually applied to food that is permitted.

Kreplach: triangle shaped pastry containing meat or cream cheese.

Kroopniks: barley soup.

Latkes: potato pancakes.

Lockshen: noodles.

Matzo: flat unleavened bread eaten at Passover instead of ordinary bread.

Schav: cold sorrel soup.

Tzimmes : stew made with carrots and potatoes.

Preface and Acknowledgements

The manuscripts of Book One (Der Heim) and Book Two (London) of *My Family* were written by my uncle David Sheinbaum. He was born on 24th September 1891 in Swalbitch, Poland. He emigrated to England in 1904 and, in 1916, settled in New York where he died on 25th August 1975.

Uncle David typed the manuscript 'with two fingers' during the years 1947 to 1966. Considering that he spent only about 15 months in an English school his flow and use of the English language is remarkable. He clearly was much influenced by English novelists and poets whom he read voraciously. I recall my mother, Fanny, describing how David, instead of serving customers in the grocery shop, would be ensconced in a corner reading a book.

A certain amount of editing has been necessary without, we think, affecting David's style nor the flow of thoughts and incidents that flooded from his fertile memory and imagination.

The Appendix has been added as a supplement to provide background information. It contains articles on David's later life in the USA and the history of the Jews in London, up-to-date family charts and information about our earlier family history.

The book is the result of an enjoyable, albeit strenuous, collaboration between myself as editor, my cousin Lily and her husband Martin Mitchell. Lily retyped the faded manuscripts into their loyal but somewhat capricious (malicious?) computer, and also prepared the individual family charts setting out the descendants to date of Hirsch (1858-1948) and Schprintze (1858-1913) Sheinbaum. Martin dealt with the desktop publishing (with the able assistance of David Stevenson, a specialist in the arcane mysteries of computer

publishing) and he also assembled the photographs and pictures in the charts and the illustrated pages. I am responsible for the overall editing, the foot notes and the article on the history of the Jews in London. I am indebted to the Encyclopaedia Judaica for much of the factual information.

We thank Professor Chimen Abramsky for his translation from the Yiddish of Halperin Levik's elegy in chapter 12. Our thanks go also to Tammy Kustow for drawing the map on the front inside cover and we are grateful to the Bishopsgate Institute and Tower Hamlets Local History Library for their helpful assistance. We have drawn on the following sources for the illustrations: Levy, *East End Story*, Vallentine Mitchell; White, *Rothschild Buildings*, History Workshop Series, Routledge and Kegan Paul; Sims, *Living London*, Cassell.

We thank David's daughter Mildred Schoenbrun and her son Mitchell, for letting us have the manuscript of Book Two and for writing about David's life in the USA.

Our reason for publishing this book is best stated in David's own words, 'so that future generations will have some knowledge of their ancestral heritage'.

Cyril Sherwood
London 1996

Book One

Der Heim (The Homeland)

Dedication

In a manner most simple and unassuming and without any pretension or claim to authorship, I shall endeavour to write into the pages that follow, the simple story of my life, my lineage, my experiences, and the thoughts and ideas which have determined their course, influenced my actions and resolved my philosophy and behaviour.

I humbly dedicate the following pages to my dear and beloved children, Shirley and Mildred.

D.S.
New York 1947

Prologue: The Jewish Exile

The purpose of this lengthy prologue to the story of my life is, in a way, an effort on my part to answer the often repeated questions, 'How did the Jews come to settle in Eastern Europe?' and 'When and from where did they come?'

I have drawn the following historical accounts from several famous Jewish historians, but by far the greater part of it I have taken from the 'History of the Jews in Russia and Poland', by the famous historian S. M.Dubnow.

The nineteenth century was fast drawing to a close and the great masses of humanity who inhabited the vast but sparsely populated domains of the Tsars, as well as the more populated regions of the Ukraine and Poland, slowly emerged from a state of slavery and feudal overlordship and obtained for themselves greater political freedom. The Jews, however, who had settled in Eastern Europe many centuries earlier, found themselves still leading a life of fear and persecution and limited in their social, economic and political activities. It is quite possible that the settlement of Jews in Eastern Europe antedated their settlement in the West. Eastern Europe, beginning with Alexander the Great, received its immigrants from the ancient lands of Hellenized Asia, while the immigrants into Western Europe proceeded, in the main, from the Roman Empire.

Among the ancient Jewish settlements in Eastern Europe the colonies situated on the northern shores of the Black Sea occupy a prominent place. At the mouth of the Volga where the mighty river joins the Caspian Sea arose the kingdom of the Khazars with its capital city Ityl. Another Khazar centre was established in the Crimea among Byzantine Greeks and Jews. While yet in their pagan state the

Khazars were exposed to the influence of the Jewish, Christian and Mohammedan religions. All three of them succeeded in converting some groups to their respective faiths. The lion's share however fell to the Jews, for they succeeded in converting the Royal dynasty and the ruling classes.

The conversion of the Khazars to Judaism, which took place in the year 700 CE, is described in the traditions preserved among Jews and in the accounts of medieval Arabic travellers.

The king, or Khagan, of the Khazars, by the name of Bulan, had resolved to abandon paganism. He resolved to adopt the Jewish religion, and the ruling classes and nobles followed him and also chose this faith. Thirteen Jewish monarchs followed King Bulan and ruled the favourably situated and powerful and prosperous kingdom of the Khazars. Some of them were particularly zealous adherents of Judaism and they invited Jewish sages, possibly from Babylonia, to instruct them in the Bible and Talmud. They also founded synagogues for divine services. It was during the reign of King Joseph that Slovenian tribes, united under the leadership of Russian princes, succeeded in invading and destroying the centre of the Khazars at the mouth of the Volga. The Khazars withdrew to their possessions by the Black Sea and established themselves, in particular, on the Crimean Peninsula, which for a long time retained the name of Khazaria.

For nearly half a century the reduced Khazar kingdom was able to hold its own in the Crimea after which it fell a prey to the Russians and Byzantines. Some of the relatives of the last Khagan fled to their co-religionists in Spain and the rest of them were scattered and subsequently lost among other nations. Remnants of the Khazar in the Crimea who professed Judaism were in all likelihood merged with the native Jews consisting partly of Rabbanites and partly of Karaites.

With the destruction of the second Temple in Jerusalem by the Roman tyrant Titus, and the dispersion of the Jews through the Diaspora, the long and terrible 'Golus' (exile) of the Jews really commenced. Today, almost two thousand years later, the Jews still clinging tenaciously to their ancient religion and secular rituals, retain their faith in their God's promise to their forefathers, and annually repeat in their prayers that, in the year to come, they shall

be free men in their promised land Eretz-Yisroel (Palestine), now Israel.

During the Moorish occupation of Spain under the rule of the Caliphs, the Jews, for a number of years, enjoyed political and social freedom and they succeeded in creating there an important Jewish settlement. At a time when the rest of Europe was steeped in ignorance and superstition and was passing through an era known in history as the Dark Ages the Jews, who lived in Spain and enjoyed freedom and social equality and permission to participate in the commercial and cultural life of the Moors, succeeded in writing into the history of that country and into the story of mankind a page filled with human progress and social and political achievement.

During that era the Talmud, up to then known to but a handful of learned Rabbis and up to then existing in a state of chaos and perplexity, with argumentation overlapping argumentation, and with no order in it as to time and place, was revised and chronicled by the great men of Cordova and Barcelona.

Even before the defeat of the Moors by Philip the Second of Spain, the Almohades had passed a decree that all Jews should be converted to the faith of Islam. In 1148 Maimonides, the greatest Jewish luminary of the twelfth century and the last of the great Talmudic giants, at the young age of thirteen was forced to take the cane of the wanderer in his hand, and together with his family wander from country to country in search of a refuge. With the defeat of the Moors by the Christian Spaniards, and with the zeal of the Christian fathers to convert the Jews to their faith, and later with the introduction of the Spanish Inquisition, the martyrdom of thousands of Jews took place, and the final eviction of the Jews from Spain in 1492 marked the beginning of the Jewish wandering into Eastern Europe.

The Jews wandered from country to country, through France, Belgium, and the anti-Semitic principalities of Germany, and wherever they came and tried to settle they were ill-treated, persecuted, despised and forced to keep on the move. Finally they reached the Eastern states of Europe and they settled in the kingdoms of Greater and Lesser Poland. These states were Slav lands on the banks of the Vistula River which, being the nearest to Western Europe, were bound to attract the Jews at a very early period in their capacity as

international traders. As far back as the ninth century Jews living in the German provinces carried on commerce with the neighbouring Slav countries. These visits frequently led to permanent settlements in those strange lands. However, this slow commercial colonisation would scarcely have assumed any considerable dimensions. With the march of the Crusaders on their way to the Holy Land and their attacks upon Jews and forcing them to become converted, a steady flow of Jews from the Rhine and Danube provinces into Poland resulted, increasing in volume as the result of the Crusades of 1146, 1147 and 1196, and the severe Jewish persecution in Germany.

The first signs of discord between Christians and Jews in Poland are to be noticed when Poland was divided into several feudal principalities. The Prince of Greater Poland, Meschislav the Third, in his desire to enforce law and order in his state, issued in 1173 strict injunctions forbidding all kinds of violence against the Jews.

Under Meschislav, the Old Casimir the Just, and Leshek the White, who reigned at the end of the twelfth and the beginning of the thirteenth centuries, the Jews administered the mint of Greater and Lesser Poland, and the coins struck by these Jews, many of which have come down to us, have names of the ruling princes marked in Hebrew characters. Jews also owned lands and estates in Polish Silesia.

It was in the German mother country that the Polish Jews developed their own language, Yiddish, a language which was adapted from a German dialect, together with their religious culture and communal organisation.

It was during the reign of Casimir the Great that the Jews received the greatest charter of freedom they ever enjoyed since their dispersion. It granted the Jews the right to be judged according to their own laws and autonomy in their own communal affairs. Actually with the creation of the Kahals (legislative bodies) the Jews constituted a state within a state.

> *[Mechislav (Mieczyslaw) the Third, Casimir the Second known as 'The Just', and Leshek (Leszek) known as 'The White', were princes of various Polish principalities. Poland became a united kingdom in 1320 under Wladislaw (Ladislaus) the First (1261-1333). He was known as Lubitiek*

('The Short'). On his death in 1333 his son Casimir the Third (1310-1370), known as 'The Great', became King of Poland. -Ed.]

It is difficult to determine the exact date of the first Jewish settlement in Lithuania. It is however certain that by the end of the fourteenth century important communities such as Brest, Grodno, Troili, Lutzk were in existence.

In 1388 the Jews of Brest and other Lithuanian communities obtained from Vitovt, the ruler of Lithuania, a charter similar in content to the charter of Casimir the Great, and in 1389 even more extensive privileges were bestowed by him on the Jews of Grodno. Here too the Kahals enjoyed autonomy in their communal affairs. At the head of the Kahals stood the Rabbis and Kahal Elders, and the Kings, in their official capacity as guardians of the Jews, were especially concerned in having the Kahals properly organised, since the regular payment of the Jewish taxes was thereby assured.

An Ukase (decree) issued in 1776 sanctioned the existence of the Kahal, as a fiscal and legislative institution which the Russian administration found convenient for its purpose. The plan of introducing personal military service instead of the hitherto customary exemption tax was carried into effect by Nicholas the First. For some time the Russian authorities were dreaming of a means by which they could bring about a wholesale conversion of the Jews to Christianity. Nicholas the First was resolved to bring this into effect by the use of military service. The barrack was to serve as a school which was to completely Russify the Jews and if possible Christianise them.

The duty of enlisting the recruits was imposed upon the Jewish Kahals. They were given the responsibility of supplying a given number of recruits from their community and in the event that the required number was not forthcoming within a given term, they were empowered to draft and fill their quota with those Jews who were guilty of irregularity in the payment of taxes, vagrancy and other misdemeanours. This power the Kahals often used very discreetly by accepting large sums of money from the wealthy Jews and exempting their military fit sons, and in order to fill their required quotas they drafted the sons of the poor who for various reasons were entitled to military exemption. The later extension of the term of military

service to twenty-five years, and the enrolment of young boys into the army called cantonists, surpassed the very worst apprehensions of the Jews who were staggered by such a blow, which descended crushingly upon their mode of life, their time honoured traditions and their religious ideals. The Jewish family became astir, terrified and perplexed and horrified with the thought of what would happen to their children.

Again the Kahal was forced to put this military order into effect, and the Jews determined to avoid military service by whatever means they were able to invent. This practically forced the Kahals to become a police agency, whose function it was to capture their allotted quota of recruits. A popular song in Yiddish refers to these conditions as follows:

Der erster Ukas is arobgekummen auf jidische Selner
Sainen sich alle zulofen in die puste Wälder.
Oi weih, oi weih!
In alle puste Wälder sainen mir zulofen
In puste Griber, sainen mir varlofen
Oi weih, oi weih!

The first decree came down for Jewish soldiers,
They have run away in the empty forests.
Oi weih, oi weih!
In all the empty forests we have run away,
In empty pits we have run away.
Oi weih, oi weih!

The recruiting agents hired by the Kahals received the names of hunters or captors, who hunted down the fugitives everywhere and in the event of an insufficient number of adults, then little boys, even under age children, were captured. Houses were raided during the night, and boys were snatched from their mothers' arms, or otherwise kidnapped and lured away. The streets of Jewish towns resounded with moans, as hysterical parents ran through the streets in the hope of finding and rescuing their dear ones. With the conscription of a son of any age, his parents gave up any hope of ever seeing him alive again. They therefore made the conventional rip in their clothes and

sat shiva (mourning) for seven days in accordance with the ancient custom among Jews at the death of a near relative.

During the reign of Alexander the Second the twenty-five year military service law was revoked and young boys were no longer recruited. With the removal of this black stain and with the introduction of new reforms the lot of the Jews became highly brightened, and in recognition of the magnanimity of the Tsar the Jews ordered that a special prayer for the preservation of the health of the Tsar be recited during the special Sabbath services. For a time the Jews breathed more easily and they thanked their God for answering their prayers from above, but this was not to be the end of their troubles.

The future Tsars were not as well disposed towards them and the anti-Semites, who for a while had held their peace, now found new sponsors in the Tsars who followed the assassination of Alexander the Second. New laws of persecution of the Jews were enacted, and the children of Israel once more felt the heavy hand and the terror of exile. A new scavenger in the form of the terrible pogrom made its entry into the Jewish Pale, and the Jews trembled and feared for their existence. The savage scenes which took place in the Jewish quarters of many towns are indescribable. Beside the demolition of Jewish homes and the destruction and pillage of property and merchandise, many Jews were slaughtered, their wives and daughters raped while others became insane from fright, and even the well-to-do Jews were turned into beggars.

By the year 1880, the salvation of Judaism was primarily associated with the idea of emigration, for it was finally recognised that to remain in this land of despotism and persecution might result in the total annihilation of the Jews. It was the Hebrew poet Judah Leib Gordon who became the champion of emigration to America. In one of his poems he addresses the daughters of Jacob (the Jewish people) who, having been disgraced by the sons of Haman (Russian government), appealed to them in the following lines.

Come let us go where liberty's light
Doth shine upon all with equal might.
Where every man without disgrace
Is free to adhere to his creed and his race.

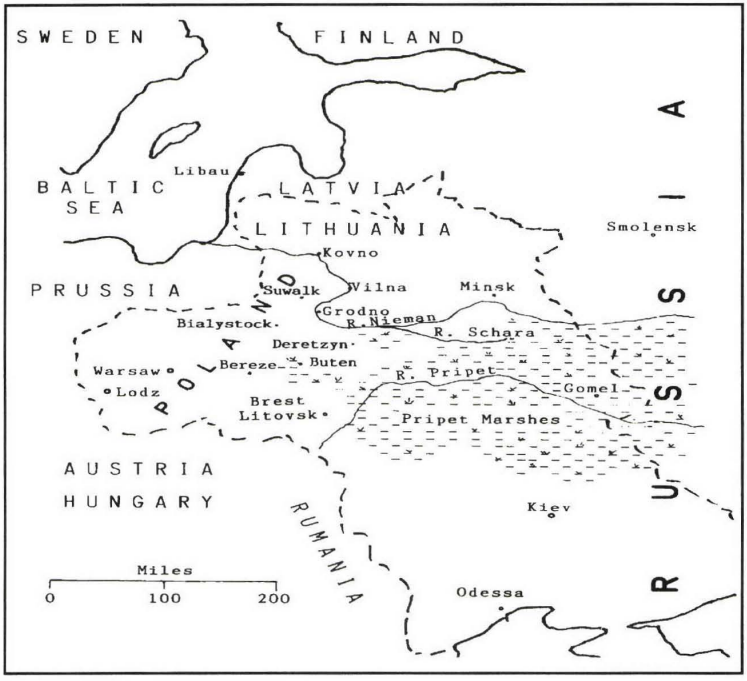
Where thou shalt too, my sister dear,
Dishonour from brutes no longer fear.

The Polish Jews had somewhat of an advantage over their Russian brothers, for some of the experiments in which St. Petersburg was revelling during that period left them untouched. Taken as a whole, their lot, sad though it was, might yet be pronounced enviable when compared with the lot of their brothers in Russia proper.

In a region which bordered on Russia, Poland and Lithuania, my ancestors were born and lived there for many generations. There they mingled their interests and fortunes with their co-religionists who struggled and lived there for many centuries. Some of my ancestors played an important role in the community, performing the important function of Grand Rabbis, teachers and judges. The names of several of them are mentioned in the chronicles of the History of the Jews in Russia and Poland. Others of them led a more quiet and simple life as merchants, tradesmen and simple workers. All of them, however, formed a part of that great conglomeration of Jews who, having started from two widely separated eras and centers way back in ancient times, did slowly converge to form the greatest and most important Jewish settlement in exile, during the more than two thousand years of the Jewish dispersion throughout the world.

It was in the region of the Pripet Marshes, a land of mud and mire, where marshes, lakes and lagoons abound and form a continuous wasteland that I was born. There, the stork and the heron, like sculptured statues, rest on one leg and silently stalk their prey and the frogs croak and the crickets chirp in the tall reeds and swaying grass. There, the vast and thickly wooded forests in silence harbour their secrets, and the slinking fox, the hungry wolf and the grizzly bear play hide and seek with each other and with whatever other life happens to cross their path, to the fear and terror of all who dare to venture therein. It was there that I first saw the light of day and it is in this sordid and dreary uncultivated environment, where human enlightenment was still at its lowest ebb, and where the sons of man crudely tilled the cursed soil for whatever they could extract from it, that my simple story unfolds.

The Pale of Settlement



The Pale of Settlement, the area in Tsarist Russia in which the Jewish population were required to live, was developed at the end of the l8th and in the early l9th centuries when, after the successive partitions of Poland, large numbers of Jews came under Russian rule. Movement by Jews within the Pale and their permitted occupations were also restricted. After the l917 Revolution the Pale was abolished.

In 1897 some five million Jews lived in the Pale, about twelve per cent of its total population and ninety four per cent of the total Jewish population of Russia. The common language spoken by the Jews was Yiddish.

Uncle David's family lived at the northern edge of the Pripet Marshes, and where the rivers Nieman and Schara joined.

Although the idea of the Pale was restrictive it did have the unintended effect of forming a framework for an independent Jewish people. - Ed.

1

Swalbitch

The well known English novelist William Makepeace Thackeray prefaced the first chapter of his famous novel 'Vanity Fair' with the notation that all stories begin in an inn. My story also begins in an inn, for I was born in a house which was located alongside an important highway, and it was used by travellers over this highway for a resting place where they could obtain a refreshing drink or an informal repast. Although our house did not have an official status as an inn, it nevertheless informally was used as such and it answered for that purpose.

I was born on September 24th 1891 in a secluded house which was located three or four miles away from the nearest village called Swalbitch. Our house was included in the postal district of this village. I have therefore accepted Swalbitch to be my birthplace.

This village belongs to the governorship of Grodno and is located in the region of the famous Pripet marshes in Russian Poland. This district is well known for its many marshes, lakes and lagoons and the famous Pripet River, in some places wide and shallow and in other places narrow and deep, which flows through this region and feeds from its swelling breasts hundreds of miles of marshland and watersheds. Nevertheless little more than tiny stagnated pools, which dried up in the hot summer days and froze solidly in the cold winter months, were to be found near my home. Only in the springtime, when the snow and ice melted, streams of water rushed here and there and to them I was attracted in a most fascinating manner. By these streams I used to play and spend many hours of my childhood days. Into their swift currents I used to float small bits of wood, and make believe that they were mighty ships sailing to distant shores

and far away lands. Our countryside was rich in legends about far away strange lands and our country folk were eager to relate their own adventures there as well as some of the stories they had heard about them.

The villages of this district were settled by poor and illiterate peasants, most of whom had descended from former feudal slaves and all of whom spoke a mixed dialect of Russian, Polish and Lithuanian extraction. All of these countries had at one time or another ruled over them, enslaved them, and oppressed them in a most arrogant manner.

The house in which I was born was quite unlike the houses in which the poor peasants lived. Our house was much better constructed, it had several rooms in it and it offered us greater protection and much more comfort than the peasants' homes.

A peasant's home was a simple wooden hut which he himself constructed, and it had a straw covered roof and but one room for his whole family to live in. His house offered him very little protection from the bitter cold in the winter time and the pouring rain throughout the year. The interior of the peasant's home was barely furnished but for a table and several benches which he himself crudely made, and which were used by his family for sleeping purposes as well as the usual purpose for which they were intended. In the cold winter months his horse and cow, his pig and chickens shared with his household whatever warmth the total crowd contributed.

Our house was a remnant of a former stately mansion, which at some time in the past was owned and occupied by a rich Polish landowner. About the activities within and about this mansion the old peasants from our village used to relate interesting stories. They used to relate about the nobles who lived there and their noble friends who used to come to visit them there. Their noble friends, the peasants claimed, came to visit them during the hunting seasons and they used to arrive in fine carriages drawn by splendid horses and they also used to bring along with them packs of ferocious hunting dogs. The peasants also used to describe how the nobles rode into the marshes to shoot wild game, and out into the forests to hunt for foxes, wolves and bears.

Obviously the poor and hungry peasants used to relate about the grand festivities which were held in the mansion and with delight they used to recall the delicious and appetising morsels which the house servants sometimes brought to the village and which the peasants ravenously devoured.

All this happened many years ago, long before I was born and long before railroads were built in this part of the country. But later on, when a railroad was built some ten miles away from this spot and more modern means of communication came into use, the rich landowner moved to a more convenient location and the grand mansion here was abandoned.

The main house together with some of the stables and outhouses were pulled down and the expensive furnishings and valuable paintings, the gold and silver dishes and tableware, were carefully packed and shipped to their new home. The imposing gates and fences which surrounded the mansion were taken apart, and the fruit trees from the orchard uprooted and all of them carted away. In the fine gardens the beautiful flower beds and shady walks were trampled upon and neglected, and in the course of time the overgrowing wild weeds obliterated from view all of its former grandeur.

Amidst this wasteland and ruins the highway alone remained and in my days the highway was also neglected and deserted, and it was only once in a great while that one could notice upon it a peasant and his wagon loaded with hay or straw, drawn by a half starved nag, on his way to town, or a peddler, his lean and tired horse dragging a cart loaded with wares, slowly making his way from village to village.

It was also for the very same reason that the old post station, situated a stone's throw away from our house and which was at one time full of life and activity, was now neglected and deserted but for a lonely caretaker and several ferocious dogs which were kept there to look after the building, garden and orchard.

The servants' quarters of the mansion with its underground cold storage room formed but a small part of the original buildings. In addition, there was one of the stables and a very old well which remained undisturbed. All of these my father leased from the landowner for a small yearly rental. And a horse, blind in one eye, my father either bought or, as rumour went about, had it presented to

him by the nobleman for some services which my father was supposed to have rendered him in the past.

In the rear of our house there remained many excavations and tunnels, which formerly were the wine cellars of the big house. And according to legend some of them were deep underground and extended for a considerable distance, and were supposed to have been used in the feudal days for prisons and dungeons. There, criminals and rebellious slaves were kept for long durations and sometimes tortured and left there to die of hunger and starvation.

In my days the tunnels were mostly infested with mice and rats and I used to spend many adventurous hours in them trying to trap and kill them. The number of rats we succeeded in killing, most of them to my credit, would have put to shame and envy an old time warrior. Neither did the rats and mice get all the worst of it, for they caused us plenty of damage in their own way. They bored into the cold storage room, they ate and spoiled much of the eggs, butter and cheese which we kept there.

To the old peasants from the village this spot, however, did not altogether lose its old fame, and it so happened that whenever one of them passed our house he would hesitate for a moment, and in a most reverential manner would utter a prayer and make the sign of the cross.

Jews were not permitted to own land in old Russia so my father was forced to lease some land which adjoined our house. Part of the land thus leased was used by my father for a vegetable garden, and a potato patch, and the rest for planting wheat and corn. The annual yield from this land was more than enough for our own consumption. We therefore used the rest for barter with the peasants for their chickens, eggs and cloth as well as for their help in the cultivation of our land and the pasturing of our cows.

In all we owned three cows. They were bought by my father as our family increased, usually at the birth of one child or another, and in some instances the cows were called by the same name as the child at whose birth they were bought. At one time we also owned two goats but they did not stay with us for very long, for one day they strayed deep into the forest and never came back, evidently devoured by wild beasts.

The cows played an important part in the economic life of our family. They gave birth to calves and, when they grew old enough, were slaughtered for their meat, and their excrement which, mixed with the hay and straw spread for their comfort, was used by us for fertiliser for our fields. However, the most important contribution of our cows was the milk which they supplied us with. Part of this milk we used for feeding our children as well as for various cooking purposes, and the rest we stored away in large vase like urns in the cold storage room of our cellar. There the milk was allowed to remain until it soured and coagulated. The top layer of the now coagulated milk in the form of a semi-sweet cream was removed, and part of it eaten in that form, and the rest we churned into butter. The remaining part of the coagulated milk, a dish we called sour milk, was both nourishing and healthy as attested to by the noted Russian bacteriologist Dr Metchnikoff, and formed an important part of our daily diet. Also, we heated a good part of this sour milk until it curdled, after which it was poured into V shaped linen bags and suspended until the water in it drained off. Then the bags were placed in between two wooden boards and a heavy slab of rock placed on top of them, and in this way they were allowed to remain until they hardened into cheese. The harder the cheese became, the longer it kept in good preservation.

The fourth member of our stable was Koobilla, that was the name of our horse, and he too played an important part in our family life. He was called upon to perform many duties, such as that of being harnessed to our wagon in the summer time, to our sled in winter time, and to the plough and farrow in the cultivation of our land and, later, in the trucking of the harvest to our stable for storage. Koobilla was a mild and good natured horse. He possessed a keen sense of direction and his knowledge of the highway and the country roads was quite astonishing. My father often made distant journeys in the interest of his vocation. Some took a whole day and night to cover the distance. On these protracted journeys, particularly during the nights, father was in the habit of falling asleep in the driver's seat. However no harm ever came to father because the horse never lost his way, and father always reached his destination safely. It happened on many occasions when father was on his way home from distant

journeys that he would fall asleep, but our horse would follow the road and come right up to the door. It would be the neighing of our horse, outscored by the snoring of my father, that informed us of father's return home safe and sound and mostly sound asleep. From his distant journeys, father often brought home a sheep or lamb, which were slaughtered for their meat, and in our backyard we had ducks, geese and chickens, and once in a while a turkey would strut about in our yard in his usual self-styled egotistic manner, and a cat, and frequently kittens, completed our possessions of the animal kingdom.

Aside our house and the old post station were two other structures, both of which were owned by the only other Jewish family in our locality. One of the buildings, a small cottage, was owned and occupied by the village blacksmith, and the other structure, a mere shack somewhat removed from his house alongside a dirt road, was his smithy, called a Kuzsnye. The smith's name was Velvel, and he was known in our neighbourhood as Velvel the Smith. He was of medium height, stocky and a very powerful man. He had a reddish beard, steel grey eyes and strong sinewy arms, and when he stood in his smithy by his anvil, with hammer in hand held high above his head and about to strike the fiery horse shoe, he portrayed a scene which would have made a perfect setting for the forest scene in Wagner's opera Siegfried. For a Jew he was very illiterate, for he could neither read nor write, not even as much as sign his own name. When undisturbed, he was peaceful and kind. But if ever he was aroused he would become dangerous and fretful. It was therefore that the peasants, with whom he mostly dealt, feared and respected him all of the time.

For me his smithy was a very alluring place, and I used to go there as often as I could. His ancient craftsmanship fascinated me very much, and I used to love to watch the leaping flames as they galloped from the glowing coals in the forge, and I was fascinated by the flying sparks as they scattered in all directions when he hammered the hot glowing steel. But above all, I was thrilled when he allowed me to operate the heaving and panting bellows.

His wife's name was Rive. The word is of Hebrew derivation and means strife. She most assiduously lived up to her name in selfishness,

meanness and quarrelsome disposition. She was also at times subject to most violent rages at which times she would become dangerous to enemy and friend. Sometimes she would even frighten her husband, who otherwise was not afraid of the very devil himself, and forever there were boisterous quarrels in their house. Even the peasants disliked and feared her and they have, in their superstitious belief, accused her of having the evil eye. She did not always get the best of her husband, however, and it sometimes happened that when her nagging made him lose his temper that he would beat her most unmercifully. It was even rumoured that on one cold winter's night when she made him mad with rage he locked her outside in the cold sub zero weather where she would surely have frozen to death. However, fortunately for her, an old peasant, who helped her husband in the smithy and slept there during very cold nights, noticed her lying in the snow and dragging her limp body into the smithy he succeeded to revive her by the warmth of the smouldering coals.

We were only two families in the immediate neighbourhood and we could have been of great comfort to one another, especially during the winter time, when we were entirely cut off from our Jewish neighbours. But, try as we did, it was impossible to live in harmony with this woman. It was all we could do to just barely get along with her.

The smith had two sons and a daughter, the oldest a son called Itzchak. He closely resembled his father and like him he was kind and peaceful. He disliked learning and, like his father, he remained illiterate and ignorant. He worked with his father in the smithy and he preferred to choose his friends from the youths of the village peasants.

Their second son was called Moishe. He was a very nice and quiet boy and about two years older than I was. He was the only boy I had to play with but unfortunately he was crippled for life, due to infantile paralysis which he had in his infancy, and which left him limping badly on one leg and deprived him of the use of his right arm. He was shy, kind and friendly and he might have taken well to learning, but in his case too education was neglected because his father considered it a waste of time and money. However I liked him very much and we got along together very nicely.

Their daughter's name was Chyenke; she resembled her mother very closely, and like her mother she was mean, quarrelsome and ill tempered. She was often the cause of many quarrels in her home and was very much disliked by everybody. No matter how hard we tried to keep out of her way we could not avoid her, and we were often obliged to accept her in our games because otherwise she would make things miserable for us. However she always managed to find some reason for quarrelling with us and we would usually wind up by fighting like cats and dogs.

Moishe's disability often interfered with some of my plans and some of the games which I wanted to play. However I never allowed this to interfere with our friendship and we played together most of the time. He could not make the long trips from our home to the forest or the marshes some distance away, nor did he ever venture into the tunnels in the rear of our house, for he was in deadly fear of the mice and rats there. Neither was he able to climb onto the thatched roof of our stable, onto which I often climbed in order to pay visits to the stork's nest which had been up there for many years. I was very much interested in the intricate construction of the stork's nest, and I loved to tease the young storks that were in it. However, the mother stork must have resented my frequent visits to the family, for she would often come swooping down on me in terrible rage and present me with some very painful pecks with her long and sharp beak.

In the orchard of the old post station there grew many apple, pear and cherry trees. In their ripe season the fruit looked to me so fresh and appetising as to make it impossible for me to resist the temptation of picking them off the trees. However, to get at the fruit was no easy matter. For in addition to the high fence which surrounded the orchard there was the caretaker and the mean dogs to be taken into account. But, just the same, I often managed to get at the fruit by scaling the fence and using Moishe as my lookout man. I usually managed to get away in the nick of time from the keeper's grip and the snapping jaws of the unfriendly dogs. But it sometimes happened that my timing was not so good, with the unpleasant result that the latest patch in the seat of my pants remained firmly held in the ugly jaws of one of the dogs. To add insult to injury mother used to scold

me and put me to shame and disgrace, and warn me that if ever I would attempt to commit any such indiscretion I would be severely punished in a manner befitting the crime.

I also recollect having been the proud owner of a fairly large go-cart that had real iron rims. Moishe and I used to have lots of fun with it in many of our games. Sometimes we would capture a stray goat and harness it to the wagon, and at other times we would succeed to induce a friendly dog to accept the same responsibility. With the wagon we were able to make trips to the distant forest and gather mushrooms and pick berries, and had Moishe ride part of the way that otherwise would have been too far for him to go.

As I recollect, father was seldom home for his work took him away to distant places. He used to return home for holidays and other important occasions such as for spring planting and harvest time during the fall. With eager expectations I used to await his return home because he never failed to bring home some presents, sometimes a bag of sweets, a hat or a new pair of shoes all of which I usually badly needed and appreciated very much.

My older brothers also were most of the time away, usually in distant towns for their education, and it was only during important festivals that our entire family would ever be home together. Pictures of the actual scenes of our entire family at home keep stealing in and out of my mind in rapid succession, particularly the scenes when we were all dressed in our best fineries, sitting around our dining room table. This happened only during one holiday or another, and occasionally on a Friday night when the Sabbath meal would be conducted in a more formal manner. On these occasions the number of courses served, and their variety, contrasted very much with the simple dishes that were served to us during the ordinary weekdays.

As a whole our family led a very steady and simple life, which was very much in keeping with natural surroundings in which we lived. It was also a very orderly life. Summers and winters came and went away, planting and harvest time came and went. The Sabbath and festivals came and went. Life alone, the life of the every day with all of its needs and demands, its long hours of hard physical labour and intense concentration of body and mind, it alone for ever remained present with us.

Yet is was also a peaceful life; peaceful because all around us nature sprawled calmly, in peace, quiet and in an orderly manner. There were buds, leaves and flowers in the summer and snow, lily white snow, during the long winter. Otherwise the vast prairie remained constant and unchanged.

Of food, clothing and other necessities of life we had but very little. However, we never did actually starve nor did we ever freeze for the lack of clothes. Luxuries were unknown to us but then again not knowing any better, we did not miss them, neither did we see them anywhere about us. Truly simple as our life was it was yet enviable when compared with life of the peasants among whom we lived, for they did freeze during the winter and they did hunger most of the year.

In our home, life was peaceful, quiet and very congenial. Our children hardly ever quarrelled among themselves, and friction of a serious nature hardly ever arose amongst them. No favouritism was ever shown by our parents to any one of us, therefore no jealousy existed among ourselves. We were taught to heed and respect our elders, and this rule extended to include our older brothers and sisters. At no time was anger permitted to make itself evident, and threat and fear were never used to discipline us, nor were we ever kept in fear of a revengeful father and the coming of a revengeful day, the punishment of which we would never escape, to distort and pervert our minds and shatter our nerves.

From our very early infancy and during the whole of our life we were indoctrinated with a feeling of goodwill and consideration towards one another, and love and affection became deeply rooted within ourselves so that neither time or long absence, nor the tumult of daily life, has been able to make us forget one another.

Often in my hours of leisure I have tried to draw back the curtain of time, in an effort to get another glimpse of the happy days when in innocent youth we all played together and we all lived under a single roof. But for the many years that have passed and the events that have come and gone, the scene I recall is but faint and my eyes glisten with tears, and my mind fatigues with strain, and my whole body trembles and shivers when my memory faintly recalls those happy carefree days, when hardship and toil was no burden at all,

and when in youthful delight we played all day and gave no thought to the problems of tomorrow.

There were many things we could do and many games we could play in the long and warm summer days. But when the distant green hills sprawled in the last sun of autumn, changed their colour to a shady drab, and the leaves in the trees rustled and fluttered and were scattered by the north wind in all directions, then our young hearts grew sad, lonesome and weary because happy summer was passing away, and old man winter, cold and dreary, was about to invade our land.

For persons who have not experienced the severity of a Russian winter, it is impossible for them to comprehend the hardships and suffering it brings to the people who live in that vast and sprawling land. For children in particular the approach of winter was saddening and gave promise of very little cheer and fun, little more than a long confinement in cold and chilly quarters with snow and biting wind on the outside. During the cold winter nights we used to sit huddled close together by the wood burning fire in the oven and listen to the stories which the old peasants from our village loved to relate. Some of them were true stories and some legends new and old.

By the dim light of a kerosene lamp on the table and the crackling fire in the oven, the old peasants sat and warmed their cold and chilled bodies. With a jigger of vodka to moisten their parched throats they used to reminisce about their youth when, as soldiers in the old Tzarist army, they tracked for months through the frozen steppes of Siberia or the burning sands of Mongolia. They used to describe the many wild and treacherous nomadic tribes whom they used to meet and the hard battles they fought with them.

The old peasants even claimed recollection of the Napoleonic wars in which some of them participated, of Napoleon's invasion of their mother country and the burning of Moscow in 1812. In a grave and awe inspiring manner they used to describe the scenes they witnessed at the burning of Moscow and with a burning hatred and revenge, to the delight of their listeners, they used to describe the disastrous defeat of Napoleon's grand army and its retreat through the deep snows and mud of the Pripet marshes. The villagers attacked them with axes and pitchforks and beat them to death and scattered

those who escaped them into the thickly wooded forests where the wolf, the jackal and the bear attacked them and tore them to pieces. Calculation would hardly substantiate their claims. However on many occasions I was an eye witness to excavations which were carried on in our locality. Human remains, undoubtedly the bodies of soldiers of the grand army, some of them with parts of their uniform still clinging to their bones, were dug up.

> *[In the summer of 1812 Napoleon commenced his attack on Russia by crossing the River Nieman in the Grodno area. When his army retreated in the following winter they vainly attempted to rally at Vilna. Many of his forces were slaughtered in the area where our family lived. -Ed.]*

They also used to tell stories which they had heard from their fathers and grandfathers about wars which took place many years ago, even way back to the days of Bogdan Hneltitzki who, with his Tartar and Cossack hordes, invaded these parts of the country. They robbed and killed the peasants, burned their homes and laid waste their villages in a most unmerciful and inhuman manner.

The peasants who lived in this region were very poor. They owned but little land and they managed to extract very little from the poor soil. There was very little they could do to improve their destitute life. A life which was hard and miserable, as old and young slaved and got very little return for their hard work. They grew vegetables, corn, wheat and a fair amount of flax. Their wives and children helped to spin the flax into yarn and with crude home constructed looms they wove the yarn into cloth. They could afford to use but little of the cloth for themselves. They, therefore, sold most of it in the nearby towns. Some of it they used for barter, for the many things they did not have and could not afford to buy. Often they were forced to take to market even the little farm products they raised on their land and which they could ill afford to spare in order to enable them to buy some of the things which they very badly needed.

The living quarters of our house comprised a kitchen, dining room and three bedrooms. Our dining room served as a living room as well. It was a large oblong room with two windows in each of its outside walls giving the room plenty of light and fresh air in the summertime. In the winter, storm windows were installed to keep

the cold out and they could not be opened. This made the room very stuffy.

Two of the dining room windows gave us a full view of the well and stable, enabling us to keep an eye on our cows and poultry. The other two windows faced the highway and gave us a sort of open window to the outside world. During the winter when it was too cold to go outside, I used to sit hours and days with my nose pressed flat against one of the window panes and watch for whatever traffic might pass over the highway. Often for days not a single carriage or wagon would pass by and for as far as the eye could see no sign of life could be seen to break the monotony. Silence and solitude reigned supreme everywhere. Our combination living and dining room was very simply furnished. There was a table large enough to seat our entire family comfortably, two very long benches which stood alongside the two outside walls, several stools and a commode. A square oven built from the floor to the ceiling kept this room fairly warm during the wintertime and it also supplied some warmth to some of the bedrooms. Several canvasses in frames depicting simple rural life, which my eldest sister very artistically designed in needlework, decorated some of the walls and a table kerosene lamp dimly lit the room.

In our bedrooms we had rudely constructed wooden beds which had long wooden planks in place of springs which held in place the feather sacks which we used instead of mattresses, and mirrorless dressers and a large clothes closet, all of which were made out of unpainted wood.

We had a large kitchen. A great deal of space was taken up by the large baker's oven which was constructed of brick and cement, oblong shaped, built flush against two of the kitchen walls and which stood from the floor to about two thirds up the height of the kitchen. The empty space from the top of this oven to the ceiling was used by the children during the cold wintertime. It was a warm and comfortable place to play on during the day and to sleep on during the night. However, due to the lack of fresh air in the kitchen and the release of injurious gasses from the oven we often woke up in the morning with terrible headaches. In the Yiddish dialect, this condition was called being 'farchaded'.

All our baking was done in this oven. Chale and black bread constituted the most important food in our diet. Baking was done once a week and it was enough for a day's work for the whole family. There was the mixing of the flour and water, the adding of yeast for the rising of the dough and the kneading of the dough, then the forming of the dough into various shaped loaves and lastly the setting of them into the oven, which had to be done with care and required many years of hard practice. Mother used to bake two kinds of bread: Chale and rolls for the Sabbath made out of pure wheat flour and large round 12lb loaves of black bread made out of whole-wheat and cornflour which was eaten during the rest of the week.

In addition to bread mother baked cakes, pies and always a large potato pudding which delighted us youngsters, and a large portion was our compensation for whatever help we contributed to the baking. Special bakings were also done for the various holidays. Each one, in one form or another, sometimes in the shape of the chale and on other occasions by the particular cake that was baked, symbolised in some manner the holiday that was being celebrated. Homantashen for Purim; kneidlach for Passover; cheese blintzes for Shavuoth; kreplach for the New Year and potato latkes for Chanukah.

On Fridays there was the special cooking to be done for the Sabbath. Also a variety of dishes for the Friday night meal of gefilte fish, chicken soup with lockshen, tzimmes and other preparations. For the Sabbath meal the famous cholent was prepared consisting of potatoes, barley, beans and meat and a special kneidel or pudding made of flour, eggs, chunks of meat fat and plenty of seasoning placed into one pot with the cholent and put into the oven. The door of the oven was closed and cemented so as to keep the warmth from escaping and the pot remained in the oven until the Sabbath meal was served. In itself the cholent was appetising and delicious and we youngsters measured our importance by the size of the portion we received. However, this greasy mass often gave us an awful tummy ache which often spoiled the rest of the day for us. But suffer no matter how much, we looked forward to the next Sabbath and clamoured for as large a portion as we could get.

In spite of all the heat which our two ovens gave, our house would be freezing cold just the same. This was particularly true during the

cold winter nights when the fires in the ovens would burn down. Very often on arising in the morning we would find the water which we kept in a wooden pail frozen into a single lump of ice. It also snowed constantly for weeks and we would become totally snowed in. The snow would pile up so high that it would cover the windows and we would not be able to see what was doing outside. It would take us many hours and sometimes more than a day before we could dig a passageway to the well or stable.

To protect ourselves against the bitter cold when we went out we had to bundle ourselves in ever so many clothes and we laughed at each other because we looked so very strange. We looked more like demons from out of this world. We wore heavy woollen stockings which my mother and sisters knitted and heavy shoes with rags wound all around them and over it all shtivel (riding boots) which fitted right up to our bodies. Long heavy underwear and sometimes two suits at a time, a large woollen shawl and a heavy overcoat, a fur lined cap and a bashlick (hood) which covered our head, ears and almost our entire faces as well. Yet in spite of all these precautions, and if we were obliged to stay outside for any length of time, we would come home with frozen hands and feet, nose and ears and sometimes for many hours we would have to keep our hands in cold water before normal circulation of the blood could be effected.

Now and then during the winter the intense cold would let up for a while and we would go outside to play. I would then be reunited with my friend Moishe whom sometimes I could not see for months. We would make snowmen or go skating on the frozen marshes. Sometimes for a treat we would be taken for a long and delightful ride in the sled.

Throughout the long and dreary winter the youngsters used to eagerly await the coming spring. Spring comes early in that part of the world and although for a while the melting ice and snow causes widespread floods and renders the countryside knee-deep in mud and slush, it takes but a short while for the soft soil to absorb the moisture and but a short while for the warm sun to dry up the countryside.

For youngsters in particular springtime is a happy season which promises them new life and hope of warm sunny days, buds, flowers

and birds who sing in the trees. Therefore with the coming of spring the children come creeping out of their winter prisons and they cheerfully enjoy the exhilarating fresh air and the sweet odours which blow over meadow and lea.

Springtime ushers in yet another delight for it is the season of the Passover festival. The ritual service is most impressive and inspiring and the festival itself is the happiest of all the festivals of the year. To us Jews this festival symbolises freedom, joy and glory. To the youngsters it promises a new suit, shoes or a hat as well as many other enticing things. Especially, the ritual performance of the Seder with all of its novelties and display is a most fascinating and bewitching time.

Also the spring cleaning which is done when this festival is about to be ushered in has always been a welcome occasion. All of the contents of our house had to be carried out onto the lawn – furniture, clothing and bedding and anything moveable which could be carried out of the house. Out on the lawn the bedding and clothes used to be beaten with sticks and aired. All the other things were washed, scrubbed and cleaned. The inside of our house was scrubbed and cleaned. Walls and ceiling calcimined and every nook and corner scrupulously cleaned and ascertained that not a crumb remained anywhere. In our attic we had special Passover dishes, pots, pans, glass and silverware which was only used by us from year to year on this the most ritual of all festivals.

The Jewish day commences at sunset so all of our Holidays and the Sabbath also commence at this time. Therefore the first Seder is performed in the evening of the day before the first day of Passover. On the morning of that day before ten o'clock, the ritual of burning the chometz (leaven) is performed. On that morning we are awakened at dawn. After reciting the morning prayers we had breakfast and then removed all traces of chometz in the house. When all was ready father with a lit candle, a goose feather and a wooden spoon wrapped up in a piece of linen, went through the entire house and swept up whatever crumbs he might have found which had escaped the cleaners. However, the job of house cleaning was usually so thorough that mother had to spread some crumbs here and there, thereby giving father's performance the legal status necessary for the

execution of this ritual in the traditional manner. After the execution of this ritual, no leavened food could be eaten, touched or even looked at for the next eight days. Neither were we permitted to eat matzos until the ritual part of the Seder had been executed. We therefore hungered the rest of the day and looked forward to the Seder with more reasons than one.

The performance of the Seder was conducted by father in a most solemn sacred and traditional manner. Its ritual was adhered to even as it had been performed sacredly for more than two thousand years during our exile and dispersion throughout the Diaspora. In some respects it even followed the order set by the high priest in the Temple before the Temple's destruction by the Roman tyrant Titus.

Our entire family bathed, washed and dressed in their best and newest clothes. They sat around the table in the order of their prerogative. The dining table was covered with a snow white linen tablecloth and decorated with flowers. Each diner was provided with plates, silverware and a napkin. A crystal cut wine bottle filled with sparkling red wine stood on the table and vari-coloured wine glasses for each member was provided. A silver goblet, the only one we possessed, was placed in the centre of the table and was filled with wine in honour of the prophet Elijah. During the reading of the Haggadah the door is opened and he is supposed to enter and invisibly participate with us in the ritual. The flickering flames from the candles in the four shining brass candlesticks, and the light from the kerosene lamp reflecting through the vari-coloured wine glasses and crystal wine bottle, sent streams of coloured rays in all directions and gave the entire room an appearance of mystic oriental rituality.

In the most comfortable chair we possessed, father was seated upon a white pillow with another to lean on. Dressed in a long white kittle (robe) with a scull cap on his head, he sat majestically at the head of the table. His long neatly combed greying beard and his very grave and solemn deportment gave father the appearance of an oriental potentate, which on this night he was supposed to be. Beside him, dressed in her best finery and adorned with the golden neck chain and watch which father had given her on her wedding day, my mother sat with majesty and grace as would be becoming to a queen. The rest of us sat around the table in solemnity and respect.

At father's place at the table stood a large plate with three matzos on it. It was covered with a white napkin which had the symbol of King David's flag embroidered on it. On his right hand stood another plate which contained a cooked chicken wing symbolic of the sacrifice which was offered in the Temple, a boiled egg which represented life itself, a cooked potato, and some grated horseradish which referred to the vegetable food the Israelites ate in Egypt and the bitter life they endured there. To his left stood a smaller plate which contained the charosses, a mixture of wine, apples and nuts. This cement like mixture represented the lime and mortar with which the enslaved Israelites built the cities of Pithom and Ramasses. The charosses also symbolised the fine fruits and nuts that grow in the land of Eretz-Yisroel.

Once everything was in its assigned place and order father stood up, and holding his glass filled with wine in his right hand he recited the blessing of Kiddush over the wine and the season:

> *Blessed art thou O Lord our God, King of the Universe, Creator of the fruit of the vine.*
> *Blessed art thou O Lord our God, King of the Universe for having sustained us and kept us alive and permitted us to reach unto this season.*

A pitcher of water, a basin and towel was then brought to the table and we all washed our hands. Father, once more seated comfortably and leaning on the pillow, commenced in a loud tone with his fine tenor voice and, chorused by our entire family, proceeded to recite the ancient Haggadah:

> *This is the bread of affliction which our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt. Let all those who are hungry enter and eat thereof and all that are necessitous come and celebrate the Passover.*

I have always been deeply impressed by the beauty of these lines, and by the very humble and hospitable invitation they extend to the celebrants of Pesach:

> *At present we are here and in the year to come we hope to be freemen.*

I was also deeply moved by these opening lines of the Haggadah. They brought me a vision of the large round black bread of affliction which we ate daily and which constituted the most important food in our diet and for which we had to thank God, the rich landowner, the Tsar and his host of cruel persecuting officials. For which we had to sweat, labour and toil and hope that the sun will send forth its life giving rays, the rains water the field and the cursed soil give forth its yield.

The land of Egypt, the land which to Jews symbolises enslavement, torture and persecution. What of our own times? Were we not hated, discriminated against, driven from the cities and villages into ghettos, concentration camps and torture chambers?

At present we are here in Russia, for us the land of Egypt, the land of oppression, persecution and exile. How much longer will our dispersion continue? 'In the year to come we shall be freemen'. For more than two thousand years this hope has been uttered again and again. In the streets of the towns and in the villages, in the synagogues and houses of prayer during festival holidays and days of wailing, in hours of grave danger and during joyful celebrations. Yes, in the year to come we shall be freemen!

Next the boiled potato was cut into tiny pieces dipped in salt water and given to each one of us. We all repeated after father the blessing:

> *Blessed are Thou O Lord our God, King of the Universe, Creator of the fruit of the earth.*

This was followed by a small portion of the horseradish and we repeated after father the blessing which ends:

> *For that Thou hast sanctified us with Thy commandments and hast instructed us to eat bitter herbs.*

And now the most important and significant part of the Seder as far as I was concerned was at hand. It was part of the ritual when the

four questions are asked. An ancient tradition gives prerogative to the youngest male member of the family to ask the four questions. Being the youngest member of the boys in the family I was therefore entitled to this honour.

I must have been well coached in the lines I had to recite because I distinctly remember standing up with confidence and, with the eyes of my whole family fixed upon me, reciting in a loud voice and clear tone the four questions:

Wherefore is this night distinguished from all other nights?

I do not know what thoughts entered my young mind. It is hardly possible that I understood the meaning. It is very probable that little more than the juicy appetising kneidlach, which I saw my mother preparing, and the savoury odours from the kitchen oven distinguished this night from any other night as far as I was concerned.

Any other night we may eat leavened bread but on this night only unleavened bread.
All other nights we may eat any species of herbs but on this night only bitter herbs.
All other nights we do not dip even once but on this night we dip twice.
All other nights we eat either sitting or reclining but on this night we all recline.

The questions were simple enough, childlike and fascinating. I seriously believed that the whole show, including all the preparations and preliminaries, was all done for the benefit of the children. I therefore felt very much obligated to my parents and all the rest of the adult family for the very serious manner in which they played their parts, and for the sincerity with which they conducted themselves during the performance of the spectacular ritual on this night. Mother's sympathetic smile expressing satisfaction with my faultless and clear recitation, made me feel very proud.

Father, retaining his grave and serious deportment, answered my questions in a loud tone:

> *Because we were slaves unto Pharoah in the land of Egypt and the Eternal our God brought us thence with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm.*

I was a little puzzled with the method of our release. Mighty hand I could understand, but the outstretched arm, that was beyond me. I just could not figure out what an outstretched arm could have accomplished. However it was an era of miracles and I supposed that the arm had some sort of a miraculous effect.

Father translated each chapter into Yiddish for the benefit of my mother, sisters and brothers, because none of us understood the Hebrew text. They are simple stories which are told and retold every year during the Seder and always remain fresh and delightful.

The next event of interest was the enumeration of the ten plagues with which the Lord smote the evil Egyptians. We all waited for father to commence counting. Dipping my finger into the wine glass I spilled a good measure of wine as is the custom at father's mentioning of each plague:

> *Blood, frogs, vermin, noxious beasts, pestilence, boils, hail, locusts, darkness and plague of the first born.*

After we had read several more chapters of the Haggadah and drunk part of the second glass of wine, four of which must be partly tasted during the Seder, the feast at last but not least began in earnest. And what a feast! In the number of servings and in its variety this was for us a real feast. The extra large ball of gefillte fish and well spiced sauce; the large delicious kneidlach floating in a plate of chicken soup surrounded by a thousand circular globules of fat; the large portion of chicken with its helping of grated carrots and, to finish, the matzo pudding and stewed fruit. All of this with the sweet intoxicating wine together with all the fuss and formality of the Seder left with us an impressive memory of this night which could never be forgotten.

During the Passover week we children had lots of fun playing Passover games. There was the broken Matzos game. A piece of matzo was broken in half and pieced together again and someone had to

guess where the break was. What laughter and fun would ensue when the wrong place was pointed out! Other games were played with hazel and walnuts, and what with paying visits and receiving visitors a happy week was had by all.

Other holidays and festivals during the year come and pass away but they are very soon forgotten. Passover, however, comes in the springtime when life reawakens from its long winter's sleep, when buds sprout on trees and flowers bloom in the fields; the chirping of birds is heard in the trees and the sweet odours of the green meadows beckon youth to come out and play. This festival is long remembered.

The Passover sentiment of freedom and glory inspires the Jews, those forgotten and downtrodden people. For two thousand years they have wandered from continent to continent, from country to country over land and sea, forever seeking and searching for a resting place for their tired and weary bodies, a haven of peace for their broken down souls, but who, for all their praying to God and pleading to man in their many years of suffering hardship and exile, have received but disappointment, rebuke and dismay.

Wherever they came they were laughed at and put to shame and disgrace.They were persecuted and tortured, forced to become martyrs and their survivors have been evicted and forced to keep on the move. To them this season and festival proclaim a new lease of life, a new promise and a hope of spirit and strength, of a power and will to struggle on and on and to bear and survive their present hardships and woe. To endure and outlive their present oppressors even as their ancient ancestors survived and outlived the very existence and memory of their ancient Egyptian oppressors.

Year in and year out when Passover comes we Jews celebrate and perform the ritual of the Seder. And each year as we sit united in thought and spirit we relate to our children the story of the Haggadah, the story of the release of the children of Israel from bondage. We repeat again and again our ancient hope and desire that in the year to come we shall be freemen in the land of Eretz Yisroel.

2

Education

Study, my son, the wisdom of our sages, take note of their laws and instructions, so that the Lord will therefore prolong your days within the land He had promised to your forefathers. Hearken to the voice of your father, and do not forget the teaching of your mother. The Lord will therefore prolong your years upon the earth, which He has given to mankind.

> *Hear O Israel the Lord our God the Lord is one.*
> *Blessed be His glorious sovereign name for ever and ever.*
> *And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart and with all thine soul and with all thy might. These words which I command thee this day shall be in thy heart and thou shalt teach them diligently to thy children and thy children's children. Thou shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house and when thou walkest by the way and when thou liest down and when thou risest up.*

The above commandment as it is stated in the book of Deuteronomy was the basis upon which the education of Jewish children in that era and part of the world was conducted. Although the proper education of children usually commenced when the child was five or six years of age, the child's religious instruction commenced in its early infancy and no sooner was the child able to pronounce words, clearly or otherwise, it was instructed to recite the many and various blessings and thank offerings to the Almighty God which a pious Jew has been commanded to recite in almost every move he makes and throughout his wakeful day.

In the Torah the pivotal point of the child's education is deeply planted. The compilers of the Talmud have, in their voluminous comments and explanations of the Torah, embraced the following command: A man is obliged to instruct his son and even his son's son in the commandments of the Torah. This commandment is mandatory and obligatory upon all parents. Exception is however made in the case of female children. I quote from the same treatise:

> *A woman who has studied the Torah has a reward coming to her.*

However, it is not comparable to the reward of a man who has studied the Torah because she has not been instructed to do so as it is stated:

> *Women, slaves and infants are absolved from the study of the Torah.*

The sages of the Talmud have commanded that even though the Torah does grant her a reward for the study of its text, she should not be instructed in the Torah and they further emphasised that a man who instructs his daughter does no better than if he were to instruct her in matters of profanity.

For thousands of years and reaching far back into ancient antiquity the Jews have clung fanatically to their Torah and the Talmud. Their prophets idealised both texts and the numerous teachers, philosophers and commentators on the Talmud, sometimes in freedom but more often in exile, sometimes during periods of enlightenment and at other times during periods of fanaticism and superstition, they all have insistently and most feverishly delved into its deep and indicative metaphoric allusions. The scholars have enriched and written into its pages a philosophy of idealism which is unique and which, even in this day of science and enlightenment, is accepted by the majority of the people of the civilised world to be the standard bible of mankind.

To those of us who have had no connection with the people who lived in that era and who have never seen them in their surroundings,

and in order that we do not feel contemptuous of the way in which they lived and of their customs and traditions, consideration should be given to their times, actions and manners and regard to their traditions, limitations and opportunities. There is a disposition on the part of human beings to exaggerate in all their admirations and criticisms. They were living in difficult times, in darkness and with a narrowness of outlook as to make our own times by comparison an era of dazzling illumination. What we may lose in reverence we shall gain in sympathy for them. They discussed questions which we still discuss today and they struggled with problems that still confront us in our own times. The Jews of that era and location, persecuted, despised and limited in their social, political and cultural freedoms, took refuge in the teaching of their ancients.

Centuries ago their forefathers awoke to the endless miseries and disorders of life. They decided that these miseries and disorders were due to the lawless acts of man and they concluded that salvation would come only through subduing themselves to the service of God who rules heaven and earth. They disregarded human rights, natural instincts, longings and desires in their efforts to enforce upon their co-religionists absolute subjugation. God was foremost and the all powerful. He was to be worshipped and obeyed without question or doubt. Loved and adored with *all thy soul and all thy heart* and all of His commandments obeyed implicitly. The prophets, mystics and holy rabbis of the Talmud instituted numerous and incalculable mandates and prohibitions, customs and traditions, some of which are supposed to have been heaven inspired and others the result of human experience and to all of which a holy and mystic absolutism was attached. Within these iron fenced laws, rules and regulations, permeated with a spiritual idealism of purity, goodness, righteousness and brotherly love, Judaism has tried to put a meaning into life to make it bearable and worthwhile.

To what extent they succeeded cannot be measured because for all the many centuries of human progress and human experience in social organisation, humanity has not succeeded to perfect a yardstick by which its happiness could be measured. Nor have all their religious, ethical and social reformers been able to agree on a rule of behaviour which would direct them into a channel which would lead

to happiness and success. Suffice it is for me to say that the various nations amongst whom they have lived and struggled can boast of very little greater happiness, joy and peace of mind.

The era in the midst of which my story unfolds was not entirely darkened by ignorance and superstition and it was not in any way a nightmare comparable to the dark ages. Every now and then the heavy clouds lifted and they permitted a ray of literary sunshine to penetrate and enlighten the masses, to soothe their aching hearts and clear their minds from the confusion into which their hard and bitter life had engulfed them.

I have already mentioned that the peasants who lived in the nearby villages were totally ignorant and illiterate. Schools were non-existent and even the sheriff of the village could neither read nor write, not even as much as sign his own name. The sheriff just the same exercised absolute authority in the village and he strictly enforced the despotism of higher officialdom.

Besides the cruel and despotic state which oppressed and enslaved the poor peasants, the church played an important role in the peasant community. The church, hand in hand with the state, in mutual collusion, kept the peasants in ignorance and superstition, suppressed their freedom, taxed them into poverty and exercised over them an authority which was cruel, despotic and arrogant. The peasants, ignorant in matters of law in their religious catechism, often found themselves accused by one or other of religious negligence or legal disobedience. They were therefore very often flogged, tortured and imprisoned, sometimes for very long durations. The life of the peasant was hard, miserable and very sad. Steeped as he was in ignorance and superstition, he was unable by himself to find a solution to his perplexing problems. He was very often driven to alcoholism, from which both the state and the church obtained considerable incomes, wherein he hoped to drown his sorrow and numb the pain in his aching heart.

Among themselves as well as to strangers the peasants were harmless, peaceful and hospitable. In order to divert the peasant's mind from his own troubles and absolve themselves from blame for their hardships, the state and the church very often pointed to the Jew whom they blamed and against whom they encouraged the

peasants' wrath. The result being that the Jews were attacked, beaten, robbed and on many occasions forced to flee from their homes in order to save their lives. Just the same many of them were sometimes fatally injured.

The large Jewish population, settled in the towns and villages of Poland and Lithuania, formed an important social entity, which exerted its energy in many departments of its social and economic life. By far the greater majority of the Jews were able to read and write Russian and Yiddish. Their inherited culture and long experience in trade offered them invaluable advantages in the field of competitive trading. A great asset to the Jews was their foreign connections with co-religionists, which enabled them to dispose of various kinds of merchandise in other countries. The rich landowners born into luxury and brought up in an environment of aristocratic indifference and indolence knew only how to mismanage their estates. They therefore appreciated the usefulness of the Jews and they engaged them to manage their estates for them. The Jews contracted for their vast timber holdings, their orchards and the grain which grew on their land. This also brought the Jews into direct contact with the peasants on whose behalf they intervened, and for whom they obtained from the hard driving landowners, some semblance of decent and fair treatment.

It can therefore be very clearly seen that education to the Jew was very important in addition to his inherent and fanatical persistence to study the Talmud for its own sake. The instruction of the Hebrew language and the Bible to the rising generation was the object of constant solicitude on the part of Polish and Lithuanian Jewry. It was a self imposed compulsion and there was scarcely a Jewish home where the Talmud was not studied. In the towns large and small cheders existed plentifully, and in the villages 'melammeds', Jewish elementary teachers, were hired to instruct the very young. Later, when they grew older and could take care of themselves, they were sent to the nearby towns for their further and higher education.

The modern Yiddish, a dialect which developed from the so-called 'Judisch-Deutsch' which the Jews brought from Germany to Poland and Lithuania, used the Hebrew Alphabet in its written form. However, in so far as its spoken form was concerned, it is altogether

foreign to the language of the Bible and the Talmud. It therefore took years of learning for the student to understand the Bible in its original, and many more years of learning for him to understand the Talmud which is written in the Babylonian tongue. Aside from this, even greater intensity of study was required from the student who aspired to rabbinical attainment or important talmudic erudition. The latter students had to study day and night for many years, and wrestle and struggle with intricate and complex allegorical argumentations, sophistries, mystics, pilpul and hilluk. In general the method of education was poor and unsystematic. In the larger cities, as far as higher learning was concerned, the talmudic school, the Yeshivah, was well-organised and it provided a complete religious and juridical education, based on the Talmud and the rabbinical codes of law. However, in elementary education no systematic form was followed and very often the rabbi resorted to teaching because he was temperamentally unfit to be a rabbi; that he was equally unfit to be a teacher did not seem to matter.

The class room, or cheder as it was called, was very often little more than a hovel, and in many cases was held in the rabbi's house which, because of his stipend income, was often an old tumble-down shack, poorly ventilated, dark, dirty and filthy. The students themselves had to clean the cheder, and very often the rest of the rabbi's house, and it was usually freezing cold in the winter and overheated and stuffy in the summer. The hours of study were long and arduous and the students, cooped up in these unventilated rooms and deprived of fresh air, physical exercise, and youthful freedom and longings, lost their health and vigour long before they reached maturity. It was therefore that the commencement of a boy's education marked an important milestone in his life. For the boy it meant the end of his youth and the end of his childhood dreams and the beginning of an era of serious study, laborious concentration of his mind, far above his years and mental development. It would demand of him that he skip a whole period of his life, during which time normally he would have undergone physical and mental changes, and assume the serious deportment of a matured person.

I must have been between five and six years of age when this realisation suddenly overtook me. I was too young to be sent to a

nearby town for my education and my parents could not afford to hire a teacher for me because, in addition to a small stipend, they would also have to provide food and lodging for the teacher. I was therefore informed that I would be going to a village about ten miles away from our home where an aunt of mine lived, who, together with several other families in that village, had hired a teacher to instruct their children, and I was to be one of his pupils. I was also told that I would live in my aunt's house and stay there for the school term.

My young mind for the moment did not realise the change that was about to take place in my young life, but I was just the same very much confused and did not know whether I should be happy or sad about it. The prospect of leaving home and family, and parting with my childhood friend and environment, made me feel sorrowful and depressed. But at the same time I also remembered the envy that I, on many occasions, felt toward my older brothers when they were leaving home to go to different towns for their education, and the jealousy that was aroused in me because of the fuss that was made when they were about to leave or when they were about to return home for holidays. I also recalled the stories of adventure which they used to relate during their stay home, and the description which they used to give us of the towns in which they were receiving their education and the relatives and friends whom they met there.

I also found satisfaction in the thought that I had reached an age when I would be considered a more important member of the family, entitled to greater respect and consideration, and maybe even receive a larger portion on my plate. Several days before my departure, I made hurried visits to all the places where I used to play, to the excavations and tunnels in the rear of our house, to the brook by the highway and the highway itself. To the old post orchard, the marshes and the woodland some distance away from our house. To the village smithy and its fascinating bellows which, like a patient mother, forever feeds from its narrow throat the smouldering embers in the forge, and breathes from its giant lung life and zest into the fire, whose leaping flames gallop and frolic and heat the horse-shoe to a glowing white heat. And the ancient proverbial anvil that is there, which forever keeps cool and submissive, and absorbs the striking

blows of the hammer which causes the sparks to fly and scatter in all directions as the echo of its metallic ring resounds from the hills far away.

Sadly, and with tears in my eyes, I took leave of my childhood playgrounds. My friend Moishe accompanied me wherever I went, in a very sad and sorrowful mood. Suddenly a great divide seemed to have arisen between us, which neither of us could clearly understand. For days we walked together without saying a word because we found no words to say which would explain to us the inevitable, which we knew would soon tear us apart from each other, perhaps never to be together again. We avoided each other's eye as we walked silently from place to place until the sun would descend far into the west, and the stars would sprinkle the heavens, and the pale moon sail through the clouds, and the damp and chilly autumn air make us shiver and hurry our steps home. In later years, excitement of a much lesser degree would have, I am sure, kept me awake during those nights, but youthful flexibility of body and mind reacts to habitual inclinations rather than mental perturbation. I therefore submissively acquiesced to the warmth and comforts of my bed and fell soundly asleep,

When the day of my departure arrived, I was awake very early that morning and, after washing my hands and face and reciting the morning prayer, I sat down to a more wholesome breakfast than I had ever had before. My mother and sisters were busy with last minute preparations, and father was getting the horse and wagon ready for our journey. Realising that the hour of departure was actually at hand, and that I really was about to leave home, my parents, my friends, my surroundings, and the very house in which I was born and learned to love so dearly, I became very much confused. Feelings of consideration and antagonism kept running in and out of my confused mind, as at one moment everybody seemed to bereave my going away, and yet at another moment they seemed to be eager for me to go!

'What was in store for me?' I kept wondering, and asking myself. I ate my breakfast without much of an appetite and without noticing what I was stuffing into my mouth. I kept swallowing chunks of bread and whatever other food had been placed before me in an effort

to assuage the recurring spasms which choked up my throat, and which prevented me from swallowing my food. Everybody followed me as I was leaving the house. Father lifted me up as I was about to step over the threshold and told me to kiss the Mezzuza, an act he always performed when he was leaving the house, and when we reached our wagon my sisters surrounded me and each one of them kissed me in turn and wished me good luck.

I managed to keep well composed and calm right up to this moment and pretended that I was not at all disturbed by my going away. But when mother was about to bid me good-bye, mother from whom I had never been separated before, I was no more able to control my emotions or remain calm. Her tearful eyes and trembling lips, her sorrowful expression and her hugging and kissing upset my deportment and, as my eyes filled with tears, I cried bitterly as I clung to her with all my might.

Father lifted me up quickly and placed me in the wagon. He climbed up into the driver's seat and, with a tug at the reins and a sharp crack of the whip, our horse pulled away. The distance of about seven or eight miles over muddy country roads took many hours to cover in those days. The incessant autumn rains, washing the soft soil from the fields on to the road, rendered it muddy and impassable in some parts and, even though our horse willingly pulled hard at the traces, father was forced now and then to get down from the wagon and help our horse to drag the wheels out of the mud.

The air was chilly and damp, and the sky heavily overcast, and the whole world seemed to be in mourning. In the rain-sodden fields peasant women, with coloured kerchiefs tied about their heads, stooped low to the ground in their work and as they saw us passing they rose, mumbled some words and made the sign of the cross. We passed through many villages and as we rode through them peasant children, dressed in dirty and ragged clothes, made faces at us and showered us with mud, and packs of village dogs attacked us on all sides. Father's masterful wielding of his long whip gave a good account of itself and forced the dogs to scamper away, whimpering and yelping with pain. Through woodland and fields our horse trudged slowly along, and after many tiring and weary hours we reached my aunt's village.

The road we had come by widened as we entered the village and here the houses on both sides of the road were built more closely together and seemed to conform to some sort of a building plan. Here and there a shop could be spotted by the presence of various merchandise which could be seen through the dirty and mud splutttered windows, and they fascinated me very much because I had never before been inside or even seen a shop. I was very anxious to enter one of them and looked forward to this experience with hopeful expectations.

We were given a hearty reception by my aunt, uncle and cousins, and in anticipation of our arrival a meal consisting of herring and potatoes, sour milk, and hot tea was very much appreciated, probably due to the fact that a hungrier boy never sat down to a meal before. My cousins kept looking and scrutinising me from head to foot and, as they exchanged glances between themselves, they laughed and giggled and made me blush and redden all over my ears. When the meal was over and we recited the after meal prayers, I was shown into my room. It was a very small room with a very large bed which took up most of the space in it; a small clothes closet and a bench completed its furnishing leaving hardly any room to move about. I later learned that I was to share this room with two of my cousins, the three of us sleeping in the one bed.

My father then took me by the hand and we both entered another room which was long and narrow, and which had a long narrow table and two long benches standing along both of its elongated sides. At the head of this table a youngish man sat and cradled himself to and fro and recited in a loud Talmudic tune from a large volume. His face was lean, drawn and pale with prominent cheek bones, and a thin crop of adolescent hair scattered about his chin, bushy eyebrows and piercing black eyes. Noticing our entrance he quickly arose and exchanged with my father the usual Sholem-Aleichem greeting. My father introduced me and told me to offer the rabbi, 'Sholem Aleichem', after which formality the youngish rabbi looked me over, pinched my apple red cheeks and pulled the lobe of my ear in a manner of one testing its texture, and sat me down by the table. He placed an alphabetic tablet before me and asked me if I could read the letters. I had already been instructed in the alphabet and knew it

by heart. I therefore read the Hebrew letters quite fluently. As I mentioned the last letter, a kopeck (half cent piece) came tumbling down on the table from above my head and my father said to me in a very serious tone of voice,

'You see my son, the good angel from heaven has rewarded you with this kopeck, and if you will be good and willing to learn and pay close attention to your rabbi, then will the good angel reward you very often, and with gifts of much greater value, and you will grow up to be a renowned talmudist.'

I had seen my parents handling money quite often but actually it had no intrinsic value for me, because there were no shops anywhere near my house and I had no idea what use they made of it. But in this village I had been told that there was a sweet shop where, in exchange of these coins, one could obtain the delicious sweets which father used to bring home. I therefore appreciated and felt thankful to the good angel for his very valuable reward. I accompanied my father in some shopping he had to do in the village and the first shop we visited was the one where they sold the sweets, and I exchanged my kopeck for some multi-coloured hard candy, which seemed to me to be much sweeter and which I enjoyed much more than any sweets I had ever had before. When father had done with all of his shopping we returned to aunt's house, and after father had related all the news from home and aunt had made sure that she left none of the village gossip unrelated, father prepared for his return home.

Before leaving, my father in his usual calm and composed manner explained to me the reason for my coming here. He explained to me how important it was for Jewish boys to learn and study the Bible and the Torah, and become acquainted with laws and ways of our forefathers. He told me to heed and pay close attention to my rabbi and to learn and study my lessons very hard. He also told me to remember to recite all the prayers which I had been taught at home, and some more which my rabbi will teach me. He also told me to remember to wear the shirt with the fringes which, except during the sleeping hours of night, must always be worn. My reward for all this, he said, would be that I would grow up to be a blessing to my family, a respected member of the community and enjoy a happy and successful life.

For some time I stood in the roadway, and watched my father and our wagon disappear in the country road dust. I felt sad, lonesome, and deserted. My young and inexperienced mind in a maze, still unable to grasp what actually had happened, I remained cemented to the spot in the roadway long after all traces of our wagon had disappeared; in the flat country road, there I stood bewildered and dismayed. In this way, and at the young tender age of between five and six years of age, I found myself to be a stranger amongst strangers, lonesome and forlorn, keeper of my own life and destiny.

For several days the fear which took hold of me with my father's departure possessed me day and night, but as the days went by I slowly emerged from my mist and between my aunt's kindness and my cousins' friendly behaviour towards me, I regained my confidence and my usually happy disposition and became quite acclimatised to my new environment. I got along very nicely with my teacher, who considered me an apt and willing student, and I managed to keep ahead of my cousins in my studies throughout that term. My father came to visit me several times during that term, and I made one trip home during the feast of Purim. In all I spent three terms in this village and advanced very nicely in my learning, and whenever I came home to spend one holiday or another, I was fondled and petted by my mother and sisters.

The teacher was a young man of about twenty years of age. He had but recently graduated from a Yeshivah College and this was his first teaching position. He was fluent in the Talmud and Midrash and aspired to be an instructor in a Yeshivah college and accepted this position in anticipation of an appointment. His young students were very fond of him and their parents were very much satisfied with his method of teaching and would have been very glad to retain him for as long as he would be willing to remain. Without the usual sarcasm and cynicism with which most rabbis often used to bully their pupils and scold them, this rabbi, in a manner of jest rather than anything else, used to playfully refer to them in accordance with their aptitude in learning. He used to refer to one pupil as ox, another horse, sheep, peasant, or dumbhead. The nickname which he gave to each pupil after a while stuck to him and in our games we used to call one another by their given nickname, and no one was at all

offended by it. In my own case however, and for a reason which I cannot explain, instead of giving me a nickname, he made up a rhyme which went as follows, 'Dovid, Dovid, mishi lovid' ('David, David, catches mice'). Whether the Rabbi overheard me boasting to my cousins about the many mice I used to catch in the tunnels in the rear of our house, or whether it was an inspiration all of his own, I had no way of telling but this much I do know, the rhyme caught the fancy of the boys in my class, and they in turn passed it on to all the other boys in the village who adopted a tune to go with it, and wherever I went or made my appearance, even in faraway distant towns where I went for my further studies, this rhyme followed me and in some cases even preceded my arrival there.

During the third term, our rabbi received word of his appointment to a higher Yeshivah and, because of the hardship to get a good teacher to come to a small village class, my father decided that I was old enough to be sent to some town for my further studies. After making enquiries in several towns which were located not very far away from my home without any success, my mother suggested the town of Buten which was her birthplace and where members of her family resided. Father, who was at that time in the employ of mother's brother who lived in this town and whereto father made frequent visits, made enquiries there and succeeded to find room for me with one of the rabbis who conducted a cheder in his home. He also arranged for me to stay in my grandfather's house, who had long passed away, but whose second wife, that is mother's step-mother, was still alive and lived in this house together with several of her children, all of whom were mother's stepbrothers and stepsisters.

At about the same time that arrangements had been made for me to go to Buten my elder sister Sarah (Tziril), who was very efficient with needle and cotton and was anxious to learn dressmaking, decided to accompany me to Buten. Father therefore made arrangements with a dressmaker, and also arranged for her to stay with me in the same room. Buten was about fifty miles away from our home, and in those days it meant a very long and tedious journey and no shuttling back and forth, not even for holidays, once we went there. There were therefore important preparations to be made and various items of clothing to be bought.

My parents therefore decided that we should all go to the nearest town of Multch, which was about ten miles away from our home, to make the necessary purchases. Multch was little more than a village itself. However there was a tailor, a shoemaker and several other shops in this town. It was located in the midst of marshlands and bogs, and the roads leading to it were muddy and full of ruts with stagnated pools which had to be forded. Our trip was therefore slow and tiresome, and every now and then our wagon became stuck in the mud so that neither the hard pulling of our willing horse, nor the help which we could give, proved of much avail. Several times we had to pay dearly to some peasant who, with the help of a team of oxen, managed to extricate us from the deep mud.

In the town itself we fared no better , having to wallow knee deep in mud whenever we needed to cross from one side of the street to the other. Some very distantly related members of the Nirenstein family lived in this town, and they made us both welcome and comfortable during the several days we had to stay there. After we completed our purchases, and I had paid my visits to every puddle and mud hole in this town, we returned home and began our preparations for our journey to Buten. One day before our journey had been decided upon, an incident occurred which made us postpone our journey for several days.

The most direct route from western Europe to Russia cuts right through the lake and swamp region of the Pripet marshes, and invading armies of Swede, German and French soldiers have for many centuries marched and fought bitter battles with the Slav armies who opposed them in these localities. Mired in the treacherous bogs and swamps which abound there, the invaders died in the thousands. Those who succeeded in going further fared no better in the vast steppes of Russia proper, and very few of them were able to overcome and survive the bitter cold and the deep snows with which they were confronted there. Russian strategists have long ago recognised the importance of the Pripet marshes in their national defence. They therefore built many fortifications in that region and have held annual manoeuvres in many of its localities.

One day before our intended journey was to have taken place a scouting party of soldiers stopped at our house, and they told us that

within 24 hours an army marching over the highway on its way to manoeuvres will halt in our locality for a three days rest. My parents were hardly pleased with this information, because they had previously experienced the unpleasant hardships and dangers of that motley crowd, and because it meant a postponement of our trip for it would have been most dangerous to leave mother and sisters alone in the house. A short while later, the kitchen staff of the army arrived. They rode in enormous wagons some of which had as many as eight horses hitched to them. They also brought with them enormous kettles and wagon loads of potatoes and cabbages, and ready to set up baking ovens in which they baked large black breads. They dug trenches everywhere and set up their ovens and kettles and tents for miles around. Shepherds drove herds of cattle and sheep which they slaughtered out in the open, and the stench this caused and the mess they made was a good enough reason in itself for my parents' displeasure. They also brought wagon loads of wooden dishes and spoons painted in various colours.

In the very early hours of the next morning, the officers and general staff arrived. They rode ahead of the main army seated upon splendidly trained horses, galloping in perfect formation, and behind them trailed packs of blood hounds and enormously large Siberian dogs, some of which were as big as full grown calves. Some of the officers were billeted in the old post station and for the rest peasant homes in the village were commandeered. About noon, the main army marching on foot arrived. Father locked us all in the house and warned us not to go outside until they had all departed. My father even bolted the shutters on our windows because he was afraid lest the soldiers should notice my sisters inside our house, and like a bunch of prisoners we were warned to be very quiet, not even as much as converse among ourselves in a loud tone. But it would have taken much more than a lock on our door, or a warning of danger outside, to keep inside the house while so much doings were going on outside, and such a spectacle as I had never seen before. I therefore stole my way out through a trap door in our cellar and roamed about amongst the officers and soldiers. I found both officers and soldiers quite friendly and I collected many interesting souvenirs, such as shining brass buttons and variously coloured plates and spoons, some

of which were given to me and others to which, when no one was looking, I stealthily helped myself. I had such a very good time, one I would not want to miss for anything in the world, not even if it would have meant the risking of my life.

I was thrilled as I watched the soldiers drilling and marching and performing all kinds of tricks as they rode upon their spirited horses. Most of all I was thrilled and fascinated by the large military band which played many overtures and inspiring military marches. They used a great number of large and small shining brass instruments, and the beating and rumbling of their large and small drums sounded like distant thunder to me. I had never before heard such wonderful music, or seen so many instruments as were used by this band. In the evenings the soldiers formed themselves into various groups and played all kinds of fascinating games, some with cards, and others used all sorts of miscellaneous things to play games, most of which were unknown and strange to me. Some of the soldiers had balalaikas, and others concertinas or simple mouth organs, with which they played all sorts of beautiful folk songs and music to which some of the soldiers sang and others danced in a most fascinating manner. Their dancing in particular impressed me very much, because most of them were tricky, grotesque and fantastic. They whirled and swirled, leaped high or stooped almost to the ground, and they performed all sorts of tricks and gymnastics until they all seemed to be tired and exhausted and quite dizzy with the pace of their strenuous performance.

After the army had departed and marched on its way over the highway the peasants from all of the surrounding villages came running and swarming into the abandoned camping ground. They collected and took home whatever they could find, no matter how insignificant the thing was, and over many of the things they quarrelled and fought, just like a lot of mad and hungry dogs.

Once more we resumed our interrupted preparations for our long and tedious journey hoping that this time nothing unexpected would occur which might delay our journey any longer, for already we had lost several days of our schedule and been forced to delay the date of our departure. It was in the late spring of 1898 when we started out on our journey. The sun was shining brightly and warm, and a gentle

breeze brought sweet scented odours from the fresh green fields and forests.

After we had all taken leave of my mother and sisters, and my sister and I were safely and comfortably seated in the wagon, father took hold of the horse's bridle and with a hard pull he encouraged our horse to drag the heavily loaded wagon up on to the elevated highway. Once our horse had accomplished this task he was halted and given a chance to rest up for a few minutes. During this time, father examined the wagon all round and made sure that everything was in proper order. Then he dragged a large axe from under some bundles and concealed it in a handy place near his seat. Then father climbed on to the driver's seat in the wagon and with a last look in the direction of our house and a wave of his hand to mother, who on all such occasions stood outside our house and awaited father's habitual performance of this act, he cracked his whip and gave a tug at the reins and our horse in a steady gait proceeded upon the highway onto our destination. The spring floods had by now receded and the countryside was fresh and dry. We did not expect very bad roads to delay us on our way because, for a quarter of the distance, we could keep on the highway where the riding was comfortable and of little strain to our horse.

I asked my father why he had gone to the trouble of dragging the axe from under the bundles and why he preferred to have it near by his seat. 'Well you see my son,' he said, 'One must always be prepared for all kinds of eventualities when one makes a lonely and long trip. Besides a break down of the wagon, when the axe would prove to be a very handy tool, a crazed peasant or a lonely bandit might take advantage of a lonely traveller, so I always keep the axe handy by my side with which to protect myself and with which to frighten them away'.

I also noticed on several occasions when father was about to leave home for a protracted journey that, after he had bidden us all farewell and was about to leave the house, he would sit down for several moments, and then arise and leave the house. For quite some time this formality puzzled me very much. Somehow or other I never got around to asking my father either the purpose or meaning of this act on his part. Later on however, after I had occasion to see more of

him and to know him much better than before, this formality became self explanatory and quite clear to me.

Father was deeply steeped in traditions and mannerisms which to us would seem to be superstitious and fanatic behaviour. As far as he was concerned they should not be considered from this point of view at all, for he possessed neither of these traits nor did he believe in them either., Although in his religious beliefs he was very orthodox he nevertheless belonged to the rationally religious type of men, and he considered superstition to be a mockery as far as religious ethics were concerned and the leftovers of centuries of ignorance and paganism. However, he was often obliged to lead a hard and dangerous life in pursuit of his vocation, when for many months at a time he had to live in the midst of a forest, sometimes all alone and at other times with a bunch of ignorant and unruly peasants. In addition, he had to guard himself against bandits and lawless criminals as well as the sneaky jackal, the wolf, and the bear who roamed through the forest both by day and by night. All this made him very cautious, resourceful and self-sufficient and made him adopt certain customs in which fatalism played a part, but which had nothing to do with superstition or fanaticism. His purpose of sitting down for a few moments before leaving on a long and dangerous journey was in a sense an act of taking tenure of a place which, after a short interval, would continue permanently in this, his permanent home.

Father was about five feet seven inches in height, physically healthy and strong. He was well hardened to the outdoor life and he liked it very much. His education was strictly orthodox and he accepted the teaching of the Bible and Talmud without question. He adhered strictly to all its laws and regulations, and to all its mandates and prohibitions. Father observed strictly the holy Sabbath and the rituals of the various festivals, and attended all the services of worship; he recited all of the blessings and thank offerings which a pious and religious Jew is supposed to recite and repeat throughout the wakeful day and every move he makes during his natural life.

He was clean in his habits and he forever preached purity of body and of soul, the first which he maintained was to assure good health and long life, and the second to merit glory and peace in the world to come. He has by now passed his ninetieth year, which in a way

justifies his first observation, and whilst we cannot for certain substantiate or deny his second observation we might as well consider it a good virtue just the same. Father was not very ambitious, nor did he look upon the accumulation of wealth in itself as an aim in life. He aspired to no earthly riches and held fast to the biblical motto, 'Happy is the man who is contented with his lot', and he used to say that one should not complain when adversity overtook him nor celebrate ostentatiously when fortune came his way. He never ventured into business on his own as far as I am aware and later, when he did own his business, it was his grown up children who carried its burden and looked after its affairs and interests. But it was not for any shortcomings or failings on his part that this happens to be so, but rather it was due to his generally non-aggressive attitude in all of his means and ways.

He gave a very good account of himself in the various positions which he held, and the trustfulness and respect which his employers extended to him very clearly attested to this. He was liked and respected by everybody with whom he came in contact or anyone with whom he had any dealings at all. And the peasants in particular, either those who just knew him or the many hundreds of them who used to work for him from time to time, held him in high esteem and respect. Some of them even believed that father was blessed with divine guidance and wisdom. Some of the peasants used to come to him for counsel and advice in their economic, family and inter-family problems and quarrels. They also came to him when any one member of their family became stricken with illness, or when their cow or goat sickened or went astray in the forest. On such occasions they used to come to father and, kneeling before him and kissing his hand, they used to plead and beg of him that he pray for them and intercede on their behalf with the Almighty, for the recovery of their sick or the safe return of their animal. Father used to plead with them and try to make them understand that he had no such powers over fate, and that it was sinful and foolish of them to come to him, but instead they should go to their own priests who were ordained and qualified to deal with such problems. But all his pleading to them did him no good, for they in their ignorance and superstitious beliefs, accused him of unwillingness to help them, and they would become angry

with him and more insistent that he pray for them and accept from them presents which they used to bring to him, sometimes a chicken, a basket full of eggs, or a bolt of cloth.

Father was very modest, gentle, kindly and affectionate. He never quarrelled with anyone, was easily pleased, and always tried to avoid heated discussions or arguments, especially when they became personal. In our home, father never assumed the role of dictator and, although he readily accepted that his fatherly duties included those of teacher, instructor, and adviser, he never considered that these duties were of a specially ordained character entitling him to bully and cajole his wife and children in the despotic manner which some fathers consider it to be, a heaven ordained prerogative. Father was neither loved, hated or feared by his family, friends or anyone else with whom he ever came in contact. But everybody did like him, admire and respect him very much because of his honesty and sincerity. They could not have regarded him otherwise, because his gentle, quiet and inoffensive manners and behaviour did not arouse in any one of them any extremes.

As his son I would have hardly been in a proper frame of mind to give a true and unbiased opinion or description of him. However, in consideration of the fact that I have been separated from him for more than thirty years, during all of which time I have seen him but once for a very short time, I feel that I have a right to claim that my description of him is unbiased and true.

His was the true life of the stoic, rational and unimpressed by passion or pleasure. He was born and reared amidst forest and wasteland, he travelled from place to place, from village to village, from country to country, over land and sea; he met and mingled with all sorts and races of mankind, and wherever he passed or abided he left behind him no burning fires or memorable conflagrations, just peace, harmony and tranquillity. He reared a family which, if I may say so, is sturdy in body and healthy in mind, free from complex involvements or fixations.

We proceeded in a steady gait on the highway. The sun was shining pleasantly and the air was exhilarating, and we all felt comfortable and pleasant. All around us was nothing but wasteland, as far as the eye could see, and only now and then did we pass a lonely

house by the highway or from the distance espy a village. Hardly any life could be seen anywhere, only a stork resting on one leg.

We made our first stop in the town of Bereze, which was about ten miles away from our home and which was the birthplace of my father. Many years ago, Bereze was a small village and of no greater importance than most of the villages in that region. However after the highway was built and several less important roads built which connected this village with others, it assumed a role of importance and in time the peasant huts were rebuilt and large houses with shops erected in their place. Bereze was a small but busy town. From nearby and distant villages, the peasants brought their various products and offered them for sale there. Trappers brought all kinds of skins from animals which they trapped in the vast forest nearby. And later when the railroad was built a short distance away, dealing in lumber and fruit made this town even more important and prosperous. Jews by far made up the greater part of its inhabitants, engaging in all sorts of dealings and business transactions.

I have been able to obtain but very little information regarding father's ancestry, or how long they had lived in this town. Grandfather was born in this town and his name at birth was Solomon Seigel. Probably due to military service, which all Jews tried very hard to dodge, my grandfather changed his second or family name to Sheinbaum by which name all of his sons and their sons in turn have been known. Grandfather was not a rich man; he was mostly interested in orchards, which he leased from nearby rich landowners, and sold the fruit which he obtained from them to shippers who in turn shipped them to distant cities or foreign countries. He owned a fairly comfortable home and enjoyed an envious reputation of being an honest man, very orthodox and well learned in the Talmud. At the time of our arrival in Bereze not one of the Sheinbaums remained there, both my grandfather and grandmother having died many years earlier, and their children, after they were married, had either moved away to other locations or had emigrated to London.

In Bereze we stopped for several hours at a house of a distant relative of father's where we were very much welcomed and given a substantial meal; the only decent meal we could expect until our arrival in Buten.

Bereze could boast of the residence there of a fully fledged medical doctor, and also a felsher. The felsher's medical equipment consisted of castor oil, iodine and several other herbal purgatives. He also carried around with him a vial containing leeches for the purpose of drawing blood from patients who suffered from various impurities. The felsher's practice was mostly limited to the very poor Jews and the more enlightened peasants, neither of whom could afford the services of the doctor. As an aid to his livelihood, the felsher also practised dentistry. Here too his practice was limited to the application of various herbs to swollen gums or the cheek, and extractions. I had been having trouble with decayed teeth for some time, and I had been nursing swollen gums and cheeks for many a day and night. At home we never had a doctor to help us when we fell sick and several years earlier, when almost our entire family was stricken with typhoid fever and some of us were laid up for weeks in bed from this deadly scavenger, with high fever and delirium, no doctor was brought to help us and I recollect how for several weeks I was delirious and insisted that I be seated upon the large wall clock we had in our dining room.

Father took me to this dentist felsher, and after he examined my teeth he told father that three of my teeth had to be extracted. He took out an instrument from his bag, which I am sure he either bought or borrowed from the local blacksmith, and without the use of any asepsis he pulled them out one after another. I did not feel or suffer much pain because they were my temporary teeth but I did learn something about dentistry, particularly in as far as extractions are concerned, and in the future, when I was similarly afflicted, I found that a string tied to the tooth and the other end of the string tied to the door accomplished the same trick as the blacksmith's blunt instrument, by shutting the door whilst I held tight on to a pillar in the middle of the room.

Leaving Bereze, we rode over the highway for several miles and then we had to turn off and take to a country road. Here the riding was difficult and slow, and the dust kicked up by our horse's hoofs made us choke and cough all the time. After a short ride we came across a railroad crossing, a thing which neither my sister or I had ever seen before. As we crossed over the shining railroad tracks I asked

my father what it was all about. Father explained to us what it was, and pointing to the rails he said that the train rolls upon these rails. It was all very strange and amazing to me and I further enquired as to the whereabouts of the train. Oh, it might be hours before a train passes by and we could not waste all this time. However as father said these words he noticed some smoke in the distance, and told us that we were very lucky because a train was coming along in our direction. He made the horse turn off from the road and we rode into a nearby thicket. There we all came down from the wagon and father pulled out a large sack from the wagon and covered our horse's head with it. Then he proceeded to tie our horse to a tree, a precaution he had sadly learned from past experience, when on a similar occasion our horse took fright and bolted away, overturning the wagon and causing considerable damage. Although our horse's eyes and ears were well covered with the sack father remained with him and held him tightly by the bridle. I ran back to the tracks and stood there and waited for the coming of the train. By now the belching smoke from the engine could easily be seen and the rumbling of the wheels could be heard. It took but a short while for the train to come into view, and what I saw was an enormous monster, terrible and frightening, approaching to where I stood at terrific speed. I stood there as if in a trance, bewildered and frightened, hardly believing what I saw, and as the train came close to the crossing road it gave several sharp ear piercing shrills, which frightened me altogether, and made me scamper quickly to my father's arms.

It took me a long time to collect my wits and clear my mind of the excitement with which the speeding monster affected me. We resumed our journey and I tried to interest myself in the surrounding scenery, but my mind kept wandering back to the speeding monster; and the problem which most tormented my mind was, how in the world the train was able to run, without the help of the proverbial horses. After some time had elapsed and we had covered a considerable distance of the road I was still unable to solve the problem by myself. I turned to my father and asked him how the train was able to run without the aid of horses. Father looked at me, smiled, and said that the train is being drawn by iron horses. Respect for my father's understanding prevented me from asking him for further

explanations. It could never have occurred to me then, that my father's understanding of the mechanics of a train engine amounted to little more than my own understanding of it. I therefore accepted his explanation and said no more about it. However, my mind was not satisfied and now it was tormented by a new problem. In my insistence in solving this problem, I hitched, in my imagination, a pair of giant and powerful immobile iron horses to the train and tried to imagine they were pulling the train. However, I only succeeded in placing the iron horses, immobile and inane, in front of the train, and I still remained puzzled as to how they could ever make the train run!

The day wore on very monotonously, the dust from the road was very annoying because it constantly flew into our eyes, and made us blink and rub our eyes with our fists which only further irritated them and made the tears flow all the more. We were relieved from this annoyance later in the day by a sudden shower which came pouring down with a vengeance, but it did not last very long and it was therefore very much appreciated. When the sun had set behind the trees of a distant forest, it became damp and chilly and pitch darkness soon enveloped us completely. Dead stillness reigned all about us, and it was broken only now and then by the croaking of a frog in the marshes, or the chirping of crickets in the grass. Now and then the flapping of birds' wings could be heard overhead, and the barking of wild beasts from the distant forest made us feel very uncomfortable and frightened. We buried ourselves under whatever clothes and sacks we were able to find in the wagon, in order to keep ourselves comfortable and warm. The lurching of our wagon from side to side cradled us into a deep sleep and we slept soundly all through that night.

When we awoke the next morning it was already full daylight and, coming on to a fresh looking rapid stream we stopped there to water our horse, feed him, and do the same with ourselves. We washed ourselves, took a good draft of the fresh cool water, and before sitting down to our breakfast father told us to say the morning prayers. Father wrapped his praying shawl about himself, wound one phylactery around his left arm and the other he adjusted on his forehead and, facing east, he proceeded to recite the morning prayers. My sister

and I stood by his side with prayer books in our hands and we too recited the prayers. After that we ate a cold make-shift breakfast and, after resting for a while, we proceeded with our journey.

The scene all about us had changed very little from the day before, just the road and everlasting bogs on both sides of it and the forest in the far away distance. We rode through wasteland for many hours, without a village or any human life anywhere to be seen. About noon-time we came to a cemetery, and this was a sure sign that we were approaching a town. Father told us that this cemetery belonged to the town of Buten and pointing to a turn in the road he said that on making this turn we would be in the outskirts of the town itself.

As we approached the town my attention was attracted to a lake on the left side of the road, which a short distance ahead seemed to flow under a bridge but, to my amazement, I could not see any water on the right side of the road. As we rode on the bridge an interesting sight caught my eye on its right side.

From somewhere I could hear a noise of rushing water, very much like that of a waterfall, and there before me was an enormous wooden wheel revolving very slowly, and from its top and sides a white frothy foam kept falling all around it. I looked at my father with amazement in my eyes and asked him what it was. It is a water mill, he said to me, nonchalantly.

'You will have plenty of time to learn all about it.'

As soon as we crossed the bridge we were actually in the town itself, a part where the poor people lived. Here the road was dirty, narrow and knee deep in mud, and the houses on both sides of it old, dilapidated tumbling down shacks. From the back yards of the shanties ducks, geese and chickens came waddling into the road and made it very hard for our horse to proceed without stepping on them and killing many of them. My father therefore lashed with his whip right and left in order to scare them off the road, and as they scattered away they set up a hissing and a clucking and a flapping with their wings, that they filled the street with their noise and the air with their flying feathers. Their noise aroused many dogs in the neighbourhood and they came running and barking from still dirtier and narrower side streets, and so in this very impolite manner we were welcomed into the town of Buten.

3

Buten

I was not very much impressed with this town so far. I had expected to find Buten much nicer than this. However, in a short while we rode into a much nicer part of the town and that made me feel much happier. We passed by the old synagogue which looked very ancient and uninspiring, but a short distance away the new synagogue appeared. It was several storeys high with beautiful stained glass windows and a large dome which gave it the appearance of an Arabian mosque, and it looked very dignified and inspiring.

Leaving the old and new synagogues behind us, we rode for another short distance and then we came into the market place of the town. It was a large square in the midst of which stood a small wooden building which, I later learned, housed the town's single fire extinguishing apparatus, several ladders, water pails, and other antiquated fire fighting equipment. These together with the town's fire fighting brigade was the pride of Buten. By far the greater number of houses in this town, and for that matter in all of the towns and villages of that part of the country, were of wooden construction. Therefore fires occurred very frequently and it often happened that when a house caught on fire at one end of the town, there was no way of telling where the fire might stop. It sometimes happened that whole villages burned down in this manner and, less frequently but sometimes, small towns also disappeared in flames. As far as I was able to learn Buten's voluntary fire brigade never extinguished a fire, nor did it ever succeed to prevent one from spreading once it started. Just the same Buten was very proud of its voluntary brigade, and every young man aspired and looked forward to the time when he would be admitted and become a member of its force.

The buildings facing the market square were the most important houses in the town, and many of them had shops which opened in to the market square Amongst them was the baker, the grocer, the butcher, the sweet shop and many others stocked with all kinds of merchandise. The most important event to which all of the town's inhabitants looked forward was the fair, which was held in the market square at certain periods of the year.

From nearby and faraway villages and towns, came merchants and brokers, peddlers and vendors, Jews and peasants, thieves and beggars. Confectioners and bakers from Syria and Turkey came to the fair in their large wagons which were equipped with confectionery and baking facilities, and they baked various coloured cookies of all kinds and shapes and patterns and made Halva and other Turkish delights. Peasants offered for sale horses, cattle, sheep, goats, chickens and cloth, and horse dealers and other brokers haggled and tried to cheat the peasants and one another. The noise from the lowing cattle, the neighing of the horses, the barking of dogs, and the mess and stench from the animals was enough to deafen and nauseate the most hardy and resolute customer and visitor, and the cheating of the peasants often occasioned bloody fights. There was also the hurdy-gurdy man leading a bear on a chain, who for one kopeck will let one turn the handle of his hurdy-gurdy and order the bear to dance and perform all sorts of tricks, and a Punch and Judy show which was the delight of the youngsters. Last, but not least, there was that wonder of the age, a box-like contraption with two ear phones attached, which the owner for a mere kopeck would let one hold to one's ears, whilst a black longish cylinder would revolve and one could listen to and hear a devil or an angel talk and sing.

The main thoroughfare of Buten, a street built of cobble stones and kept very clean, was situated on one side of the market place. And the row of houses on the other side of it were the most imposing buildings in the town, and they were owned by the richest citizens of Buten. In the midst of this row of houses there was one very fine large house which had a spacious enclosed porch and a wide staircase leading up to the entrance of it. Also tall hedges and several trees, the branches of which hid, except for the porch, almost the entire house from view. A tall fence with a wide double door gate in the middle

of it connected this house with a smaller and much older house. The smaller house was built and owned during his lifetime by my grandfather, and was now occupied by his widow and several of her children. The larger and more imposing house was built and owned by mother's brother Joshe, who was considered to be one of the richest citizens in Buten and who employed my father at that time.

We crossed the cobbled main street and drove up to the gate which was opened for us by a caretaker, and then drove into a large spacious courtyard. This was our destination and here our tiresome and weary journey came to an end. In the centre of this courtyard there was a well at which our horse by instinct came to a halt, a large barn big enough to house many cows, sheep and goats, a good many of which my uncle owned, and a large stable for horses and carriages and sleds, barns for hay and food for the cattle and horses, a laundry and an underground cold storage room. At one end of the courtyard there was a tall gate which, I later learned very much to my delight, opened up to a nice and considerably large orchard in which grew many apple, pear, plum and cherry trees as well as several gooseberry and raspberry bushes.

From the smaller house an elderly lady, tall and stately looking came towards us. Father, who had already alighted from the wagon and helped my sister and me to come down, went forward to meet her and exchanged greetings with her. He then proceeded to introduce us to her saying, 'This is Aunt Bas-Shevah,' and then addressing his aunt he said to her, 'These are my children, Tziril and David'.

Aunt Bas-Shevah kissed my sister affectionately and after looking me over and pinching my cheek she remarked, 'What nice apple red cheeks you have got'.

Aunt Bas-Shevah was grandfather's second wife, and Mother's step-mother. We called her aunt because, before her marriage to grandfather, she was an aunt to the family, somehow.

We were ushered into a room where we took off our travelling clothes, and then shown where we could wash ourselves and rid ourselves of the mud and dust with which we were covered from head to foot. When we returned inside the house Aunt remarked that we must be very hungry; she therefore excused herself and went into the kitchen to prepare some food for us.

A short while later, Aunt Serke (Sarah), Uncle Yefroike(Ephraim) and Uncle Shlemke (Sol or Saul) came in. They were Aunt Bas-Shevah's children and my mother's step-sister and step-brothers, and after greetings and introductions were done with, we were served a nice and most welcome meal. Discussions regarding my mother and the rest of the family proceeded, as well as general family affairs. Later we were shown into the room which my sister and I were to share during our stay in Buten. It was small but large enough for the two of us. It had two small beds and a dresser in it as well as a large commode to hang our clothes in. Two windows opened on to the courtyard, giving this room plenty of light and fresh air and promising us considerable comfort and pleasantry.

Mother's family in Buten enjoyed renowned fame and respect and their ancestral lineage boasted their descent from some of the most celebrated families in that era and location. They were in possession of a family record of their descendency which hung very prominently in Uncle Joshe's house, encased in a gilt frame and written on archaically designed parchment. The record connected this family with the names of some of the great and most important rabbis, teachers, and men who have played an important role in Jewish life, way back to the middle ages. Itzchak-Isack Chover, mother's great grandfather, was the Chief of the Court of Justice of the city of Suwalk. He was the author of the work 'Everlasting Structure', a cabalistic and religio-philosophic treatise on the structure of the universe, which has many obscure mystic and symbolic allusions. He also wrote several other books on mysticism and revelations.

Three of his sons, for the purpose of avoiding the hated Russian military service, adopted three different names. One of them adopted the family name of Rabinowitz and he was therefore called the Father of the Rabinowitz family.

His name was Moses Rabinowitz, and he was Chief of the Court of Justice of the city of Yadwabne. He was very much admired and respected for his Talmudic erudition and his humanitarian tendencies. His eldest son was David, who was my grandfather, and in whose memory I was named. He received the traditional Jewish education and he qualified for the Rabbinate. However, he did not lean towards that hard and tumultuous life and therefore, aided by his general

knowledge, he accepted the position of chief accountant and cashier in the employ of a wealthy dealer in forestry. He married the daughter of a wealthy and distinguished family who by her own birth-right claimed descendency from important rabbinical lineage. Her name was Rivke-Mariam and because of her distinction, virtue and charitable disposition was called Rivke-Mariam the Magnanimous.

Grandfather's position necessitated his presence in the neighbourhood of Buten. He therefore chose this town for his residence. Here, on the main street facing the market place, he built a house for himself, not a very large house but one that proved to be nice and comfortable and large enough for himself and the eleven children which his first and second wives presented him with. To one of his daughters, which his first wife presented to him, they gave the name of Shprinze who was my mother, and in whose memory my daughter Shirley is named.

Grandfather's lineage and the important position which brought him to Buten, created quite a stir in this small but envied town because of the unusual number of fine families which it boasted of and in particular, because of its famous Rabbi Dovidel, who was a great scholar and mystic. The family was soon enrolled in the social life of the town. They participated in its charitable and economic activities and their house, because of the wealthy merchants who came to transact business with my grandfather and other important personages who visited, and because of the welcome and liberal atmosphere which prevailed there, became the centre of activity of the town and the meeting-place of merchants and the intelligentsia. Grandmother very graciously complemented the atmosphere of this house and her noble character and intelligence fulfilled the role of grand lady, and therefore old and young, rich and poor, mingled with one another in a most unique and friendly manner.

The family lived in considerable comfort, happy and respected and admired by everybody. When children were born, they engaged several servants to help them with their increased responsibilities. They also had horses and carriages, cows, chickens and other livestock and in the large grounds which they owned they planted an orchard. However this pleasantry and glory did not last very long and soon dark clouds gathered over this family and a very sad

calamity overtook them. This very much saddened their lives and the lives of all the inhabitants of that town. It was in the prime of her life and in the midst of happiness and glory that grandmother suddenly became very ill, the nature of which I have never been able to learn, and in a very short time she passed away. Her death quite unexpectedly struck down her family into grief and mourning in a lightning manner, and the entire citizenry of Buten was thrown into sadness and despair.

Her funeral, attended by persons from all walks of life, was remembered and talked about for very many years, even right down to the time when I came to this town. Rabbis and important members from nearby and far away towns and villages came to pay their last respects to her, and mourned her passing away. Her body, wrapped in a white shroud, and covered over with a black cloth, was carried on a litter by the town's burial unit, all the way from her house to the cemetery, followed by her family and friends as well as by all the citizens of Buten and surrounding towns and villages. They first stopped outside the orthodox synagogue, to which during her life she belonged, and there special prayers and eulogies were delivered by several rabbis. Then at the cemetery, a cantor offered the special prayer for the departed, during which time the wailing and crying of the assembled crowd was most heartbreaking, and more eulogies in praise of her goodness, kindness and virtuosity, as well as of the many charitable deeds which she performed, were delivered by various speakers. Her body was laid to rest on plain boards in the grave and covered over with earth.

In this manner and in the early thirties of her life, passed away this grand and distinguished lady, who was the pride of her family and in whose veins flowed the holy blood of rabbis and distinguished men, and who was mourned in the custom of that day, and in love and respect remembered for many years to come.

Time went on, grandfather remarried. This time to a woman who was related to the family. Her name was Bas-Shevah. She was also a kind, virtuous and gracious lady.

Grandfather's life though distinguished and successful, and as a whole a happy life, was nevertheless frequently interrupted by sad and sorrowful events. His own health was never too robust, and at

one time when he was in his late thirties, he was stricken with a serious illness. At first, the doctors did not take his indisposition seriously, but when after some time their efforts and various treatments did not improve his condition, he was advised to go to a larger city where expert medical opinion could be obtained. The specialists he went to see took his illness seriously and one of them, a very prominent doctor, diagnosed his case to be of a cancerous condition. He himself was not told what his condition was but the family became very much alarmed.

Whether the intervention of Providence in the life and welfare of individuals be a fact or even a remote possibility is not my purpose here to discuss, but the following story was often related to us by my mother and she, in her earnest piety and her deep religious faith, believed that it was not just a usual dream that her father had, but rather that a miraculous intervention by the Almighty was revealed to him in his dream.

The following is a version of her story. Grandfather's condition became worse from day to day and even his family doctor claimed that his symptoms gave him reason to believe that he was suffering from a cancer. One day his condition became very serious and, afraid that he might soon pass away, grandfather instructed his children that his family and very dear friends should be called to see him as he wished to see them all and take leave of them before it was too late. His family and friends all answered the call, and one by one he bade them farewell and took leave of each one of them. That night his condition became very grave and it was evident that the man was sinking. None of his family or friends departed but sat around sadly awaiting his death. During that night grandfather fell into a heavy sleep and he seemed to sleep peacefully right through that night. When he awoke the next morning, very much to the surprise of his family and friends he smiled and said he felt very much better. He asked that his family and friends be all called to his bedside and when they had all gathered around him, he said that he had something very important to tell them.

'During the night I had a dream,' he said. 'In my dream I was visited by my grandfather, Rabbi Itzchak Isack, and he told me that, because of the fact that I spent so much time in the study of the

Talmud and took such a great interest in charity, I would recover from this illness and be granted twenty more years of life.'

He recovered in a short time and took his place in the daily life, and my mother always insisted that he lived exactly twenty years after his dream and died when he was about 57 years of age. Although still a young man, grandfather had already lived a full and very active life. His exemplary life, his honesty and sincerity, his deep devotion to the welfare of the community, and his good and charitable deeds, remained an everlasting tribute to this man of the town of Buten. Already his memory has outlived the town itself which, together with its entire Jewish population, has been devastated and almost its entire citizenry mercilessly slaughtered by the bloody hordes of Hitler's Germany during the Second World War.

Whether this town, and the thousands of other towns, villages and hamlets in Poland in particular and that part of the world in general, will ever again rise from their ruins we must leave for the future to reveal. But this much is certain, that an era in the life of the Jews and the greatest settlement they created during their exile has come to a sorrowful and bitter end, probably never to rise again.

I know very little about mother's early life. There is no one that I know who might be able to throw any light upon that time when mother, as a child or young girl, moved about in the busy house and mingled with the motley of persons who came to visit there. However, in consideration of the intellectual and refined environment in which she moved about, it must be concluded that her early life must have been interesting and colourful. Mother often used to tell us about her youth and the activities which went on in her house. However, that was so many years ago that I can no longer recall the details. I do, however, remember her frequent allusions to that period of her life when as a young girl of about fifteen years of age, with the sudden and tragic death of her mother, she remained an orphan and she had to assume the responsibility of taking care of a young brother, and the greater responsibility of managing the activities of the tumultuous house. In her reminiscences of those years she used to become agitated and her countenance would register strain and fatigue and assume a gloomy aspect which seemed to say, 'Alas, ever since then this seems to be my fate and destiny!'

The average young woman of those times received hardly any education at all. It was then thought sufficient for a young woman to know how to read the prayers which are recited in Hebrew. That she had no notion of the meaning of the prayers did not seem to matter at all because, according to the Talmudic law, it was not obligatory to educate the women. On the other hand, her understanding and ability in the management of the home formed a standard upon which her importance and virtuosity was measured, and in this respect mother qualified in a manner sufficient to satisfy the expectation of the severest critic. However, in the more enlightened and cultured homes girls sometimes received important instructions, and I have been informed that at least one of my great grandmothers was renowned for her talmudic erudition. My mother, too, received more than average education for a girl and she was able to read and write Yiddish fluently.

Both of her parents left her a rich legacy of fine traits. From her mother she inherited a strong sense of duty and piety and a vigorous body and mind. And from her father she received a sense of fair judgement, honesty, sincerity and regard for all sorts of persons in all walks of life. It was a hard and laborious life that she had to contend with, often attended with much peril and danger, but I do not remember her ever complaining or blaming anyone else for her fate. Rather she accepted it all to be a part of a higher scheme, which she neither understood nor could define, but she believed that it was by the greater wisdom and justice of her Almighty God that such a fate had been destined for her. Deeply resolved within this belief she conducted her life accordingly, dutifully and sincerely.

Marriages in those days were contracted upon the merits of the family, their social importance and then, even more so than today, dowry played an important role. I am not intimately acquainted how my parents were brought together in marriage since there was a full day's journey from Bereze to Buten. But from fragments I have gathered here and there, I have been able to arrive to the following narration.

An uncle of mother's who lived in Buten was married to a woman whose family lived in Bereze. This aunt was very fond of mother and very much admired her in every way. She was a very clever and

intelligent woman and marriage-making was not at all of her taste. In her frequent visits to her family in Bereze she often met and admired her tall, quiet and good natured cousin, Hershel (Hirsch). Returning from one of her trips to Bereze, with the thought of this young man fresh in her mind, the idea occurred to her when she again met my mother, that this boy and girl would make a very good match. She therefore decided to raise the interest of the two already related families on behalf of this boy and girl. First she consulted my grandfather from Buten and she gave him a description and whatever else she knew about Hershel and meeting with a favourable reaction from him, she purposely journeyed to Bereze to discuss this matter with the other side. When here too she met with success, she felt very happy indeed.

Although the two families were already related by marriage, and both had some knowledge of one another, yet nevertheless the usual customary investigation was put by both sides into effect. Letters of enquiry were sent to the rabbis of each town and enquiries were made in regard to the young man about his education, Talmudic accomplishment, character, behaviour and his ancestry. Similar enquiries were made about the young lady except that in place of education, information regarding her household virtues was requested. After both reports had been received and closely studied to the satisfaction of all concerned, it was decided that, because of the wider celebrity of the Rabinowitz family, mother's father should therefore be given the honour of first coming to see and judge for himself the young man and his parents.

After grandfather David had paid his visit, and found everything entirely to his satisfaction, he extended an invitation to the Sheinbaums to visit him in Buten. Father's parents then journeyed to Buten and when they too had been favourably impressed, matters pertaining to the future of the couple and dowry was then agreed. Evidently everything was satisfactory to both sides because a marriage contract was there and then drawn up, and an early date for the wedding to take place was set to be held in the town of Buten.

It was in the spring of 1875 that a caravan of several wagons journeyed from Bereze to Buten. The wagons were filled with old and young, all jolly, happy and gay, and in their midst sat a rather

quiet and good natured young man, who was much more reserved and serious than the rest. The wagons also contained all sorts of things which went to make up the wedding presents which were to be presented to the bridge and groom. When the train of wagons, increased by several others who joined them en route reached Buten, they drove up to the gate of grandfather's house, where they were met by a large assembly of the bride's relations and many more of the townsfolk. Grandfather's fairly nice house, surrounded by lilac trees in their full bloom, made a deep impression on the quiet and reserved young man who considered himself very fortunate to marry into this noted family and whose own home in Bereze was much more humble and simple. The gate was opened by the caretaker and the wedding guests were driven into the spacious courtyard within.

There is a doubt in my mind as to whether the prospective bride and groom were permitted to see each other before they both stood under the wedding canopy. However, be it as it may, mother often related to us with a feeling of shame and guilt, of an indiscretion she secretly committed, when hidden behind the draping of an upper storey window, she stole a glimpse of the tall and handsome young groom as he alighted from one of the wagons. I feel sure that if he were given a similar opportunity father would not have taken advantage of it, because of his deep respect and regard of custom and tradition.

On the eve of her nuptial, mother had her head completely shorn of its beautiful black, long hair. This custom was strictly demanded from all Jewish brides on the eve of their marriage. After she placed the conventional Sheitel (wig) on her head, she solemnly vowed that she would wear it throughout the rest of her life. She was not permitted to be seen without it in public or, for that matter, not even in her own home by her husband and children. The sacrifice of the Jewish bride of this, nature's most cherished and gracious gift to womanhood, was symbolic of her sanctification and her initiation into the maternal bond of the motherhood of Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah. And for compensation she was promised that her maternal life would be fruitful, her issue God-fearing, her children would love their father and mother, and that she and her husband and children would enjoy long life, happiness and success.

The ceremony was held, in accordance with the custom of those days, in the courtyard of the orthodox synagogue. At the hour close to midnight of the day the ceremony was due to take place, the groom was escorted by the male guests of both sides from his cousin's house, where he was staying, to the courtyard. There, under the canopy, he awaited the arrival of his bride.

At about the same time, the bride, escorted by a retinue of women, was led from her father's house. Young girls and old women carrying lit candles and lanterns through the dark, lampless streets, were preceded by the bride who was dressed in white, with a veil covering her head and face. The sad and sombre procession had the appearance of a primitive tribal ritual. A single flutist, very much like the Pied Piper of Hamlin, led the procession and played a sad melodic tune, which seemed to magnetise his followers, and made them sigh and cry most pathetically.

At the hour of midnight the bride's procession arrived at the synagogue courtyard and, with her escort and attendants, she circled seven times around the canopy under which her groom stood, in accordance with the ceremonial tradition. This done, the cantor placed her alongside her future mate and in a loud and melodic voice he sang the ceremonial service and made the benediction over the wine. He gave the bride and groom a glass and they drank a little of the now blessed wine, which was the only nourishment either of them had had all of that day. Then the rabbi gave them the matrimonial blessing, and the groom placed the marriage ring upon the bride's finger and recited aloud, 'Herewith art thou betrothed unto me in accordance with the law of Moses and Israel'.

Now the rabbi read aloud for all present to hear, in the original Aramaic tongue, the ancient marriage contract, after which the groom with a vengeance broke the traditional glass of sorrow in memory of the destruction of the Temple. Then the musicians three, Flute, Fife and Fiddle, played a merry wedding tune and the women kissed the bride and the men wished the groom and each other Mazeltov and everybody became happy and gay.

In the synagogue courtyard long tables and benches had been set up and they were well provided with schnapps and wine, several varieties of prepared herring, stuffed fish and various cakes and

cookies. All present, including a motley crowd of gluttons and beggars, were invited to partake of the drinks and victuals, and when these had their fill and departed, the tables were cleared and reset and a very sumptuous wedding supper was served for the invited guests. In the meantime, the musicians played polkas and kosatskes, and the guests jumped, skipped and danced, but never men and women together because that was absolutely taboo according to orthodox tradition. Speeches were delivered by rabbis and other notables, in which they lauded the bride and groom, as well as themselves and each other. The groom also had to deliver a speech which he commenced by saying, 'This is the happiest day of my life', and then went on to indulge in argumentative polemics and much Talmudic dissertation, during which time he tried very hard to impress the honoured guests with his knowledge of Hilluk, Haggadah and Pilpul.

Then there was also the professional jester, or the ~~Chale~~ Besetzer, as they called him who, in an ironic melodious intonation, sarcastically ridiculed the bride and groom, as well as all the guests present, in a jestful manner to the great delight and merriment of all present. And then, changing his tone and melody to a more sombre tune, he recalled whatever unpleasant and tragic event had befallen each of the families, and in a grave and warning manner he drew for the young couple a heart rending and sordid picture of the hardships and toils of life in store for them, and he warned them of the many snares and traps of temptation which the devil will surely set up with which to entangle them, and wreck their home, bliss and congeniality. In this depraved and perverted recitation the Chale Besetzer reached the height of his artistic genius. Among the wedding guests, as might be expected at a large assembly, there were old and feeble minded men as well as others who were ignorant and superstitious. They sat there and listened admiringly to every pearly word which rolled off the smooth and slick tongue of the jester. But by far his greatest admirers were the women folk, particularly the aged bubbas (grandmothers), who applauded him very liberally and who, by their crying, wailing and moaning, helped to create that marvellous atmosphere of bewithchment which affirmed his amazing narrative genius.

That whole night and for several days and nights that followed, the ceremonial rite continued and would have lasted the rest of the

week. But the long journey home, which the groom's family had to make, prompted them to terminate the festivities in time which would permit them to return home for the following Sabbath. I have no detailed account of my parents' early married life but this much I venture to presume, that my father did not remain a boarder in his bride's home but that he returned with his family to Bereze and took his bride with him.

Love and affection in open demonstration or even in their private abode, was in those days absolutely taboo. Any such behaviour on the part of the young or old was considered to be evil and forebode sad and tragic consequences. Modesty and respect, fidelity and kindness, were expected and considered decent and proper. The yielding to natural instincts and inclinations was looked upon as a sinful and bestial manner of behaviour, and the evil machinations of the very devil himself. Whosoever departed from this self denial was shamed, condemned and ostracised.

In Bereze for a while the young couple made their home in grandfather's house, and father helped his parents in their dealings with the peasants, and in the orchards which they leased from the rich landowners, and sold the fruit which they obtained from them to shippers, to faraway cities, or to foreign countries.

For leisure and an easy life there was no room in those days, not even for the young and newly married bride, so that for mother the change from her father's house to that of her husband's merely meant a change of place. Mother had to help in the management of her new home and do her share of the work, and during the season when the fruit ripened in the orchards she had to help in the picking of the fruit from off the trees. Mother was but a little over five feet in height but she more than made up for this shortcoming by her vigour and fondness of hard work. She was more ambitious than her taller and physically healthier and stronger husband, and this was very evident in her daily active life. I therefore feel certain that it was through her motivation that father was induced to branch out for himself.

Twelve months after their marriage a son was born, and two years later a daughter, and the small house became overcrowded and the income too small to sustain the increasing family. It was about this time father had come across the house in Swalbitch, which offered a

small income as well as a home for his family. The house was leased and the family moved in and, to augment his small income, father dispensed liquor. The house situated by the main highway, where travellers often stepped off for a rest, acted in part as a non-official inn. For a number of years things worked out very nicely and the family managed on the income quite well and, as the family increased, cows were purchased, land was leased, and the family had its own milk, cheese, cream and butter, and from the land they leased they had vegetables, wheat and corn. Most of the house duties fell upon the shoulders of mother, because father still engaged in other activities, and from very early in the morning until late at night mother had a full and busy day's work to perform. A number of years passed in this way and all might have gone along quite well, then something happened which threw the whole set-up out of gear and brought about new problems and hardships.

The Russian government, for ever in need of money, and the government officials, who were forever bent on inventing new ways and means by which they could increase the national income, and at the same time increase their own means for obtaining large amounts of graft, induced the government to pass a law by which they nationalised the sale of liquor within a government monopoly. This came as a very hard blow to thousands of Jews, and it doomed their livelihood and income from the saloons and inns which they owned and operated. Some of the Jews who were able to dispense large quantities of liquor bribed the government agents and brewed their own brands, but the smaller dispensers could not afford to pay the large graft the agents demanded, and they were therefore forced to sell on the quiet and chance being caught. This was the situation my parents found themselves in and, due to the lesser amount they were now able to sell, the profit from this source diminished to a point where my father was forced to become more active outside, and the whole burden of the house plus the sale of illicit liquor fell upon the already heavily burdened shoulders of my mother. By this time her seventh child was already on the scene and I very well remember the hard life she was forced to lead. I also recollect the many occasions when news reached her that government agents were in the neighbourhood and how she would suddenly take to bed with the entire

stock of illicit liquor tucked carefully about her body, pretending she was very ill or expecting the arrival of a child, and remain there till she was sure that the government agents had left.

Equally dangerous and sometimes even more frightening than the government agents, were the peasants themselves for they would often become blind drunk and unruly, and engage in brawls among themselves which often led to a free fight for all. Then they would smash our windows and upset the whole house and frighten us out of our wits. Sometimes the peasants in their drunken stupor would come in the dead of the night, when the entire family was already fast asleep, and they would bang on our window shutters and try to force our barred door in a mad effort to obtain liquor. Our entire family would be awakened, and we used to lean with all our strength against the barred door in order to ease the strain against the bars and hinges, whilst mother and all of us, frightened and terrified, prayed to the Almighty that the drunken peasants would not break down our door and that our family would be saved.

Often tales of similar attacks on other Jewish liquor dispensers reached our ears, such as when drink-crazed peasants forced their way into the house, stealing whatever they were able to carry away, and frightening inmates to the point where some of them went out of their minds. In some cases the peasants caused serious injury which resulted in the death of the Jews.

It was during these hard and troublesome times that mother's health showed signs of weakening. After she bore and gave birth to her last issue, which turned out to be twin girls (Mary and Yette), her health became thereby even more precarious. She rose daily in the twilight hours of the morning and drove our cows to the field where they pastured, and it happened one morning that she was caught in a terrible storm and on her return home, drenched to the skin and half frozen from the cold, that she was forced to take to bed with a high fever and with a body-racking cough. After spending some time in bed she recuperated and went about her daily tasks. However, the cough never left her, and, as time went on, it became more and more chronic. For the rest of her life it gave her neither peace nor rest, and little by little it sapped her health and strength. She, however, seldom complained or deplored her condition, but

forever she had faith, and she prayed and hoped that some day her merciful God would cure her of her ailment, and restore her to her normal good health. Later, however, complications of asthma and bronchitis, nursed by the lowlands and marshes amongst which we lived, further aggravated her condition, and the London dampness and fogs where she spent the last years of her life did her no more good.

The emigration of our family from Russia to England, and the change of climate we made from the lowlands of the Pripet marshes to the damp and foggy climate of London did not improve mother's health very much. However the grocery shop which father bought with the help of the family relieved my mother of economic worry and the children relieved her of most of the household work, and otherwise took good care of her. Also in London she was able to receive medical attention which, together with the love and affection which all of her children showered upon her, did succeed in improving her health considerably.

She was sent to the seashore during summer time and there the warm and health-rendering sunshine did her a lot of good and at least for a time, restored her to comfortable health. The welfare of her children was the ever present problem which concerned her most. In this she was very sincere and unselfish. Her own life and the ambitions of her youth did not matter any more, now that her entire family was reunited and their future more or less secure. Her aim in life was to cement her family into a unity which concerned itself with the welfare of each of us.

Her legacy to her children did not consist of earthly riches or worldly goods, rather she left them a heritage of love, affection, and goodwill and a fine example of life which she herself preached and practised. This has stood them in good stead, and it has helped them to overcome adverse times and experiences and all the difficulties which are encountered in normal daily life. All of her life she worked hard and industriously, and with her it was not just work for its own sake that she indulged in, but rather it was work with a plan and system in it. Her death at the early age of fifty-nine years was all the more tragic because it occurred at a time when she was surrounded by all of her children, in peace and security, in love, honour and

respect. She was most regretfully mourned by her children, family and all other such persons who by chance or circumstance had the pleasure of knowing her.

And now to return to my own story and my experience in Buten. We spent our first evening at aunt Bas-Shevah's house where many of our relatives who lived in this town came to meet and see their newly arrived relatives from so far away a village. Father went to pay his respects to Uncle Joshe, with whom he had various business matters to transact, and with whom he promised mother to discuss a matter about which she had already written to her elder brother. This important matter was a plea on the part of my mother that her brother should exert his efforts to provide father with a position which would be more permanent, and be sufficiently lucrative so that mother would not have to continue with the sale of illicit liquor, as her poor health would not permit her to withstand the strain any longer. Uncle promised that he would consider the matter and take it up with his business associates. Tired from the journey and the day's excitement my sister and I retired quite early, and I soon fell sound asleep in our comfortable room and bed.

After we had our breakfast the next morning father prepared us for our introduction to uncle Joshe and aunt Leike. As we climbed up the stairs which led on to uncle Joshe's porch, and we entered within, father looked us over to make sure that we were in good order. He brushed our clothes and made us blow our noses and, after doing the same himself, he told me to behave nice and quietly in uncle's house, not to ask any questions, to make remarks only when I was spoken to and to accept whatever might be offered to me and say, thank you. He then opened the door and we entered Uncle's house. The room we entered was a very large one with a high ceiling, flowered papered walls, a very large dining table, numerous chairs and other fine pieces of furniture. I was overwhelmed by the richness of this room as well as by its size. From the centre of the ceiling, suspended by four chains, hung a very beautiful chandelier in the centre of which was set an oil burning lamp which could be raised up and down.

Uncle was sitting at a large desk busy with some papers and, as he noticed our entrance, he arose but remained standing by his desk.

Father walked over to him and offered his hand in greeting, to which Uncle responded rather formally and in a voice which was hardly audible. From a door to the left of the room near the entrance Aunt Leike came in, and as she left the door by which she entered open I noticed many shelves well stocked with cotton and woollen piece goods. This, I later learned, was a shop which Aunt Leike managed and which was quite lucrative.

We were introduced to both uncle and aunt who looked us over from head to foot and then asked us to be seated on a leather covered sofa that aunt pointed out to us. In a short while two young ladies walked into the room. They both greeted father in a friendly manner and then walked over to us, looked us over and asked for our names. They were cousins Chye-Mary and Chane-Rivke. Following them in a quiet and rather frightened manner cousin Sholem came into the room, and after greeting father he came over to us. He greeted my sister and sitting down by my side, he observed me very closely but without saying a word. Remembering father's instructions I sat quietly fidgeting with my hands and not knowing what to do with them. Although both my cousins were very nice and very refined the younger one of the two, that is Chane-Mary, immediately appeared to me to be very sympathetic and I took a very strong liking to her.

Uncle Joshe was a tall square shouldered man. He had prominent features and deep set grey eyes. He had a very prominent square chin, bushy eyebrows, and his front teeth protruded very conspicuously. Although his general appearance was that of a severe person he nevertheless showed signs of weakness, and his austere and intolerant behaviour did not very well hide its superficiality.

Aunt Leike on the other hand was a self-centred woman, dictatorial, proud and dominating. I very soon learned that the restrained mannerism in which everybody in the house behaved was due to her rigid enforcement of formality, which she considered to constitute an inherent and inalienable attribute which providence entrusted to her, and which it was her duty to teach and to enforce upon her household. She was of small stature, a nervous disposition and a busybody of extraordinary energy and activity. A healthy appetite she considered to be sign of ill manners, and she looked with disdain upon a person who over-indulged in anything. Although outwardly

she gave the impression of being stingy or frugal, I do not believe that it was for economical reasons that she expected persons to act in restraint and self denial.

Uncle Joshe and Aunt Leike were married when he was fourteen years of age and she was about the same age. For several years Uncle continued with his studies and when he was still quite young, he started on his own in forestry and was quite successful from the beginning. He built the large and very elaborate house in which he lived, and he also added barns, stables and several outhouses and he enlarged the orchard. He also owned many cows, horses and carriages and, at the time of my arrival in Buten, he was considered to be one of the richest citizens there and he was interested in many enterprises among which were two turpentine distilleries. My father was employed by him, first in one forest or another, but of late he was in charge of one of the turpentine distilleries.

Before we took leave from uncle and aunt I noticed that I was the subject of a discussion which took place between them and father, but their hushed words were inaudible to me. Then Aunt came over to me and said, 'David you will come here every morning at eight o'clock for your breakfast and at seven o'clock for the evening meal.'

Although I knew that the meals in this house would be plentiful and of the best quality I nevertheless would have preferred to have eaten at Aunt Bas-Shevah's house, where I felt much more at home and where the general atmosphere was informal and much more liberal. But I had no choice in this matter and so had to be satisfied with the knowledge that I certainly would not go hungry.

It took me quite some time to get accustomed to the formality of Uncle's home and to adjust my behaviour at their table. In my desire to be nice and avoid bothering them, I tried to copy the mannerism of my cousins. I ate sparsely, never asked for an extra portion, and even if I was asked whether I wanted more of any serving, I very humbly said, 'No thank you.' But the truth of the matter was that on many an occasion I left the table with a half empty stomach. For that I certainly could not blame my host although, in a way and indirectly, my aunt was to blame for this, because she so often admonished my cousin Sholem for his over indulgence in food, calling him a glutton and voracious eater, so that when I felt still

hungry I refrained from further indulgence. On many an occasion a most serious argument followed my leaving the table between my appetite and my conscience, but as time went on I somehow managed to adjust this problem to the satisfaction of my stomach and conscience as well.

After breakfast Aunt used to hand me a small stipend with which to buy some lunch, as on my way to cheder I had to pass by Aunt Bas-Shevah's little sweet shop. She nearly always used to call me in and graciously hand me a bag containing sometimes some Halva and sometimes other kinds of sweets. Cousin Chana-Rivke, who was very affectionate and well disposed towards me, would often without asking me place an extra roll or a piece of cake on my plate, and because of her interest in me and her good psychological understanding and observations she soon learned, by signs on my part and behaviour, that I was in need of something and handed same to me.

Cousin Sholem was two years older than I was. He was friendly, kind and very considerate towards me but I could not play with him because Aunt would not allow him to play with anyone, nor would she allow him to play outside in the street. However, he would often invite me into his room or take me into the courtyard where we used to play amongst the various buildings during the late summer. When the late fruit in their orchard was ripe we would both steal quietly into the orchard and eat all the fruit we could manage to stuff into ourselves. Also during this season, on Saturdays, the whole family used to spend the day in the orchard but, with his parents around, we had to behave ourselves and we could only partake of whatever fruit they offered us. However, cousin Chane-Rivke used to often stuff an apple or a pear into my pocket stealthily and send me on a pretended errand, which I soon learned was done only to give me a chance to eat the fruit or hide it away for a later feast.

After our visit to Uncle's house father told me that he would now go to see the rabbi in whose cheder I was to continue my studies. He led me across the market place, turned into a narrow dirty side street, passed several small houses and then entered into an old dilapidated shack, which gave good promise that it would tumble down long before the school term would be over. Inside, we found ourselves in a large room which had a long table and benches alongside its

elongated sides, and several tiny windows, the panes of which were all spattered with mud on the outside and it could be easily seen that they had not been cleaned for a very long time. In a corner of the room stood what once must have been a clothes closet but was now doorless, and on several shelves were piled prayer books and study books, most of which had seen better days because very few of them had covers to them, and others had just a lot of pages hanging onto the binding strings. Sitting on a stool at the head of the table was Rabbi Gershon, cradling himself to and fro as he read out aloud from a large Talmudic text. He was so absorbed in his study that he did not notice us as we came in.

It was not until we both stood facing Rabbi Gershon that he noticed us. Quickly placing his index finger on the page of the text in front of him, he raised his glasses to his forehead, scrutinised us, and then rising slowly he exclaimed, 'Reb Hershel, Sholem Aleichem, Sholem Aleichem', at the same time offering his hand to my father.

Father returned his greetings and told me to say, 'Sholem Aleichem' to the rabbi. Father exchanged some words with the rabbi and then the rabbi walked over to where the books were piled up, took a volume of one of the five testaments and, opening it at random, he asked me to read and translate a chapter. After I had read and translated the chapter that he pointed out to me, he turned over several pages and pointed to another chapter for me to read. When I had finished reading and translating the second chapter Rabbi Gershon looked at my father, nodded his head in an indication of satisfaction which pleased my father very much, and he told me to come on Sunday morning at nine o'clock when the cheder term was to commence.

After father had attended to several other matters, which included my sister's apprenticeship to a dressmaker, he prepared to leave Buten to go to the turpentine factory where he was then in charge.

I stayed for almost a whole year in Buten, and I attended the two semesters at the same cheder. It took me but a short while to get acquainted with my class mates and select a group from them with whom I played, and on our off days went rambling through the town, and on very hot days we swam by the water mill. Occasionally we paid visits to the priest's orchard, where we tried to steal cherries and

other fruits as they became ripe and in these expeditions my experience in the old post station orchard came in very handy.

The class room hours, commencing at nine o'clock in the morning during the winter time, often dragged into the late hours of the evening, but during the very hot summer days we were allowed to go free very much earlier. There were two rivers nearby the town. One, called the Schara, was a very long river which wound for hundreds of miles and finally entered into the Nieman at the town of Brest-Litovsk, the other was a short river, but very wide and deep, which entered the Schara a short distance out of Buten. By these rivers we spent many a happy day and evening swimming, boating, fishing and, in the winter time, skating. *[Uncle David's geographical memory has gone awry. River Schara joins River Nieman about one hundred miles north of Brest-Litovsk. -Ed.]*

Rabbi Gershon was tall and lean. He had a long greying beard which still retained several original red hairs, and he was a very strict disciplinarian. He did not use a ruler or a cane with which to punish his pupils but a contrivance all of his own invention, which was very effective. He used to sharpen pencil length pieces of wood to a very sharp point and, at the least provocation by any of his pupils, he used to prick them with it on their foreheads with such quickness and accuracy that it frightened the offending pupil even more than the sharp pain it inflicted. We used to steal these pointers whenever we had a chance but as if by magic another would soon take its place, much sharper and more painful than the former one. Every day another batch of students were appointed by him to clean and sweep out the class room, and very often the rest of his house.

The rabbi's wife was an awful nag, and she used to frequently insist that the rabbi permit her to send one of the pupils to do errands for her. The pupils didn't mind being sent on errands because it gave them a chance to while away some time on the outside but usually, on their return, the rabbi's wife would scold them for keeping her waiting so long, and then the rabbi would make a fuss because the pupils had missed part of the lesson. Sometimes the rabbi blamed his wife for interfering during his lessons. Often she responded by giving him a piece of her mind, and then a disturbance lasting all day would ensue.

It was a very happy year that I spent in Buten. The memory is still fairly fresh in my mind. But the year soon passed away and the time came for me to return home. I had hoped that I would go back to Buten to continue my studies but fate willed otherwise.

Uncle Joshe kept his promise to my father and he arranged for him a better paying and more permanent position by permitting him to take charge of a larger turpentine factory which was located about twenty miles away from Buten, and about the same distance as my home was from Buten. This factory was but recently built but not yet quite complete and, although a fairly large house had already been put up, little more than the four walls was as yet finished. It was therefore decided that just my father and I should go there, and the rest of our family remain in Swalbitch until the house was ready for them to live in.

On my return home I learned that another important event in our family was about to happen, which had to do with my eldest sister Rivke-Mariam. A sister of my father's who had some years earlier emigrated to London had a son of marriageable age, and because he was so very orthodox she and her husband insisted that the son import a girl from the old country to take to himself for a wife. Knowing that at least two of my sisters were already of marriageable age, and that they had been brought up in an orthodox way, the parents wrote to my father and proposed that my eldest sister come to London for the purpose of marrying their son. They also informed us that the young man was in good circumstances, owning his own very profitable grocery shop. They also mentioned that they were willing to accept my sister just as she was, which meant that they did not ask for any dowry. To my father this was like a fateful event, because he had no dowry to give.

My sister was not too happy with the whole idea because, having lived all of her life in this lonely and secluded place where she was born, she feared the very thought of going to such a large city as London. Also, her ignorance of English customs and language bothered her very much and made her wish that the marriage proposition had never been made. There were also many things about the young man which she would like to know, and which she could not find out until she would get there. But what she was afraid of

most was that because of the great expense and bother to which her cousin's family would have to go through she might not find the courage to refuse to marry him, even if she should not find things and the young man suitable. No matter from which angle she tried to consider this matter the whole proposition seemed to her to be fantastic. She therefore hesitated before she decided one way or another, but the longer she hesitated the more enthusiastic her cousin in London became, and the letters which his family wrote to my parents were filled with descriptions of the good fortune which awaited my sister in London. Then one day a large envelope arrived, and it contained a fully paid ticket for her passage, as well as a money order for other incidentals. This had the effect of deciding the problem and in a short while my sister was on her way to London.

It seems, as I learned a number of years later, that my sister was very disappointed on meeting the young man she was to marry . She was brought up in a strictly religious manner but the fantastic religious fervour of this family was altogether strange to her, and annoyed her greatly. Also the intended husband was a big disappointment to her.

He was but little over five feet in height with reddish hair and a carrot complexion, and so very short-sighted that unless he actually touched the next person he could not see him very well. The grocery shop which he owned was truly enough one of the best shops located in the East End of London. It was kept open from six in the morning until twelve midnight for six days of the week, and only closed during the twenty four hours of the Sabbath. The work in this shop was plentiful and it was very hard and exhausting. After she had stayed in the shop for a couple of weeks, and had a chance to acquaint herself with the life it offered and the man with whom she was to share it, she decided that it would never do for her and, during a talk she had with another of father's sisters in London, she told her that she could not go through with the marriage proposal, even if it meant that she would have to return home.

This naturally caused an awful consternation in the family, and made things very uncomfortable for my sister. Her cousin and his family tried very hard to make her change her mind, pointing out the great expense to which they had gone, but all their pleading and

disconcerting arguments could not make her change her mind and, one Saturday afternoon when she visited her other aunt, she made it clear that she was not going to return to her cousin's home. This aunt was very much upset and did not know what to do but, after my sister had cried bitterly for many an hour telling how she felt about the whole thing, my aunt realised that she was absolutely determined not to marry her cousin and that it would be a crime to try to make her change her mind. My aunt told her that if that was how she felt about it she need not go back to her cousin's house. She could stay with her, and help in her grocery shop as well as in her household work. This pleased my sister very much and made her very happy. After a while the two families got together and following a great deal of deliberation they called off the wedding and my sister remained in her other aunt's house.

The family who had sent for my sister felt very bad about the outcome of this venture, but they felt even worse because once more their son remained without the prospects of a wife. It took but a short time for our rejected cousin Isser Cohen, and his mother Libe-Gittel who was the brains behind the scheming and the one to have the last word in deciding whom he should or should not marry, to go into a huddle in an effort to solve the problem of his marriage. They believed Rivke was the answer to their long and ardent prayers for a bride. She possessed the qualities and requirements which to them were most important. Though their adventure had miscarried, they did not consider that their idea was as fantastic as some of their family and friends thought it was. There was the satisfaction that it might have succeeded but for the will of God, and they had at least uncovered a source which offered them further hopes for the attainments of their aims. They knew that Rivke had a younger sister and that she too was of marriageable age, and they had been informed that like her sister she had all of the desirable qualifications.

Without wasting any more time in pondering over their disappointment, they sent a long and friendly letter to my father, in which they expressed regrets about my sister Rivke's failure to realise the great opportunity which they had offered her, assuring my father at the same time that they accepted the outcome to be a providential determination, and they therefore entertained no ill feelings towards

her. And, in their further efforts to assure both of my parents that they did not in any way blame them at all, they offered to consider sending for their younger daughter Chaike, this time with the stipulation that if she decided to come she must be prepared to marry their son. This new proposition confused my parents very much and they did not know what to do. They consulted my sister Chaike and asked her how she felt about it. They told her to consider the matter seriously before she made up her mind one way or another. In the meantime they wrote to my sister Rivke about this new development and asked her first of all as to whether she was definitely determined in her refusal to marry her cousin Isser, and whether she had no objection to her younger sister going to London for the purpose of marrying the same young man in question. They also asked her to give a frank description of the young man, and the true reason why she refused to marry him.

Rivke wrote back a long and descriptive letter in which she explained her opinion about her cousin, which was to the effect that he was a decent, honest and a very sincere young man with a future more or less already assured, but who as a man did not at all appeal to her and that it was for this very reason that she had refused to marry him, and that she was quite certain and determined about her decision. She further assured in her letter that she had no objection to her younger sister coming to London to marry this young man, emphasising at the same time that Chaike should think very seriously and make sure that if she did come she would be willing to marry her cousin no matter whether he appealed to her or not. She further stated that whilst she went to London without knowing anything at all about her cousin, her sister Chaike, on the other hand, had by now ample information about him on which to weigh up the offer.

My sister Chaike, who had followed the proceedings of the whole affair very closely, did not hesitate very long in her acceptance of the offer, and in a short while another large envelope arrived containing a fully paid passage and a money order for an even larger sum than the last time, and they assured my sister she could spend it in any way she pleased. In a short time my second sister was on her way to London, the city which was destined to become our home in the near future.

In the meantime life did not come to a standstill as far as my sister Rivke was concerned, for there was plenty of hard work for her at her aunt Hodes' house where, in addition to the housework, she also helped them in their grocery shop. But this did not bother her very much because she was a strong and healthy young woman and quite well accustomed to hard work. She was slowly getting over the excitement of her recent experience, which so much contrasted with the quiet and uneventful life to which she was accustomed, and which had so suddenly transplanted her from the rustic and rural environments of country life into the busy life of hustle and bustle of the largest city in the world.

It did not seem that her mind was meant to be at ease or that her life should proceed without much ado, for she had hardly spent more than a couple of weeks at her second aunt's house when she became once more involved in an affair of the heart. But this time it was not a one sided affair. Another cousin, the son of the aunt with whom she was staying, fell deeply in love with her, and this time she found that her own heart was quite as much involved,

This cousin Solly, an abbreviation for Solomon (Cohen), was a very fine young man who had been brought up and well educated in London. His parents were very proud of him because he did have a brilliant mind and they hoped that he would make a wealthy marriage, and choose a young lady from some of the rich families of London. It therefore came as a terrible shock to them when they learned of his affair with my sister, and they immediately did everything they could to persuade him to give her up and abandon the foolish idea of marrying this poor girl, whom they considered to be so very much below his station, lacking in education and in the way of life to which he was accustomed, They also warned him that if he were to insist upon this marriage, to which they would never consent, he could not expect to receive any help from them and that he would have to struggle along with her all by himself. But young Solly was madly in love with this simple, but very clever and beautiful, country cousin. He realised that she was not familiar with the formal life of London and that she could not speak or understand the English language, but in the short time he knew her he found her to be very apt and willing to learn, and to be endowed with good

common sense and understanding. He also noticed how hard she worked in their house and grocery shop, and how well she took to the business. He noticed her proficiency in whatever she did, and how the customers liked her, and the traders who came into their shop admired her very much. He also admired the courage and independence which she exemplified in her battle with the family whose son she had refused to marry, and her compromise of comfort and security, and her acceptance instead of hardship and struggle and an unknown future rather than to spend a futile and loveless life. All of these facts convinced him that his parents were unreasonable in their objections to her, and he loved and admired her all the more because of all that. He very much respected his father, who was a recognised Talmudist, and he very much loved and admired his mother who was a clever and gracious woman. But he also realised that for the many years they had spent in the East End of London, becoming economically secure and where they had built up a very prominent name for themselves, they were inclined to let pride rather than reason guide them in this matter of his love affair.

When his parents realised that they could not make any headway with him they turned their attentions upon my sister and they pleaded and argued with her, that she should break up the affair. My sister told them that it was not at all up to her, that she was quite innocent in the whole affair, that it was true that she loved their son and admired him very much but, poor lonesome girl that she was, what could she do to dissuade their son from loving her. They were not at all satisfied with her reply and they accused her of breaking their trust in her, and they reminded her of the time when she came begging to them that they should help her and take her into their house, and that now she is repaying them for their kindness by giving them so much trouble and heartache. Poor unfortunate girl, she was being tossed about in an angry and turbulent sea and slowly being sucked into a vortex from which she could not see any escape. What was she to do in this her embarrassing position? She had no friend to turn to and she knew no person from whom she might obtain counsel or advice. During the day she worked hard in the house and the shop but she spent the nights in torture and agony. She cried and lamented and in her despair she turned to her God in prayer.

> *Dear God of my fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, what earthly sin have I in my young life committed that I should be so cruelly punished and why have you sanctioned that I be torn away from my home and parents and flung into this unfriendly world. Have I so sinfully transgressed your laws and commandments, and has arrogance been so great, that for the rest of my life I must suffer and languish and forever shift from one misadventure to another. Help me, oh God, in this hour of trouble and make my adversaries be more kind to me.*

Her only consolation was the repeated assurances of her lover that she should have patience and be brave, because no matter how his people felt about her he would never forsake her, and that eventually they would be happy together for the rest of their lives.

After a lapse of some time both uncle and aunt realised that their objection were in vain and, afraid of turning their son against them, they eased their pressure and allowed things to take their own course. Before long everybody took it for granted that the lovers had won their hard fought battle. Whilst she was busy in the house and shop her cousin went about to look for a shop to buy, and as the days went by she enjoyed happiness and pleasure while the preparations for their marriage was being discussed.

Just about this time her younger sister Chaike arrived in London. Cousin Isser, his mother and family were just as happy and quite as well satisfied with the newly arrived intended bride as they were with her elder sister, because once more they met a nice looking and healthy young girl. And Aunt Libe-Gittel in particular was even more pleased with her second importation because, in this case, her sharp eyes recognised a girl whom she could much more easily control and mould to abide and conform to her fanatical form of orthodoxy.

Isser's family were honest and sincere about their marriage offers to both of my sisters. They were altogether blind to the shortcomings of their son, which was in fact the only reason my elder sister refused to marry him. They thought that their hurry in placing her in his grocery shop was primarily responsible for the failure of their plan. Therefore, when Chaike arrived, they decided that she would be

allowed to visit his shop so that she could see for herself the fine business which he owned, but that she would not be allowed to work there until after they were married. They therefore brought her from the boat on which she arrived directly to his mother's house and there they waited on her and served her as would become a princess. They provided her with the best of food, fruit and candies in such variety and abundance such as she had never seen, and they clothed her and dressed her in silks and satins and bought jewellery for her and fussed over her in a manner which practically overwhelmed her. They did not allow her to go out of the house by herself, or to visit any members of the family, except on Saturday afternoons when the rest of their family were able to accompany her, and in particular they were careful that she should not be alone with her sister, because they were afraid that in some way her sister might disillusion her about marriage by describing the hard life that lay in store once the marriage was consummated. They also hurried preparations for the wedding and before Chaike had a chance to look about her the wedding was at hand.

One Saturday afternoon my two sisters met at the house of a relative and took the opportunity to discuss their approaching weddings. It was a recognised custom in those days that younger sisters should not get married before their elder sisters. First, because such an act was considered to be an insult to the elder sister and second, because it was feared that ill luck would fall on all parties involved. So my sister Rivke pleaded with her younger sister that she should under no circumstances consent to get married before her own wedding took place. Whether Chaike promised her elder sister that she would respect her prerogative I am not aware, but I do know that Rivke warned her younger sister that if she should consent to a wedding whereby she would marry first, then she, Rivke, would not attend her wedding and furthermore that she would never forgive her for what she would consider to be an insult to her.

Whether it was the intention of Isser's family to spite my elder sister by arranging for her younger sister to get married before she was able to arrange her own wedding was never made clear to us. But they did arrange for Chaike's wedding to take place before her older sister's wedding and Rivke kept to her warning and did not attend

the wedding, and the estrangement between the two sisters lasted for many years.

Rivke's own wedding took place a short time later, also without the presence of her younger sister, and it was not until our whole family had emigrated to London that the whole drama was made known to us in full detail. Mother was very much shocked when she learned all the facts, and she immediately set to work to bring the two estranged sisters together. It was not an easy job to perform, but mother persisted and after several years succeeded.

I will now return to that early spring, when we returned from Buten for the Passover and my sister Rivke was preparing to go to London to marry Isser. It was for the last time that during this Passover our entire family celebrated the ritual of the Seder together in this lonely secluded house by the highway.

As in previous years the house was spring cleaned thoroughly in honour of this holy festival. The entire contents were carried outside to be washed and aired. Every nook and corner of our house was scrubbed scrupulously, and the walls and ceilings white washed and calcamised. Matzos, wine and nuts, purchased in Buten, had been brought home together with new outfits for the children.

Father dressed in his white robe and, with a white scull cap on his head, sat at the table leaning against a pillow, looking very much like an Oriental Potentate which on this night he is supposed to be, and mother sat beside him dressed in her best fineries and wearing the gold watch and chain which father presented her with on their wedding day. Elijah's gilt silver cup, the only one we possessed, stood in the centre of our table filled to the brim with sweet red wine. Our oil lamp burned dimly. The lights of the candles in the mirror flickered. And our four brass candlesticks shone through the varicoloured wine glasses and sent streams of coloured rays in all directions.

Yet the usual happiness and joy of this season seemed to lack the cheer and gaiety of bygone years, and a feeling of sadness and grief permeated the family. Now and then mother wiped away a tear, and father's voice broke down and sounded harsh and discordant, and the children sat at the table quietly and sombre. Oldest sister Rivke was most perturbed of all, and every now and then she turned her

head aside and buried her face in her handkerchief and sobbed bitterly. My twin sisters (Mary and Yette), now old enough to sit with us at the table, were still too young to understand what it was all about, but in their immature childish way they seemed to sense that something was wrong and every now and then asked why sister Rivke was crying. I was already about eight years of age and old enough to know what was bothering our family, and as I now and then noticed mother wiping away a tear or my sister Rivke's body rock with hysteria, a feeling of sorrow and sadness would come over me. Whenever I was able to ascertain that no one would notice I shamefully wiped away a tear from my eyes and tried hard to subdue the sobs seeking to free themselves from my choked up throat.

Our family up to now formed a unit which only occasionally and for short intervals became separated, otherwise we enjoyed the security and happiness of a united family. But as we sat at this Passover Seder, celebrating the emancipation of the children of Israel from bondage in the land of the Pharaohs, and recounting the ancient Haggadah which describes their miraculous escape from Egypt and their march through the wilderness on to the Land which was promised to their forefathers, the land of Eretz-Yisroel, a feeling of sorrow and sadness prevailed in our midst, because we felt that our own family was losing its unity as one of our members was about to journey to a distant land, and may become lost to us for ever.

4

Khozshike, Smolne, Sventaia-Volia

YOUTH
Poor child thou art nothing
In the scheme of things.
Chance just grips you
and hither and thither flings.
But as you are flung
to and fro,
snatch a bit here and there
for your hardships to show.

To reach the village of Khozshike we had to travel for the most part over the same road which led to Buten, through Bereze and past the railroad crossing until about 15 miles away from Buten. At this spot we turned off to the right, on a road which ran through the village of Khozshike all the way to the railroad town of Telechan. This was by far the worst road I had ever travelled over, for it was full of deep mud holes and wheel ruts, which caused our wagon to lurch from side to side dangerously and I had to hold on tightly to the sides of our wagon in order not to fall out. On both sides of the road for as far as the eye could see there were bogs and marshes, stagnating pools, their surfaces covered with tall reeds and grasses, so that not a sign of water could be seen anywhere. Every now and then we crossed over rotted wooden bridges badly in need of repair, which could hardly sustain our horse and wagon.

The ten miles we had to cover on this road in order to reach the village took us many hours to ride, and in some parts the road narrowed to a mere path which literally squeezed its way through the

thickly wooded forest where the thick foliage obliterated the sun, and where the weird solitude and loneliness frightened me out of my wits. It was a hazardous and dismal road without a sign of life anywhere to be seen or heard except for a wild hare or a wood mouse which, having been disturbed by the creaking noise of our wagon, darted swiftly across the road and disappeared into the brush. The solitude was awfully depressing, so that even the crackling of a breaking twig or the flutter of birds wings overhead made my father and me as well as our horse startle with fright. When at last the village came into sight I was very much relieved even though it did not look very appealing. It was very evident that here was a very poor village. The peasant huts were old and dilapidated and hardly any tilled land or trees could anywhere be seen.

In this village lived the family of Beril Rabinowitz, who was also interested in forestry and was reputed to be well-to-do, but who was in no way related to my mother's family by the same name. Beril was a well respected and educated man, and his wife Sarah, his daughter Leah and two sons Vigdor and Joseph were all very nice and pleasant and most desirable neighbours to have. The turpentine factory which was our destination was about three miles away from their home and it was located on the fringes of a very large forest.

Two other Jewish families lived in this village, all of them comprising a family group. The oldest member of this family group and the father of both of the other families was Noah and his wife who lived in a very large house, which they conducted as an inn. One of his daughters was married to Beril, and the other to a man by the name of Yekusiel. Each owned their own homes, closely grouped but separated from each other by the road we came by.

Beril's son Joseph was about my age, and his brother Vigdor two or three years his senior and with my father they hired a melamed (teacher) who was to live in their house and instruct the three of us.

On our arrival at this village we stopped at their house for a short while where a meal was quickly prepared for us, and then we set out for our destination in the nearby forest. We proceeded for about two miles, then we came to a river where I often swam or went boating during the year I spent in Buten. We crossed a wooden bridge and but a few more minutes of riding brought us to the turpentine

factory. We drove up to a large log cabin which evidently was newly constructed. It had a shingled roof and a stable and barn built on one side and to the back of the cabin. When I entered I found only one very large room, no floor, just a lot of sand spread for comfortable walking on, a large wooden table, several benches made out of plain wooden planks, and a bed crudely constructed of the same material.

In a corner of the room stood a built-in baker's oven, which in every respect resembled the baker's oven in our home, and another smaller oven for heating and cooking purposes. Opposite the entrance to the cabin, a door led to a smaller room which we later used as a cool storage room, and a door from this room led to the barn and stable. In the rear of the stable, somewhat removed from it and hidden by shrubs and trees, stood a small booth which answered for the purpose of urinal and other physical requirements.

One end of the log cabin was partitioned off, and a door led to a fairly large room in which lived the caretaker of the smolne, a peasant about seventy years of age with his wife who was twenty years his junior, and a daughter of his wife by her first husband who was about my age. Opposite the cabin door and about a hundred feet away from it, was a well which had fresh cool water drinkable during the cool seasons of the year, but during the hot summer time, a strong odour of turpentine permeated into the well and caused the water to become offensive for drinking purposes. We therefore had to bring water from the village during that time of the year.

After a short distance on a downward grade to the right of the log cabin there was marshland, which stretched for a couple of hundred feet to the river edge, and lengthways stretched for many miles. This gave us an easy access to the river; however during the spring it was flooded, and during the rest of the year the numerous pits which existed there were very deep and retained the water from the flood season all around the year. It was therefore very dangerous for anyone who was not well acquainted with it to reach the river by that way. One of my twin sisters once fell into one of them, and our entire family including a number of peasants who worked for us searched for her a whole day before she was discovered. Luckily this pit into which she fell had very little water in it, otherwise she would surely have drowned.

It was from the underground stumps and roots of coniferous trees that turpentine was extracted. After the trees had been cut down, their stumps were allowed to remain in the ground for at least seven years, after which time they were dug up, roots and all. Some of the stumps were so large that only one of them at a time could be brought out of the forest into the factory, and due to the absence of roads in the forest and the soft nature of the ground there, most of the transportation of the stumps was done in the cold winter months, when the ground was frozen hard and snow and sleds could be used. In the factory grounds the stumps were broken up into smaller segments, after which they were placed by experienced stowers into a large cone shaped oven.

This oven, built of cement, had an overall height of about fifty feet, twenty five feet of which was sunk into the ground, and the other twenty five feet rose from the surface of the ground up to a cone shape with an opening in its tip of about a foot in diameter. Its diameter from the surface of the ground to the bottom was about twenty five feet. It took a hundred workmen about two weeks to fill the oven with the stumps through an opening at the surface of the ground. After the oven had been filled, the opening was cemented air tight. At the tip of the cone which had a metal cap, was a short neck looking like a smoker's pipe, the stem of which reached downwards into a large wooden tub filled with cold water. Here the stem was joined to a pipe which coiled in the tub almost to its bottom. From there it passed through a hole in the tub and protruded for several inches.

Another oven, large enough to hold about a dozen logs each ten feet in length, was built alongside the cone shaped oven, and it was kept burning for three weeks during which time it heated the stumps causing them to sweat, and to release the turpentine in a vaporous form. The vapour rose to the top and passed down the pipe which coiled in the cold water filled tub, where it cooled into a fluid in which form it poured from the oven and outside the tub into a barrel.

After the three weeks of heating the fires in the other oven were put out, and it took another three weeks for the stumps to cool down before they could be removed. The now shrunken stumps which filled but a small part of the oven were removed and placed into other

ovens where they were ignited and, as they burned, they gave off a pitch-like fluid called 'smolne', after which these factories were named, Smolne. Yet another important by-product was charcoal, which was all that was left of the stumps after they were burnt in the second oven.

Mostly because none of the houses had baths, or means of warming a sufficient amount of water to take a bath in, we used to bathe in the large cooling tub. The water in the tub, heated by the vapour passing through the pipes was just warm enough to bathe in, and the turpentine with which the water was saturated was considered to be very healthy for the body. It was on this account that our friends from the village often came to bathe in the tub. The bather had to be very careful however, because the tub was about twenty feet in height, and usually filled to the brim with water, so that he had to stand on the coils in order not to drown.

The forest in which this smolne was located was said to be thousands of square miles in size and harboured all sorts of animals, including wolves and bears. During the winter months, when food was scarce, they would sometimes scratch at our door in the middle of the night and their foot prints could easily be identified in the snow all about the smolne. Very often peasants passing through the forest were attacked by the wolves, and on several occasions peasants passed by the smolne with horses that had been attacked and were bleeding, and sometimes with parts of their limbs torn away. In these parts life was grim, hard and dangerous.

Only the very strongest and fittest were able to survive. Yet, before long, I roamed about in the marshes and forest, unafraid and not giving a thought to the many dangers which lurked all about me.

Our cabin was built from large logs. To make them weatherproof some sort of moss was placed in between the logs. After we had lived in the cabin for several months, and particularly when the cold winter came around, the moss became the breeding ground for beetles, cockroaches and spiders that, finding the inside of the cabin warm and comfortable, made themselves very much at home in there. In spite of our spraying the moss with turpentine, kerosene and other insect exterminators, they, together with other insects which crawled out from the sandy floor, took legal possession of the cabin, and I

have no doubt that from their point of view they looked upon us to be the intruders. They made life for us very miserable and disgusting. It was bad enough during the day time, but when we retired and went to sleep then the real trouble started. It was not until the inside walls were plastered and wooden floors laid in the entire cabin, that we succeeded in getting rid of most of them.

Until then father and I settled in the cabin as best we could. From home we had brought with us all sorts of household necessities, pots and pans for cooking, dishes and glassware, eating utensils, bedding to sleep on and bed linen, and whatever other things which we needed for housekeeping. Father arranged with the old man Noah's wife to bake bread for us, but all other cooking we did ourselves. The nearest town where we could buy whatever we needed, was about seven miles away from the smolne. With our horse and wagon we made frequent trips there, and bought meat, flour, various kinds of grits (coarse maize) and so on, and milk was delivered to us from the village, as well as cheese and butter, at most twice a week.

In preparation of the eventual coming here of the rest of the family, father hired peasant carpenters to partition the cabin into several rooms, and lay the floors and do the plastering. However, all this took a long time to accomplish and it was almost two years before the rest of our family was able to join us.

I walked every morning except on the Sabbath to Beril's house in the village for my education, and returned home at nightfall. During the summer time this daily trip was quite pleasant. However, when the winter came, heavy snow obliterated the road and made my trip hazardous. The bitter cold forced me to turn back after I had ploughed through the deep snow for a short distance, and I often returned home with a frozen face and nose, hands and feet. Expecting that the smolne was going to be our permanent home, father leased a potato field some distance the other side of the village, and he hired some peasants to plant a vegetable garden not far from our cabin. He did not bother about a grain field, because he was able to obtain whatever grain we needed from the peasants for very little money.

For a greater part of the year, with the exception of seeding and harvest time, most of the village peasants worked for my father in the smolne. They therefore respected him very much and did a lot

of work for him without accepting any pay for it. They would also frequently come to him for advances, in anticipation of the work they would be doing for him during the winter time, at which times they used to bring him presents such as a basket of eggs, a chicken or a bolt of cloth, as well as any grain they could spare. At other times they offered to do some work around the house or send their wives to do the house cleaning, mending or washing for us.

After spending the first summer here we returned home to Swalbitch for the high holidays and the festival of Succoth. We made two such trips home, and by the time the third trip had come around our entire family came to live in the smolne.

The second trip home was for the Passover Festival, one year after we first arrived in the smolne. The spring floods were then at their worst and the road very bad to travel over. The worst part of the road which father expected to find partly flooded and dangerous to ride over was the first few miles from the village, beyond which the road through the forest would be hard and dry. Father therefore decided to start out at midnight and cover this part of the road during the night and ride in daylight over that part of the road which would be dangerous to ride at night. Our wagon was loaded with matzos which father had ordered to be baked for him in the nearby towns, and with sacks of potatoes and many other things, so that there was no room for me inside the wagon. So father bundled me up in a lot of clothes, because it was still quite cold, and made a comfortable place for me on top of all the other things.

Due to the late hour I soon fell asleep and father, also bundled up in several coats and a blanket in his driver's seat, took charge of the horse. The road to the forest was very muddy and full of ruts and as the wagon lurched from side to side I slowly slipped off from the wagon, and falling in the soft mud I did not even wake up. Father knew nothing about what had happened to me. He therefore proceeded until he came to the forest. Glad that he was past a bad part of the road, he halted the horse and looked behind to make sure that I was well and comfortable. He felt over that part of the wagon where I was supposed to be, but to his great distress he could not locate me. He started to call me by my name, thinking that I was asleep in some part of the wagon but, receiving no answer, he searched the wagon

thoroughly and soon realised what must have happened. It was useless to turn the horse around, because he could make better time on foot. He therefore set out to look for me. His greatest fear was that by the time he would find me a forest beast might have smelled my presence, and made a good meal out of me. He therefore hurried as fast as his legs and the muddy road permitted him to walk, and after an hour's walk he noticed a heavy bundle lying in the road and guessed that it was his son. He came over to where I was lying in the mud, and after many digs and shakes he succeeded in waking me up. We walked to our wagon and proceeded on our journey, with me none the worse for my experience except that we had lost several hours which could not be made up.

Father had informed my mother and the rest of our family on what day they might expect us home, but as that day passed by and we had not arrived they were a little upset. However, they did not worry very much because that was how life ran its course at that time and in that part of the world, in hardship and danger and in many disappointments every day and all the year around.

It was as the saying went, 'if one must of necessity go to battle, he must quickly accustom himself to the smell of gunpowder'. That was how life then and there was constituted and how it had to be accepted. The story of my disappearance from the wagon was told and retold many times during the Passover, and alongside with all the other miracles of Passover my escape from harm occasioned the offering of many a prayer by my family.

This was the last Passover I spent in Swalbitch, my first home and birthplace, and the last time I was to be here for the rest of my life. Perhaps it is but a lot of silly nonsense and sentimental tripe and little more than childish fancy that the word 'home' always brings Swalbitch to my mind. For the many places in which I have lived, and the many homes which I have had, none of them seems to me have as much meaning to me as this God-forsaken secluded house alongside the great highway in which I was born. I have often grieved for another glimpse of that spot and all of its surroundings. No other place or house can ever claim to have impressed me so. I have constantly looked forward and hoped that some day, somewhere, this most cherished of all my wishes may be fulfilled. But such a very long

time has now passed by, and so many changes have taken place in this sad and dreary world, that I sometimes feel that it would be better to leave well enough alone and be satisfied with the sweet memories which I so much cherish, lest disappointment and disillusion altogether destroy the little memory that I possess of that wonder spot, my home, my birthplace.

My harmless adventure was not the only topic which interested my family during this Passover. A matter which required much greater consideration engaged their thoughts, and this involved my eldest brother Yossel (Joseph) and my third sister Sarah. The letters she had been receiving from my two sisters who lived in London, were very encouraging. Both of them were happily married, and both of them were doing very nicely in their respective grocery shops. In one of her letters my sister Rivke hinted that if her younger sister Sarah would consider coming to London, she would have a ready position for her in her shop. This appealed to sister Sarah, and the matter was being discussed at home. At the same time my brother Yossel, who by now was a young man of twenty three years of age, and who had learned the trade of leather tanning, decided that there was very little future for him in Russia. He therefore wrote to his sisters in London, and asked them as to whether they thought that it would be advisable for him to emigrate there. My sisters encouraged him and so both Jossel and Sarah made preparations to emigrate.

They were at this time waiting for steamship tickets from London, for which my sisters had paid, and they were getting themselves ready for their voyage. Just about this time emigration from Russia was at its highest point, and on all sides families were breaking up and the younger generation was abandoning its ancient home of Russia and Poland. By far the greater part of the emigration was headed towards the Americas and very little to England. The departure of members of any one family to England, which was a not very distant European country compared with America, did not give rise to the tragic and heartbreaking scenes which afflicted families whose children were about to leave for America.

However, to my parents it was a tragedy just the same, and I very well remember the many tears which my mother shed when two

more members of her family were about to leave. To her, even the distance to England seemed to be so far away, especially as it was across the great sea, that she mourned and grieved and suffered and cried, and she doubted that she would ever see them again. A short time after father and I returned to the smolne, Yossel and Sarah emigrated to London. In the smolne things went along as before and nothing of importance happened there. I walked every morning to the village and returned when the day was over.

Our teacher left several weeks before the normal end of the term, and this gave me several extra weeks during which time I stayed in the smolne the whole day, with absolutely nothing at all to do. The only one of my own age with whom I would might spend the time was the caretaker's stepdaughter Natasha who was about my own age.

I roamed about with her over fields and deep into the forest for hours and sometimes for days, and it took quite some time until I learned to converse with her and talk to her in her mixed dialect. She was a very simple peasant girl, good natured and quite clever too and it was from her that I learned how to ramble through the forest, and how to return home. She seemed to have a natural instinct about ways and directions and she knew all the paths which led to various parts of the forest, and the spots where berries or mushrooms could be found, and she knew which mushrooms were good to eat and which were poisonous and harmful. She could swim and jump and climb trees like a boy and fight if ever any peasant boys from the village attacked us, and she could throw a stone more accurately and further than I could, and I accepted her and played with her just the same as if she was really to have been a boy.

One thing in particular the smolne had in plenty and that was all kinds and breeds of snakes, and we used to have much fun with them as we caught them and threw them into a ten gallon bottle filled with turpentine. For hours we used to watch the snakes try to get out of the turpentine, but with long sticks we used to force them back into the bottle, and keep them in there until they drowned.

Late that summer mother and what was left of our family left Swalbitch, never to return there again, and joined us in the smolne. With her came my brother Shlomo (Solomon), sister Tzippe (Sophie) and the twins Yente (Yette) and Mushe (Mary). They brought

with them most of our old furniture and all of the other things we owned, and a peasant drove our three cows by foot all the way from Swalbitch.

The log cabin was very much livened up by the presence of the whole family. It could now easily be seen that what it lacked all the time was the touch of a woman's hand. My mother and sisters with the help of the rest of us made it look like a real home. They hung up pictures on the walls and cleaned the floors and everywhere else, and made the place spick and span.

It was also about this time that father bought two goats which, together with our horse and three cows, made the place look civilised and inhabited. Most of the time we had a hundred or so peasants working in the turpentine and pitch, and the smolne took on the appearance of a busy place and quite interesting, too. Some time later, another by-product in the form of axle grease was fabricated, but this venture undertaken by a sub-contractor was not very successful.

During our first winter in the smolne there was very little social life between us and the three families who lived in the village, but with the coming of spring some fraternisation took place, and an interesting social life and a friendly relationship developed with these families.

Saturdays, the day of rest, often found the younger members of the village folk rambling about in the forest which surrounded the smolne together with our own youngsters. After a while a very intimate friendship developed between my brother Shlomo and Beril's daughter Leah. Their friendship probably would have resulted in the tying of the two families together by their marriage. However, Shlomo was nearing the age of military service and, when that time drew very near, the emigration of the rest of our family to London was slowly taking shape.

Life as a whole for our family was more pleasant here than in Swalbitch, even though we were further removed from our neighbours here and isolated in this out of the way spot, without ever seeing or meeting any strangers, in the way we did at our former home near the highway. Yet nevertheless, we felt safer here from being attacked by unruly drunken peasants, and we did not have to worry about revenue agents, and mother and the rest of us did not have to

work as hard as in our former house. In addition to this there was the satisfaction of having father with us all the time.

We were also assured of firewood in plenty, the lack of which was a great problem to us before, and there were now more than enough willing peasants to chop the wood. The vegetable garden was greatly increased with the arrival of our family, and we had a plentiful supply of vegetables, potatoes, and pumpkins From the pumpkin we extracted the seeds, which we dried on the roof of our cabin. The job of climbing on the roof I readily accepted and accomplished with great skill. However, one mishap did overtake me. It happened one time as I was slowly sliding down the roof in my usual way, that I missed the ladder and fell. The fall itself would not have hurt me, because for all of the climbing I had done and the frequent falls I had experienced I had become quite as agile as a cat, but on this particular occasion mother happened to be milking a cow right under the eaves of the roof from where I fell, and I landed most accurately on the horns of the cow. Fortunately for me, this cow had very large horns which curved forward and downward. I was therefore spared grave injury, but I was badly stunned just the same, and had to be carried inside the house where for several days I nursed a number of aching bruises and pains.

Mother escaped with little more than a good fright, and the cow, it was the one named Tzippe, was quite a bit shaken and scared and the milk pail was badly dented and its precious contents, almost filled to the brim, were a total loss.

It was also during this summer that father had a most harassing experience, which a person less hardened to that kind of life and one who did not possess the presence of mind and self control which father had, would hardly have been able to survive such an experience.

I have already mentioned that father had leased a potato field several miles on the other side of the village, and it happened that when the potatoes were ready to be dug up father hired a number of peasant women to do the digging and collecting of the potatoes in large sacks. In the later part of the day, father and my brother drove to the village and hired a peasant with a horse and wagon and together they drove to the field. Father thought that he could cart all the sacks

home in the two wagons; however the yield was more than he expected, and after they loaded both wagons a number of sacks remained. Father therefore decided that my brother and the peasant should drive with the wagons home and he would stay behind, because the potatoes now packed in sacks could not be left by themselves, as they would most surely be stolen. He also told my brother that they should unload the peasant's wagon as soon as they got home, and that the peasant should return for him and the rest of the potatoes.

Everything went along as planned and the peasant was on his way to the field, but just about the time the peasant reached the village a most terrible thunder storm accompanied by blinding lightning and torrential rain broke out. It frightened the peasant and his horse, and forced the peasant to take shelter in his own cottage in the village. The peasant, tired, exhausted and soaked to the skin from the rain, lay down to rest until the storm would subside and soon fell fast asleep.

In the meantime, Father was waiting for the peasant to return, and when the storm broke out he surmised what might have happened to the peasant. He therefore wrapped himself up in some empty sacks and waited for the storm to stop and the peasant to call for him, but several hours later when the storm did subside and it was already dark and the peasant did not return, he became very much alarmed. Father was well enough acquainted with that particular locality, and he knew that during the night packs of wolves roamed about there, and that the wolves in their hungry desperation even dared to invade the village and kill some of the cattle right in their stalls. Therefore the prospect of his having to spend the whole night out in the open did not appeal to him at all.

There was very little he could do about it, and as a last resort he decided to spend the night high up in a tree. He selected the most suitable tree for this purpose, and no sooner had he succeeded in making himself secure and comfortable on one of its branches that he heard the weird howling of the wolves very clearly.

A short while later, the pack of wolves passed right under the tree upon which he sat and the wolves, scenting the presence of human flesh, redoubled their howling and barking, and they fought among

themselves as each one of them tried to get close enough to the tree he sat on, and they set up such a weird and frightening commotion that was enough to frighten anyone to death. During the whole night the wolves slunk about the tree. They tried to jump on to it, and scratched at its bark, and they did not depart until the sun rose high in the sky.

At home we did not worry very much about father, because we thought that he had been picked up by the peasant, and that because of the persistence of the storm father had decided to spend the night at the peasant's home. Such occasions frequently arose, but at all other times when father was for one reason or another forced to spend the night at a peasant's home, he would always return home early the next morning before anyone of us awoke. This time when we awoke the next morning we found that father had not returned home, and we did become very much alarmed.

My brother hurriedly harnessed our horse to the wagon, and drove off to the peasant's home in the village. It was still very early, so that by the time my brother reached the peasant's home he found him still fast asleep. After waking him up and finding out that he did not even go for my father, my brother and the peasant drove to the field as fast as they could make our horse go. When they arrived at the field they found father sitting amongst the sacks of potatoes, half dazed and hardly able to talk. They helped him on to our wagon and hurriedly drove him home. As soon as they reached home father was given some hot milk to drink and put to bed. He fell soundly asleep and slept for the whole of that day, and it was not until he woke up and partook of a hearty meal that he was able to tell us what had happened to him during the night.

Father said that he was not all that worried about the wolves because he knew that they could not climb up the tree. He had become so badly soaked from the rain, and he was so very tired from the day's work, that he was afraid he might fall asleep. That would have been dangerous indeed, because in his weakened condition he probably would have fallen off the tree, and the wolves would have taken care of him in their well known fashion. To keep himself awake he told us that he recited as many psalms as he knew by heart, and there were very few psalms that he did not know by heart. He kept

on repeating them over and over again until finally the wolves retreated into the forest, and he was able to leave the cramped position in which he had spent the whole night. It was an altogether harassing experience even for a man hardened to life as he was, and thanks to his strong constitution he did not suffer any ill effects.

It was also about this time that the two goats we owned strayed into the forest and did not return, evidently devoured by wolves. In this way and with plenty of excitement, the first summer of our family's stay in the smolne passed by.

From London we received a letter from my brother Yossel, in which he described in a jovial and sporty manner his trip to London and his arrival there with my sister Sarah. It seems that the ship, if a ship it could be called, had met with some very stormy weather during their crossing of the North Sea and it delayed their reaching London for several days. My sisters made several trips to the dock where the ship was expected to arrive. Each time they were disappointed, and enquiries at the ship's offices in London proved of little avail. They missed going one day, the day, it so happened, that the ship did arrive. My sister and brother were taken off the ship by the HebrewAid Society, who brought them to their shelter in Whitechapel in the East End of London.

My brother was too eager and restless to wait until members of his family were informed of his arrival and, together with my sister and all of their baggage, they went out in search of their sisters. After dragging themselves all over the East End, they were finally directed to Old Montague Street, the street in which my sister Rivke lived, and which was located just around the corner from Whitechapel and the shelter. My brother, accustomed to small town ways, stopped whomever he met and asked where his sister Rivke's shop was. He did not think it was necessary to enquire for the number of their house, numbers being non-existent in the towns he had lived in, and he thought that the number he put down on letters which he wrote to them were a postal regulation and had nothing to do with locating his sister. To his great surprise, persons he asked about his sister told him that they never heard about her, and did not know of her shop. He persisted in his enquiries from shop to shop, and finally they entered Rivke's shop.

As it happened, Rivke was out of the shop for the time being and they did not even bother to ask her husband Solly, not knowing him. They continued their search along the street. By this time they were tired and exhausted. They put down their baggage nearby and sat down to rest right in front of Rivke's shop. After a while a crowd of women gathered around them in their partly sympathetic but much more inquisitive habit, and started to ask them what part of Poland they came from, and whether they knew their relations whom some years back they had left behind. And just about the time they rested a bit and were about to continue their search, who comes along but my sister Rivke herself! She had no expectation of finding her own sister and brother about whose arrival she was not aware, to be the centre of attraction of the crowd. But on catching a glimpse of the two central figures, she soon recognised them, and screaming out aloud, 'Yossel! Tziril!', she almost fainted away at the same time because of the shock of seeing them.

The crowd quickly stepped aside and brother and sisters fell on each other's neck kissing and crying hysterically. Reading my brother's letter we, too, did our share of crying and sobbing, and in our joy at their safe arrival we offered many a prayer to the merciful God for having brought them safely to their destination and for directing them to my sister's home.

Also about this time, my further education was the centre of discussion at home. My father was not satisfied with the young melamed who instructed me at Beril's house. As a teacher he was not bad, but they had noticed that he was paying more attention to young Leah, Beril's daughter, who was quite a pretty girl and whose wealthy family would have solved many of his economic problems, than to his pupils. He was therefore dismissed.

My father also preferred that I should attend a cheder, where he thought the environment would be more conducive to greater effort on my part for learning and study. It was therefore decided that he should try and arrange for me to go to the nearest town of Sventaia-Volia and there continue my education. The necessary arrangements were made, and in short time I was on my way to this town.

Sventaia-Volia was a dirty and muddy little town but a very active and busy one. Many years ago some sort of a miraculous revelation

was supposed to have occurred here, which gave this town its holy name, and which to that day inspired many pilgrims to come there from near and far to offer their prayers to the shrine erected there to the Virgin Mary. This shrine, a life-size and life-like statue of the Mother Mary, stood in a sentry or booth-like structure at the entrance to this town. The first time I rode by there with my father he halted our horse a short distance away, and he told me to get down from the wagon and run over to the booth and take a look inside. In fact, no Jew as they passed by this booth dared even from a distance to look into the open inside of this booth, because in their superstition they believed that to look at the face of the Mother Mary would result in some great misfortune to them and their family.

My father, who also turned away his eyes from the booth, did not actually share the general belief and, for the sake of playing a joke on me, he thought that it was worth while to chance the invocation of the evil spirit just for the sake of the amusement it would offer him. Unaware of the surprise which was in store for me, I hurried to the booth and took a look inside. I had never before seen a life-like statue nor did I ever see one in any form. I was therefore so very terribly frightened by what I beheld that I almost fainted on the spot. Collecting all my wits and strength, I ran back to father as fast as my legs could carry me, trembling and frightened and pale as death. It took quite some time before I came back to my normal self, and never again did I ever dare to go near that booth or, in passing by it, did I ever dare to look in that direction.

In Sventaia-Volia father arranged my lodging with a Jewish family, but for my meals I had to go elsewhere. I was told that the shamus (beadle) from the synagogue and cheder would be the one to make arrangements amongst the town's good people who would provide me with daily meals. Soon after, my father took me to the cheder where the head teacher asked me many questions about the advancement of my learning. It was here that I met the shamus who was to escort me to the town's Jewish families for my daily meals. Before I departed in the company of the shamus, father pressed several kopecks into my hand and, bidding me good-bye, he returned home.

I walked with the shamus from house to house, and everywhere I was examined from head to foot and, after hours of wading through

the mire of the narrow streets, I returned to the room in which I was to lodge, with a list of names of the kind citizens who sanctioned to give a meal for every day including the Sabbath.

The small dilapidated cottage in which I was to lodge was owned by a poor widow, who subsisted by renting out all the rooms in her cottage. She herself slept in the kitchen and my room was an alcove off the kitchen, just large enough to hold a bed. The largest room in the cottage was rented to a man who, in addition to sleeping there, used it as a workshop in which he did odd furniture polishing jobs. The various glues, varnishes and shellacs he used stank up the house in a manner which, until I got used to it, made me sick and vomit.

The furniture man was a kindly sort of person, and for a little help which I gave him now and then he repaid me by offering me a slice of bread and syrup, a piece of cake or a sweet.

The widow, either because she was very stingy or poor, never as much as offered me a glass of tea, nor did she ever bother to notice whether I was well or ill. She kept the house very cold during the winter time. I therefore suffered from frequent colds and coughs and, on one occasion when I suffered an upset stomach, one of my meal providers, noting my indisposition, gave me a healthy dose of castor oil.

That night I suffered severe cramps and, in order to excrete, I had to go outside into the freezing cold, where I contracted a severe cold. I spent many delirious days with high fever in the alcove without any attention and without anyone to offer me even a glass of water to moisten my parched lips. The widow did not take any notice of me at all, and acted in a manner as though I was not there. Thanks to the kindness of the carpenter, who nursed me as well as he could, and who on meeting a peasant from the village of Khozshike asked him to inform my parents of my indisposition. My father came over soon enough, and finding that my condition had improved and the fever had disappeared took me home, where mother's care soon brought me back to normal health.

Back to the town and to cheder I went, and that winter was by far the worst winter I had ever experienced.

During the summertime things were not so bad, but very far from being comfortable and pleasant. A good part of the summers I used

to spend at the smolne, either in the company of Natasha the peasant girl, or the boys and girls from the village who used to come to ramble about in the forest. I enjoyed myself very nicely. It was just about four years after my coming to the smolne, that my three sisters and brother in London decided that the rest of us should emigrate to London. The seven of us including my parents could not go all at one time. It was therefore decided that father, brother Shlomo and sister Tzippe should go first, and the rest of us would follow later.

Arrangements for someone else to take charge of the smolne was made, and we had to vacate the cabin for the new family that was to move in there. It was therefore decided that mother, myself and the twins should live in Buten until we could also be taken over to London. We sold our cows, horse and wagon, and whatever else we owned, and we went to live in a room in the house of a widow called Sprintze. She had three sons living with her, and she owned a house at the very end of the town in the direction of the river.

Just about one year went by before we were able to emigrate and here in Buten, where I was already acquainted with the town and its interesting spots, and where I renewed a friendship with some of the boys with whom I played during my first year of stay here, I had a very good time and made up for a lot of lost time. I also had a very good rabbi who taught me grammar and general knowledge, in contrast to only biblical and talmudic studies that I had been taught by my other rabbis until now, and which I found much more enlightening and interesting.

The three sons of the widow in whose house we lived were ardent Zionists, and in their house meetings were held concerning the various Zionist problems, and it was also a must that only Hebrew should be spoken among themselves. I soon picked up the language so well that I was able to speak in Hebrew even better than in my mother tongue, as well as to read in that language all kinds of books of which they had a great number.

With the expectation of going to England shortly, my cousin Chane-Rivke, who was a very intelligent young lady, and who later studied medicine and graduated as a doctor of medicine, and who, as I have already mentioned in my description of her during my first visit to Buten, had taken a liking to me, taught me to read and speak

the little English she had learned. I admit that what she taught me did not amount to very much, but it was better than nothing at all. I was by now twelve years of age. In my learning I was considered a good student but not in any sense brilliant. The trouble with David, my teachers complained, is that having a very apt mind and certain amount of willingness to learn, he seems to have too many other things to distract his mind. If only he could be made to concentrate on his learning he would go very far, but every time he seems to wander away into other interests and forgets the subject at hand.

This analysis on the part of my teachers was correct enough, and it is quite true that I do have a wandering mind. Why, and where it wanders to, I cannot explain. However, to a very large extent it was the fault of the system of teaching, and to this conclusion I arrived when for but a little over one year I attended an English school, where a systematic order was followed and where I learned in that short time what would have taken my rabbis and melameds many years to teach me. Just the same I was a little further advanced in my learning than the average student, and whatever I learned I knew and remembered for many years.

The talmudic education, dealing with times and problems some of which could be applied to modern life, forced the student to struggle with mental equilibrium and syllogisms, which but few of them could clearly comprehend, and in most cases the rabbis themselves were merely re-chewing the sanctified cud which the talmudic giants themselves struggled with. True enough, this brain twisting aid sharpens the minds of the students, some of whom succeeded in attaining the high pinnacle set up by the rabbinical oligarchy. These students then had to face a life of poverty and hardship whilst most of the others, who had failed to reach the required standard, found themselves at an advanced age without any practical experience, and unable to adapt to any kind of work. They became disappointed and disillusioned, and in their despair many of them abandoned their faith, and in shame they just disappeared, most of them emigrating to the newly discovered land of promise, America.

The emigration of the last remnant of our family to London created problems, the most important of which was that we could not obtain a passport in our own name. This was due to my older

brother's failure to appear for military service, when just about this time he was called up. We were therefore obliged to find someone who would be willing to permit us to use their name, for a price of course. After many enquiries, we succeeded in locating a person, who himself was on his way to London, and who permitted us to be wife and children. This problem solved, we prepared to leave the land of our birth, and join our family in the new land of their adoption.

It was some time during the late spring of 1904 that in a wagon loaded with bedding and other personal effects, we were taken to the nearest rail-road town, and from there we travelled by train to the sea coast town of Libau, situated in the Baltic sea, from where we were to embark upon a ship which would take us to our destination, the great city of London. It was a long and tiresome journey that lay ahead of us, full of unknown expectations.

The Russian poyesd (train) upon which we travelled and the third class compartment in which we rode, was hardly a decent enough coach for human beings to ride in. The wider gauge of the Russian railroad permits them to build their coaches much larger than all other countries, even though they are not any longer than the usual standard coach elsewhere. Instead of seats the coaches had large wide platforms, built one on top of the other, upon which the passengers sat, slept and piled their baggage. At times they were so very much overcrowded that many of the passengers slept or crowded upon the floor of the coach as well. The dirt and filth with which the third class coaches were filled, and the stench of dirty peasants with their wives and children, dressed in rags and tatters, was almost unbearable and even worse than any description which could be made.

The train dragged and every now and then stopped at many stations, and as some dirty stinking passengers left the train, others came aboard and brought more dirt and stench into the compartment. Through Grodno and Vilna, the train dragged on for four days and finally exhausted and ourselves smelling no better than the dirty peasants with whom we shared the coach, we reached the shipping town of Libau. We spent three days in Libau, awaiting the sailing of the ship which was to take us to London. During this time I had ample opportunity to explore the town which I found, much to my delight, was the largest and by far the cleanest town I have ever visited.

I came across many fine squares, lined with trees and flowers, and fine tall buildings and beautiful shops, and paved side walks which I had never seen in any town before. Most amazing of all were the electric street cars, which to me were as much a wonder as when, for the first time, I saw a train. I even had the pleasure of riding on one of them and that experience just about completed three most happy days.

Finally we boarded the ship which, although to me it looked like a wonderful thing, turned out eventually to be little more than a wreck of a tramp, and it was a wonder that we were able to reach London, dead or alive. This ship was overcrowded by an equal distribution of its space between human beings and cattle, with a slight predomination and a crowding of its human cargo. As far as comfort was concerned, neither of the two classes of passengers had occasion to envy the other, because both of them were crowded into dark, filthy and stench filled holds, into which no fresh air could in any way find admission, and where they squatted about in discomfort and disgust, sea sick and vomiting all over the place.

Those years marked the high tide of the most determined emigration from Russia and Poland and, because of the great demand for passenger transportation, all sorts of ships were pressed into service, some of them unseaworthy, and most of the rest were ships which were built for ordinary cargo and cattle transportation.

This ship was of German registry and it was manned by German seamen, and even though both the owners of the ship as well as the seamen enriched their pockets with money of Jewish immigrants, their inbred anti-Semitism was thereby in no way appeased. They treated their passengers with hatred and contempt, and with less regard and consideration than their cargo of cattle, for whom they did at least provide a sufficient amount of digestible food. Their provision of food for the passengers consisted of black bread and salted herrings, and some sort of dried salted fish, which had a musty fetid appearance and taste, the smell of which alone made everybody vomit. Hot boiled water, to which the passengers added their own tea, and toasted bread rusks, sacks full of which every immigrant took with him for the sea voyage, provided the only nourishment during the entire trip.

Except for several outside cabins, which were occupied by wealthy immigrants, there were no separate cabins for the other passengers, and in the large compartments into which they were herded, there were not even beds for them to sleep on, but just large double deck platforms on which the passengers sat, slept, wept, groaned, ailed and vomited the greater part of the voyage.

When we first boarded this ship, the men and women were berthed in separate compartments, but no sooner did the ship reach the open sea, and no sooner did sea sickness grip the weaker constituted female passengers, that the husbands, in an effort to give their wives aid and comfort, shared their berths. Later unaccompanied men, allegedly pretending to give aid and comfort to unaccompanied female passengers, snuggled themselves comfortably alongside them and, in amorous congeniality, they enchanted what otherwise would have been a very unpleasant trip.

After four days of sailing through the Baltic Sea the ship entered a German port for re-coaling, where she stayed for about six hours. An order was issued to the passengers prohibiting them from leaving the ship with which I did not at all agree, and therefore I stealthily managed to get off and make my way into the town.

I was amazed at the cleanliness of the streets, the fine squares and the buildings and shops which I saw there, and the nice shop windows which were well stocked with all kinds of merchandise. I admired the pedestrians who were well dressed and very orderly in the well known fashion of Prussian discipline. My mouth watered for some of the delicious sweets and chocolates I saw in the shop windows. I made my way back to the ship unseen, by the same way I got off, very proud of my accomplishment.

Unpleasant as our sailing through the Baltic Sea was, it was not until we entered the North Sea, that we got a real taste of ocean voyage. On the second day out, we ran into a storm and heavy sea and a strong wind which whipped the sea into mountainous waves, and which tossed our wreck of a ship about in a manner which frightened the passengers, and the captain of the ship as well. It was impossible to remain in one position, standing or sitting down, and the cargo and baggage shifted about from side to side, in a manner which threatened to split the ship wide open.

Every able bodied passenger was called upon to give a hand to the seamen, to help them tie the cargo and baggage securely in the holds, and the superstitious old men and women believing that the storm was a warning from above, for the loose behaviour of the young passengers, called upon everybody to do repentance. The old men wearing their prayer shawls, and the old women with prayer books, offered special prayers of distress, and recited psalms and fasted all of that day.

With a wealthy old lady and her daughter who occupied one of the outside cabins, I became very friendly. I ran errands for her, supplied her with hot water for tea, and in appreciation of my helpfulness, she gave me free access to partake of all of the fine provisions, cookies, sweets and chocolate she had provided herself with, and which neither of them were even able to taste. During the storm I dared the wrath of the sea, and stood outside her cabin pretentiously to be within her call, but in fact my mind was rather interested in the good provisions with which, in spite of the great storm, I could not satisfy my appetite. As I stood outside her cabin munching away the goodies with which I had stuffed my pockets, and trying very hard to balance myself with the lurching of the ship, a mountainous wave suddenly washed over the side of the ship where I stood and in its rapid recession, before I had a chance to grab hold of anything, it washed me down to the side of the ship with the heavy salt water buoying me up and swirling me about like a cork; it bore me down to the side of the ship and almost washed me overboard.

Frightened out of my wits, and with half of my body already over the side of the ship, I managed to grab hold of one of the ship's railings and held on for dear life. A seaman, noticing my perilous position, quickly came over to me and with a great effort he succeeded in pulling me back on to the deck and helped me to get inside the ship. This, too, might have been a warning from above for my indiscretion and for my greed in taking advantage of the indisposition of the old lady. But for a matter of seconds, I might have been washed overboard and be telling my life story to the fishes and old father Neptune.

Instead of ten days which our voyage to London should have taken us, for fourteen days our ship ploughed through the angry and stormy Baltic and North seas. The unseaworthy ship in which we

sailed, and which was built for ordinary cargo and cattle transportation, was rolled and tossed about by mountainous waves and perilous seas until it succeeded to reach its port, and berth somewhere in the Limehouse district of London.

My father, brothers and sisters exhausted from worry and sleepless nights and successive visits to the pier of arrival, became very much concerned about our safety when the third day of our delay had passed. On the morning of the fourth day father went to the Synagogue and offered special prayers of distress on our behalf and fasted during that day until late afternoon.

When word was received that our ship was steaming up the river Thames and due to dock several hours later, all of our family who could be spared away from their grocery shops came to the dock to meet us, and the scene which took place there was very pathetic and touching. Sobs and tears, kissing and hugging mixed with joyful smiles and gladness, as mother and her children after a separation of many years fell into each other's arms and rejoiced in their reunion, and the happy thought of being together again for evermore.

In the horse drawn carriages, such as only the very rich land owners could afford to own in the old country, we were driven through the narrow congested streets of London to our home in the East End. Some of the streets were wide and well lit, lined with fine shops for many miles, whilst some of the other streets were narrow and dark, lined with dismal looking small houses, covered with soot and very dirty.

Fresh from the great open spaces and the vast expanse of the sea, I felt like a prisoner in this vast city of brick and stone, and I strained my eyes in every direction in an effort to catch sight of a bit of green. But hard as I searched I could not espy a bit of green or a tree anywhere.

With my arrival in London this most interesting and fascinating chapter of my life came to a close. Behind me lay the open spaces which were my cradle and nursery and where, as a child and a youth, I received my first experience of life and where I wandered the highways and byways of mother nature herself. Out there in her green valleys, her vast forests and woodlands, her streams, lakes and glens, marshes and flatlands, where human endeavour and ambition had

not yet succeeded in spoiling that primitive beauty and aesthetic grace, I roamed and wandered in innocent delight.

There, Homo Sapiens, still in a semi-primitive state, crudely tilled the soil and hunted in the woodlands, and pursued the life of a simple husbandman where scheming and contrivance had not yet succeeded in corrupting and perverting the laws of nature and the elements.

There, in primitive and rustic surroundings, I had received my first lessons, in thought, in behaviour, and in understanding.

Book Two

London



Enlarged extract from a 1908 map of the Spitalfields district of the East End showing many of the streets referred to by David.

Foreword

It is with a mixed mind of fear and humility that I start on this task of describing my life and experience in London. Fear, because I am hardly endowed with the necessary descriptive talents to do justice to such an undertaking; humility, because of the many implications which might arise in my effort to describe from memory the various personalities who form the basis and purpose of this work.

It was no great effort on my part to write about my life in Russian Poland. There, life, time, scenes and events, in a slow procession, implanted themselves into my lasting memories, deep in the complex recesses of my mind, so that neither the lapse of years nor hemispheric change have been able to eradicate them.

In London, however, the process of events followed one another in rapid succession. They have, therefore, become but faintly discernible. Whatever descriptions I may make of London will be of the London I knew during the years 1904 to 1916.

I have no intention of writing a history of London as such. Rather my intention is to give a biographical sketch of the first two generations who immigrated there so that future generations will have some knowledge of their ancestral heritage.

Any reference I may make to London and the East End in particular is merely intended as a groundwork wherein our later genealogical tree was planted, took root and grew to fruitful maturity.

I dedicate the following chapters to my grandchildren and all the generations that follow.

D.S. New York 1961

5

Alicia

It is a well known fact that children are very curious, inquisitive and in the habit of asking all sorts of questions. This seems to me to be mother nature's way of training and instructing the young in their attainment of knowledge and in their struggle for survival. However, what occasionally is most annoying is that one question leads to another and then another creating a chain reaction. Yet their questions cannot be ignored as that would create in the child a state of belligerency, or worse still, frustration. This should be specially avoided when grandparents and grandchildren are the parties involved.

For reasons not now to the point, our granddaughter Alicia has been living with us for sometime and I have felt it to be my duty to assume the part of father as well as grandfather in my relations with her. We have found the child's presence with us to be a source of pleasure, amusement, and a nostalgic reminder of our younger years when our own children were but little tots. Alicia is nine years old. Very much like children of her age, she is curious and blessed with a desire for knowledge far beyond her age. If Alicia would come to me in the usual way that children do and just keep asking questions, I would naturally, sooner or later, no matter how patient I was, find some sort of an excuse not to be drawn into the game of questions and answers. But Alicia being well aware of such a possibility invented a questionnaire all of her own. Here is how she makes her approach.

'Grandpa, do you know something?' Now as can be clearly seen this hardly sound like a question. In fact, it might be a statement or some informative assertion. Any effort on my part to try and avoid

getting involved would, to her way of thinking, constitute a case of non-cooperation on my part.

Alicia has a child's exaggerated opinion of her grandfather. She thinks that he is extremely clever, ingenious, and that he has a complete knowledge of history, geography and science as well as all sorts of worldly affairs. At various times I have had to explain to her matters pertaining to our planet as well as those which have to do with the vast spaces of the universe. When the Russian astronaut, Yuri Gagarin, made his famous orbit of the earth I had to explain to her the many hazards which accompanied his flight; the meaning of weightlessness, the speed at which an object has to travel in order to escape the earth's gravitational pull and the effect of the lack of oxygen in outer space.

Now just a moment, here comes Alicia, and for a better understanding of what I mean let's hear what she has in mind.

'Grandpa, you know something?'- see what I mean?

'Yes my dear, what is it?'

'You know grandpa, before you came to America you lived in London, and before you came to London you lived in Poland, and so did the rest of the family, right? So where did the rest of the people who lived in London come from?'

So you see, dear reader, whoever you may be, what I mean. This is a typical question of hers and I have to give her some sort of an answer, and I am not fooling myself for this is not the end of her questioning. It is but the beginning of my aforesaid chain reaction.

'All right, my dear Alicia, I will try and answer your question but you must promise not to interrupt until I finish.'

'All right, yes, grandpa, I will not interrupt.'

'There are many legends pertaining to the earliest settlement of Bretayne. That is the name by which England was known in ancient times. One story is that Histon, son of Japhet, the son of Noah had four sons, Grancis, Romanus, Almaus and Brito from whom descended the French, Roman, German and British people.

'Another legend whose principal authority is Geoffrey of Monmouth. *[Geoffrey de Monmouth is noted for his romantic imagination! -Ed.]* His history, written in the twelfth century, purports to be a translation of a history of Britain, brought over from the opposite

shores of France which, under the name of Brittany, was chiefly peopled by nations of Britain who from time to time emigrated there, driven from their own country by the Picts and Scots.

'Brutus, son of Silvius, son of Aneus who escaped the destruction of Troy and who with a fleet of 120 ships sailed westward passed through the straits of Gibraltar then known as the Pillars of Herculis. He tried to establish a settlement on the Spanish and French coasts but was driven off by unfriendly natives. He eventually reached the shores of Britain and there he established a settlement. He founded a city which he named Trenevont (New Troy). Several kings reigned after Brutus but none worthy of mention until we come to one by the name of "Lud". He changed the name of Trenevont to "Lud-stown", later to be known as London. This my dear Alicia is where the rest of the people who live in London come from.'

'But grandpa you know something?'

'Now just a moment my dear, not another question because it is long past your bedtime and here comes grandma to put you to bed. So one kiss and good night.'

'But grandpa, this is not a question I want to ask you but something I would like you to do'.

'All right, my dear, let me hear what is but don't make a long story out of it'.

'You remember, grandpa, you once wrote a book about your life in Russian Poland, well then, so why don't you write a book about your life in London, so I would not have to bother you with questions whenever I would like to know something about your life there and your family who live there'.

'Well now my dear, that may be a good idea. But it is easier said than done. In the first place it takes a long time to write a book and it takes a great deal of concentration to bring back from memory things which happened so long ago. However, if you will promise to be a good girl, have plenty of patience and ask no questions, then I will do it to the best of my ability. I will try to put into writing whatever I may recall from memory about my life in London and about my family who live there and about some of the events which took place during those many years ago. All right Alicia?'

'Yes grandpa, that would be very nice.'

6

London

Is London as it used to be,
Is the Strand still there?
Do the boys walk up in the West
In light and glare?
Are the girls as nice
and beautiful,
Are my pals all right?
Oh what would I give
to be with them all,
In London town tonight.

An old English Music Hall ballad.

Like all large cities in the world London has its many contrasting districts and social divisions. Wealth and poverty, comfort and misery, enlightenment and ignorance abide side by side in this sprawling city. All parts are tightly knitted in unity, and in the observation of law and order and tradition, as no other large city can claim.

In any large city in the world one may be assaulted, robbed or even murdered. London can claim no exception to such incivility and brutality. Yet, even a stranger must soon realise the greater freedom and safety traditionally exemplified in this great metropolis. Here, the very atmosphere seems to bear witness to many centuries of civil tradition and behaviour enhanced by the contribution of liberal minded reformers, teachers and wise administrators.

As if by natural selection London is divided into distinctive districts. Kensington by its royalty. The West End by its clamour and

other districts by their own particular uniqueness. An entire distinction of its own may be claimed by that part of London know as the 'East End'. Here we have a city within a city, populated to a large extent by refugees who, having escaped hardship and persecution in their native countries, immigrated to this land of freedom and liberty, and found a haven of peace and opportunity in the East End of London.

By far outnumbering the various nationalities in the East End is a unique and religious people, ancient in fame and in tradition, who had wandered for more than two thousand years through many lands. They had mingled with the many races of mankind who had persecuted and oppressed them, and had forever forced them to be on the move. Yet these people had succeeded in retaining their ancient heritage of a secular religious life and moral fortitude which was planted in them by their ancient fathers, teachers and moralists. They are a remnant of the wandering Jews.

Quite unlike the West End, the home of King and Court, Westminster Abbey, the Houses of Parliament, the British Museum and most of the historical monuments, art galleries, theatres and nearly everything interesting and refined, is the East End. To find it you went eastwards down the Strand and Fleet Street, past St. Paul's cathedral and the Guildhall, the Royal Exchange, down Leadenhall Street, and soon you reached the East End, at the centre of which is the famous Whitechapel. Here are none of the fineries comparable to the West End. But the East End has its own special interest and history. It is a city itself. True, there are many slums and in 'Poverty Lane' one may meet with what the author Booker T. Washington called, 'the man way down, who portrays a living shame, and disgrace to this great city, mistress of the world'.

The East End has many attractions such as the Tower of London, Tower Bridge, the parks and museums, libraries and music halls which compare favourably with those of the West End and which have played an important part in the welfare and enlightenment of the inhabitants.

Although the East End is mostly settled by Jews it is not a ghetto in the Eastern European sense. The Jews were not driven into this part of London by social, political or economic discrimination. Even

though they are not necessarily loved, they did not anywhere in London experience the hateful treatment they received in their native countries. The East End of London has for long been a refuge for the poor, as well as for the oppressed, of other countries.

The Jews, humbled by centuries of oppression and generally poverty stricken, found the East End of London most suitable for their settlement. Even those Jews who managed to accumulate and retain considerable sums of money were attracted to this place. Some because they wanted to live amongst their own co-religionists, and others because of the language barriers. Here they engaged in all kinds of business, industry and labour. Although most of them struggled for a livelihood many of them prospered and some became quite successful. The latter usually did not remain in the East End but moved to various part of Greater London and their places were soon taken by new fugitives from Eastern Europe.

Of the various industries in which the Jews engaged in the East End, the men's and ladies' tailoring seems to have attracted them in particular. In cellars or in the rear of houses they fixed up small workshops, mere hovels where families, their children and relatives, friends and refugees, all in search of a livelihood, laboured for many hours from early dawn to late in the night. They sweated in dingy, unventilated, foul quarters where they were exposed to all kinds of diseases and fire hazards. These shops, worked mostly by grossly underpaid hands, were well able to compete with the more up to date workshops in the West End. They therefore prospered and in time became known as 'master tailors' and were mainly patronised by West End clients.

It was into this East End of London that my family immigrated at the turn of the 19th century and they settled in the district of Whitechapel.

A serious problem arose when the question of making a living had to be decided. The family saw how many of the newcomers to this land of freedom and liberty forsook the laws of Moses and abandoned the former religious life which they led in the old country. How they disregarded the many mandates and prohibitions of the Torah and profaned the holy Sabbath by working or keeping their shops open on that day. Determined to continue in the orthodox life of their

forefathers they found that the retail grocery business offered a solution to this problem. With the exception of but one of their members all of the old generation engaged in this business. Many of their sons and daughters followed them in this line of business. At one time or another there might have been as many as a dozen or more grocery shops in the family.

Some of the younger generation, and others when they married, branched out into other industries which offered greater opportunities of advancement and more leisure time for better living. They moved from the East End to more desirable locations and more comfortable homes. At this time of writing I know of only one grocery shop remaining in the family.

7

The Grocery Shop

There is an anecdote told about a man who once approached a rabbi and said to him, 'Rabbi, what is the meaning of mazel? (luck)'

The rabbi hesitated a moment stroked his greying beard and said to the man, 'Let us say that a man wants to go into business. What are his necessary qualifications in order that he be successful? There are three of them, Time, Place and Experience. Time, for it would be foolish of him to go into business during a depression. Place, it would be equally foolish of him to open a business in a deserted location. Experience, because it would be ruinous for him to venture into a business in which he has no experience at all.'

'But', continued the rabbi, 'what happens if a man without any experience and during a time of depression opens a business in a deserted locality and still makes a success of it – well, that is Mazel!'.

Whether this anecdote is applicable to our older generation, I do not venture to assert but this much is certain. They could have known but little about time and locality and even less about the grocery business. Were they successful? I would say, more or less, yes. Was it mazel? Definitely, no! It was a case of sheer hard work during many hours and a dedication to truth and honesty that whatever success they had must be attributed.

By their strict standard of orthodoxy they set a precedent which few others were willing or able to follow. Therefore they were held in great respect by those who had adhered to orthodoxy as well as by those who had forsaken it. As often happens they were accused, by some critics, of hypocrisy because they sold some items in their shops which they did not use for their own consumption. They did not use

the milk they sold in their shops but had milk delivered to them direct from a dairy located in the East End and delivered to them by a trustworthy orthodox Jew. There were other items which they did not use for their own consumption. During the Passover festival they denied themselves several items of food because they were not sure that these were processed or handled in accordance with the laws of the Passover rituals.

In all instances the criticism brought against them were not valid. They did not handle any items which knowingly did not come up to the requirements of Kashrus. Due to this fact they lost considerable business. When a customer showed any signs of orthodoxy they told him that some of the items in their shop they did not consume themselves. It is true that some members of the older generation as well as some of their children practised their orthodoxy somewhat beyond reasonable requirements and therefore bordered on fanaticism. However, most of them, though born and reared in orthodox tradition, nevertheless led an enlightened and exemplary life.

At family gatherings of the younger generation discussions often arose questioning whether the older generation could not have improved upon their life in the grocery business as well as in their financial status, in view of their intelligence and ambition, provided they were willing to lower the fences of their orthodoxy. The conclusions were usually unanimous – they could have done much better for themselves.

However, I am not at all in agreement with them about this matter. As far as their intelligence and ambition is concerned I am sure that they could have done well in any undertaking. As far as lowering their orthodoxy, if they had been approached with this problem, they would probably relate the anecdote mentioned in the Talmud about a rabbi who was invited by a friendly priest to join the Christian faith which promised its adherents peace and security. The rabbi gave the priest the usual rabbinical answer in the way of a moral tale.

'A hungry fox,' he said, 'once stopped at a river's edge and saw a fish which would very well satisfy his hunger. He said to the fish, "Why do you flounder about in these turbid waters getting nowhere, and forever afraid lest a larger fish might devour you or a fisherman

catch you in his net? Come out on to the dry land and you will be safe and well.

'The fish answered the fox as follows, "If here in my native surroundings where I and my ancestors have lived since creation I am not safe, then what kind of safety can I expect in an alien world on dry land?" '

What might have been is an unknown factor and all such arguments are merely hypotheses. They did well enough for themselves even though their choice might have been one of least resistance.

The retail grocery business, though it did not require any outstanding capabilities or considerable investment to operate, nevertheless had its many problems and required considerable expert judgement. Competition was one of the many problems to be considered. The profit on many items they sold added up from a farthing to a penny and the only profit they could realise on the sale of sugar, an item of considerable volume and labour, was the sugar dust which remained at the bottom of the case after it was packaged into one and two pound paper bags. Although the net profit of such items as flour, washing sodas and several other items was somewhat better – they came in 120lb and 240lb sacks and had to be weighed out into 1lb and 2lb paper bags – the work was both messy and laborious.

Also unpleasant to handle were herrings in their smelly brine. The most nauseating of all the items sold in these shops was paraffin. It was kept in a large metal container fitted with a pump and sold by the quart. Some finely ground salt came in hundredweight sacks and had to be packaged in large triangles and sold at a halfpenny a section. Tea was sold both loose and in packages. Coffee was sold ground from whole roasted beans which had to be hand operated by a grinding machine which entailed considerable effort.

Milk arrived early every morning in large churns and was dispensed by the pint from an open pail. This offered a welcome invitation to dust, flies and all sorts of germs much to the detriment of the consumers, and was probably responsible for the many ailments which was suffered by adults and infants in particular. The London Board of Health inspectors often surprised the shopkeepers and took samples of the milk but they were mostly interested in the

water and fat content of the milk. Very much to the discredit of the shopkeepers was their resistance to new health regulations which Dr. Thomas, chief of the Board of Health, tried to enact. How can they be blamed for a system which had preceded them for hundreds of years?

To enumerate all the commodities sold in these shops would require a volume by itself. But one other must be mentioned and that is soda water, or lemonade as it was called, which was made by the shopkeepers themselves. Not all the shops had the necessary facilities required for these drinks but those who did dispense them had to add a great deal of labour to their already well proportioned day's work. The soda water making machine was kept in the back yard, when a back yard was available, or in some other part of the living quarters at the back of the shop. On a steel frame a cylindrical tank rested on an axle which passed through the tank. At one end of the axle a hand crank was attached. The part of the axle inside the tank had fins attached to it so that as the axle was turned by the hand crank the contents inside the tank were mixed. The tank had a glass tube which showed the quantity of water needed and a meter which controlled the amount of carbon gas allowed into the tank. The carbon gas came in a separate tank and was attached to the tank, as was also a water pipe. After the tank was filled with the prescribed amount of water and gas the hand crank had to be turned for about an hour. It was quite a laborious operation.

Some of the shops opened as early as five in the morning but never later than seven. Though some shops were able to close at eleven in the evening most of them were open until midnight and some even later. The many hours and the hard work put in by the owners might have been even more than their sturdy constitutions could bear but for their faithfulness to the holy Sabbath and the religious festivals, which afforded them some relief from their labours. From sundown Friday to sundown Saturday their shops were closed and no customer's arguments could induce them to hand out a forgotten item. Shabas and the festivals were theirs for praying, study of the Talmud, rest and recuperation.

On the outside the humdrum and activity of daily life went on just the same but they were no part of it. With a cleansing of their

sweated bodies and a change of attire they were as if transported into another world. A world of solemnity and inactivity. A world of holy contemplation. They were for that day separated from the alien world into which destiny had steered them and, as of old, they reverted back to the age when as a chosen people they were sanctified to an exclusive holy life.

On Friday evenings during the wintertime, when the evenings were long, the menfolk would go to 'shool' (synagogue). Having prepared the evening and the rest of the Sabbath meals in advance, and with the Sabbath candles lit in the copper or silver candlesticks and placed on the mantelshelf, the womenfolk would put the finishing touches to their own grooming. Returning from shool there was the usual greeting, 'Gut Shabos', and the recitation of the Friday night zemiros (songs). Then the entire family sat at the table for the Friday night supper. Often some of the married children would visit their parents and spend a pleasant evening together. Early next morning parents and their sons would go to shool again and spend about four hours there, and on their return home would once more enjoy a meal together. After a short nap the menfolk would return to shool for the study of a portion of 'Mishnais' while the elder women would enjoy the reading of the 'Teitch-Chumesh', which is a Yiddish translation of the five books of Moses, or 'Tzene-Ureno', which is a Yiddish translation of legends of the Haggada. The youngsters would take a walk to visit members of the family and during the long summer days go to Victoria Park or maybe visit a museum, or just get together for a good time. After sunset, and not before the ritual of 'Havdola' had been recited, the shops were re-opened for another week of labour. Whilst most of the religious holidays were passed in a similar manner, a special mention must be made regarding Passover.

The Passover festival, though a most welcome occasion, meant a great deal of extra work for the grocery shopkeeper. The older generation strictly observed the ritual demands of this festival. The shops were prepared to handle the Passover items separate from the year round merchandise. Customers had to order in advance whatever they needed for the Passover week for only a limited number of items were dispensed during the four days of Chol-Hamoed. This

added up to a couple of weeks of very hard work. Orders were filled and delivered to the customers' homes. Often during the last two days before the Seder night the older generation worked both day and night because everything had to be done in time. In their homes the Passover rituals, the burning of the Chometz and the evening Seder festival, were conducted as of old in the tradition of their ancestors.

For the old folks Passover was a week for rest and relaxation. A week for adding up profit or loss for the year and for the possible improvements for the coming year. But for the youngsters it was a Roman holiday, practically a whole week's vacation. During Chol-Hamoed they explored Greater London. They went for a bus ride to Hyde Park, Golders Green and maybe they took a walk to the Spaniards which was an inn on Hampstead Heath. But most of all they enjoyed a theatrical performance in the old Pavilion where the Finemans, Moscovitch, Adler and many other famous Jewish actors portrayed some of the well known dramatic roles of the plays of Jacob Gordon, such as Mirele Rfros, Got Mentch and Teivel, Jewish King Lear and many other, over which they would quietly cry to their hearts' content.

In this way life went on from year to year with but little change or diversity. Occasionally there was a Bar Mitzvah, an engagement or a wedding. On these occasions the entire family would get together and have a good time. As the family increased through the marriage of the younger generation it became most difficult to explain and connect the relationships of the various members, partly due to the number of in-marriages which took place. Aunts became mothers-in-law; uncles, fathers-in-law; cousins, brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law. One could go on entangling the family chain ad infinitum.

Praise be to those already departed from this earthly life, and those who are still with us, for they were the pioneers who had to track out a path in an unknown wilderness, and in a strange land and a strange language, so that those who will follow will have an easier, better and a more peaceful life.

How much the younger generation realises the enormous debt due to these humble men and women and their ancestors whose teaching and training have stood them in such good stead can hardly

be measured. But there is no doubt that much of their own success is due to the example set by those steady and hardy immigrants who, uprooted from their native soil, succeeded in replanting themselves in a new and strange land.

Peace to the departed and goodwill to the generation to come.

8

Immigration

Mass immigration cannot be judged in the same light as the voluntary emigration of an individual or even a family from one country to another.

Most of the migrators of the late nineteenth century came from poor families, many of them with hardly sufficient funds to last them until they reached their destination. Unable to obtain passports from the Russian government they had to engage special agents to take them across the border which added to their financial problems and was often the cause of delays. Many of them were stranded in various parts of their journey or at embarkation ports, sometimes for considerable lengths of time. Some of the scenes at these points were most pathetic as wives and children often had to remain stranded, because of lack of funds for the whole family, while their husbands alone were able to proceed.

Much credit is due to the various Jewish emigration societies who did their best to help them. However, their help could not reach all of those in need of help. Much of such help fell to the goodwill of individual humanitarians who in their own small way assisted many badly in need. Besides these migrators, members of the family who remained in the old country clamoured for help, especially when an illness overtook them or when a dowry was needed for the marriage of a daughter. These occurrences were not of a rare nature and the mails were kept busy with letters imploring such help.

Not many could be found amongst families who were able or willing to give up their time and energy as well as a little of their own earnings to help the less fortunate members of their family. It is a credit to our family that such a person, a man of modest means,

humble and unassuming in his manners and without any altruistic motives for his own aggrandisement voluntarily took upon himself the task of collecting donations from willing as well as unwilling members of the family. Even friendly strangers influenced by his appeal became monthly contributors to a general fund. This person much to my pride and the pride of my own family is my eldest beloved brother Yossel (Joseph) Shinebaum. Personally he made monthly visits to all members who donated to this fund and collected from them each according to his ability and willingness to contribute.

For twelve years a monthly allowance was sent to one family in Russia which, due to the indisposition of the head of the family, was the only income they had. Later this entire family of eight souls were brought to London and partially supported until their children were able to take over.

Several sums of money (fifty pounds sterling each) were sent to various members in the old country to enable them to marry off a daughter or some other urgent need. An uncle in the old country had a grown daughter who had little prospects over there. She was sent for and brought to London where she worked in one of the family shops. With the help of the family she was later married and lived very comfortably. During the First World War her entire family in Russia was killed.

Others distantly related, as well as total strangers who were but neighbours in the old country, came to London, usually penniless and were welcomed by our family and given board and lodging and often some spending money until such time as they were able to earn their own living. The wise men of the Talmud said, 'He who does the work is even greater than the one who gives'. Still, even the donor must not be forgotten for without his generosity all the labour might have been in vain. Therefore other members of the family whose donations helped the success of this undertaking come in for due credit.

One such member of the family, fortunate in his many enterprises, himself an industrious and hard worker, blessed with a sound and steady mind and a perseverance which helped him to overcome many hardships, succeeded after many year of trials to build up a considerable income for his own family and enabled him to help others less

fortunate. Directly or indirectly many of us benefited from his success. But he receives even greater credit for giving more than financial help can accomplish. A sound advice, an encouragement or the solution of a serious problem may sometimes prove more helpful to those who are perplexed. It is therefore my pride and pleasure that this person is my older brother Sidney Sherwood (Solly Shinebaum). It is not within my ability to enumerate all of his qualifications and his many contributions as well as his general concern for our family. Together with his children he made the greatest contribution which enabled the family to raise a fund of one thousand sterling for the benefit of an ailing cousin. Many of his other contributions amounted to considerable sums.

One other member of the family I must mention for his generosity and help. With sums of many figures he was responsible for the marriages of several maidens in the family. His contributions to religious schools in Israel were both considerable and publicly recognised there. It is said that during his lifetime each man erects his own monument. Therefore, let the example set by our cousin and brother-in-law Isser Cohen, may he rest in peace, remain an everlasting guide to all men of goodwill. Undoubtedly, other members of the family deserve similar mention and recognition for their willingness to help the less fortunate. My absence from the main body of our family for more than forty five years has deprived me of the necessary knowledge of their activities in our family affairs. I, therefore, beg their forgiveness if in my ignorance I have in any way slighted any one of them.

Although only one branch of the family has the honour of descendancy from the famous Rabbinowitz and Katzenellenbogen 'Yichus' whose genealogical record dates back to the early fifteenth century, I nevertheless feel justified in assuming that had it been possible to trace the genealogical descendency of the rest of the family, no less of an honour would have further adorned our family 'Yichus'. I base my assumption upon a remark in 'Ethics of our Fathers' by Rabbi Meyer. I quote: 'Look not at the flask but what it contains'. It is for their honesty, integrity and the example of a good life which they led that judgment should be made.

9

The Old Generation

Aunt Hodus	=	Uncle Mordechai-Itzchok
Aunt Libe-Gittle	=	Uncle Shimon Moshe
Aunt Sarah	=	Uncle Chaim Itzchok
Aunt Reizel	=	Uncle David
Aunt Tilly	=	Uncle Yankel
Aunt Malka	=	Uncle ?
Mother Shprintze	=	Father Hirsch

There is also an Aunt Hinde, an Uncle Moshe and possibly others of whom I have no knowledge. So far as I am aware, none of the old generation are any more with the living. May they all rest in peace and their memory be everlasting!

The mass emigration from Eastern Europe took place towards the latter part of the nineteenth century. Members of various families followed relations and neighbours who had previously emigrated to different parts of the world. It therefore happened that members of mother's family emigrated to the U.S.A., whilst those of my father emigrated to London, England.

The earliest related emigrants must have belonged to the Cohen side of our family. Father's two elder sisters were married to two brothers. Aunt Hodus was married to Mordecai Itzchok Cohen and Aunt Libe-Gittle to Shimon Moshe Cohen. One or the other, or both together, were the first members of our duo Cohen and Shinebaum family to come to London. Somewhat later, father's two younger brothers, Chaim Itzchok and Yankel joined them in London, and in about the year 1898, my sister Rivke-Mariam was invited to come to London as a bride for one of her cousins. With her

departure and the departure shortly after of another one of my sisters, Chaike, commenced our family emigration from the old country. Rivke-Mariam married her cousin Solly, son of Aunt Hodus, and Chaike married Isser, son of Libe-Gittle.

In the year 1900, my brother Yosel and sister Tziril came to London and he married cousin Minnie, daughter of Aunt Libe-Gittle. In 1902 brother Solly also came there. In 1903, father and sister Sophie (Tzippi) departed for London. In 1904, mother, myself and twin sisters Yetta and Mary completed our family's emigration to London. About 1908 cousin Solly, son of Uncle David, came to London followed shortly after by cousin Bushe-Yenta. At about the same time cousin Solly Lebovitch also arrived. In 1910 the family of Uncle David and Aunt Reizel was brought by the family to London. Some time later cousin Hetty was invited to come to London as a bride for her cousin Solly, Aunt Libe Gittle's son. She came together with her mother Aunt Malka and a brother, who several years later unfortunately died after an appendectomy operation.

Thus came to and end the migration of our family from the old country. Whatever members of the family remained there, were eliminated together with their children by the two world wars.

In about 1908 or 1909, somehow distantly related Jacob Nirenstein came to London. Shortly afterwards he brought over his very fine and clever niece Feigel whom he later married. This couple became closely integrated with our family, actually becoming a part of us even before Jacob's brother, who came to London later, married my sister Sophie.

For quite sometime Jacob Nirenstein experienced hardship in London. Having been a Talmudic student all of his life he had no industrial experience. Whatever he tried he either found unsuitable or was not suited to that particular work. During these times he stayed either in our house or in the house of brother Yossel. Being a good Hebraist and well versed in the Talmud, he succeeded in connecting himself with the famous bookshop Shapiro Vallentine. Mrs. Shapiro, a widow who at the death of her husband had inherited his lucrative business soon realised the worthy contribution that Jacob and his wife Feigel made to the business. She therefore made them a fair allowance for their living and later made them part

owners. At the death of Mrs. Shapiro, the Nirensteins became owners of this shop. Since the untimely death of Jacob, the business has been operated by Feigel and her children. During Jacob's lifetime, their home was often visited by cultured people.

> *[This famous East End bookshop was the successor of a company founded by Isaac Vallentine (1773-1868), the Belgian born son of a rabbi. He was a leading communal figure as well as a printer, publisher and notable bookseller. In 1841 he founded the Jewish Chronicle and, in 1848, the forerunner of the Jewish Year Book. The firm Vallentine & Co later merged to become the bookselling and publishing firm of Shapiro Vallentine. The Nirenstein part of our family became involved with the firm early this century, and then took over the running of it until it closed in 1969. Shapiro Vallentine published a wide range of Jewish books, both religious and secular. Many in our family would have used their prayer books in the synagogue. At home their children would have read their many books in English published in 'The Library for Jewish Children'. - Ed]*

On several Saturday afternoons when I visited them, I met the famous Jewish spiritualist and preacher the 'Kamnitzer Maggid'. I enjoyed listening to their discussions and comments on the Talmud, and on other cultural topics.

Now I must return to the main characters of this chapter, the Old Generation.

Aunt Hodus I remember as a woman of generous character and personality. She was tall, graceful and possessed fine features. In my memory of her I can only refer to her as 'her ladyship'. One became older and more thoughtful in her presence and behaved in a more serious and gentlemanly manner. She was much admired for her many virtues. She was most helpful in their business and her own formula for making wine for Passover out of raisins became a popular Passover demand.

Uncle Mordecai-Itzchok, hardly an easy personality, was stern, autocratic, and to a large extent dictatorial with his children and family. Orthodox and authoritarian, he to a large extent portrayed in the personality of a potentate. He was well learned in the Talmud

and on Saturday afternoons often acted as a reader to a set of old talmudists who came to the synagogue 'Chevra-Shas' to learn a portion of Mishnais. I often attended these readings with my father. He had good potentialities as a business man and he conducted a successful grocery shop in Spital Street. He was also a partner to some extent in his sons' wholesale egg and butter business. They had five sons, Aby, Solly, Harry, Aaron and Sam, and two daughters, Annie and Leah. They all established themselves successfully in business and in their social life. Between them, Aunt and Uncle had much to offer their children in the way of inheritance, spiritually and culturally.

Aunt Libe-Gittle was a woman somewhat removed from her elder sister, Hodus, in her mannerism and personality. Kind, honest and sincere in all of her ways she was beyond measure. She was outstanding in her orthodoxy which closely bordered on fanaticism. She was of short stature, near sighted and with bulging eyes, a feature that she passed on to most of her children, the welfare of whom she was so concerned with. Her entire life was dedicated to God and the observance of all the commandments. She implanted this strict orthodoxy in all her children and constantly watched them closely, lest they should by chance, or worse still, God forbid, by intent, slight a divine mandate or incur a prohibition. The marriage of her children, her sons in particular, to strictly orthodox mates became quite a fetish with her. She considered it to be the woman's influence in the home that made the home a religious institution. If a matrimonial agent proposed a particular mate for one of her children, she was not satisfied with their assertion that the mate came from a strictly orthodox home. She would therefore go to there on Friday evening, and watch to see whether proper Sabbath rituals were observed. Finding no satisfactory mates for her two sons through matrimonial agents she decided to import them from the old country from such families of whose orthodoxy she was well assured. Who could fill this requirement better than her own brother and sister. So without any consideration for monetary expenditure and the unknown implications that might ensue, she first sent for my sister Rivke-Mariam. When that venture did not work out, she sent for my sister Chaike. Years later when her other son was ready for marriage the same problem arose. This time she remembered that

there still remained a sister in the old country who had a daughter old enough to marry. A letter was despatched to this sister proposing that her daughter should come to London as a bride for her son. The sister, a widow in poor circumstances, replied that the proposition was entirely to their satisfaction. However, as she was a widow and there was a young son for whom there was little prospect in the old country, the entire family would have to emigrate.

Without any consideration for expense and whatever complications that might arise, sufficient money was sent and the entire family came to London. Even more complications arose than on the occasion when my sister, Rivke, was imported as a bride. Hetty, the prospective bride, did not like the prospective groom and refused to marry him. What now? Here there was a family of three souls without any means of support, and still worse, no bride for her son. It was a terrible disappointment for Aunt and a headache for the entire family. Several weeks passed in confusion and much disagreement arose in the family as to whom was most to blame.

The older members of the family blamed the bride for not living up to the agreed purpose of her coming to London. They argued that there was no good reason for her refusal to marry the young man. He was a very fine young man, good natured and well set up in business. Some of the younger members of the family blamed Aunt for not taking into consideration any such probability. They admired and sympathised with the young bride for refusing to marry a man she did not like. Hetty, a young lady of high spirits, brought up in an environment of revolutionary activity and idealism was much influenced by novels of that period that dealt mostly with independence, the body beautiful and love. She did not find the prospective groom, who was blond and quite plump, in any way resembled her dreams of a lover.

Her mother, an innocent victim of what was to her a catastrophe, found the groom to be a very sincere and decent young man who was well set up in his own business. She could not overlook the fact that her daughter's marriage would solve a pressing economic problem. She therefore tried to induce her daughter to change her mind. Neither her efforts, nor the efforts of some members of the family succeeded in changing the young lady's determination. For some

time there seemed to be no solution to this unpleasant situation which took an even more serious turn when Aunt Libe-Gittle refused to have anything to do with her ungrateful niece. The affair reached a climax when Hetty demanded that the entire family be sent back to Russia. This could have brought about a serious conflict within the family but for the intervention of Feigel and Jacob Nirenstein.

By their wise counsel and sympathetic approach they succeeded in enlightening Hetty of the serious situation she had to consider and that she had allowed her passion to get the best of her judgement. Here was a fine, honest and sincere young man, well educated, willing to marry a poor girl and to provide for her mother and young brother. Yet she, Hetty, finding no other fault but that he was blond and somewhat obese, refused to go through with what she ought to acknowledge as a most fortunate chance. They got both sides together, and after a great deal of argument, harmony was restored to the satisfaction of both parties and the entire family.

With this grievous problem happily solved and harmony restored in the family an early date for the wedding was set. It was attended by all members of the family and friends and, as the saying goes, they lived happily ever after. Hetty, contrary to the apprehension of some members of the family, proved to be a most helpful mate in their grocery shop and she provided a pleasant home for her husband as well as her family. I purposely recounted this episode in great detail in order to show that problems in the family did arise, and that they were resolved by the family in a peaceful and harmonious manner.

Uncle Shimon-Moshe, quite in contrast to his brother Mordecai-Itzchok, was calm, gentle and mild mannered. He was tall and well proportioned and of a slow and contemplative character. In his ageing years, when I knew him, his complexion was very fair. This, and a head and beard covered with snow-white hair and his general demeanour gave him the appearance of a Mosaic character. He too was extremely orthodox but he lacked his wife's fanaticism though he condoned her extreme orthodoxy. His influence upon his children was much more tolerant. He worked hard in his grocery shop, first in Oxford Street and later in Old Nichol Street. He worked in a most dedicated manner and left their domestic life to the management of his more vigorous wife. He was loved and adored by his children and

well respected by the family. They had two sons, Isser and Solly and five daughters, Bella, Anna, Minnie, Rebecca and Hetty.

I find it difficult to give an adequate portrayal of Uncle Yankel's personality, though I knew him better than some of the older members of the family having lived next door to him for some years. He was less refined than his brothers and sisters in both his mannerism and behaviour. Though he was undoubtedly religious there seemed to be a certain amount of superficiality and a lack of sincerity in his orthodoxy as exemplified by the others.

Of the older generation he was the only one who did not engage in the grocery business. He was a milkman and delivered milk to private homes. He would rise at four o'clock in the morning, push his three-wheeled wagon, which had a large churn and several large metal cans as well as many one pint and quart cans hanging on its rails to a dairy in the East End of London. There, he would obtain the necessary amount of milk, milked fresh from the cows, and make his rounds through the streets of the East End. With a long pole which had a nail at one end he would lift the cans of milk up to the first or second storeys and leave them on the window sills of his clients. Neither rain nor snow, nor the heat in the summer nor the freezing cold in winter, held him back from making his daily rounds.

His domestic life was not a happy one for his wife. Tilly was somewhat psychotic and at times quite irrational though never actually desperate. With a more understanding and tolerant husband she might have gone through life fairly normally. As it was there were many unpleasant scenes in their home and for their four children hardly a healthy environment to be brought up in. Two of their elder children, their son Mendel and daughter Hetty, were badly affected by their home environment and both of them showed neurotic tendencies. However, the two younger children, a son and a daughter, seemed to elude the unpleasant inheritance and environment and grew up to be normal and decent members of society.

Uncle Chaim-Itzchok was a tall, massive man. He might have been successful as a weight lifter but athletics was an unknown art in his circles. He was a good natured, non aggressive man and always ready to help a brother in need. He owned a grocery shop in Pedley Street, a short distance away from our grocery shop in the same street.

Here he put to good use his physical strength labouring in a dedicated manner from early morning until late in the night.

As to his physical prowess, there is a story told of how late one evening, after closing his shop, he entered his house through a side door and mounted a flight of stairs which led to his living quarters above his shop. On top of the stairs, on meeting a couple of prowlers, he grappled with them and the three of them fell down the whole flight of stairs. But he held on to them until the police were called and he had them arrested, he being none the worse for the experience.

He married a widow or divorcee who had several grown up children. If my memory does not fail me her name was Aunt Sarah.She was much more energetic and dictatorial than her much younger husband. She too was dedicated to the shop and she delegated to herself its management. She was quite miserly though not mean. She always amused me by saying 'farling' for 'farthing' whenever she presented me with this generous gift. With Uncle she had only one son whose name was Solly, and he was known in the family as 'Solly, der Starker (the strong)'. This was the only trait he inherited from his father, for he was very much spoiled by both his parents, but by his mother in particular, who gloated over him and whose fondness of him went far beyond any reason or desire to control him.

Solly was extremely unsociable and very much an egoist. Boorish in his relationship within the family, he had no regard or respect for any one of them. A ne'er-do-well in any of his undertakings in which he was always generously assisted by his parents, he was for ever a financial burden on them. He married a very charming young girl who came from a very nice and respectable family, but I very much doubt that he ever appreciated her in a deserving manner. Several children resulted from this marriage but he must have passed away at a very young age, for in 1945 when I visited the family in London I was informed that he was already dead. I very much doubt that their marriage was ever a happy one.

Of Aunt Sarah's children by her first husband there was a son by the name of Abie Horns who was referred to in the family as Cousin Abie Horns. He might have been entitled to this relationship because it is my belief that Aunt Sarah was a sister to the Cohen members of

the family. I knew Abie Horns quite well during the years I lived in London, and also shared his company for a number of years when I was already married and lived in Brooklyn, New York. It might be interesting to make some remarks about him because in many respects he did form part of the family. He closely resembled his mother in many of her characteristics. He was undoubtedly very stingy and very much self-centred. Quite clever and very well self-educated he considered himself to be quite an authority on many subjects. He argued quite logically in discussing a point but no logical argument could alter his point of view. It was therefore that many of our discussions protracted into the wee hours of the morning.

His marriage was a love affair that lasted but little beyond their honeymoon, and though he lived in the same house as his wife and children he was little more than a lodger there rather than a husband or father. In his allowance to his family he took no consideration for any need of luxuries of any nature, but while he lived in London, or New York or anywhere else he made sure that this allowance reached them regularly, whatever the amount might have been. Their marriage did produce twins, a boy and a girl. The boy Percy later changed his name to Bob and then to Robert Horns and came to U.S.A. in his early twenties. For a short while father and son tried to live together but soon their characters clashed and they parted.

Robert Horns became a traveller for a concern manufacturing buttons and he has been with this concern for a great many years. Eventually he became managing director and he is doing very well financially. He is married to his second wife, the first marriage having gone on the rocks. He has one daughter and seemingly he is quite happy. Hilda, the daughter, remained with her mother in London and, as far as I know, never married.

Abie Horns engaged in several business enterprises in New York but, unwilling to risk his savings in some business, he always went into partnerships. These, however, never did work out and after several such efforts he left New York and emigrated to Israel, where he lived for several years and then passed away. All in all, I would say that he lived a very lonely life and owing to his miserly nature he had no friends to speak of. He kept himself well dressed and was very clean in his habits. For a time he lived in my house, paid rent and

often made use of our kitchen. He would go down to the fish market, buy some fish and prepare it himself, the fish often lasting him for several days. But here, too, he made sure that any utensils he used he scoured clean. He never lost his preference for the English way of making tea and this he made use of the day long.

Now, Uncle David and Aunt Reizel. Uncle David was one of the most humble and unassuming persons that I have ever met. He was kind and affectionate and his goodness, which was of a saintly nature, reflected in his countenance. Like a ray of sunshine which struggles to penetrate the dark clouds of a stormy day, his shining eyes strove to dispel the gloom which like a spectre hung over him during the latter part of his life. His pestilential disease slowly sapped his strength, destroyed his lungs and brought to an end a life which, though tortured and suffering, he just the same loved and cherished and tried hard to prolong until the very last spark became extinguished.

He was truly a modern 'Job'. The Job of the Bible (whose author and time of composition is unknown and about whom a Talmudic quotation says, 'Job never existed nor was he created, he is but a moral') is considered in modern thought to be a 'philosophical tragedy' based on ancient legends, masterfully composed in 'Byronic' style and beauty. It is considered to be an everlasting work of art which can be applied to all ages and times. But, in the case of David, we have a living example of suffering and patience, for a complaint never passed his lips nor did he deny his God in his most troublesome years. His orthodoxy was moderate, realistic without a trace of fanaticism. Yet it was sincere and genuine. In his prayers it was tears of sincerity that he shed, and for his courage he was admired and loved with deep affection. His death in his middle age might have been a relief to him from his many sufferings, but it was a shock to his family and friends. May his memory be everlasting.

'A woman of virtue who can find, for her price is above rubies.' I do not know what woman this passage would fit so well as beloved Aunt Reizel. Love, labour, patience and kindness were the tools with which she managed her home, her family and her life. Beset by economic hardship, her husband's illness and physical disability of two of her children, she nevertheless faced life with hope and courage

and she dedicated her life to her husband's care and the welfare of her children. Her education did not exceed the usual education received by a woman of her social standing. Yet she possessed a hunger and an understanding of any knowledge that she was able to obtain. Hungrily, and with patience, she would sit into the late hours of the night and listen to my recitation of a book that I had read, or a play that I had seen. Of poverty, hardships and other discomforts of life, this family had a full share. Yet their home was peaceful and pleasant. Hospitable to the extreme, one was drawn to their home in joyful expectation, and all comers were received with thankful appreciation and with a welcome never to be forgotten.

The village of Rovyatich, in which they lived in Russian Poland, was several miles away from our own home in Swalbitch. As a child of four or five years of age I faintly recollect visiting their home, but after our removal from my birthplace I did not see them until their entire family emigrated to London in 1910. It was here that I formed a lasting friendship with them, which time has not been able to erase. I spent so many spare days and evenings with them in pleasant amusement that my sudden departure from them was filled with regret and nostalgia.

There were seven children in this family – five boys and two girls. The eldest, Solly, was first known as 'Solly the Greener', but later when he became somewhat anglicised and when others greener than he came to London, he was referred to as 'Solly der Kleiner' (Solly the Smaller), this in order to identify him from the many Sollys in the family. He came to London before the rest of his family and until their arrival in 1910 he worked in brother-in-law Isser's grocery shop. I don't know what wages he was paid, but I do know that the highest wages paid to a helper in the grocery business was ten shillings per week plus food and lodging. For this remuneration a helper had to work from early dawn until late in the night for six days in the week. He was a hard and conscientious worker and he undoubtedly sent some of his earnings home to his family. When the rest of his family came to London, and in order to encourage them to become self supporting, a grocery shop was bought for them in Vallance Road. This venture did not prove to be successful and was given up. Next, a milk round, similar to that of Uncle Jankel, was bought for them

and Solly took charge of it with a little help from his younger brothers. This venture was quite successful and was the main support of that family for many years.

For many years Solly was the main support of his family. He had very little time to enjoy his youth, and the burden of supporting a family at such an early stage of his life may have been responsible for unpleasant eccentricities which he developed later on. He acted in an all-knowing, stubborn and opinionated manner which very much embarrassed his family, and caused him no end of trouble when he became embroiled in a matrimonial affair with a woman altogether out of his class.

Next in line came his sister Hetty. She was a living replica of her mother and she inherited all the good traits of both her parents. This made up in good measure for her short and somewhat corpulent figure. She was mirthful and affectionate and she accepted her family's hardships and misfortunes with a realistic understanding. For a time she worked in an uncle's grocery shop, and later on she helped her mother in the domestic chores. She married and, I hope, is deservedly enjoying a happy life.

A more pitiful and unfortunate boy than Laizer I can hardly comprehend. Good natured, affectionate and extremely kind, he tried hard to adjust himself to a normal life. Sadly, however, he had an abnormally enlarged head. I am not aware if he was born with it or if it was due to accident. Anyway, it retarded his normal development and caused him to suffer constant headaches and other discomforts. Though physically well developed he was weak and lacked stamina and strenuous endurance. He withdrew into his inner self and he shied away from company and conversation. At more important family gatherings, like an uninvited guest he made himself as inconspicuous as possible lest he offend the host or in any way cause unpleasantness. He worked for a number of years in a fur factory and this might have further aggravated his feeble health, for he passed away quite a young man.

Next in line came Aaron and Louis. Having come to London at an early age they both received normal English school education. They developed into normal healthy boys both mentally and physically. They were playful, jolly and full of fun. Often the five boys

would contest their strength against mine. A door in their home which opened into a rear yard must have been meant to withstand modern bombardment. All of them would lean with all their strength against the outside of the door and try to push it open, whilst I on the outside held it back. Or, vice versa, they on the inside would try to prevent me opening the door. Much to their disappointment and dismay their combined efforts against me failed. Aaron and Louis married into nice families, lived happily and prospered in their respective hardware businesses.

The youngest of the boys, Joseph, was another case of life's inhospitality. Probably a victim of infantile paralysis in his youth, he was robbed of part use of one hand and leg. He was alert and quite studious and had there been more free schooling in London in higher education he probably would have ended up in one of the fine arts. He was still attending normal school when I left London so I am unaware of the events that followed my departure. He was sympathetic, affectionate and full of life. He tried hard to participate in our more strenuous games but he usually had to settle for a game of cards or draughts. His visit to my home in New York in 1961 was a great thrill for me, but unfortunately we could not spend as much time together as I would have liked. He engaged in the hardware business in partnership with his brother Aaron and he deservingly prospered.

The youngest of the daughters was Leah. I can just remember her as a child, rather shy and very much reserved. I have no doubt but that like the rest of them she must have inherited her parents' good traits and preserved the family tradition. When I visited London in 1945-6, I found her to be a fully grown married woman with a child of her own. I was assured that she was happily married and lived comfortably a few doors away from my brother Joseph in Gore Road.

No doubt, more could be written and said about this family, about their fortunes and misfortunes, their joys and sorrows and their experiences during their lifetime. I must, however, leave that to a more inspired chronicler.

Fortune and misfortune, joy and sorrow, mental and physical disabilities are part and parcel of human tragedy. Some there are who believe that these experiences are decrees predestined from above, and that society is therefore powerless. There are others, however,

who hold that these are but accidents, some of which could be avoided. As proof of their view, they point to the many improvements, economically, which liberal administrations have brought about, and the various plagues and diseases which have been eliminated or modified by improved medical aid to the masses. Some of the suffering of the present time, and much more of the past, can be laid directly at the feet of society and its laissez-faire attitude.

I have not made any reference regarding my own family in my description of the first two generations of our family. That is because I have already given a description of my parents in my first book, and as far as the younger members are concerned I will come to them when I relate some of my own experience in London in the coming chapters.

My description of the various members of our family has been but fragmentary. They are certainly entitled to a much more detailed account as to their lineage, experience and their general outlook on life. It is certain that for a number of generations to come their genetic domination will to a large extent influence, mould and shape the physical, mental and general characteristics, as well as mannerism and behaviour, of the men and women who will make up the future branches of our family tree.

10

Brick Lane

What the Strand, Oxford Street and Piccadilly Circus were to the West End, Whitechapel, in a less dignified manner, was to the East End. It was its shopping centre and parade ground. On long winter Friday evenings lovers were drawn to this wide and well lit street, and they could be seen strolling arm in arm in amorous fantasy into the late hours of the night. On sunny summer Saturday afternoons married couples, with their children dressed in their finest Sabbath attire, paraded up and down this street in pleasant contemplation.

Facing Whitechapel Church, Osborne Street runs for but a short distance, culminating in Brick Lane. Whitechapel, wide, gay and well lit, was patronised by the less orthodox Jews, some of whom kept their shops open on Saturdays. Brick Lane, on the other hand, was a street steeped in orthodoxy. Even during week days, when all the shops were open, this street was but dimly lit and a pall of old age seemed to cling to its pavements and buildings. As one walked through this street one felt burdened with a pack of ancient troubles and sorrows, and one stooped to its task. Centuries back, this district must have been a village separated from greater London, and Brick Lane its shopping centre. But time and change neglected it and left it to rot and crumble in its own senility.

A short distance away one comes to Thrawl Street, where Isser had his grocery shop hidden in a corner of one of one of the massive buildings erected by the Rothschilds for poor working class tenants. Next we come to Flower & Dean Street on the corner of which there was a cheap lodging house, patronised by men and women who had degenerated so low in the ranks of human society that they could not

be classed even with the most primitive peasants anywhere. If peasants are at the bottom of the social ladder it is not because they have degenerated but because they had never risen. But these derelicts, outcasts and human waste of this large city, heve degenerated into a class all of their own. Thousands of them were to be met with in fashionable London as well as in the East End. Not all of them were of an ignorant or illiterate type and some of them must have known of a better life and had a good education. Whether they found life too competitive or some other social or domestic problems brought them to this deplorable state, is a secret which they took with them to their graves. Any attempt to converse with them as to their personal affairs resulted in their immediate disappearance, without leaving a trace of the shameful secrets they harboured.

Several streets further on in Brick Lane, probably at the corner of Fournier Street, there stood facing one another two institutions of a contrasting character; one serving to man's spiritual aspirations, the other his physical body. In a sense they symbolised the old proverb, that cleanliness is next to Godliness.

'Machzikeh Hadaas' (upholders of the law) was the largest and, most likely, the oldest synagogue in the East End. It was also the most orthodox and so was its congregation. The building was old and covered with the ever present London soot. The interior also reflected its age and an odour of old books and moulding woodwork permeated throughout the large worship auditorium. There were also several assembly rooms one of which was used as a talmudic classroom. Here a number of scholars studied the Talmud under rabbinical supervision. For a short time I studied there and one advanced student, who later became very famous, was the eminent Zelig Brodetsky. Some years later I had the pleasure of attending one of his lectures on astronomy, and I was so very much fascinated by this ancient science that to the present day I have remained a victim to its fascination.

The other institution was 'Shefchicks Turkish Baths'. Considering its locality, it was a place of luxury and it had first and second class accommodation. Its dry hot room, steam room and small swimming pool were used by both classes. It was in the reception rooms, where the patrons undressed, that they parted company. The second class

dressing room was a small dimly lit room with several wooden benches, but the first class room was luxuriously furnished. It had upholstered sofas and chairs, and small tables scattered throughout the spacious room. There were some magazines for reading and one could order tea and biscuits for refreshment. On occasions father took me there but it was always in the second class that we went; the first class was too expensive and, besides that, father considered it unbecoming for an orthodox Jew with a greying beard to luxuriate in a first class compartment.

I would never had known what the first class offered in the way of luxury but for an episode in my youthful experience. Occasionally I went there by myself. In the hot dry room I once met a very imposing English gentleman who began a conversation with me. He spoke a very fine English and as I was very anxious to improve my English I tried very hard to show my interest in the subject. When it was time to get dressed he invited me to come into the first class compartment which I readily accepted. I do not remember the subject of our conversation but over a good cup of tea and biscuits we spent a very pleasant evening. When we were ready to depart he asked me when I would come again. I told him that I would come again in about two weeks.

'Let us make it a date', he said, 'and I will meet you at the entrance'.

We parted quite formally and I ran home as fast as my legs would carry me, very much enthused and very eager to relate my experience at home.

I told father of my meeting with this fine gentleman and expected to see him beaming with pride at his son's entrance into society, but father did not see it my way. Quite seriously he warned me never to meet this man again, and he added that from now on I was not to go there by myself.

'This man,' he said, 'is a missionary and he will surely try to convert you'.

I had heard a great deal about missionary work in the East End, and how the missionaries took advantage of poor immigrants who, being poverty stricken, were willing to accept food and lodging from them, and how in a number of cases they had succeeded in converting some of them to Christianity. I therefore readily agreed with father

and promised never to meet this man again. After a lapse of several months I thought it would be safe for me to visit this bath house again and, with father's permission, I went there.

Whether bv accident or destiny when I went up to the window to pay for my entrance I felt a gentle hand touching my shoulder. Turning around I faced the same gentleman and became quite frightened. I did not know what to do. For a while I thought of running out and hurrying home as fast as I could, but in my embarrassment I hesitated and before I had time to collect my wits he took me by the hand and led me into the first class compartment. I was cornered, but I soon regained my self composure and conducted myself with confidence. Once more we spent a pleasant evening together, although several times I was embarrassed by his allusions to my well developed body and by his touching one part of my body or another. Before going home he said he would like me to visit him in his apartment in the West End. In appreciation of his goodwill I told that I would be very happy to visit him whenever an opportunity availed itself. We parted formally as before and I went home rather confused. I decided not to tell father about my meeting with this man again and I let it go at that.

One of our customers, a very poor shoemaker, had fixed up a shoe repair shop in a basement. Here he did shoe repairing and lived quite frugally. He was quite literate and spoke English very well, at least as far as I could judge. I often visited him and watched him at his trade and listened to some of the stories he loved to relate about his life. In a boastful manner I told him about my adventure with the gentleman I had met at the bath house. He smiled and said to me, 'Your father is mistaken. He is not a missionary but one more dangerous to you. He is a homosexual'.

'A homosexual', I said, 'what is that?' He explained to me what it was and this time I really got frightened. 'But', I argued, 'he is such a fine gentleman and with such fine manners'.

'Yes', he said, 'he can be a very fine gentleman, but take my advice, and don't ever see him again'. This is how Shefchicks lost a youthful patron.

The working class of London, both male and female, were great beer drinkers and at the corners of Brick Lane and Hanbury Street

was a gigantic brewery, owned by Truman, Hanbury and Buxton. During my lifetime I had seen various breeds of horses, race horses, military horses and just plain horses. But never had I seen a breed in any way comparable to the gigantic horses hitched to the enormous brewery wagons. They looked like antediluvian monsters.

A short distance away we come to the Brick Lane arch. It was an archway over which the freight trains of the Great Eastern Railway passed on to a depot in Shoreditch. Nearby there was a court at the end of which was a railroad station. It was called the Pedley Street Station, and for some distance the trains ran below street level. It was here, one misty November morning in 1916, that I took a last look and said goodbye to London as I descended the station stairs and took a train to King's Cross docks, where I boarded a ship and worked my way to Montreal, Canada.

At the foot of this station was the beginning of Pedley Street. Though I wandered about in the East End and its outlying districts I consider Pedley Street to have been my home during the previous twelve and a half years, during my life in London.

> *[I think Uncle David's memory is at fault. He must have meant that he went from Pedley Street to King's Cross Station (the main line station in central London), and then by train to Liverpool Docks on the estuary of the Mersey where he boarded the ship for Canada. - Ed.]*

11

Pedley Street

Pedley Street had houses on one side of the street only. On the other side of the street ran a wall as far as Shuttle Street. On the other side of the wall ran the below-street-level railroad. A short distance down Pedley Street there was a court at which corner Uncle Chaim-Itschok had his grocery shop and still further down, at the corner of Bratley Street, our grocery shop was located. It was here, late one afternoon in 1904, that a carriage laden with some heavy bundles and four tired sea travellers brought us to our new home in the East End.

Number 33 Pedley Street was a three storey building. The ground floor comprised the grocery shop and a fairly large kitchen. A door led to a hallway and another door opened to the back yard. Here there was a faucet for our water supply, and the private WC. for use by all the occupants of the house. Another door in the hallway opened on to the street and was the private entrance to the house. A stairway led to the upper living rooms on the first floor in one corner of which stood a sink with a water faucet. There were two rooms on this floor, one a small room which was used as a bedroom for our parents, and a very large room that served as a sitting room as well as a bedroom for the rest of the family. On the upper floor lived a tenant who paid seven and sixpence (38p) rent, while father paid thirty shillings (£1.50) a week for the entire house.

The below-street-level railway ran as far as Shuttle Street and then it crossed under Pedley Street and, turning once more, it ran at the back of our house. This train was not electrified and it used coal for its fuel and as it passed our house it belched clouds of smoke and soot. We were therefore obliged to keep the one large window we

had in our kitchen which faced the yard closed, as otherwise it would fill our kitchen with smoke and soot, very much to our discomfort and most harmful to poor mother who suffered from asthma and bronchitis.

A coke burning stove in the kitchen served for heating in the winter and cooking and baking all the year round. A table, a couple of chairs and a wooden sofa was all the furnishing we had here and, except for rare occasions, all of our time was spent in this room.

I was twelve and a half years of age when I came to London, somewhat short for my age and stubby, with apple red cheeks and beaming with health and vigour. My twin sisters were several years younger, and the first thing in order was our being placed in school. There was no problem in as much as my sisters were concerned; they were soon placed in a girls' school. But we just could not find a school that had room for me. It was not until a school officer came to our help that a school was found in a most undesirable location.Opposite our house was very large goods warehouse. It was six storeys high and one of the tallest buildings in the East End. It ran from Shuttle Street to the end of Pedley Street, then for some distance to where Weaver Street made a right angle, and proceeded to Shuttle Street. Pedley Street and Weaver Street formed a square which in effect was a dead end, as one could not proceed from there on. This warehouse received various merchandise from all parts of the country and from foreign lands and during the weekdays Pedley Street was filled with wagons which came to collect merchandise for distribution to all parts of London. But on Saturdays and Sundays, the warehouse being closed, there was dead silence but for the rare hawker who, in an ear piercing monotone, offered to sell his wares, sometimes water-cress or kippered herrings, or offered to buy old clothes or junk.

As there was no traffic at all on Sundays and this section was closed off from the rest of the neighbourhood with hardly a policeman around, men and boys from other neighbourhoods made use of this location for various games. Often amateur pugilists came here with their retinues of admirers and fought with their bare knuckles. It was also rumoured that in the past famous English fighters fought championship bouts in the locality. An interesting contest often started here by men who carried cart wheels upright on their heads

all the way to the Tower of London. On all of these occasions a great deal of betting would go on, and we youngsters would have a jolly good time.

During the interval before being placed in a school I became acquainted with the boys of the neighbourhood, learned their strange games and excelled in many of them. Often the boys would try to entice me into a fight with one or other of them, but boxing is an unknown art in the country I came from. They therefore had to settle for a wrestling match and in this I was able to give a good account with the biggest and best of them

But once placed in school, and in the evening in a Yeshivah, there was little time for me to mix with the boys. Six months soon passed by and I had reached my thirteenth birthday, time for Barmitzvah. On a Thursday morning, when the Torah Scrolls are read during the morning service, father took me to Shool. I was called up for Aliyah and with no other fuss or even a fountain pen for a present I became a man.

Shuttle Street runs from Weaver Street alongside the warehouse, ducks under another arch of the Great Eastern Railway and ends at the foot of a flight of stairs which leads on to a footbridge over the passenger part of the railway. It was over this bridge that I had to go in order to reach my school. On our side of the railway on Buxton Street there was a church and a Catholic school. Most of the boys attending this school came from the other side of the railway, from the neighbourhood of Bethnal Green. They were a rough bunch of boys, anti-Semitically inclined and partly antagonistic to greeners (immigrants). There was only one other boy from my street who attended this school, much taller than myself, and we two were the only two Jewish boys in the whole school. When I was able to go to school together with him the two of us were able to take good care of ourselves and we were never molested. But when I went by myself I would often be attacked by them and though at times I was able to give a good account of myself, more often I was fairly well beaten up. The same happened on my way home and it lasted during my entire school days. Sometimes, when I encountered too many of them to risk punishment I would return home and have someone escort me. Also sometimes on my way home the same thing hap-

pened, then I would wait for one of the teachers who would escort me past the bridge. It was due to these hardships that at my fourteenth year I decided to quit school, much as I regretted it.

Actually, I attended school for one year and three months, making the first and second standard. My master was a Mr Oliver and the headmaster was a Mr Scott. I learned very quickly and I must say that both of them were very nice to me. When, in my exams at the end of the term in the second standard, I made 299 points out of a total of 300 points, I not only made a record for my class but a record for the school for all time. The headmaster was so astonished that he paraded me throughout the five standards the school had and admonished the students with the remark, 'Here is a boy who a little more than a year ago came to this school not knowing a word of English, succeeded in this short time to do what no other boy in this school has ever done'. For my accomplishment he presented me with the first prize - a book.

In Stoney Lane, a street off Middlesex Street, on the top floor of one of the buildings a wealthy German spinster, evidently in an effort to make up for her non-fulfilment of God's command to be fruitful, supported a Yeshivah. Here, a dozen or more boys were instructed by a rabbi in the Talmud. Father, being anxious that I should continue with my religious education, placed me in this Yeshivah which held a class for five evenings a week.

It was here that I met my life-long friend Abie Rossetsky. It seems as though it was fated that we share a life-long friendship for, like myself, destiny decreed that he emigrate to the United States and spend the rest of his life here. Having spent our youth in London we naturally have much in common, and many a day or evening have we spent reminiscing the good time we had together in London attending Music Halls, riding on a bus to Epping Forest, or listening to the Military band in Hyde Park. Whilst his father was just a Shammas, he was a well learned Talmudist and quite a character otherwise. A daughter, Mary, is married to Ian Mikardo, Member of Parliament for Reading, and his son Morris Rosette was Secretary of the Zionist Party until the establishment of the Jewish State of Israel when Chaim Weitzman, First President of Israel, appointed him Secretary to the Knesset.

After a while the Yeshivah in Stoney Lane was given up and was then held in a room in a street at the back of Brick Lane called Eagle Street, and here a new rabbi recently arrived from Lithuania became our teacher. He was by far the best Talmudic teacher I have ever had. His name was Gershon Perchick. He later became my brother-in-law by marrying my sister Sarah. Shortly after, the wealthy German lady disconnected herself from the Yeshivah and lack of funds forced it to be moved to a room in Machzikah Hadaas school.

When I became fourteen years of age, an age at which London boys left school, I was eager to continue my English education and could have continued in this school. However, in view of the hardships I had on my way to school, I decided that if I could transfer to another school I would continue with my education, but if no other school would accept me at this age, then I would terminate my schooling. As no other school was willing to accept me, I left school for good. Much as I regretted terminating my education I never blamed myself for this decision, but I have always regretted the cause which forced me to do so.

There was some talk about my entering a foundation school, but it was soon evident that father could not afford the expense. And so, after one year and three months, my English education came to a very much inadequate and insufficient end. However, I then and there made a decision that I would somehow try very hard not to forget what I had learned, and try to improve my speech and knowledge of the English language.

In the old country I had a fairly good education in Hebrew. I knew grammar well and I was able to converse in Hebrew fluently. I read many books in Hebrew and, besides those written by Jewish Hebrew authors, I also read some translations from English authors and many more by continental authors. But now, I said to myself, I am living in an English speaking country and will most likely spend my life here, I will have to neglect my Hebrew for the sake of the new language I must master.

I did just that, and though by no means can I make any claim of knowing English, I am nevertheless able to read any book, be it a novel or non-fiction, and very well understand what it is all about. However, I do regret the fact that I have forgotten most of my

Hebrew, even though occasionally I do pick up a Hebrew book and am able to follow the story. Just the same I cannot any more claim knowledge of the Hebrew language.

With the termination of school the question arose, 'What next?' I did not much favour the grocery business with its long hours and no time for social or educational opportunities, and would have preferred learning a trade. But father would not hear of that, for fear that I might have to work on Shabbas. There was nothing left to do but to enter the grocery business.

12

Church Lane

Termination of school left me no other choice but to go to work, and work meant a job in a grocery shop. Although by this time brother Solly had decided to look for a business of his own, and my twin sisters, Yetta and Mary, had several more years to attend school, Father, with the efficient help of sister Sophie and what little help Mother and the young twins could give, was well enough able to manage the shop without my help. I therefore looked for a job elsewhere. This problem was very soon solved for me, for brother Joseph (Yossel) needed help in the grocery shop in Church Lane. I therefore packed my few personal belongings and, with my prize book, I moved into Church Lane.

I have but a faint recollection of brother Joseph in his early youth. He must have been fifteen or sixteen years of age when I was born and he emigrated to London when I was about nine years of age. During these nine years he was seldom home. Away most of the time, first finishing his education and later working in a tannery in a town called Krinik. He undoubtedly came home for the important Festivals and some other special occasions. One such occasion remains clearly fixed in my mind; it was at the birth of my twin sisters, Yetta and Mary. I must have been about four years of age, and I distinctly remember Joseph lifting me high above the cradle in which the newly born twins were lying wrapped up in their infant swaddling. Another occasion clearly fixed in my mind took place several years later, when I was taken by my father to the town of Buten, my mother's birth place, for my education. Joseph was for a short time working in this town in a tannery owned by a distant relative of ours. Here he had joined the local fire brigade. In his fireman's uniform, with helmet

and water pail in his hand, he portrayed the gallant fireman he must have been.

In my recollections of Joseph at that distant time he was lean, tall and well groomed. He was of a happy disposition with a facial expression of intense sensitiveness. About his mouth and on his lips there played a slightly mischievous whimsical smile, giving one the impression that he was about to tell a joke or enact some sort of prank. He was an easy going, happy and frolicsome young man and this trait remained symbolic of him throughout his lifetime, He must have been popular with the fair sex upon whom he, in a most innocent and playful way, liked to play tricks. To be sure, they must have admired him and hilariously enjoyed his pranks, and considered him to be a pleasant and sympathetic young man.

His emigration to London, his marriage to his cousin Minnie and his confinement in a grocery shop, which might have been his marriage dowry, must have had some sobering effect on him, though it did not altogether extinguish that mirthful smile on his lips or that sparkling gleam in his eyes.

In his life monetary ambition played but a minor role. Money to him was not an end in itself but a means to an end, and that end was the welfare of the whole community. He was in love with humanity, particularly with those in need. To him the unfortunates were victims rather than perpetrators of their misfortunes. Instead of being blamed and disrespected, they should rather be given sympathy, and encouraged and helped, be they misfits or victims of circumstances. The vicissitudes of their lives harbour the secrets of their failures. Where is the Solomon that could solve their problems?

He borrowed from our ancient Fathers the philosophy that he is wealthy who is contented with his lot. He felt it to be his duty to do someone a favour and to give someone a helping hand, be he relative or stranger, and it was with this humanity in mind that someone wrote, 'I will pass through this life but once. Any good thing therefore that I can do, any kindness that I can show to any human being, let me do it now. Let me not defer it or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again'. Yet another wise saying is, 'What man is contributes more to his happiness than what he has; not wealth but wisdom is the way'. Sometimes in poverty, sometimes in tragedy, failure and

hardship, yet for ever he bore the burden of life wistfully, pensively and philosophically.

He managed his grocery as well as he could; it may not have been good enough or, perhaps, it could not have been done better. He was not dedicated or enslaved to the shop, as some others were. He would frequently absent himself from the shop, assumingly on an important errand which often turned out to be no more than a game of draughts with Mr Feldman in his shipping office. He must not be misjudged on this account for it was not a case of immaturity or neglect of his business, rather it was a need for a more excruciating task for his mind, which was for ever seeking a solution to some of the more profound mysteries of life. It was not the play – win or lose – that counted, but rather the food for thought that the game offered. The larger percentage of his mind dwelled much less on industrial progress, and much more on humanity. Many there are who without his help would have been much worse off. The respect shown him by many and the love felt by those who shared life with him, remain as beacons for those who wish to follow his example. May his memory be a delight to his loved ones, and may he everlastingly rest in peace.

Cousin and sister-in-law Minnie, was the daughter of Aunt Liebe-Gittel and Uncle Shimon-Moshe. Brought up in a house of orthodoxy and fanaticism Minnie left the latter at her maiden home, but she did take orthodoxy, together with whatever other dowry she might have presented to her young husband, into their own home and shop. For those who knew and liked Minnie as I did, and I am sure there are very few who did not, it was not for her beauty's sake that they admired her. It was on account of her goodness, sincerity and wholehearted acceptance of life, for better or for worse, whether in health or in sickness, tragedy, joy or pleasure, that due honours to her memory must be paid.

It may well be said that she and her husband enjoyed a normal, happy and contented life. Not because life had lavished on them ease and comfort, joy and prosperity in full measure, but rather in spite of the absence of much of these luxuries during a good part of their togetherness. Any misunderstandings or unpleasantries which in married life do arise were of a non serious nature, and love, kindness

and consideration always prevailed in the end. As life discounted the months and years of their togetherness, the happiness of their early married life must have been impaired by the fact that their marriage did not immediately bless them with an offspring. Fear that they might go through life childless accounted for some complexities that later became evident. When, after five years of their married life, Minnie became pregnant they awaited the coming of the blessed event with joy and a feeling of fulfilment of their mission in life. As a result help was needed in their shop, and that is where I came into the picture.

The grocery shops owned by our family were all very much alike. One could easily step from one shop into another and feel quite at home there. However, brother Joseph's shop in Church Lane was different. Church Lane was a short street running from Whitechapel to Commercial Road. Because it was a business street with shops on both sides, the clientele in his shop was of a wealthier and more intelligent class of business men and women, and so the shop was much more pleasant to work in. Also it required less labour in its management for much of the packaging which had to be done in the other shops made up but a small part of the sales here. Merchandise, such as canned goods and other items which were already processed for sale, made up the bulk of the business. Here, a happier mood filled the street, and life otherwise seemed to be more turbulent, more interesting and more alive. I did not feel as fenced in, as I did in Pedley Street. Life here was more pleasant and comfortable.

Joseph occupied the entire house in which his shop was located. It consisted of the shop and a small stock room in the back of it, a spacious back yard where was kept the soda water machine and with plenty of room to spare for Minnie to hang out her washing. The upper floor consisted of a kitchen and a large living room and a bedroom. These rooms were spacious and well ventilated and one could breath and sleep in peace and comfort here. Both shop and house also had electric lighting, so there were no messy gas mantles to bother with. Because the kitchen was upstairs and we had to take our meals there a communication problem arose which Joseph solved by installing a pipe linking the shop to an upstairs room. At both ends of the pipe he had whistles fitted, so that when one wanted to

communicate to a person upstairs one would remove the whistle from his end of the pipe and blow into the pipe. This would cause the whistle upstairs to whistle, and the person upstairs would remove the whistle from his end, speak into the pipe and then put his ear to the pipe in order to hear the speaker from the other end.

I remained in this shop for about two happy and interesting years. For a while a rabbi came once a week and gave me an hour's tutoring in the Talmud. But after some time I terminated these lessons as I could not see what the civil laws of ancient times would do for me. True, the polemic arguments and discussions therein did sharpen the mind and helped one to understand life with all of its trials and complexities, yet I felt that it was more important for me to improve my English, it being apparent that I was destined to spend my life among English speaking people.

From my early youth it was evident that, whether by self indulgence or by some other reason I cannot explain, I was what is called a book worm. First I read in Yiddish, then in Hebrew and even a little in Russian, most of which I have forgotten, but lastly and for all I could digest, in English. Schooling did not teach me a basic knowledge of English. One year and three months spent in the two lowest standards in one of the poorest schools in the Bethnal Green district of the East End taught me little more than the alphabet and the putting together of simple words. Even while I was attending school I bought second hand fairy tale books from stands in Middlesex Street for half penny or a penny at most. These I read in the hundreds, and I continued with them during my working in this shop.

It was not until some time later that I got hold of a book called, 'In the Year of Waterloo'. I laboured over this book for a whole year. How much of it I understood I cannot say, but just the same I read its every word. I was not supposed to read books during the working hours in the shop, but as the shop was open from seven in the morning until twelve midnight, and in view of the need of rest and sleep during the remaining hours of the day, when could one read?

Well, I must confess that I did steal a glance at a book I kept hidden behind the counter and, when I retired for the night's sleep, I used to stuff the keyhole with cotton, so that the candle light by

which I was reading could not be seen from outside the door. In this way I read whatever books I was able to get hold of. Later, I took books out of the library, and to this day I have remained a bookworm.

I must have been about sixteen years of age when I attended my first play in English; I may have seen a play in Yiddish but I am not sure. The play was 'Svengali', and a short time later I also attended a play called 'The Village Blacksmith'. Both plays made a lasting impression on me, and had the effect of putting me in a trance. It was not until a number of years later that, accompanied by my sister Sophie, we went to the Covent Garden Opera House to hear Rossini's opera, The Barber of Seville. I do not know who sang the role of Figaro, but I could not forget the melodious voice of Madam Tetrazini. She sang the part of Rosina and in the lesson scene she sang, 'The Last Rose of Summer'. Both of us were so overcome with her singing, that for the time being we wondered whether it was real. Somehow neither of us could believe that a human voice could be so melodious, so wonderful.

In Joseph's shop I soon became popular with the customers. They were intelligent, friendly and pleasant to wait on. In contrast to brother Joseph who was quite tall, I was short even for my age. I really did not grow up to my present height until several years later, therefore the customers called me Little Sheinbaum.

Among Joseph's customers there were the Feldman families. One of them had a shipping office at the corner of Osborn Street and Whitechapel. The Mrs Feldman of this family never came to our shop. We had to go there to get her orders and then deliver them. The other Feldman had a shipping office in Church Lane and the other Mrs Feldman used to come to our shop for her groceries. The Feldmans were considered to be wealthy and they were well respected in the neighbourhood, and rightly so, for they were both intelligent and aristocratic in their deportment. Mrs Feldman was often accompanied by her daughter Lily.

Lily was about my age. She attended a private school and, in spite of her environment, she was a very nice and pleasant girl and simple in her bearing towards me. She liked to come behind the counter and help in serving our customers. She even insisted on helping us with some of the work in the shop, and she did not mind if the work

was messy. So we used to dress her up in Minnie's apron and put her to work. In the meantime we used to talk, with her of course doing most of the talking. That fitted right into my scheme of things for she spoke a better English than most of the others, and I listened to her articulation of words and tried hard to remember them. Also on Friday nights, when she knew that I was not working, she would invite me to her house. There I met her two brothers, both of whom were very nice and pleasant young men. But it was in the shop that I mostly enjoyed her company. Here, talk in time led to admiration and fondness, and fondness led to romance and love.

Little Sheinbaum found himself deeply in love with Lily. No more shop, no more customers, and no more day or night, only just Lily. I could neither eat, sleep or think clearly. No matter how hard I tried to hide my secret the customers began to notice that I was not my usual self and, in their friendly teasing intimacy they would remark, 'Little Sheinbaum is in love'. For weeks and months I went about as if in a fog. I kept building castles in the air, and dreaming up all sorts of situations in which Lily was in dire peril of being harmed and I, gallant Knight Errant, would come to her rescue. In my dream world I fought robbers and would-be abductors and, but for some windmills, I would have portrayed the real Don Quixote as conceived by the famous Spanish author Miguel Cervantes.

But time is an everlasting healer!

As time went on my sense of balance slowly brought me back to reality and I came to see the folly of my involvement with this fine young girl who, in her simplicity and friendliness, made me feel unaware of the many obstacles which, due to age, circumstances and a number of other reasons, created a divide between us which I could hardly overcome. Here was I, a grocery shop clerk earning eight shillings (40p) a week, true, with keep, hardly able to speak the language, in love with this well mannered and well educated young girl. She came from a well-to-do and prominent family, and was totally unaware of the love I had cherished for her. But my folly was overcome and lost in the past. We remained good friends during the time I worked in this shop, and to this day I still harbour in my memory a recollection of my first love, of Lily, and the years I spent in this shop.

Other interesting events must have taken place during those youthful years, but time has erased the memory of most of them. But Youth, oh Youth, where art thou?

Minnie gave birth to a son. In those times births took place in the home, and it was in the early hours of one morning that I sped through the streets of the East End of London to inform the various members of the family of the glad tidings.

'It's a boy!'

They named the boy Solomon in memory of his great-grandfather. Solomon was a beautiful healthy child and father and mother beamed with joy. They felt that their prayers had been answered from above, and they would not have to bear the Biblical curse of spending their life in loneliness. To Joseph, it was as if no other child had ever been born or, at least, none to compare with little Solomon. In spite of Minnie's all around efficiency he, the father, made it his business to watch over the child. To see that he is fed on time, diapered and put to bed on time. When the child was old enough to be taken for a stroll in the street, Joseph was behind the carriage to see to his comfort and safety. Joseph could not decide whether he should wheel the carriage near buildings or near the kerb. Near the building he was afraid that a brick might become loose, fall and hurt the child; near the kerb he was afraid that a driver might lose control of his horse, and the cart mount the pavement and hurt the child. As a last resort he commandeered the middle of the pavement with no respect for other pedestrians. All day and all night Solomon was on his mind. He located for him toys no one in this locality had ever seen, and his clothing had to be the best English wool that the country could furnish.

But, alas and alack, misfortune and tragedy reared its nasty head as Joseph's shop, for reasons unknown to me, failed so that he had to give it up. Shortly after this, when little Solomon was four or five years of age, he became seriously ill, no doubt with the then vicious scourge – pneumonia. I clearly remember the dark, single-windowed room in the back of Isser's shop in Thrawl Street, dusty with hardly a clean breath of air for the child to breath. Medical science was helpless with this dreadful disease which, usually beginning with a cold, ended in pneumonia. Doctors advised to keep the patient warm

and away from draughts, therefore all windows were kept closed and the fire in the fireplace kept at its maximum. This resulted in further reducing the oxygen in the room and also reduced the child's chance of fighting off the disease. (Several fatalities due to the above were suffered by our family and will be told in the proper place.) For days the poor child struggled for his life but neither the help of the doctors or specialists, nor the many prayers on behalf of the child were of any avail. Little Solomon passed away. Like a candle light his life slowly flickered away, and he was no more. It was a tragedy of tragedies for the family and for Minnie, but for Joseph it was like the Last Day of Judgement, a tragedy beyond description. There was no consolation for him, there was nothing left for him to live for and we greatly feared what this might do to him.

No business, no home and, worse of all, no child. What next? It was thought that it would be best for him to leave the scene of his misfortune, and such an opportunity did avail itself.

Minnie's sister Rebecca had married a Mr Cohen from Tredegar, Wales. He was a peddler among the Welsh miners and did quite well for himself. He asked Joseph to come out there, promising that he would help him establish himself among miners and he would do well. Joseph did go there, but he soon found that to carry a load of merchandise on his back over the Welsh hills and valleys was much more than his dispirited body could endure; he therefore soon returned to London. Here, with the help of the family, he took over a milk round and fared quite well. In time children came and life took on once more a normal and useful existence.

On April 17th 1963 I received a letter from brother Solly, in which he described to me about his visit to Israel with sister Sara. I was delighted with his description of the many interesting places they visited. Some of them were familiar to me, having learned about them in my youthful studies of the Bible. Others were rebuilt in the New Israel and are recorded in books about modern Israel. In particular I found interesting Nelson Glueck's book, 'Rivers in the Desert', dealing with the ancient history of the Negev and its importance to Israel today. But my delight was soon dispelled as I came to the very sad news of the death of our dear and beloved brother Joseph, may he rest in peace! I was very much overcome emotionally, so that I

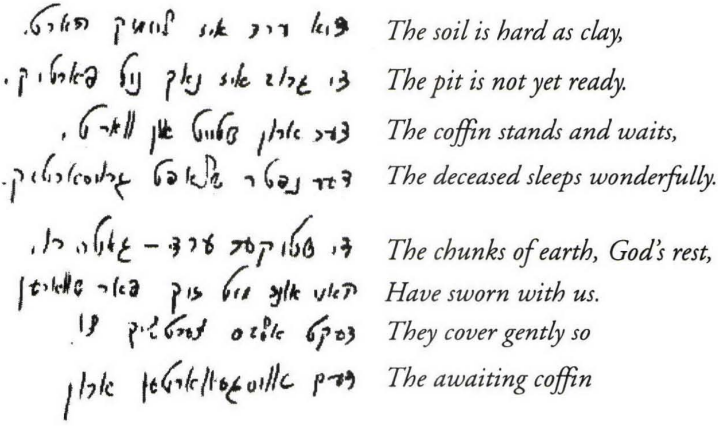
could not finish reading the letter, because my eyes became glazed with tears, and my mind quite dumb. I sat for some time, as if in a dream as many scenes of our life together passed through my mind. I thought of the many and frequent letters I received from him, which I shall grievously miss, in which he tried hard, in the spirit of the philosophical and allegorical arguments of the talmudic giants, to express some of his own concepts of life, and its many hardships, problems and inconsistencies, which for ever plagued his mind on his own behalf, and even more so on behalf of the underprivileged, the sick and the helpless.

His passing is not only a loss to his family but to the entire East End and beyond, on whose behalf he gave of his time and energy. Apart from his many activities on behalf of individuals, his more important role was as elder in his synagogue, and as President of the Hackney Talmud Torah, for both of which he collected considerable sums of money, and made frequent appeals in Yiddish and English language periodicals. I am sure that in these religious and educational institutions his name will be long remembered and revered.

It is needless for me to say that he will be very much missed, for his loss is more than the mere loss of a member of the family. He was the connecting link between the new and the old generation who had emigrated from their ancient homes in Eastern Europe where, for many centuries in fear, danger and hatred, they had settled and taken root, and there had created a tradition and a way of life unique among the nations of the world. It is that generation, that tradition and that way of life that he symbolised, and now the chain is broken, probably never to reconnect. I am very well aware of the fact that there are many who are much more religious than he was but, in spite of their dedicated and sincere orthodoxy, they do not, and cannot, represent the type of life that existed there; they are not a link to the old generation as Joseph was, as were our fathers and grandfathers and the generations before them.

In his own way Joseph was a simple, unpretentious individual. He was no orator yet he liked to be heard. He liked to make speeches at family affairs, and in his synagogue and Talmud Torah. Were they good, or were there shortcomings? Or, maybe, it was in part vanity. Who knows? And what does it matter! They answered a purpose, yes,

good enough. A recording of some of his speeches I had the pleasure to hear, and I was amazed at his assemblage of so many ancient sayings and morals, and they all so well fitted the occasion or particular affair. He will be very much missed by his family, his friends and by the community among whom he spent the greater part of his life. Thinking of his funeral, an *Elegy* by the Yiddish poet Halperin Levik comes to my mind. I write the elegy in the Yiddish in which it was written.



The soil is hard as clay,
The pit is not yet ready.
The coffin stands and waits,
The deceased sleeps wonderfully.

The chunks of earth, God's rest,
Have sworn with us.
They cover gently so
The awaiting coffin

We lift chunks of clay,
The deceased's house is ready.
The coffin comes home,
The deceased sleeps wonderfully.

H. Levik.

trans. Chimen Abramsky



1.

The Father of the Family Rabbinowitz. The Hebrew inscription reads : 'Look on the magnificent face of Moses our Father'.



2.
David Rabbinowitz son of Rabbi Moses Rabbinowitz, and father of Shprintze.



3.
Hirsch Sheinbaum emigrated to London with Shprintze and 'the last remnants of our family' in 1904.



4.
Hirsch and Shprintze in 1907. They lived at No. 7 Old Nichol Street. A few years previously Old Nichol Street had been part of the infamous slum known as 'The Jago'. Their grocery shop was in Pedley Street where they first lived at No. 33.



5.
Joseph Sheinbaum. See chap. 12.



6.
Minnie, Joseph's wife.



7.
Rivke Sheinbaum and husband Solomon Cohen. See chap. 14.



8.
Chaike Sheinbaum and husband Isser Cohen in Palestine in 1931. See chap. 16.



9.
Solomon Sherwood, wife Fanny and daughter Lily in 1926. See chap. 15.



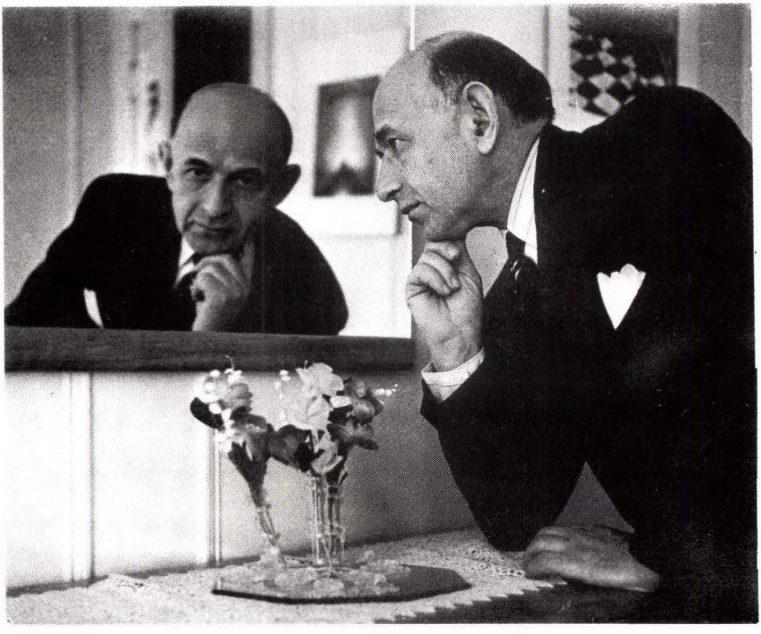
10.
Sarah Sheinbaum, husband Gershon Perchik, children Phil and Becky. See chap. 13.



11.
Sophie Sheinbaum and husband Pinchus Nirenstein. See chap. 16.



12.
Feigel and Jacob Nirenstein, daughter Minna, about 1912.
See chap. 9.



13.
David Sheinbaum in a reflective mood in 1942.



14.
David and Frieda in the year of their marriage, 1921.



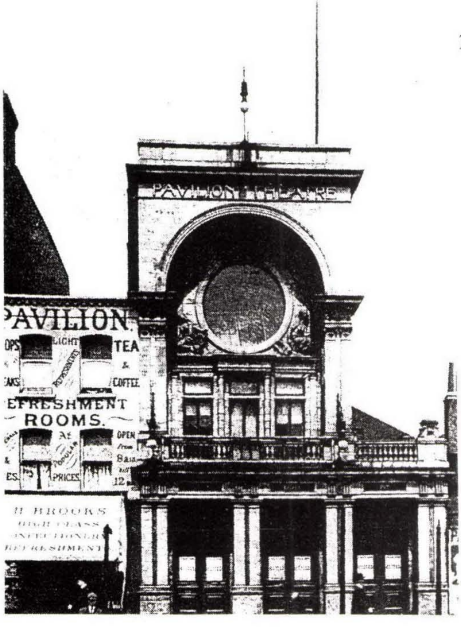
15.
Mary Sheinbaum and husband Jack Ajgengold in 1930.



16.
Yetta Sheinbaum and husband Saul Burstein. Yetta, twin of Mary, is (in 1995) 100 years old and the last of the immigrant generation.



17.
A mantle maker's workshop just before World War 1 from the collection in the London Museum of Jewish life. See 'dingy, unventilated, foul quarters', page 125.



18.
The Pavilion Theatre (see page 132) where David may have seen the Yiddish version of King Lear. The theatre closed in 1937.



19.
Jacob Nirenstein outside Mrs Shapiro's shop, which was later named Shapiro Vallentine & Co. by Jacob and wife Feigel, to whom she left the business (see page 138).

20.
Shapiro Vallentine & Co.



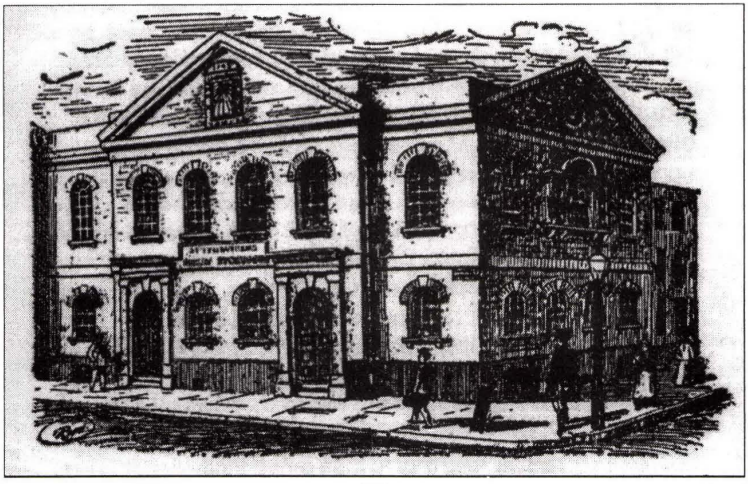


21.
Solly's shop in the early 1920s. In the middle is daughter Lily. On her left is Karl Dreischmayer, a German World War 1 POW who, on his release, was employed by Solly for 30 years in the smoked salmon business which took over from the butcher's business. See chapter 15.



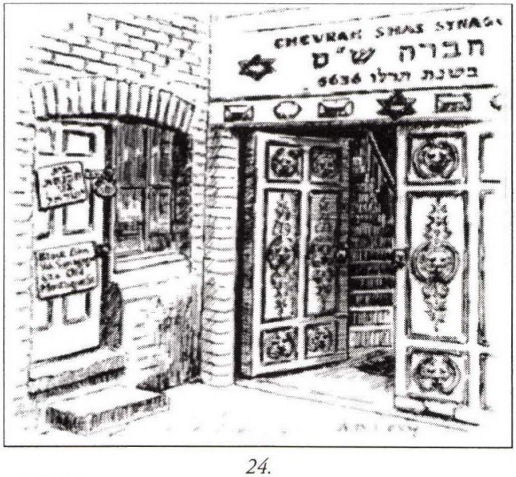
22.

On September 9th, 1940, in the early days of the London blitz, a bomb destroyed the house of Sophie and Pinkus Nirenstein, at 35 Harrington Square, Mornington Crescent, NW1, killing Pinkus, and their two children, Philip and Frieda, and Frieda's fiancé. Their other son, David, was buried under the rubble for ten hours before he was rescued. The force of the blast blew the bus against the front of the house next door. This picture has been published in many books and films on life in war torn London. See chapter 16.



23.

The historic Machzike Hadas (Spitalfields Great Synagogue) on the corner of Fournier Street and Brick Lane (see page 152) was erected as a Church in 1743 by protestant Huguenot refugees. It then became a 'Mission House for Converting Jews', and in 1819 it became a Wesleyan Chapel. In 1896 the Brick Lane Talmud Torah bought the lease and on 11th September, 1898, it was consecrated as a Synagogue. In 1975, the Synagogue became a mosque for the local Bangladeshi population.For a while David studied the Talmud here.



24.

Solly Shinebaum was President of the Chevrah Shas, 'a small unimposing synagogue' (see page 173). Adjacent is is the Black Lion Yard Synagogue. The sketch is by the artist A.B. Levy.



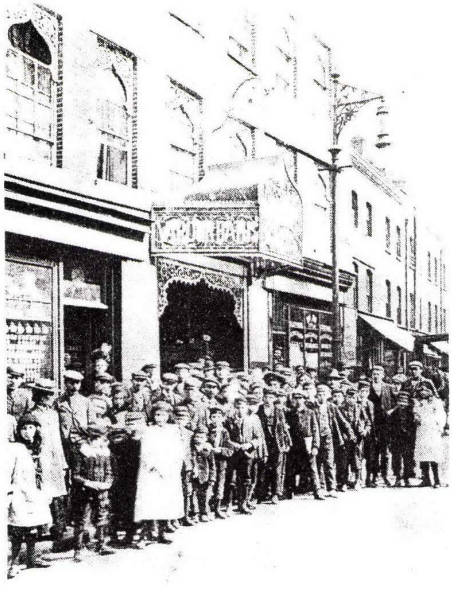
25.
Rothschild Buidings, Thrawl St. c.1902, the site of Isser Cohen's shop (page 151).

וויכטיגע
בעקאננטמאכונג!!
א מענאנט וואס נעמט
אריין כיי זיך א לאדזשער
ווירד זאפארט קריענען
א נאטיס ארוים צו
ציהען.
בייא ארדער.
1902 יולי

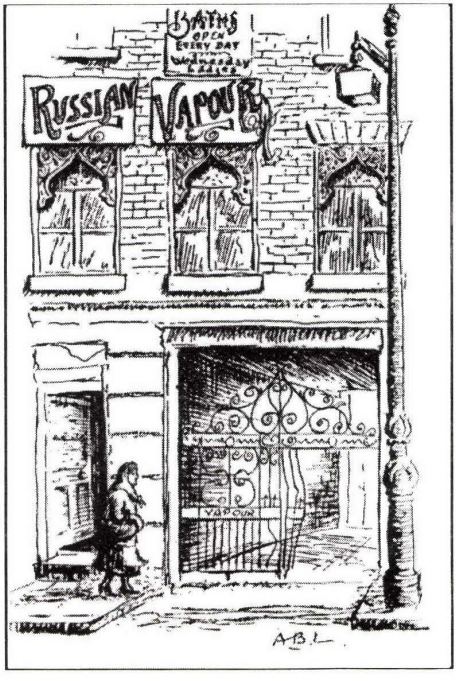
26.
This warning issued by The Four Per Cent Industrial Dwellings Company Limited (Rothschild), reads, "Special and Important Notice. Any Tenant taking a Lodger will receive immediate NOTICE TO QUIT. By Order. July, 1902".



27.
The Flower and Dean St. lodging house (see page 151).



28.
Schevzik's Russian Vapour baths in Brick Lane in 1910, conveniently situated near the Machzike Hadas so that the Orthodox men could be thoroughly steamed in readiness for the Friday evening prayers at the Synagogue. It was here that David had his innocent encounter with that amorous 'fine gentleman'. See chapter 10.



29.
The artist A. B. Levy's version of the baths.



30.
Looking to the City from Aldgate in the early 1900s.



31.
Commercial St. in about 1900. On the left is Spitalfield's Market. Flower and Dean Street, Thrawl Street and Brick Lane are close by.



32.
A typical group of newly arrived immigrants at the Port of London, c.1900.



33.
A soup kitchen for poor Jews in Spitalfields, taken from The Illustrated London News of December 1879. You can see the racial stereotyping in this sketch.

POST OFFICE LONDON

34.

The following extracts are taken from the 1906 and (for Solomon Sheinbaum) 1911 Post Office street directories. Note the variations in the spelling of the Sheinbaum name. The first shop was Hirsch's at no. 33 Pedley street. Shops are called chandler's shops, meaning candle-maker or -seller, a retailer of provisions or groceries i.e. a grocer. The grocer has now evolved into the mini- or supermarket.

Church lane, *Whitechapel*

9 Berks Jacob, electro plater
11 Meczyk Paul & Co. printers
13 Baibuk Joseph, hairdresser
15 Spiegel Samuel, mantle maker
17 Marshall&Wragg,vetrnry.surgns
19 Schwartz Max, laundry
21 *Horse & Groom*, Jacob King
....here is Colchester street....
23 ShanbaumJoseph,chandler's shp
25 Yaffa Harris, bootmaker
27 Muende Barnett, cgrtt.papr.ma

Old Montague st. *Whitechapel* (**E.** *or* **N.E.**) (STEPNEY), 24 *Osborn street to Vallance road.* MAP P 8, Q 8.

NORTH SIDE.

1 Victor Moses, hosier
3 Rosenblat Alter, chandler's shp
5 Tobias Harris, bootmaker
7 Freud Solomon, piecebroker
.....here is Dunk street.....
95 Cohen Solomon, grocer
97 Bloom Lewis, tobacconist
HEBREW CONFERENCE HALL

Great Alie st. *Goodman's fields* (**E.**) (STEPNEY), 38 *Leman street & 37 Mansell street.* MAP P 9.

SOUTH SIDE.

5 Cohen Marks, tobacconist
6 Sheinbaum Solomon, butcher
8 Delmonte Judah, dncng.academy
9 *Board for the Affairs of Shecheta*
..... here is Alie place .....
13 Turner Alfred & Son, solicitors
13 Loane Joseph, public vaccinator
15 *Metropolitan Borough of Stepney Municipal Offices,*

Pedley st. *Bethnal green,* 176 *Brick lane* (**E.** *or* **N.E.**) (BETHNAL GREEN).

MAP P 8.

.....here is Code street.....
Lawley Thomas, cooper
9Schineboam Hyman, chndlr.'s shp
....here is Eckersley street....
10 *Queen's Head*, Frank Green
13 Gold Morris, cab proprietor
13 Mishkin Barnett, smith
16 Cohen Mrs. Fanny, greengrocer
.. here is New Church street ..
17 *Ram & Magpie*, Jas.Wltr.Booty
30 Barnes Alex. Wm. dining rooms
....here is Fleet street hill....
GREAT EASTERN RAILWAY GOODS STATION
33 SchineboamHarris, chandler's sh

Thrawl street (**E.**) (STEPNEY), 56 *Commercial street to* 13 *Brick lane, Spitalfields.*

MAP P 8.

Charlotte de Rothschild Dwellings
John O'Brien, superintendent
....here is Lolesworth street ...
2 Cohen Isaac, chandler's shop
3 Greenberg Isaac, hairdresser
4 Sanden Israel, bootmaker
4 Benjamin Abraham, tailor
5 Harris Joe, chandler's shop
18 Solomons Israel, dairy
18A, Clark Mrs. Mary, confectioner
National Schools for Jews, Spanish & Portuguese
24 to 28 McCarthy Mrs. Annie, registered lodging house

13

Old Montague Street

Some time before the sad events just related took place, business in Joseph's shop slackened considerably so that my services had to be dispensed with. I therefore looked around for another job. It so happened that providence, or may be it was Mother Nature, solved this problem for me. The young members of the family were at the stage of their lives when the fruits of their wombs ripened periodically, in accordance with the laws of maternity. Therefore, one or other member of the family required my services.

At the junction of Osborn Street and Brick Lane there is a court with hitching posts at either end of it, leading to Old Montague Street. This street starts out as a market street. The market stalls dispensed smelly herring, fish, fruit and vegetables and all sorts of merchandise which were displayed on open barrows on both sides of the street. The market continues as far as Spelman Street and here, pushed back and hidden from its unholy surroundings, stood our family house of worship, 'Chevra Shas', a small unimposing synagogue, attended by a very orthodox congregation, and all members of the Cohen and Sheinbaum clan within walking distance worshipped here. A short distance along Old Montague Street we come to Black Lion Yard. Though little more than a yard it served as the Maiden Lane of the East End. Here were the shops of the important jewellery dealers, where fathers bought fountain pens for their Bar Mitzvah sons, and young men bought engagement and, later, wedding rings for their prospective brides. Here also prosperous East Enders bought all kinds of jewellery for their ageing mammas.

Still farther down Old Montague Street we come first to Great Garden Street and then to Dunk Street, at the corner of which stood

a grocery shop first owned by sister Rivke, and later by sister Sarah. Sarah was about to give birth, therefore my services were required. She needed someone to take her place in the shop, so I packed my few personal belongings and moved to Old Montague Street.

There was a fairly large kitchen in the back of the shop, a long passage led to a yard and a staircase to two upper floors. Beneath the shop there was a cellar, only used to store empty boxes and junk in general. We very seldom went down into this cellar because it was infested with rats, some of them as big as full grown cats. They did not limit their presence to the cellar alone for, while we had command of the shop and kitchen during the day and evening, the rats took possession at night.

My bed was a sofa that could be converted to a bed in this very kitchen. I could hear at night the rats running about and I kept an empty box handy and I used to throw the open part of the box onto any rats that came close, and in this way I caught quite a number of them, but that made little difference for they kept coming in flocks night after night. The rats must have done business during the nights because even some eggs, kept in a partition shoulder high in a window facing Dunk Street, were found missing when the shop was opened in the morning. That rats can carry eggs over all sorts of obstacles is a well known fact.

Sister Sarah must have been about nine years of age when I was born. I have no recollection of any of my brothers or sisters at my early childhood years; it is only when events of some consequence took place that my memory recalls one or another member of our family. Therefore, my first recollection of sister Sarah is when I was about six or seven years of age and on my way to mother's birth place, the town of Buten, for my education. Sarah came along with the intention of learning there the trade of dress making.

Sarah was little more than five feet tall. She had a round face with, if I am not mistaken, blue eyes and a well shaped nose to fit her wind-blown cheeks. She was healthy, energetic and ambitious and she possessed a vitality easily matching those much more physically proportioned. She was good natured, considerate and understanding, and she was most mindful of her duties to God and her fellow men and women. Truth, honesty and faithfulness, to her own family as

well as to strangers, was her guiding maxim. She worked hard in the grocery shop, first for her sister and brother-in-law and later for herself and her family.

She married Gershon Perchick, a student rather than a helpful man behind the counter. She lived happily with him, and mothered four daughters and one son. She took charge of her house, shop and children as well as her not too healthy husband. The fears and pathos of life, the recurring sickness among her children, the disability and later the loss of her mate in early life must have inflicted untold misery and hardship upon this little bundle of vitality. However, it did not daunt her courage and resolution to carry on in the face of whatever hardship she may have encountered.

A gloomy scene flashes through my mind of an upstairs room, with windows closed tight, and a fireplace heaped with coke, and leaping flames, their fiery tongues reaching into the chimney, consuming whatever oxygen the room might contain. In the darkened room and in the crib a tiny life, its tiny chest heaving up and down like a blacksmith's bellow, was trying hard to survive. (It might have been infant Bella). Doctors and specialists came in sombre consultation and helplessness and left the infant's fate to its own power to fight off the disease. Not once, but on several occasions, members of our family sadly mourned the loss of their little ones from the same scourge of that time. Fortunately, little Bella was able to fight off the bugs that menaced her life and she survived to fine womanhood.

Gershon Perchick was a life long talmudic student and he must have experienced the usual hardships of a Yeshivah student. He must have eaten poorly and insufficiently, seven days a week in different homes, and often he must have slept on hard boards in environments not at all friendly or comfortable. Cooped up, as he must have been, the greater part of the day in airless rooms and without any outdoor exercise, left him a victim of all sorts of maladies. He tried to adjust himself to the grocery shop, and be of help to his more vigorous wife, whilst at the same time he retained his teaching position in the Talmud Torah. He was without any doubt the best talmudic teacher London, and the East End in particular, ever had. His early death was not only a loss to his wife and children and our family, but also a serious loss to the entire orthodox London Jewry. The eulogies that

were delivered at his funeral and articles in the press gave ample evidence to his contribution to talmudic revival in the East End.

There is very little of interest that I can recall during my stay in this shop. Across the street, and within sight as I stood behind the counter, I could watch some of the characters who came into the fish and chip shop for a pennyworth of both for their midday meal, an appetising London delicacy I would sometimes indulge in. But more important and much more interesting to me was a laundry or cleaning shop at the counter of which sat a young girl, a little older than myself. Seeming never to do anything, but possessing a pair of large black eyes which could easily penetrate the worst London fog, she for ever kept looking in my direction, with that come-over-here look, pleading for a little love and affection. Actually we never met and there was never a word exchanged between us, yet we must have created an unreal secret world of our own; or at least I must have done so, for in my very intimate dream world I roamed with her over hills and valleys filled with flowers and clover, and we danced to the music of the heavenly spheres.

Behold, thou art beautiful my beloved,
Behold, thou art lovely.
Thy dove like eyes look forth from behind the veil.
Until the day becomes cool,
And the shadows flee away,
I will dream of you.

I remained in this shop for a year or more and then, my services being no longer required, I looked around for another job. For the time being matrimony in the family took a holiday. It was just as well as I really wanted to see what it was like to work outside the family.

I was recommended to a Mrs Galinsky, I believe that was her name, who conducted a grocery shop in Ridley Road, Stamford Hill. I applied there and was accepted and so I moved to Ridley Road. Mr Galinsky did not at all mix in the managing of this shop, for he had other interests. He was a partner in a rug and linoleum shop located in Whitechapel. Mrs Galinsky was a well educated, intelligent woman. She was proud, well built and managed the shop ably with the help

of an assistant. She had a daughter who was spoiled, haughty and very much self-centred. She too was well shaped, not bad looking, and she sang and played the piano fairly well. However, she over did both of them, and after a while it got on my nerves, her whiling away the time, never doing anything, but moping over herself. I had little use for her, and she evidently had even less use for me for never a word passed between us.

Generally speaking I was well treated here and was quite happy. However, having to start the day by pushing a barrow laden with bread and rolls in all kinds of London weather was not to my liking at all. While the weather was nice I was willing to stay on. But when the winter came along and cold rain and sleet presented me with a nasty cold, I decided to quit.

It so happened that just at that time cousin Annie, daughter of Aunt Hodes, went into the grocery business and bought a shop in Sandringham Road. She found that she could not manage by herself as her husband, employed in a bank, proved entirely unfit to give her any assistance. She therefore asked me to work for her and I was only too pleased to accept in a locality that I liked much better than the East End. And,besides, I did not have to push a barrow to deliver bread and rolls in the early hours of the morning.

Cousin Annie was a pleasant and likeable young woman. As a member of the Cohen side of the family she inherited much of the grace of her mother, but she also inherited the pride and discipline of her father, with a sprinkling of economic extremes. She kept the food larder under lock and key. True, the servant girl, Curry, who but a short time ago had removed from the breezy hills and valleys of Wales, and the shop assistant David, also not very long removed from the open spaces of Russia-Poland, had between them an appetite that was unbecoming to a sparse table set by Cousin Annie who tried to emulate aristocratic aspirations. Therefore, we often left the table quite hungry. Mind you, this is no aspersion on Cousin Annie but, just the same, we went hungry. So I solved the problem for us by putting away, stealthily of course, a loaf of bread, a tin of sardines or salmon and, when all had gone up to sleep, Curry and I would hold a feast together. Naturally enough, as young and healthy boy and girl, we would also have some fun – of course, in a most

innocent way. Whether Annie caught on to our feasts or our fun I do not know, but the fun at least reached the very conservative ears of my mother and,of course, she became very much upset.

It happened that when I paid my usual Friday night visits home Mother, may she rest in peace, remarked casually and unemotionally that an unpleasant rumour had reached her ear regarding my being too friendly with the servant girl. I assured her that she need lose no sleep about this matter as it was much exaggerated, and that our relationship was of a wholly innocent nature. Mother was quite satisfied with my assurance and I heard no more about it.

Cousin Annie's shop was a nice and pleasant place to work in. The clientele there was of a more refined and well-to-do crowd, and the shop clean and easy to keep in order. I must even at this distant time pay tribute to Cousin Annie for her able management of the shop. We got along very well together and I believe that she was quite satisfied with me, as she often remarked that if I should ever leave her she would be obliged to sell her shop. In fact, that is exactly what happened a short time after I left her.

Nearby in a barber shop, where I used to have my hair cut, there was a young man who was the barber's assistant and who, in spite of his lowly calling, was quite intelligent and spoke English very well. I became friendly with him and spent much time in conversation with him. In his advice to me as to how I could improve my English he said that I should attend lectures and theatrical performances, and listen attentively. But it was not until many years later that I was able to follow his advice.

Sam Maizie must have been a problem child even as he was as an adult. As an only child he must have been very much spoiled and over protected, with the result that in many ways he never grew up. However, he was very much misunderstood and often ridiculed by his wife, his family and possibly all others he came in contact with. In fact, he was basically a very serious man, a truly good friend and a loving husband and father. It was his occasional well intended clowning, very much misinterpreted, that gave him the appearance of being immature and childish. I liked him very much and I often felt most sympathetic towards him. He was fond of the game of whist and he was quite an expert at it, as evidenced by the many trophies

he often brought home, which he won at his club. Cousin Annie was not at all happy about this, her husband's diversion, as the playing of cards among the older members of our family was considered to be a wastrel's pastime. This activity was occasionally the cause of serious disagreements between husband and wife and it led to many unpleasant events. Like a child after being admonished, Sam, in a most humble and endearing way, would plead for reconciliation but on the next session of the whist club he would bring home yet another trophy! However, love and affection always won out in the end. In their outlook upon life they were miles apart. Annie, ambitious, industrious and a forger ahead; Sam, sportive, easy going and satisfied to let things take a line of least resistance. Just the same. they spent their life together in love and harmony

During the time I was with them they had two little girls. Rita, the older one, was pretty, energetic, self willed and somewhat of a problem child. Hetty, the younger, was just the opposite, quiet, shy and withdrawn. Whilst speaking of the children, a sad and gloomy scene flashes through my mind. It is a scene in a hospital. Cousin Annie and myself dressed in white smocks and our nose and mouth covered, we sat with choked emotions as we watched the two little girls lying in separate cots, wrapped in the flames of scarlet fever. There were many alarming moments during their long hospitalisation and poor Cousin Annie spent many sorrowful days and sleepless nights during their long isolation. Fortunately both of them recovered to good health.

How long I worked for Cousin Annie I do not remember, neither do I recall the reason for my leaving, but it was quite possible due to the a calling of the Stork to a more immediate member of the family. But the time I spent in this shop was a pleasant one.

I do not precisely remember now my movements within the family, when, and from whom to whom, so I may well have somewhat scrambled the events.

14

Old Nichol Street

My next move would have been to Old Nichol Street at the corner of Mount Clare Street. Here the shop of my sister Rivke and Solly Cohen was located, may they both rest in peace! This must have been about the year 1910 and I would then have been in my eighteenth year. 1910 was a most eventful year for more than one reason. It was the year when, after a lapse of more than seventy years, Halley's Comet paid a visit and was expected to come so close to our Mother Earth that it was feared that his long sweeping tail might reach the earth and poison all living creatures living here, including man.

It was a sad year for English Royalty and peace-loving men everywhere, for during this year England's beloved King Edward the Seventh died. His fame as a Bon Vivant, as a lover of beautiful women and, above all, as a peacemaker, made him beloved not only to his English subjects but to nations throughout Europe and the world. So gorgeous was the spectacle of his funeral what with seven kings and Royal Highnesses and ambassadors representing as many as seventy nations following his cortege. Foremost was Kaiser Wilhelm of Germany riding a white horse at the head of them, his moustache in an expression of grave severity, but happy and laughing up his sleeve because at last the encircler of his domain was dead. This was said to be the greatest assemblage of royalty ever gathered in one place. But to me the visit of Halley's Comet was of much greater interest and importance, and I spent many nightly hours on the roof of the Old Nichol Street shop in expectation that I might catch a glimpse of this wonderful phenomenon of a visitor. Also during this year, our family celebrated the wedding of brother Solly and Fanny

Filer, may she rest in peace! In this way it can be clearly seen how the vicissitudes of life cut through many facets of existence, as often happiness and sorrow become intermixed in one and the same time.

Rivke-Mariam, named in memory of her gracious and magnanimous grandmother of the same name on Mother's side, was by all means a worthy descendant of that famous lady who was our connecting link with some of the most famous rabbis, judges and men of erudition, dating back to the fifteenth century.

Rivke-Mariam was the princess of the Sheinbaum family during her maidenhood, and a queen during her married life and widowhood. She by far excelled her brothers and sisters in beauty, grace and goodness of heart, and as for her virtue I can only quote the Friday night Psalm:

> *A woman of virtue who shall find, for her worth is more precious than rubies.*

In her calm and quiet demeanour she concerned herself about the welfare of each and all of us. It was a pleasure to be in her presence for she radiated peace, harmony and goodwill to all alike, making no preference or exception. She welcomed all visitors at all times in her busy days, and made them feel at home, with a cup of tea and an appetiser always ready to be served. I had occasion to watch her in her many chores, in the management of the shop and the house, in the care of her children, in the cooking and preparing of food for the entire household, in the shopping and cleaning, in the mending and sewing and, on Fridays, in the baking of a variety of cakes and in cooking for the holy Sabbath. It was all ready by sunset with the Sabbath candles lit. It was all done calmly, orderly, all in its time and place.

Where can I find the words which would describe the storm within my brain and the trembling of my heart when I think of her? Whenever I think of her, and it is often enough, there comes into my view the famous painting of the 'Madonna' by Leonardo da Vinci. She could very well have sat for that portrait, she, having the calm serenity of the Madonna, and yet burdened with all the troubles of this unfriendly world.

Her life, though pleasant and agreeable, was however not altogether free of heartache, pain and tragedy, for of this too she had full measure. Her lonesome departure from her family at an early age, her emigration to a strange land, people and distant family, and the events which took place there on her arrival, I have given in detail in my book dealing with Russian Poland. But her loss later of her two children in infancy was enough to daunt the heart of the bravest. In glory to her she weathered all her hardships and troubles with courage and fortitude, with or without the help of her worthy husband. She carried on bravely to the very last. Her sudden and untimely death was a great shock to her family, friends, and all who happened to know her intimately. It was great shock to me in particular, because I had spent so many years in and out of her shop and home. Yet never was there a reproach or unfriendly word from her. Could it be that I was so very perfect? Hardly so. It was her inability to hurt anyone or make one feel indiscreet.

I could bring to mind so many incidents, some that were pleasant and others unpleasant, and all of which she took calmly and without any fuss or ado. But I would rather leave to someone better able than I to give credit to them. To be sure I have seen her sad as in tragedy, and very happy on more pleasant occasions, but even though her sadness was profound and her happiness exuberant, she was never an exhibitionist, nor ever a seeker of sympathy or praise. I could go on and on like this, but let us not disturb her peace and but say, 'Good night sweet Princess, and Rest in Peace'.

Solly Cohen (Solly Rivke's) was the second oldest son of Aunt Hodus and Uncle Mordechai-Itzchok. I do not know whether all their children were born in London, or whether some of them were brought to London in their infancy when this family emigrated to England. Be it as it may, all of them had a good English normal school education, and the two youngest members of this family, Allen and Samuel, attended college. I have to say that though all of them had a good command of the English language, not all of them took advantage of this privilege.

It might be said that Solly was the most serious and clear-headed member of his family yet, in consideration of his tactful and juridical mind, it is surprising that he did not attain more important English

or talmudic learning. For I am sure that had he had opportunities for higher studies, he surely would have done better than be a grocery store keeper. As President of the East End Grocers Association, he had opportunities to show his abilities in organisational work. He often had to battle in and out of court with the Board of Health and in his many scraps with Dr Thomas, who was then chief of the Board of Health. Most of the time he acquitted himself with flying colours. His mind was sharp and alert, and he was fearless in his confrontation with men of prominence. I do not recollect the details for the occasion of his appearance before the Jewish Board of something or other, evidently having to do with some Kashrus question, but when he had repeated an argument, one of the more orthodox and less patient rabbis snapped at him with the remark, 'I do not like one who chews the cud'. Solly snapped back just as quickly and said, 'When it comes to that, we all eat out of the same manger'. He got the best of this matter too. He very frequently had to appear before a judge of some sort or another on behalf of the Grocers Association, always without the benefit of a solicitor.

I spent many a long winter's Friday evening during the time I worked in this shop, sometimes in discussing and sometimes in arguing about various subjects. I found Solly to be very much addicted to tradition, as well as religion. Though Solly was willing to accept a good argument about a subject with which he did not agree, however when it came to matters of religion he would become stubborn to the point of the ridiculous. That was not because he was in any way fanatic, but rather because he considered that religious matters were not for arbitration.

Except for the two tragic events in their married lifetime, and other occasional mishaps beyond human control, they otherwise enjoyed a life of happiness, prosperity and contentment. Their children grew up in a home of peace and security, and though I can say little about them because of my sudden departure from London when they were very young or in their infancy, just the same I feel especially intimate with them because some of them spent much of their infancy in my arms.

Their home was a happy gathering house for our family, on Friday evenings, Saturday afternoons or holidays for a game of sixty-six. No

matter when anyone came to their home, one was always welcome and made comfortable.

Solly passed away at an early age, and certainly a most worthy member of our family was taken from us, much to the grief and misfortune of his wife and family.

I must have worked in this shop through a period of about five years but not steadily because, every now and then, some other member of the family required my services more needfully. Off I would go for a required period, and then happily return here where I was most comfortable, at ease and well adjusted to the shop, the customers and the environment as a whole.

After their marriage, Solly and Rivke had their first shop in Old Montague Street. Here they spent quite a number of years. When sister Sarah came to London she worked in this shop until Solly decided to look for a shop elsewhere. Their next venture was a grocery shop in Dalston Lane and Sarah was given the shop in Old Nichol Street.

Dalston Lane, in North London, was not a part of the East End and here a much more refined class of people as well as more wealthy citizens resided. Their shop here was about twice the size of the average East End shop, with a spacious kitchen back of the shop and very nice rooms in the two floors above the shop. They also had a garden instead of a mere yard in the back of the house, and in the summer grapes ripened as best they could in the cool London summer. However, for reasons unknown to me, Solly was again looking around for a shop elsewhere.

This time Solly leased or bought an empty lot on Old Nichol Street, facing the London County Council Buildings. Here, he erected three shops with living quarters above. The corner shop he kept for himself as his grocery shop and the other two shops were rented, one as a cigarette shop and the other as a fruit and vegetable shop. The shops formed an L shape against another building, leaving in the back of the shops a fairly large yard to be shared by the three occupants. In this yard were two toilets and water faucets for each tenant, which sometimes froze in the cold winter months. A staircase rose from this yard to the first floor leading to a hallway, to the right of which a door led to my room. It was the only time that I had a

room all to myself during my life in London, and I have happy recollections of this room. Though several times I was called away to other shops, this room remained mine. Here I kept some of my books, some writing I may have done, and some poetry which, when it got the better of me, induced me to try my hand at it.

From the beginning I was happy to work in this shop. The environment, both inside and outside the shop as well as in the house, was most pleasant. With the customers I soon became intimate and popular, with very few exceptions.

I must admit there were some interesting customers to whom I gave special attention, in a more intimate manner. There was the case of the elderly widow who had two married and one single daughter, all of whom treated me in a very friendly way. One of the married daughters, whose husband was an exporter of fine and expensive cigarettes to South Africa, was particularly nice to me, and occasionally presented me with a box of her husband's fine King size cigarettes, which I smoked only when I went out on special occasions. Sometimes the mother, the two daughters and their husbands, would come in for their shopping, and they would all pay special attention to me, just as though I was an item for purchase. It was not for quite a time that I was given a hint regarding their interest in me, but about this much later on.

There was also a young girl who occasionally did the shopping for her family, and who always asked that the order be delivered to their home. Of course I had to do the delivery, which I must admit I did not mind at all, because this young girl was both pretty and friendly and liked to converse with me when I made the delivery. She did invite me to come to her house whenever I would like but, whilst I would have liked to visit her quite often, when did I have time to do so? Most of the time when I would make a delivery I would always find there a young man who was introduced to me as her young man, and both would show the same friendship to me. This girl was a good pianist and her boy friend was studying the violin, and both of them would often delay me and play for me. This girl was a cousin of the famous violinist Misha Elman, and one time she gave me a pass to one of his concerts, which was the first time I heard a violin virtuoso play.

There was also a Mrs Warshafsky whose husband was in New York and, from what I could learn, he was a gambler. He used to send her just about enough money to feed herself and her two children, with little love enclosed to any of them. His letters were written in Yiddish, but it would have made no difference to her in what language he might have written, as she could neither read nor write in any language. She used to bring me his letters to read to her and also to answer them. I did that for a while, but soon I became so well acquainted with the situation between them that I stopped reading the letters to her, but I just read them myself and answered them myself, without consulting her. It seems that my letters to him, which he thought were dictated by her, pleased him considerably for he increased his remittances to her, and in general he wrote in a more affectionate tone. This pleased her very much.

I believe that it was about this time that Rivke gave birth to her third daughter, Millie. She was a beautiful child, good natured and well satisfied with herself, and the new world, and the people she found in it. The oldest daughter was Hetty, reserved, inwardly withdrawn and shy. At an age when girls of her age usually begin to assert themselves and start to make demands on the world around them, Hetty, I think never did a naughty thing or ever had to be reprimanded. She went about her work whether she liked it or not, did what she was told, never complained and, if I am not mistaken, thought that I was the greatest guy that ever lived. If I took her once or twice to see a film at the Cambridge Theatre she remained indebted to me for the rest of her life. Dear Hetty , I could not help mentioning you in my writing, for you are one of the more colourful pieces that fit into that jigsaw puzzle, which was my life in London.

Then there was Lily. As I remember her, she was rather tall and skinny for her age and she had deep set eyes and complexion; all this gave her an appearance of being frightened. She was quiet, shy and withdrawn. During my visit to London in 1962, when I first met her, I gazed fixedly at her in an effort to see if I could recall that little girl of the early 1900s, but all I could see and recognise was the smile and shy apprehensive look in her eyes.

Late on Saturday nights a couple, husband and wife, always came into Solly's shop to do their shopping. It seemed to me that Solly

would look forward to their coming, and sometimes he would keep the shop open later than usually on Saturday nights in expectation of their being late, and sure enough they would come, probably from a theatre or late party. Every time a girl would be born to Rivke the woman who, like her husband was tall and stately looking, would tease Solly much to his embarrassment, and at the last announcement at the birth of another daughter, in her usual teasing way, said to him, 'You are a button-hole maker'. I used to wonder what she meant by that. Solly made no reply to her remark, but I could see by the way Solly's Adam's apple stuck in his throat when he tried to swallow, that he was much hurt. It was not clear to me until my second daughter was born and the doctor made the delivery in our own apartment – Frieda had refused to go to a hospital, because Shirley, our older daughter, had a fever of 104 degrees. Well, when the doctor came out of the delivery room and saw how eager I was to know what the stork had brought, he said to me, 'You are a button-hole maker, you have another daughter'. I then realised Solly's embarrassment, and knew why his Adam's apple stuck in his throat

I distinctly recollect the birth of David, and the pride with which his father announced his birth. David was just too young when I left London for me to make any remarks about him. If Pressy was born before my departure I cannot recollect.

15

Alie Street

I knew Solly (Solomon Shinebaum, later Sherwood) much more intimately than I knew my brother Joseph during my childhood years. I have a clear recollection of him when we lived in the village of my birth. Although he too was away most of the time for his education, part of the time in the city of Pinsk, I nevertheless remember him quite well. I remember one Saturday afternoon when he and I went to look after our horse that was tethered in a field nearby, how for some reason the horse kicked him and he was badly hurt. Another occasion, clearly fixed in my mind, happened when the Russian army halted during their march for manoeuvres at our village. The foot soldiers who came marching over the highway blocked it for a couple of days, so that the highway could not be crossed during that time. Solly was riding on our horse visiting in a village across the highway when he saw the foot soldiers coming and realised his predicament. He spurred the horse to such speed in his effort to beat the soldiers across the highway that the horse, on reaching our stable, fell to the ground totally exhausted – to all appearances about to give up the ghost. An army veterinarian who was consulted told Father that he should cover the horse with blankets and keep pouring ice cold water on its head. After some time this seemed to revive it and he got up, shook himself and was alright again. But for some time we had been most fearful that we were going to lose our beloved horse.

Solly could ride a horse bareback and without the help of reins, something I could never do. In fact, I made a very poor rider in general and whenever I did try to ride a horse I could not sit on my you-will-excuse-me for weeks. Again when we moved to the turpen-

tine factory, Solly was with us for several years. Solly was a healthy and strong young man, a good long distance swimmer and generally athletic. With training he would have made a good weight lifter.

Brother Solly came to London in 1902 and for a time he worked for Uncle Chaim-Itzchok. When Father and sister Sophie also came to London the grocery shop at the corner of Pedley Street was bought for Father, and Solly took charge until the rest of the family came to London. Soon after, he began to look around for a business for himself. He did not like the grocery business claiming that it did not give him any time to attend a school in order to learn the English language. He therefore was on the lookout for some other business.

In Alie Street, he saw a shop which he thought was to let because he did not see any merchandise in the window, except some iron hooks which he thought the last tenant had left there. Seeing that the door was open he went inside and a man confronted him and asked him what he wanted. Solly replied, ' I see you have an empty shop which I would like to rent.'

'An empty shop?,' the man said, 'this is not an empty shop and it is not for rent.'

'But you have no merchandise in the shop and I therefore thought it was to let . Well, what kind of a business is it without merchandise?'

'This,' said the man, 'is a butcher shop. We do our business in the morning. By this hour we are all done and our merchandise is put away in an ice box for the next day's business.'

'I would like a business like that,' Solly said with some enthusiasm. 'How can one get into a business like this?'

I will not bother you with the many details that followed. Solly borrowed most of the money necessary to buy the shop and became a butcher, but not knowing anything about the business he had to keep an experienced man and through him learn the business. He paid the helper the greater part of his income from the shop but that could not be avoided. Butchers have to be licensed by the Jewish Board of Rabbis, and in order to obtain the Board's permission Solly had to keep the man until the they were satisfied with his experience.

Several years went by and though Solly managed to pay off some of his debts, or maybe all of them, he was not satisfied with the profit he realised after paying his expensive helper. By this time he had his

own licence to operate the shop but one man alone could not run the business by himself. Something had to be done about it. There was a solution – a wife as a helpmate could solve the problem! He needed just a little help. Matrimonial agents in the East End were plentiful and they carried about them little black books filled with addresses of all sorts of young ladies, all of them anxious to get married or at least their parents were anxious for them!

So Solly began a series of visits. Besides needing a wife there was also a money problem; after all he had to furnish a home, pay back debts and generally make himself more financially secure. He did come across some who had promissory notes pinned to their breasts but as they were either too old, too ugly, or too short or too fat, their promissory notes could not make up for their shortcomings. The young ladies that he met that seemed fair were also poor, and mostly from families hardly to his liking. The poor agents hustled and bustled in vain. Poor Solly had drunk so many cups of tea and eaten so many dry cakes that when he swallowed the next morsel he could hear it plop as it reached the water line in his stomach.

He was about to give up and refuse to make any more visits when one of the agents came to him and said, 'Just one more try. If this time nothing comes of it I give up. I have a very fine young lady who comes from a very fine family, poor but respectable, religious and one that will be acceptable to your family.' Solly was tired of these visits, and almost refused to listen any more but this agent was insistent. 'Just one more visit, and after all I've tried.'

Well, Solly decided, one more cup of tea won't hurt, and so made an appointment. At the appointed evening and hour – and Solly was very punctual – Solly walked up Commercial Road until he reached Cannon Street Road, walked down this street until he came to the number given to him by the agent, looked up to a window above the stoop which led into the building and saw a jewellery repair shop. That was it. He walked up the few steps and at the back of the shop he came to a door and knocked. An elderly lady opened the door and Solly asked if this was the Filer apartment.

'Yes', said the lady and Solly introduced himself.

'Why, yes, come in,' the lady said and took him into a living room where Mr Filer sat with a heavy Talmudic tome.

'Mr Shinebaum,' the lady said to her husband. Mr Filer came over, shook hands and said the usual Sholem Aleichem.

'This is Mrs Filer,' he said pointing to his wife. Solly bowed and shook hands with her and was asked to be seated. Some conversation of a general nature passed between Mr Filer and Solly and soon Mrs Filer excused herself and walked out of the room. She returned a short time later accompanied by a tall, simply dressed but very pretty young lady. Solly stood up, as well as Mr Filer who walked to meet his wife and daughter, all of whom came close to Solly.

Mr Filer said 'This is our daughter, Fanny' and turning to Fanny he said 'This is Mr Shinebaum.'

Solly said 'How do you do, pleased to meet you', and Fanny answered the same.

Solly looked at Fanny but he could not see her, for he was quite dazzled! He saw before him a tallish young woman, with a perfect figure, a face like a cameo, features only a sculptor could chisel, light brown hair, clear eyes and fine slender hands white as snow, and that was Fanny, Fanny, Fanny! Fanny!! Something in his mind kept repeating, Fanny! He found it hard to control himself, as something seemed to feel strange in his brain, his heart, in fact all over his body. Yes, Solly was in love with Fanny at first sight! He drank tea, one glass after another, and ate dry round cakes, and it all tasted better than ever before. Solly made several visits to see Fanny, and after each visit returned home with greater enthusiasm and conviction that this was the woman of his dreams.

But Solly had many problems that required careful consideration. Some of his debts incurred in the purchase of the butcher shop had by this time been paid, but some were still unpaid. In marriage there would naturally accrue new financial expenditures – furnishing a home, clothing for the wife, and generally there would be greater household expenses. Solly and his parents might have hoped that a prospective bride would help to solve these problems by providing a considerable dowry. But in the case of Fanny, this was not to be expected as he had already been told that there was no dowry along with this bride. Rack his brains as he might have done, it seemed that there was no solution to this problem. There was no dowry and Solly was head over heels in love with Fanny!

One day Solly came to his parents' home and informed them of his predicament. Of course, they were very disappointed and his assurances that the Filers were a fine, religious and respectable family, hardly sufficed to dampen their disappointment. As for his repeated remarks that the prospective bride was clever, reserved and oh, so beautiful, merely brought back the comment, 'Yes, this is all well and good, but how are you going to solve the many problems you have as it is, and now with a wife, and what may follow, you might find yourself altogether insolvent, and what then? We beg you to consider all matters involved most carefully. But, as you are well aware, we will do our best no matter what your decision may be.'

Solly did consider the situation most carefully, took his time, consulted and re-consulted his heart, all to assure himself that he was not being led away by a mere beautiful face, but rather that in this young lady he had met the very woman he dreamed of, and now that he had met her there was no room for consideration!

Realising that their son was most serious about this young lady, and most determined, his parents asked him to bring her to the house and, if possible, they would like to meet her parents. This was soon arranged and one Friday evening, when several members of the family were also invited to meet the Filers and Fanny, the upstairs large room was put in order and there the guests were entertained. Needless to say, the Filers made a good impression on our family, and as for Fanny–well!–everyone had to admit that she was very beautiful. And as for Solly, he was ready to overcome all problems no matter how hard they might be, and he was ready to sign the wedding document any time it was presented to him.

There was no way of telling what Fanny's reaction to this affair might be. Solly occasionally did seem to be a little disturbed about what appeared to be something of a conflict between her and her parents. What was it ? There was no way of finding out, and even in later years there was never any hint as to what might have created an atmosphere of apprehension during his early visits to the Filer home. But let us see whether we can arrive at some solution by taking into consideration Fanny as a young lady, her upbringing, her environment, maybe her dreams regarding her future, the surroundings in which she lived and in which she was brought up.

Fanny was brought up in a home which most probably considered itself somewhat above the environment in which circumstances forced them to live, and they were rightly entitled to this prerogative. Fanny was not allowed, and probably did not care, to associate with the young men who were her neighbours after she was past her teenage. Due to economic circumstances Fanny was obliged to go to work after her school days were over.

If I am not mistaken, Fanny worked for a custom tailor, men's or ladies' wear. Here she met many young men employed as tailors, most of whom were of foreign extraction. Some of them, having been apprentices for many years in the old country, were expert workers and earned more than the average London shop worker. There were also the owners of these shops, Master Tailors, as they were known. Though they must have been more industrious than their workers, few of them were any more educated and intelligent. However, most of them did make a good living, and some were even well set up financially. They had nicer homes and dressed better. They paid particular attention to their wives and saw to it that they dressed well in silks and expensive furs, and that they were well bejewelled. They took them to West End theatres and restaurants, and sent them away for extensive holidays. All this was done more for self aggrandisement rather than anything else. It was only natural, for girls who worked in these shops, to aspire and dream of marrying a master tailor. Fanny would have been no exception to this, especially as she knew herself to be a very pretty young lady; no doubt many of the young men working with her greatly helped her to think in this direction!

Matrimonial agents no doubt must have brought other young men to meet Fanny with marriage prospects, but because the agents knew that there was no dowry involved, the young men they brought were mostly of the working class, in all of whom Fanny was not at all interested, and her parents even less! But it must be remembered that at that time, even more than in later times, dowry was a very necessary addition to any prospective bride, whether she was good or poorly looking. Any young man who had by birth or by education any claim to be worthy of a more important dowry was most determined to get it. But even the simple worker, very often, would not consider matrimony without a dowry.

It was therefore that Fanny had her own problem which could not be easily solved. Yet, Fanny must have had hopes that sometime, somehow, a Prince Charming in the guise of a master tailor will come charging on a prancing steed and carry her off!

But coming back to reality, what might have been Fanny's reaction to this healthy, well built and good looking young man who had already paid her several visits, who very much interested her parents and who seemed to be most serious about his intentions. True enough he was a fine young man, serious and reserved in his deportment, self reliant, kindly and sympathetically disposed and trustworthy. So far, so good. But, oh my god, a butcher! Fanny must have turned pale at the thought of it – a butcher? No, no, it can't be! There must have been a great deal of turmoil in the Filer home, and the atmosphere there filled with confusion, as parents and daughter seemed to disagree about the next step to be taken.

The Filers were very frank in their enthusiasm for this young man, but Fanny seemed to be hesitant, somewhat doubtful and indecisive. The matrimonial agent, though he did not get a decisive yes or no from Solly who wanted to know how matters stood in the Filer home, told the Filers that he thought that, with a little encouragement, he was sure that the young man would consent to the match. He pointed out to the Filers the matter of lack of a dowry which they must keep well in mind. But, dowry or no dowry, the Filers were very much enthusiastic about this young man aside from any other considerations. They must therefore undoubtedly have encouraged their daughter, and pointed out to her the advantages this young man offered. Fanny was not altogether a dreamer and, after many struggles and sleepless nights, she made peace with her parents and herself and said, 'Yes.'

There was no hesitation on the part of Solly, though his problems were manifold. Whether Fanny was fully reconciled to her decision, and whether she went through their engagement and marriage with the same zeal and enthusiasm as Solly did, is another of the unknowns about Fanny. However, as fact and future proved, she could, and I believe did, have a happy and successful life, and a life filled with the many vicissitudes which the times and fortunes of that confused and war torn era offered.

My remarks about what might have taken place in Fanny's mind during her early meeting with her future husband is based on mere conjecture, and must be considered in that light. Fanny was an introvert in the full sense of the word. She lived within herself. Outwardly, one might say that her life was a dutiful existence. Duty to her husband, her children, her home, and to life itself; and, after her marriage, her duty to the butcher shop, which for a time might have been the source of much perplexity to her.

Fanny did not seem to long for the usual things women care about like fine clothes, jewellery, travelling and good times in general. Her home was her Castle to defend, look after and keep in order and, within it, to perform her duties as a wife and as a mother. Were there any personal problems in her life, any dreams unfulfilled? Was there any way this could be answered, or must one make use of the Freudian couch and try reaching back into her childhood and infant days for an answer to her individualism?

Fanny to me was an enigma, a challenge, a jigsaw I could not put together. Yet, during the time I worked in the butcher shop and lived and shared with them their home and hearth, I respected and admired the courage and determination of her general conduct. Fanny bore no ill-will against anyone. Her feelings towards everyone was so much of a non-exhibitive nature, that many misunderstood her, and therefore considered her to be unsociable. However, I was well aware that hidden deep beneath that coat of armour, which so well hid her real self, there was a great deal of goodness, sympathy and concern for each and every one.

As in life, so in death. Quietly and without any fuss or ado, in her sleep, Fanny, as though unwilling to disturb even her most intimate ones, slipped away into that mysterious, everlasting sleep, taking with her whatever secrets and disillusionments she may ever have had into that last retreat of silence and peace. Peace be unto you!

Their engagement and wedding followed one another in quick succession. It was a very nice wedding, conducted in the style of the time. The marriage ceremony was held in a synagogue and the cocktails, dinner and dancing were in a hall opposite Solly's butcher's shop. They made a very fine couple. Hand in hand with Fanny – the most beautiful bride in the family up to that time – Solly proudly

went about introducing her to such members of the family and friends who had not met her up to then.

Solly rented the two room apartment above his shop, a cold flat with no running water. Water, and also the toilet, were located outside in the yard below. He furnished the rooms into a dining room and a bedroom. At the back of their shop they had a fairly spacious kitchen and a small room partitioned off from the shop, which comprised their day living quarters.

Until Fanny could learn enough to be of any help in the butcher's shop the helper could not be dispensed with but, as usually happened with young married couples, Fanny became pregnant and the helper in the shop had to remain.

Their firstborn was a girl whom they named Lily, probably in memory of some member on our father's side. Lily was a chubby, healthy child. When she reached her fourth year she had developed and grown so well that she used to dash about in the kitchen like a young colt, and everybody had to get out of her way. Sometimes, quite unexpectedly, she would charge with so much zest and energy that she would knock one over. Sister Sophie, being tall and lean and always somewhat on the weak side, used to fear lest the child dash at her on her visits there and knock her over. That Lily grew up to be somewhat of a shy matron may be due to the many chidings and restraints put upon her by her caretakers during her early childhood years.

I cannot recall whether it was during Fanny's second or third pregnancy, that my help was required. Though I was always reluctant and sorry to leave my Old Nichol Street shop and comfortable room, the idea of working in Solly's butcher shop appealed to me for the only reason that it would give me a great deal of free time during the day and evening, and so I became a butcher boy! I did not care for the butcher business itself. The necessity to handle the bloody meat, to carry chickens to the slaughter house and, after the Shochet had so mercifully cut their throats, to hold them over a trough to drain off their blood and watch them struggle in their death agony, was an unpleasant duty to me, but it had to be done.

I do not remember how long I stayed with Solly as a butcher boy, but it must have been some time. I made good use of the spare time

attending many theatrical and opera performances, all of them in second rate theatres at three-pence (approx. 1p) or at most sixpence (approx. 2p) a seat in the gallery. Solly's shop had two display windows, one of them facing the main counter where all the meat cutting and serving was done, and another window which was little used except on Thursdays and Fridays when our stock of plucked chickens were hung out for display. That, however, did not interfere with a display of posters from the Olympic Music Hall located in Shoreditch High Street, for which privilege Solly received two weekly passes. I do not remember Fanny ever taking advantage of these passes, therefore Solly and I usually enjoyed the shows there. Here some of the musical stars of that era appeared and I recollect such names as Vesta Tilly, Marie LLoyd, Little Tich, Parkers Police Court and many others.

Opposite Solly's shop stood the Jewish Alliance Building, supported by Lord Rothschild, for the benefit of young men and young ladies. Annually, a special dance was held in its large hall when Lord Rothschild himself would mingle and rub shoulders with his less fortunate youngsters. In the basement of this building there was a gymnasium for boys and girls. One term I joined the club and I very much enjoyed the various gym apparatus they had there. These included parallel and horizontal bars, vaulting horses, occasional instruction in boxing and wrestling as well as exercise in general. We also usually had a short dance after the exercises with the young lady members. I once took Solly into this gymnasium and he tried out some of the contraptions. He also tried on a pair of boxing gloves and went a couple of rounds with me. Solly was heavier and stronger than I was, yet he was surprised to find himself at a disadvantage with me because of some of the tricks I had learned. Our instructor was quite an athlete and a good acrobat. He was also instructor at the Jews Free School.

Other entertainments and educational opportunities were available at the Whitechapel Library, where amateur companies performed Shakespearean plays free of charge, and I made it my business to see them all.

It was after I had worked in the butcher shop but a short time, and I had just been able to learn some of the tricks of the trade, that

Fanny gave birth to a girl. The child at birth was quite healthy and robust, but when a couple of months old and without any warning whatsoever, she suddenly fell victim to violent convulsions. All medical effort proved of little effect. As a last resort doctors advised that when the child goes into convulsion she should be immediately placed in a very hot mustard bath. This was done repeatedly, and for a time seemed to revive the child to normalcy. However, the convulsions persisted, every time more severely, and the poor infant passed away.

No matter at what age a child is lost it is a tragedy to its parents but, for Fanny, this misfortune proved to be a tragedy of tragedies. Fanny broke down completely; there was no consolation for her. For quite some time she went about as if lost in a fog and she mourned both day and night. She could not be consoled. It was not until some time later, when Fanny was once more with child, that she slowly came to herself and resumed normal life.

Once more Fanny gave birth to a boy whose circumcision took place in one of the upstairs rooms. This event remains vivid in my mind for, unable to see and bear someone else being hurt, I fainted, though in fear of the ceremony. I remained outside the room and sat comfortably on the stairs. I do not recollect as to whether it was Jossy or Ian who had to make the ancient sacrifice in order to become a member of the order of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, but whoever it was, he did register quite a strong protest for his physical mutilation and, perhaps, to this very day has not become appeased.

But evidently lightning does strike more than once in the same place, for when this boy was so many months old he too suddenly went into a convulsive swoon. With the knowledge of its fatal consequences, pandemonium broke out as doctors were summoned, a hot mustard bath prepared and the child placed in it even before the doctor was able to reach the house. The baby in the mustard bath came to, and the doctor could do no better. Several attacks had to be attended to and each time the mustard bath proved effective. For several months watchful eyes never left the child's crib, and when several months passed without any attacks and the child thrived, the tension in the home was relieved and normal life was once more assumed by all concerned.

Life after these tragic and fearsome events went along in its normal way. Sometimes, together with Solly, I would rise at five in the morning and accompany him to the meat market in Aldgate. We would wheel a barrow there, obtain our daily portion of meat, bring it back to the shop, cut it up into its various portions and prepare for the day's business. I believe it was in Mansell Street that there was a home for orphan girls, which Solly supplied with meat and it was my duty to discharge this obligation. Also some members of the family were supplied with their meat requirement and this too fell to my lot to make deliveries.

Solly at one time bought a violin and to pass some of his leisure time he tried his hand at it. At times I too tried to do a little fiddling but I accomplished little more than to get a lot of squeaks and scrapes out of the instrument. That Fanny had the patience to withstand the noise I made, without ever a complaint to me, is a credit I hold to her memory. Many years later I also tried my hand at the piano, but with little better result! Yet music has been one of my great delights and I have spent many an hour listening on my stereo set to the great masters of recorded music. It must have been someone like myself about whom the poet said, 'Woe unto him that never sings, but dies with music in him'.

Whether because of the increase of his family and naturally the family budget, or whether it was because business in general slackened, Solly found the times financially unsatisfactory. Something had to be done to augment his income. Already he used to pickle brisket and tongue for sale, but this did not yield much at all; he therefore got an idea of first making frankfurters and later added salami. But, as is well known, beginnings are hard and not easily profitable. I remember how on many a winter's evening Solly would sit by the fire in the kitchen, his elbows resting on his knees and his face in his big powerful hands, contemplating for many hours his financial problems, and what he could do to solve them.

About that time moving pictures had graduated from the penny slot machine, and theatres were being built here and there to exhibit the new silent films for a fee of threepence and sixpence to patrons. Our brother-in-law Isser had become interested in this new enterprise and together with a Mr Stern, who had a leather shop in Osborn

Street, was looking for a location to build a theatre. But they needed someone as a scout to find a proper location, to supervise and make the various necessary contracts for the construction of the theatre, and later manage it. Being that neither of them could spare the time from their own business they contacted Solly and asked him if he would be interested. He said, yes, provided he was given a third partnership without having to make an investment himself. They agreed, and Solly went about to look for a location. After much effort he found a satisfactory spot somewhere beyond Tower Bridge Road.

Surveyors, building contractors, electricians and other sub-contractors were engaged and the theatre erected, including an office, a rest room and a projection room. A young girl who could not read a note of music was engaged as pianist but, playing by ear, she was able to follow the various musical selections suggested by the film. The first film shown in this theatre was a spectacle depicting the revolt of the Roman Gladiators called, 'Spartacus'. On several occasions I accompanied Solly to the film studios to view films for hire.

I am not aware how successful this theatre was financially. But the outbreak of the first world war, the blackout that followed and the Zeppelin raids over London which caused considerable damage to property, injury and loss of life, very much reduced theatre attendance and many film houses had to close. Solly's theatre fared no better but the government came to the rescue by taking it over for some government or military purposes. As usually happens during wars, business in general improved considerably and Solly, in his butcher shop, shared in this windfall. With the theatre off his hands Solly looked around for other investments.

Around the corner from Solly's shop there was, on Leman Street, a large stable used by a trucking company which operated horse-drawn wagons. It was part of an estate that included an entire parcel of land bordering Great Alie Street and Leman Street. The company went bankrupt due to competition from auto-trucks and the entire estate was put up for auction. Leaving out details which caused some family disputes, Solly, with the help of his bankers, found himself in possession of this parcel. Shortly after making this purchase, Solly sold that part of land which contained the stable to an auto-trucking company, realising a very considerable part of his total investment.

In his own backyard Solly built a smoke house for the smoked meat products he produced, but this was not profitable, so he looked around for other uses he might make of the smoke house. All sorts of smoked fish were important items in an Englishman's diet and smoked salmon was among them. Most of the salmon smoked at that time came from the West Coast of USA and Canada, with New York being the distribution centre for the European market.

At that time I was married and living in Brooklyn, New York. One day, I received a letter from Solly informing me that he had decided to enter the smoked salmon trade in London, and he asked whether I thought that I could be of some help to him, seeing that the salmon would have to be bought in New York. I knew a little more about salmon smoking than Solly did, as I had to a small extent helped our cousin Harry Byre in his smoke house around the corner from the shop in Old Nichol Street. I wrote back to Solly assuring him that I would do my best to help in every way possible.

I visited several salmon smokers in Brooklyn where most of the salmon for the New York trade was processed, and asked them if they would permit me to go through their plants to get acquainted with their method of smoking. Of course, I had previously informed them of the reason for this unusual request. Not all of them were co-operative, but one important smoker was. I had pointed out to him that if my brother's undertaking should prove successful, why then it may be of benefit to him as it might give him an entry into the European market. Whether he had his own interest in mind, or saw that I was most honest in my request, he was most co-operative.

I was permitted to go through his entire plant, and I made good use of this privilege, mingling amongst the men employed there. From them I learned some of the tricks of the trade. I made some sketches of some of the tanks used, some for soaking, others for cleaning the salmon, also a description of the various rooms used for drying and smoking the salmon. Further information I received from Mr Oxenberg the owner with his brother. What good, and what help all this did to aid Solly in his undertaking, I do not know.

My next step was to find out who were the more reliable brokers to deal with, and the prices they demanded for the various grades of salmon. The first thing I found out was that none of them could be

trusted to any extent, and that each and every cask of salmon must be thoroughly examined deep down into the 850 pound cask until one was sure that the size and quality of the salmon was as represented. Solly had many more problems to overcome than I did, and the most stubborn was the London Smoked Salmon Combine which, by cutting prices and making other tempting offers to their clients, tried hard to keep Solly out of the salmon market. However, all their tricks and machinations did not deter Solly from determination to become an important factor in the London salmon market.

For several years I did all of the West Coast salmon buying for Solly, but then the packers on the West Coast found that by shipping their products direct to Europe by way of the Panama Canal they could eliminate the New York brokers and the cost of cold storage of salmon in New York. Thus, less and less salmon was obtainable in New York and eventually I had to disconnect myself from Solly's latest enterprise. He did ask me to go to the West Coast to represent him, but the cost of travelling a thousand miles up and down the coast and the transportation prohibited this. Transportation was, however, the least of the problems. It would have been necessary for me to spend a great deal of time, travelling up and down the West Coast, in order to cover all of the various salmon curing organisations. I would have had to give up my own business, and the total expense including my living costs would have been prohibitive. However, agents soon appeared in the main cities of countries that used considerable quantities of salmon. This included London, so the problem was solved for Solly and relieved me of being his representative.

Solly also had interests in film theatres, some with partners and some on his own. A short time before the second world war he organised an automobile finance company which, though it had to be dissolved on account of the war, was successfully carried on after the war by him and his two sons, Ian and Cyril.

Though Solly had a hard and strenuous start he was well compensated financially. I am sure any disillusions Fanny may have had about marrying a butcher must have vanished after the usual period of adjustment experienced by newly married couples, and after their hard working days laden with financial worries had resolved into

better times. The dreary, dingy living quarters, with the water and toilet out in the cold, rainy yard in the back of the house, became a sixteen-room house in King Edward's Road, with a garden and tennis court in the back, followed by removal later to an even more desirable house in Aylestone Avenue, Willesden, and now they reside in Broadfields Avenue, Edgware, where I visited with Frieda in July and August 1962.

16

Thrawl Street

I returned to Old Nichol Street after being absent for some time, but once more my services were required elsewhere. As already mentioned, my movements in the family may not be accurately outlined. But sometime during my movements in and out of the Old Nichol Street shop, I was called upon to serve in the shop of my sister Chaike and Isser Cohen. Chaike had to go to a sanatorium for her health. She may have had a touch of TB or may have just needed a long rest from the many unfortunate events which followed several pregnancies during the early years of her married life.

Chaike was the second member of our family to emigrate to London, shortly after her sister Rivke-Mariam had arrived there. The details of Chaike's home leaving, and her going to London to marry her cousin Isser, I have described in detail in my first volume.

It would require much more ability of authorship than I have at my command, to give a true description of the many afflictions to which this woman of travails was subject. That she was able to survive all of her ailments, torments, and lastly the heart rending tragedy of losing her only child, can only be accounted to the normal, steady, and healthy upbringing in body and mind, both psychologically as well as physically, during her childhood years. Yet, in spite of this fact, she was unable to carry her pregnancy to maturity. During her first pregnancy she had a miscarriage and she required much medical care and, if I am right, hospitalisation. The doctors warned her that continued pregnancy might result in great danger to her life. But both she and her husband paid no attention to these warnings, so that when she again became pregnant and lost her child during delivery, she again had to be hospitalised, and several operations on

her breasts and also pertaining to other women's afflictions had to be performed. Once more, this time even more gravely, the doctors warned her of the danger to her life if she should again become pregnant.

More often than I can recollect no heed was paid to these medical warnings, and in spite of the many hospitalisations and repeated operations, she again became pregnant. To the astonishment of her doctors she carried and delivered a normal, healthy child, a girl, and they named her Queeny (Malka). However, her delivery was hardly a normal experience. Once more she was hospitalised, and further operations on her breasts were required. This last pregnancy and delivery must have been the last straw that broke the camel's back, because, for a long time, Chaike suffered on and off, resulting in her being sent to a sanatorium as a suspected TB case. Queeny must have been about three or more years of age when her mother had to go away, and I came to help Isser in the shop. Isser's shop in Thrawl Street was considered a very good shop, and a profitable one. Located in the Rothschild Buildings for low income families, this shop was more busy than most of the other shops I worked in, and therefore the work here more laborious. Care of little Queeny was taken by her father. No woman was engaged to care for the child or to provide meals for the child. Isser and myself looked after the child, partly because there was no room for a woman to sleep, but more than that, no woman would have been trusted to keep the house Kosher; also there may have been an economic consideration.

Isser would open the shop at six in the morning, I would get up at seven and take over in the busy shop. Then Isser would say his morning prayer and feed the child and possibly dress her. Then I would say the morning prayer, have breakfast, and then Isser would have his breakfast, dress the child and take her to his mother, who would take care of her until nightfall, when Isser would bring her back for the night. This was no easy job for either one of us, but most of all it was the poor child who, being dragged about from one house to another daily, suffered the most. I had to prepare my own breakfast and supper. Dinners I received at my parents' home where I went when time permitted; sometimes it was late in the afternoon and I then had a hearty appetite. For my breakfast I often put away a whole

herring, two or three fried eggs, and a hunk of cheese with my coffee; that was in addition to a pound of bread.

There was little fun for me in this shop and an awful lot of work. I therefore decided to ask for a half day off on Wednesdays. Isser was shocked with this demand, but I insisted a half day off or I leave. Isser went to my parents and asked them to use their influence to persuade me from this crazy, unheard of demand. My parents did agree with him and spoke to me about it, and they pointed out to me that no such thing was heard of in the entire trade. What, they argued, will the family think about it, and besides what would I do with myself during that afternoon and evening, they wanted to know. However, all of their arguments did not deter me from my demand, and I told them that I needed a half day off in the middle of the week when I could go to a park, a museum, a theatre or concert, without being hampered by Sabbath taboos, when I could not make use of money or travel.

Actually I did not make this demand until my sister returned from the sanatorium, and was already helping in the shop. But she was not as yet in a position to take my place. Anyway, I got my half day off on Wednesdays, and retained it wherever I worked afterwards. I made good use of the evening in particular, and I felt more like a human being than ever before. Chaike returned from the sanatorium looking well and cured from anything that might have been the matter with her, and she took her place in the house and shop carefully.

Amongst Isser's customers in this shop there was a widow who had a son and daughter about my age. Both son and daughter were employed in the tailoring trade, and supported themselves and their mother in a modest way. I became friendly with them and spent whatever leisure time I had with them. They took me to a dance hall where I learned the latest dances of that time, and they introduced me to many of their friends. Though they worked very hard and long hours, I just the same envied the freedom they seemed to have. I even told Father that I would like to learn a trade but of course, afraid of my having to work on the Sabbath, Father would not hear of it.

When Chaike was able to take charge of the shop, being fully recovered and readjusted, I went back to Old Nichol Street. Actually my return was demanded as Rivke was about to give birth and I was

needed to help Solly in the shop. This time Rivke gave birth to a boy and both parents were thankful to the Almighty for having blessed them with a son. They named him David, in memory of his great-grandfather. By this time they also had a servant girl, a slightly built blonde from Wales, whose name, I believe, was Maggy.

I settled down hoping that my movements were at an end, and that for the rest of my working days as a helper I would remain here where I was most comfortable and had a room all to myself. But though some time went by and it seemed my desire was fulfilled, yet another emergency call for my help came. My sister Sophie, who had married Pinchas Nirenstein and had bought a grocery shop not far away from Rivke's shop, also facing the London County Council buildings, was about to give birth to her first child. So, for the last time, I once more left Rivke's shop and went to help Pinchas in their shop. I stayed here but a few months, just long enough for Sophie to give birth and then to readjust herself to the shop.

Sophie was about four years older than myself. Though most of our children were born about two years apart a stillborn child separated me from sister Sophie. I have but a slight recollection of Sophie during my childhood years in the village of our birth. It was during our living in the forest where the turpentine distillery was that Father managed, that I first have remembrance of my sister Sophie. Sophie (Tzippi) was always tall for her age, certainly the tallest among the female members of our family. As long as I remember her she was not of the best of health, yet she was always a hard worker and very industrious. She always complained of stomach aches, was allergic, and subject to severe migraine headaches. Yet she would soon snap out of whatever ailed her and easily put in a good, hard day's work. At various times, many family and household responsibilities fell to her lot, especially during the last years of Mother's life, but good naturedly she took and carried out her duties without any fuss or complaint. Always most sympathetic and willing to help, she could not bear to see anyone in trouble and therefore, when ever illness of a serious nature or tragedy in a death in the family occurred, Sophie was the first one to faint, and had to be cared for.

Myself having something of the same characteristics, though never suffering from any organic disorders or being subject to any

allergies, I just the same always had fears regarding Sophie's health, and I felt sympathetically attached to her. Once more a healthy heritage and good breeding has enabled this member of our family to endure and reach a ripe old age.

Pinchas Nirenstein was one of the latest comers to London from the old country. Like his brother Jacob he was brought up in the mud laden small town of Maltch, where he spent most of his youth studying Talmud. Pinchas was one of the most sympathetic young men I ever met and one of the most honest that I have come across. His facial expression was all sympathy and goodness, as well as goodwill to all mankind. His philosophy, though probably unknown to him because of his being so much of an innocent man, was that of the famous Indian mystic Gandhi, a philosophy of non-resistance. He had no trade and no industrial experience. For a time he helped his brother in the Shapiro Vallentine bookshop, but it soon became evident to members of his and our family that here was a couple very much suited to one another, and both were soon brought together in a betrothal. They were married and the grocery shop I have previouly mentioned was bought for them. I am sure they both lived most happily together, and I am sure that never did disagreement or harsh words mar their well adjusted togetherness.

But destiny is not selective in dealing out some of its harsh and tragic allotments, and therefore we hear people often ask that heart rending question, Why? Why has this terrible event, this terrible tragedy happened to such a nice and good couple? There is no logical answer to this question. No matter how much one might allegorise, how much one might metaphorically suggest, there is no reasonable explanation, and over the hills and valleys of this earth of ours an echo resounds from time immemorial, Why? Why!

It was during the Second World War that London was subjected to the worst bombing that was ever heard of until that time, first by invading fleets of airplane bombers and later by missiles, which came flying down upon this helpless city like the Brimstone and Fire that was rained down upon Sodom and Gomorrah, and destroyed a very considerable part of London. The helpless civilians tried to save themselves in underground shelters, which sometimes became their burial graves. It was during one of these raids, whilst Sophie was away

visiting at a cousin's house, Phylis was away in the Land Army and Lily evacuated, that an air raid took place. The rest of the family took refuge in their shelter in front of the house. The shelter was struck by a bomb killing Pinny (Pinchus), a son Phillip, a daughter Frieda and her fiancé. So powerful was the force of the blast that a bus some twenty yards away was tossed against the front of the next door house. The family house was totally destroyed. Their son David, who was also in the shelter, was protected by a falling beam and survived with minor injuries.

That Sophie the weakling could have lived on in the shadow of such a catastrophe is a miracle. She suffered so much agony and illness. Many times she was hospitalised and underwent operations. I believe that the greatest tragedy that man or woman was ever called upon to suffer is the burial of their own children, and with this experience on her list of troubles Sophie, to be sure, has suffered all of the punishments and execrations of *Gehenna.*

Their surviving children, Phylis, Lily and David, I met on several of my visits to London but did not so much become acquainted with them as I did during my 1962 visit. Whilst all three of them are children to be proud of, I cannot help remarking how much resemblance is to be noticed in that good soul Lily. I am not making this remark only because she went so much out of her way to endear herself to us, by offering us her help in taking us around London, and further places of interest, but rather because it was quite evident to us that she was so much endowed with all the goodness that was the characteristic of both her parents, and her father in particular.

Once more and for the last time I returned to Old Nichol Street. But that does not mean that my services to other members of the family was at an end, for on several occasions I was called upon to help our brother Joseph in his milk business. One such occasion was when he had to undergo an operation for haemorrhoids removal. For about three months I became a milkman. I had to get up at four in the morning, go to the dairy, get my required amount of milk and deliver to Joseph's customers scattered over a large part of the East End. I had a double shift for, whilst most of the deliveries were made in the morning, some deliveries had to be made in the afternoon. Just the same by five in the afternoon all deliveries had been made,

and the large churn and cans in which the milk was delivered had been washed. Also the small three wheel wagon, which had to be hand pushed all the time, was given a good washing. To some of the far outlying customers I made delivery on a bicycle, carrying several cans of milk in my left hand and steering with my right hand which also supported a long pole, with a nail in one end of it, for the purpose of lifting some of the cans to a second floor window ledge. This helped me to expedite the day's work much sooner than would be otherwise possible. I soon became quite expert on the bicycle and was able to ride long distances without any steering with my hands.

One of the customers I delivered milk to, an elderly, very aristocratic couple who had an only daughter, owned a shop in a street off Wentworth Street (Petticoat Lane), where they sold fine woollens and silks. I had to make delivery through a back door as they did not permit me to pass through the shop, and even through the back door I was not allowed into the house when the old man and old lady were there. The daughter would usually meet me at the back door and take delivery. However, when the old couple were out of sight the daughter would invite me inside, offer me tea and some biscuits, and so we became very friendly. Once I noticed a bicycle in her home and I asked whether she owned it. Yes, it was her bicycle, so I invited her to accompany me for a spin to some interesting places, and so on several evenings we rode out to far outlying parks, and enjoyed our rides together. I mention this because, as it is said, stolen sweets taste best, and these rides with this pleasant and interesting young lady a little older than myself had to be done on the quiet, not only from her parents but also from brother Joseph, because he had warned me to be most polite to this particular customer, and particularly to mind my own business. Had he known of my escapades with this girl, he would fear that disclosure could yet mean the loss of a good customer. I may be in possession of a photo of this girl, even to this very day. What a foolish romanticist I must be!

It was during my return to Old Nichol Street that the tragic event to my sister Chaike took place. One Saturday I paid this sister a visit and while there I noticed that little Queenie looked very pale and she complained and cried much of the time. I heard my sister make a remark about the child, that she smelled like a piggy. At the time I

paid no attention to her remark. However, a short time later, little Queenie was taken to the London Hospital with a severe case of appendicitis. For what reason I cannot remember, Chaike was at the same time taken to the London Hospital for some sort of operation; one was put in the children's ward, the other in an adults' ward in another part of the same hospital. The child survived the operation, but remained on critical list due to a burst appendix. She hovered between life and death for quite some time, and every night someone had to stay with her. One Friday I volunteered to sit by her bed during the night as the others, who normally were able to stay during the night, were by now quite exhausted. It was about four in the morning that Isser, unable to sleep, came to the hospital. By this time it was already getting light outside, and a nurse came in, examined the child, and told us that there was no need for us to stay any longer as she would stay during the rest of the night.

For the few hours we had left until we had to get up to go to Shul, I decided to accompany Isser to his home and sleep there. We walked through the streets side by side, through the early morning mist, each one absorbed in his own sad thoughts. For some time not a word passed between us for, with death hovering like a cloud above us, what was there to say? But then, suddenly, Isser began to talk. In a speculative trend of thought he poured forth a prophetic line of certainties which astounded me, and rendered me speechless.

'Have no fear, David', he said, 'she will survive. She will survive and grow up to be a fine young woman, and by that time we shall be back in our own land, Eretz Israel, and she will be Queen of Israel. That, David, is the reason why we named her, Malka, (Queen). It has been so designated in heaven, and therefore must be.' He kept up this line of talk until we reached his home, and after I had been lying in bed for some time, unable to sleep because of the disturbance in my mind, I thought I could still hear Isser's voice pouring out these prophetic things to come.

Aunt Reizel's house in Mount Street was but a short distance away from the London Hospital. It was therefore in her house that whoever had the time sat around for news from the hospital, regarding the condition of the sick. It was the very next day, Saturday afternoon, while many of us sat in the darkening room of Aunt Reizel's home,

hungering for news from the sick rooms of Mother and Child, that the latest visitor from the hospital informed us of the tragic news – little Malka was no more, the doctors had just pronounced her passing. Cries and sobs suddenly burst from all present, each one of us wondering what terrible effect this will surely have on poor, poor Chaike.

As each one of us sat there dumbfounded, each one of us trying to unravel the mystery which had just shattered and rendered our minds numb, Isser walked in. A feeling of terror seized each one of us, as the room assumed a dreadful silence. He looked around at the terror-stricken countenances and asked what news from the hospital. There was no answer, here and there someone could not suppress a sob or a moan, but that was enough for Isser.

'Malka is no more', he said, and so saying he stood himself against the East wall and said aloud in the Hebrew which I translate, 'God has given and God has taken. Let the name of the Lord be blessed, for ever and ever, amen'. So saying he proceeded with the evening prayer. As darkness fell each one of those present, slowly, and with their hearts turned to stone, left for their own homes, to carry on their daily tasks. Chaike was not informed of the death of her only child; she was told that the child was still in the hospital, slowly improving. For about two more weeks Chaike remained in the hospital and when she was about to be discharged, still in a very weak condition, it was decided that she should not be taken home. She was therefore whisked away from the hospital directly to a convalescent home where she rested for a couple of months.

On the day when Chaike was to return home, many members of our family awaited her arrival at her home. Fearing what the shock of discovery of her tragic loss might do to her, each one of us wanted to be there to give what aid was possible. I distinctly remember her entry into her home. She looked well and healthy, physically, but the hopeful look in her eyes was visibly laden with suspicion and sadness. As she entered the room in which we all sat and looked around her, it was evident that she was looking for someone, someone most important to her, who was missing. She did not have to ask any questions, tragedy was visibly evident in the faces of all present, and lack of any enthusiastic reception for her homecoming was answer

enough for that stifling fear she had for a long time tried to suppress. 'Malchele is no more', she cried. 'My heart told me so all the time'. Saying this she buried her face in her hands in utter despair, as she sat down and cried as only a mother can mourn for her lost, only child.

Outwardly at least, both Chaike and Isser adjusted themselves to their fated life. What aches and pains, what emptiness in life they suffered, was hidden behind a mask of faith such as only martyrs possess, and undoubtedly it was this faith that helped them to proceed in their daily tasks, in the sincere hope and absolute belief that, in time to come, they will be reunited with that child of theirs in Heaven, where she will reign as queen in that mystical realm of the Lord.

Isser, for some time past, had his eyes strained towards the distant Holy Land. He bought some shares in an orange grove, which I doubt ever did yield any profit. Isser still had his grocery shop in Thrawl Street when I left England for America, so I am unaware as to the year Isser and Chaike left London and sailed to their new home in what was then Palestine. In Tel-Aviv, where they settled, Isser built on Nachlat-Benyamin the first, largest building to be erected in Tel-Aviv, and later he built a house in King Solomon Street where he lived until his death, and where Chaike resides to the present day.

Much more could be said and written about this couple, but enough for my present purpose.

17

More of Old Nichol Street

For some time all was quiet and peaceful in good old London Town. England, at that time, enjoyed peace and plenty, and Englishmen were well respected in all parts of the world. An Englishman could walk through the length and breadth of Europe and feel sure that, wherever he might come, he would be made most welcome. Englishmen at home went about their affairs with little worry, except in so far as their insignificant personal problems were concerned, and lived in peace with one another. Elections and by-elections took place, with sometimes the Tories and sometimes the Liberals coming to power. But it really made little difference who was at the political helm, for then Great Britain was the supreme world power, and there were none to challenge her. Some foreign powers there were who envied her, schemed and gnashed their blunt teeth in an effort to bite off a bit here and there, but England paid little attention to them for like Sir Francis Drake, when told that the Spanish Armada was coming while he was at a game of bowls, he replied, 'There's plenty of time to finish our game and beat the Spaniards too.'

In the grocery shops our family, some doing very well and some not so well, nevertheless went about their daily lives in peace and security and, whilst some schemed and others planned, little of any interest was really accomplished by any one. Being already in my early twenties, with goodwill and harmony all around me, I felt quite satisfied with my lot. The environment in which I lived and worked was most pleasant and my room most comfortable. There I had my books, sometimes I wrote a little poetry, but most of the time I read and read. Books on poetry, science and philosophy comprised the

food with which I crammed my mentality, and which my mentality seemed to digest fairly well.

At that time many a young man of my age might already be thinking, or at least dreaming, about marriage and future, but I must admit that neither of these bothered me in the least. In fact a couple of years later, a matrimonial agent decided that I was a ripe victim for his matrimonial schemes, and consistently kept urging me that I visit at least one of the young ladies he had in mind for me. To get rid of him, I decided to make one visit and then tell him, once and for all, that I was not in the least interested, hoping that I would finish with him in this way. This agent was very pleased with my decision, and it is quite possible that for a first visit he selected the most desirable prize he had to offer. He was well aware that all he had to do was to induce a young man to make the first visit; the rest would be much easier for, when once given a taste of this intriguing experience, a young man becomes an easy victim of the scheming matrimonial agent.

The stage for my entanglement was well set. In the synagogue in which brother-in-law Solly and I worshipped on the Sabbath, there was among the elders of this synagogue a well-to-do master tailor, who donated freely to the synagogue and therefore was entitled to a seat of honour at the East Wall of the synagogue along with the most important members. He lived in a fine home, which was well furnished and kept in good order. My visit was arranged for a Wednesday evening, the day I was off from the store. If I had gone there with serious intentions, it being my first experience in this particular kind of visit, I would undoubtedly have been nervous and ill at ease. But as it was, I made the trip with a light heart and a feeling one usually has when he is about to play a prank; which is exactly how I felt about this visit.

I arrived at the address of Mr X, was met at the door by a servant girl and ushered into a spacious, well furnished living room boasting a comfortable upholstered sofa and chairs, an upright piano against one of the walls, and on the mantel-shelf stood two fine cut glass Epergnes and other articles d'art. The host and hostess welcomed me in a very friendly manner and in a short while the young lady herself came in and was introduced to me. To my surprise she turned out to

be quite a pretty young girl, I am sure no more than seventeen years of age. She played a couple of numbers on the piano, none of any impressive importance, and her playing was only passable; however this was of little consequence. Tea was served with some pastries and fruit. The father, who had often seen me in Shul and knowing the Cohen and Shinebaum families, who were well respected in the East End of London, tried to show that he too was no orphan. He therefore brought out a large, heavy photo album, and started to acquaint me with some of his predecessors. Pointing to a young man with an important bicycle handle moustache, he said to me, 'You see, this is me when I was a young man.'

'It doesn't look very much like you,' I said.

'Well, maybe,' he replied, 'but it is, I assure you'.

'Oh, I have no doubt about it,' I replied, 'as long as you say it is you I take it for granted that it is you, whether it looks like you or no'.

'But,' he insisted, 'I tell you it is me.'

I had trouble convincing him that I believed him. Then he went on to his ancestors, and here too he kept assuring me that the persons in the photos were really the persons he said they were. And so it went on until I had to go home.

It was a most entertaining experience for me, and when I was at my parents' home and related to them of all that took place there, we laughed so much that evening, reminding me how a comedy of errors might well have been written about this visit. If nothing else the visit paid off, for I did get rid of the matrimonial agent after I told him that everything was just as he had told me, that the young girl was nice and quite talented, but I was not interested in marriage, and in spite of the many advantages the proposition offered, I am sorry but I am not interested. Finish.

However, in spite of my not being ready, or being unwilling, to entangle myself in matrimonial matters, I was for quite some time interestingly attracted to the fair sex. On many a Friday evening I would walk up Whitechapel Road, usually with a friend, and we would pick up a couple of girls who evidently were out to be picked up. Unable to take the girls for a bus ride, or treat them to some other amusement, we used to spend the evening walking and talking. But

it was Wednesday that my important day turned out to be. I had some cousins in the family with whom I associated, and I kept in close touch with Abe Rose, my friend from yeshivah days. However, all these people were at work on Wednesdays and, as I was the only one with a half day off, I had to forage by myself.

So on Wednesday afternoon at twelve noon, I would have my lunch, shave, wash and dress in my Sunday best and, with my walking stick in my hand and a King size oval cigarette in my mouth, I would be off to the green valleys and clover covered fields of rural England.

Often I would spend the afternoon in Springfield Park in Clapton. There on the River Lee I would hire a sculling boat and row for hours, and spend the evening in the park. A more alluring and pleasant environment I often visited was Golders Hill Park. Here on a lawn covered with thick green grass stood a tea house. Outside this tea house there was a veranda on which at afternoon tea time a small orchestra would perform light music. There were tables and chairs on the lawn and for a pot of tea and bread and butter and jam, sixpence per person was charged. At other times I would visit the West End, Hyde Park, and walk all the way to Kensington Gardens, a charming woodland park. There I often sat at the Round Pond and admired the statue of Peter Pan, and further on I admired the scene of the long water from the bridge which divides it from the Serpentine.

One late Wednesday afternoon as I was walking along Piccadilly, I noticed a very pretty young girl looking into one of the shop windows. She was so very pretty that I could not help stopping and looking at her. It seemed to me that she smiled when she noticed me, so I walked up to her and said, 'Pardon me, miss, how do you do'.

'How do you do,' she replied, smiling and showing her pearly white teeth.

I then said to her, 'I didn't offend you, I hope, by the way I kept looking at you'.

'Well, why did you look at me?' she said, blushing somewhat.

I hesitated for a moment and, smiling, I said, 'Because you remind me of some passages in the Song of Songs'.

'The Song of Songs?' she said. 'I have heard of it, but I don't know any of it.'

'Well,' I said, 'I don't remember enough to recite them all to you, but some of them go something like this...

> Behold, thou art beautiful,
> Thy hair is like a flock of Goats,
> Thine eyes are those of a Dove,
> Thy teeth are like a flock of well selected Sheep,
> Like a thread of scarlet are thy Lips,
> Thy breasts are like two Fawns."

Seeing that she blushed even more, I said to her, 'The Corner House is only a few steps away from here. How about having tea with me?'

'That I wouldn't mind at all,' she said.

And this is how, for the first time in my life, I met a beautiful *shikseh*, a gentile girl. She was pretty, as pretty as only a young seventeen year old can be, but alas, she was a shikseh. I spent one shilling and sixpence (7½p) at Lyons Corner House, and then we strolled in Hyde Park. We talked and talked but never was a thought given to that taboo, which of necessity must keep us apart.

When she said that it was time for her to go home I offered to take her home, but she said that she lived very far away and that it might take me too far out of my way.

'That, I don't mind,' I assured her, so at Marble Arch we took a bus on Bayswater Road, and we rode and rode to the last stop of the bus. Nearby we came to her home, a pretty family home with a garden in front of the house and, as I later learned, a larger garden at the back. It cost me eight pence (approx 3½p) in bus fare to get home, and a loss of several hours sleep, but it was all worth it. It was a pleasant evening which could not be the last, for we had agreed to meet again.

I spent several other Wednesday afternoons with her. On one occasion I took her home quite early as she asked me to come into her house and meet her folks. For a moment I hesitated, but in due respect to her I went in and met her family, all of them fine middle class English folks. I had tea with them and was shown into the well kept garden, full of tidy flower beds all in full bloom with flowers of

all colours. I did not feel too comfortable there for, while *they* seemed unbothered by religion, I knew only too well what religion meant as far as *I* was concerned.

An ill feeling kept nagging me at the back of my mind, asking Why? Why this division? If it is true that only one creation took place, and we are all brothers and sisters under our skins, then why this division? But the 'Why' is a senseless question, for egotism, false pride, a craze for power and money and worldly possessions are used to subjugate and enslave the less endowed mental and physical subjects. These evils have created social castes and religious faiths and practices of many a strange variety, all of which have led to disharmony in man's social, economic and spiritual life. These practices, protracted over aeons of time, have created hatred and prejudice amongst the various factions of society such as to make disregard of them dangerous and foolhardy, especially in conjugal relationships.

It was therefore that, much as I regretted severance of our relationship, in justice to this sweet innocent girl as well as for my own peace of mind, I felt it to be my duty to terminate what was fast becoming a romantic episode. Painfully, at our next and last meeting, which was spent among the beautiful rows of flowers and shady nooks of Battersea Park, I brought this matter out in the open. I pointed out to her that, in spite of our very friendly and congenial relationship, we do belong to two entirely different cultures into which we were born, and which nurtured and moulded our characters and points of view. Therefore a continuation of our meetings might result in much suffering to either one of us, or both. Having made this point clear and final, and although it brought sorrow and disappointment to both of us, neither one of us made any further remarks as we both sat in deadly silence, wrapped in pain and despair. As I noticed a tear roll down her now pale cheek, a spasm of pain gripped my heart recalling to my mind the lines in Oscar Wilde's poem, The Ballad of Reading Gaol:

He who more lives than one must live,
More deaths than one must die.

And so it is with faint heart and frail mind. But young minds and hearts mend very quickly, and they are soon ready for new adventures.

In Old Nichol Street, where I worked longer than in any other grocery shop, I developed many friendly relationships among the customers there. None of them meant anything more than just being friendly, having a little innocent fun, telling a joke or giving a smile– all of which are conducive to a good relationship between client and shop keeper, but one must be careful not to overstep that boundary called ethics. However, as the saying goes, all laws are made to be broken. Here, too, exceptions are to be met with as innocently and unaware, one suddenly discovers that one has overstepped the boundary.

One day a new customer came into this shop. She was young, quite pretty, with brown dreamy eyes and auburn hair. She always asked for the best quality of whatever she wanted, never bargained about prices, and ordered in quantities as though for a large family. Naturally, customers like this are at a premium, and when one does turn up she is treated with special care and consideration. To further ensure the client's patronage, a more intimate showing of friendliness and interest in the client's family and problems is made by the shop keeper or clerk, sometimes sincerely and sometimes only a means to an end, which end was the assurance of the customer's patronage. This effort was exerted in respect of this particular customer by both brother-in-law Solly and myself. We often augmented one another in these efforts, when a customer seemed to be resistant to us. But with customer X our combined efforts were a total loss, for customer X showed no interest whatsoever except in the grocery items she was in need of. So after some time we gave up further efforts to become more intimate with her and Solly once remarked to me, 'Better don't try any jokes with her, as it would be a pity to lose her patronage.'

However, I was not going to take this lying down, for this customer had become a challenge to me. Who was she, why didn't any other member of her family ever accompany her? We had several young girls doing their family shopping, some because their mothers were indisposed, others because they were motherless and took care of their homes. I assumed that this was the case with Customer X. I made my plans and carried them out carefully and with great caution, for I did not want any one to catch on, nor Customer X to become offended, which would probably mean loss of her patronage.

I made it my business to note what items and in what quantities she usually asked for at different times of the week or even month, and I selected the best of these items and put them aside for her, so that after a time, if it happened that we were alone, I would take out the items I had put aside for her and say, 'See which of these you could use.' She usually took everything I had put aside for her. She noted that I did this only when we were alone. At other times when there were other customers or my sister or brother-in-law present I would ask her what she wanted, and serve her the same as with other customers. Therefore, she thereafter came to the shop between one and three o'clock, when few customers did shopping at that hour and I was usually alone in the shop.

Slowly, we exchanged smiles, a touch of the hand, and sometimes I would put my hand around her waist and exert a friendly squeeze. But with care and caution, for even though quite some time went by I still did not know who she was. There was no question of a doubt in my mind but that she was single, as otherwise I certainly would not dare to act in such an intimate manner with her, and so it went on for quite some time, and I was beginning to get seriously interested in her, and thought that she had shown similar interest in me. And so, as it usually happens with young men of adolescent age, romance entered the picture as I came to admire her more and more. I began to day dream about her and build castles in the air when one day, suddenly, the whole edifice came tumbling down in ruins all around me.

It was one fine, early summer afternoon, that a little six year old girl came running into the shop calling, 'Mother'. Customer X, folding her in her arms and kissing her, said to me, 'This is my little girl'.

I stood there dumbfounded, and no matter how hard I tried to be calm, she must have noticed that I was very much confused and disappointed. She stood there, her face pale, with an expression that seemed to say, that's the way it is, and it cannot be helped. I lifted the little girl in my arms; she was as pretty as her mother, and I kissed her on the forehead. I looked at her and then at her mother, who stood stone still as though turned into marble. Trying to act calm and collected I said to her, 'I didn't know that.' The fires that had

been for some time smouldering into a flame, did not at once become extinguished.

There was another customer whose name I have already mentioned, a Mrs Warshafsky, who had become intimately friendly with Mrs X because they were, so to speak, both in the same boat. It was soon after that I learned that Mrs X's husband was also a gambler, but of a higher order, for he was a partner in a gambling house and made a lot of money. Besides, this gambler loved his wife and child very much, and he was very generous to them. However, Mrs X was very unhappy because he was at his gambling house every night, and often stayed away for days at a time. Mrs X liked her husband and was much concerned about his safety and well being. She constantly and insistently begged him to give up gambling and go into some legitimate business, but he was too deeply involved. Just about this time Mr X began to show signs of exhaustion, he complained of headaches and sleeplessness. His doctor too advised him to make a change in his way of life, or at least take a long rest, but he would not listen to either one of them.

One day Mrs X informed us that her husband had bought a private home rather a distance from us, and that she would be moving there in a short time. We were all very sorry about this, my brother-in-law and sister because of the loss of her patronage, and I because of the loss of herself.

As it turned out none of us were at an actual loss, for Mrs X, after moving away, came to our shop once or so a week and gave us a large order which of course I had to deliver to her home, and so all was well. I made it my business to make delivery late in the evening, so that I would not be expected to return to the shop and I would be able to stay away as long as I liked. On my arrival with deliveries at her home, I would usually find a table set for tea with a variety of delicious pastries to sweeten the occasion. Only on one or two occasions did I meet her husband. He was a very friendly and good natured man, but very stubborn when it came to matters of gambling. She had warned me never to mention or even show that I was aware of the fact that he was a gambler.

The worse his condition became, the more she insisted that he change his business. One day, seeing that he would not listen to her

she said to him, as a sort of dare, 'You won't last very long, not the way you are living. Well, I should worry, being that you won't listen to me, or your doctor's advice, I have taken care of myself and I have someone who will take care of me when you are gone.'

Hearing this, he jumped up in a terrible rage. 'What? You are seeing someone while I am away! Who is it? If you don't tell me I will find out from our daughter, and whoever it is I will kill him'.

Getting no satisfactory answer from her, he asked their little girl 'Who has been visiting your mother while I am away?'

'I will not tell you,' she answered with some bravado, and the more he insisted that she tell him who visited his mother, the more stubbornly she refused to tell him. He then tried to bribe her, and offered her a shilling, then half a crown, then ten shillings.

'Give me a pound', she said, 'and I will tell you.'

He gave her a pound and she said, 'David, from the grocery shop.'

Mrs X was sitting by as this went on, and when the child mentioned my name she laughed out aloud in his face. He looked at her, smiled and said to her, 'You are a smarty. As long as it is David I am not worried.' He knew me fairly well, for his father, who had decided to buy a grocery shop, had asked me to enquire about a particular shop he was interested in. I not only made enquiries about it, but also when I found that it was all it was claimed to be, I made all the arrangements for the purchase of the shop. I took stock and helped to put the shop into good order. Mr X's father had offered to pay me, but of course I had refused his offer. It was therefore that Mr X knew that he did not have to fear any trouble from me.

Mrs X did not tell me about this. It was some time later that I happened to meet Mr X in a Turkish bath, and as we stood and faced one another stark naked he related to me what had happened in his home. Though he expressed satisfaction that he was not worried about his wife's remark as long as he knew that I was the late caller, nevertheless he found it necessary to add that although he might be a very kindly person, and have confidence in the good intentions of others, he could be a very dangerous person to those who disregarded his personal interest, particularly with regard to his family.

Whether important or unimportant events occur or not, whether Nations rise or fall, it makes very little difference to Time as it

marches on.At the beginning of the second decade of the twentieth century peace and security – at least outwardly – was the order of the day. But, behind this veil of security, politicians and warmongers were planning, scheming and preparing armaments of war, weapons of death and destruction. As long as there was no immediate threat of war, and hysteria did not seize the masses, and vendors hawked their wares through the dusty streets of London, and old Dame Nell sold her watercress at a penny a bunch, all was well and quiet in merry old England.

With me behind a grocery counter things too went along nice and quietly. I packaged sugar and flour, as well as many other items; I measured milk and sliced smoked salmon; and I dipped my hand deep into the briny barrel of salted herring for a disgruntled 'yachne' (gossip). I smiled at some customers and frowned at others, and so passed away weeks and years as well as some of my youth.

But in justice to fact and actuality it was not all grudge and toil. I had my Friday evenings and Saturday afternoons and, better still, my Wednesday afternoon and evening off. Whether I went to a park, a museum or a music hall, or attended an opera, a play or concert, each one in its seasonable time, I enjoyed them all for their fun, amusement and instruction. I was not interested in any one interest or amusement in particular, but rather I just loved to watch the play of life in its many varieties, diversities and vicissitudes, and I tried to partake in it as much as I could. In fact, I did enjoy a peaceful and contented life amongst my many friends and members of my immediate family.

Although by nature I have always been a social entity, for ever in search for friends and companions, yet there is also to be noted in me a streak of the lone ranger. I had taken myself off all on my own to far away secluded spots, and the more deserted I found them to be the more I liked them. If I came across a wooded section or a mountainous terrain, they were as a challenge to me, enticing me to solve their hidden mysteries and scale their highest peaks. On warm summer afternoons I would lie contentedly in the fragrant, aromatic, soft green grass in an open field or park and read a play, a novel or some poetry, and when the sun would set and the light become dim I would gaze at the twinkling stars and the sad pale moon, and dream

and contemplate and wonder how many more worlds there might be among them, busy with toil and living, and whether any lonesome Davids may be lying in their green fields and dreaming even as I am.

At these moments I used to envy the Moon and the Stars for their immortality, as for ever they look down at us mortals, and mock our trivial span of life. They see one generation after another come and soon pass away while they, seemingly, remain infinitely suspended in their assigned orbits. How wonderful it would be if we could dream away our life, just like that. But no, always we must return to reality with all of its toils and tribulations, and scheme and plan and build within that short span of life allotted to us mortals upon this planet Earth, our World, where before we have time to reap the harvest of our many years of endeavour, we must return to our Mother Earth, and with our remains enrich her bowels, so that future generations will have sustenance, and life will go on for ever.

To come back to reality, it happened just about this time that brother Joseph had to undergo an operation for the removal of haemorrhoids, and it fell to my lot to take care of his milk route. Several months passed by before Joseph was well enough to relieve me of this job, and allow me to return to the grocery shop. With the father-in-law of Mrs X now having his own grocery shop we naturally lost her patronage, and by the time I returned she was altogether forgotten. So passed another episode and another milestone in my career.

Uncle Chaim-Itzchok never left his grocery shop, except to go to shool on the Sabbath or other festivals. Therefore, when this uncle made his appearance in Rivke's shop we knew that something very important must have brought him there. So it was. Uncle had an only son, Solly (Solly der Starker). Solly had no trade, no profession and he had no use for the grocery business. Already in the middle twenties with no accomplishment to his credit, Uncle decided to marry him off, hoping that responsibility might give him some initiative to make something out of himself. Solly, besides being spoiled as only sons very often are, also abhorred anything traditional, therefore Uncle dared not introduce him to a matrimonial agent. Hence his visit to Solly and Rivke, hoping that they would be of some help to him. It took but a short time for my sister and

brother-in-law to decide on a young woman from among their customers, and it could have been no other than the daughter of the widow already mentioned in a previous chapter.

Her two married daughters were approached first and asked whether their young sister was at all interested in a marriage proposition. When the two sisters heard this they were very happy, as they thought I was the young man in question. On many occasions they had hinted to me, more or less in a jocular way, that they would like to have me as a member of their family. But when they were told that it would be advisable to arrange an informal meeting so that the young folks could see each other and decide whether further meetings were to be arranged, the sisters were confused and disappointment could easily be detected in their faces as they looked at one another, realising that I was not at all the young man in question. Just the same, they said that they would discuss this matter with their mother and let them know. To make this story short, a meeting was arranged and both sides were well satisfied with each other. Shortly after they were engaged with the wedding soon following.

I am sure that neither my sister Rivke nor Solly had any inkling of the part I might have played in this affair, for even after the couple were engaged one of the sisters said to me, 'It's still not too late, you can still say the word'. Never did I mention any of this to any member of the family, and had cousin Solly or his wife still been alive I would not have mentioned it even now.

Although I had already experienced several affairs of the heart, marriage never entered my mind. However, the last implications, with grown up matured persons involved, gave me food for thought. True, I was not in a financial position to assume matrimonial responsibilities, but this was true of many people at that time. With the family's help, such as was given to my brothers and to many others, I could undoubtedly do just as well. However, I could not see myself giving up the 'laissez-faire' freedom which I had only recently acquired and so much coveted. As a child and youth I was always seeking friends and playmates, and while not yet in my teens I was already inducted into the enslaving grocery shop. If I should now enter into the further restricted individual freedom of matrimony, I would be spending my life with my own self being a stranger.

It is stated in the Sayings of Our Ancient Fathers, 'It is against thy will that thou art born, and it is against thy will that thou shalt live, and it will be against thy will that thou shalt die.' And so without my will and without my knowledge there awoke within me feelings and desires beyond my control, a longing and an awakening I had never experienced before. I seemed to be longing for and seeking somebody, yet no one who came along seemed to fill the order; something must have been lying dormant for some time and now awoke to torment me. Was it Mother Nature calling for obedience, obedience to the laws of propagation and the continuance of life on this planet Earth; insisting on involving me in matters of the heart in one way or another, even without any considerations as to what damage it might do?

Alas, there was no one to berate, no one to whom to say, 'No!' No one to whom to say, 'Mind your own business.' And insistently a voice went on nagging, nagging, nagging, drawing at the very roots of one's nerves, at night during sleep, and during the wakeful hours of the day.

18

Eva

EURIPIDES ON LOVE

How sweet is Love when it comes in season.
The first awareness,
The quiver of hope,
The pain of desire,
The flame of passion,
And the soft, mystic glow when the flame subsides.

EVA

To this very day the tortured face of
a very dear, sweet girl comes to my mind.

It is a troubled face,
a face writhing in fear and anguish.
It is a face frightened and bewildered,
and a mind unable to fathom the mysteries
of life which had brought her to this plight.
And as with tears rolling down her pale
cheeks like torrents of water spilling over
a waterfall she, with a sorrowful look in
her eyes, softly murmured,
'Marry me'.

To this very day I feel a cold shiver come
all over me, and a feeling of shame, sorrow
and guilt stares me in my face and condemns me
to everlasting purgatory.

Dear God Almighty, why do these episodes
come about now and then, to plague and torment
us - us, poor victims of events and circumstances
we are unable to control.

We are like a herd of lost sheep caught in
a blinding storm, and driven hither and thither
with no place of refuge to find anywhere.

Yes, so it is with you and me,
poor children that we are,
victims of an urge and desire,
far beyond our abilities to control.

Eva, just about five feet tall, with a darkish complexion, auburn hair, dark brown eyes and a pleasant face. She might have been the Ugly Duckling or the Cinderella in her not too pleasant home. She took care of her middle-aged, invalid mother, did all or most of the housework, the shopping, cooking and whatever other chores were required. Her father, hardly any taller than herself, seemed to be a very nice and agreeable man. He acted for a number of European lotteries, and he was reputed to do very well financially. He undoubtedly adored this youngest of his children, Eva, and he was most likely the only one in his household to appreciate her. There was also an older married brother, who had a fur shop in Brick Lane, whom I never met. At home there was an older single brother, rather a nice and pleasant chap, who occasionally came into the Old Nichol Street shop where I worked to do some odd shopping.

It was her older, single sister, who to be sure was every bit of a shrew and who, for reasons I had never been able to find out, made little Eva's life wretched and miserable. This sister I used to see every morning at the same hour walking across the street, on her way to work, business or wherever else she might have been going. Always she was dressed in the very latest of fashions, dresses of a cut and style which could only be seen in the most fashionable parts of the West End, and never seen in the East End of London. This craze got her into trouble on two occasions as I happen to remember. One, when she wore some sort of a hobble dress, and on another occasion when she wore a dress that looked like a pair of pantaloons, as worn by Arabian Desert Dervishes. Some cockneys, who happened to see her, threw mud and stones at her, and on both occasions she had to be escorted home by police.

One time, when I happened to deliver some groceries to Eva at their door, something caught fire near their fireplace. The Shrew, standing there like a scarecrow in a corn field, did nothing about it, but started to scream in her shrewish, squeaky voice, 'Fire, Fire! Hurry, don't stand there like a fool,' the last evidently addressed to me. I quickly stepped inside the house and noted that it was just a rag that caught fire and, of course, had to be put out and not allowed to spread. I picked up a small rug I noticed nearby and, throwing it onto the smouldering rag, I stamped out the fire with my feet. But

I was not going to let the Shrew off that easy, so turning around to her, I said, 'If you had any spunk in you could have done the same thing, instead of becoming panicky and causing a commotion.' Seeing fire in the Shrew's eyes, I winked at Eva who smiled at me in gratitude for my admonition of her hated sister. I walked through the door and was on my way.

On and off I had already been working in sister Rivke's shop for two or three years. During all of this time Eva had been doing her shopping there, and though a very friendly relationship existed between us no close intimacy entered the picture. We would exchange sympathetic glances or make an admiring remark as is usual and natural between boy and girl. This was all well so far as I was concerned. I made no compromising passes or remarks and asked for no special favours, but what the female's reaction even to these innocent trifles might be, I did not know.

Woman to me at that stage of my development was not a sweetheart, not a wife or a companion for very intimate relationships. In woman I could only see 'Mother', a mother who during her entire life was the sacrificial offering upon the altar of life. Submission, labour and toil for her husband, children and that cruel taskmaster, Necessity. Therefore, wherever I saw a woman in trouble, subordinated, ill-treated, I fumed with rage. My feelings of sympathy for her were beyond measure as I lifted her upon a Godly pedestal of purity, honesty and innocence, to be seen and admired, but not touched. It never entered my mind that because of her physical and mental make up she might be differently conditioned, that the life cycle had endowed her with a much earlier maturity than a boy, and therefore the same boy and girl affair might mean something entirely different to her. I therefore, like a moth attracted by the alluring flame, kept circling the danger point ever closer and closer, often finding myself in a compromising situation.

That is exactly what my admiration of this girl and my sympathy for her led to. Slowly I was straying deeper and deeper into that mystery of love; first an innocent look, a squeeze of the hand, an embrace, and then one day, as I delivered some groceries that she had ordered and was handing them to her at the apartment door, our emotions strained to the breaking point. I suddenly but very gently

clasped both her cheeks in my hands, drew her face close to mine and kissed her on her lips. I just yielded to an urge, an urge momentarily out of my control, without any thought or consideration as to its consequence. Just the same, a feeling of love and benevolence, of delight and exaltation, took hold of me as I walked back on my way to the shop. Suddenly I seemed to be in love with the whole world, and more beautiful became the buildings, the street I walked through and the people that passed me by. Yes, I suddenly realised that love had come into my life. Love, more sincerely, more surely, more intensely than ever before.

Shortly after this episode I left London for a holiday in the South East. I went to Southend with brother Joseph, who came only for the day's excursion. By the time Joseph left I had already explored this unimposing seaside resort, with its mile long pier – its only worthwhile attraction. By boat I went to Margate. There I walked along the sea shore to Broadstairs, and from there to Ramsgate where Mother was at that time spending the summer. I intended to spend two weeks in Ramsgate, but I only stayed ten days; I was just too restless. Was it Eva? I don't know, I was just restless. I did think of Eva, true enough. In fact, maybe as another thoughtless act but with a very intense desire, I went to a flower shop and sent her a box of seasonal flowers. This did somewhat relieve my tension, but just the same I returned to London and the grocery shop a few days later.

For several days Eva did not appear at the shop. This surprised me very much and I wondered whether her absence might be due to the box of flowers I sent her. Perhaps her family did not approve of a simple grocery shop clerk, and after all I could not blame them. What had I to offer? However this realisation, much as it might have hurt my feelings, intensified my desire to prove myself a worthy mate for this girl. But my fears soon resolved when Eva came into the shop one morning dressed in black. I happened to be alone in the shop so I clasped her hand and asked her where she been the last few days. 'Mother passed away', she said solemnly, 'we were sitting Shiva.' As some customers were coming into the shop she said, 'I have more to tell you, but not now.'

'Eva,' I said, 'meet me on Wednesday afternoon, just tell me where and we will spend the day together '

'By Shoreditch Church,' she said, 'at two o'clock.'

We met at the Shoreditch Church and by bus we rode to my favourite camping ground in Golders Hill Park. On the bus Eva related to me about the flowers, and how unfortunately they had arrived on the very day of her mother's funeral. (How ironically fate often chooses to play its antics).

'I answered a knock at the door,' she said, 'and a messenger handed me a box of flowers. I looked at the label on the box, and there, sure enough, was my name in full. I quickly opened the box and found your message. My sad, despondent heart was temporarily seized by a feeling of pleasantry, but the irony of it soon made me both sad and angry. I ran down the stairs and dumped the box and its contents into a dust bin, for how could I bring a box of flowers sent to me into a house full of mourners?'

She wiped away a tear now and then as she was telling me about this sad event. We had our tea on the lawn, spent part of the rest of the afternoon pleasantly, all the time our young hearts coming closer and closer together. I had to take her home in time for her family's supper, and on the way arranged for a further meeting next week.

For several weeks we met, unknown to anyone, at the Shoreditch Church and rode to parks to spend the day. But one time, someone who knew both of us saw us together and the cat was out of the bag. Like wildfire it spread through our neighbourhood, and customers patronising our shop, but otherwise strangers, talked about us with so much enthusiasm, expressed so much encouragement, saying what a wonderful couple we would make, and implying that all was done and settled but for the wedding ring to be placed on the bride's finger. All of them certainly meant well, but little did they know of the rocky road which lay ahead. There were many pitfalls which could not be avoided, and problems neither of us could solve.

Soon enough my sister and brother-in-law learned of our secret meetings, and they were both surprised and dismayed. How could this be happening? Neither David nor Eva would have been meeting for quite some time now just for the fun of it – there must be some understanding between them, so how come that the family is unaware about it? It is not the custom in our family for boy and girl to meet clandestinely, without an intermediary of one sort or another.

They therefore felt it to be their duty to inform my parents about this affair.

My parents, in consultation with other members of the family, decided that before approaching me they find out about the girl and her family, and if possible see the girl herself. From Rivke and Solly they would get an idea of the quality of Eva's family. They assured my parents that the father was a very well respected man as was the rest of the family. The girl, whom they knew very well, was of a nice and pleasing personality, but very small. The one drawback they did know was the fact that the family was not religious, that the father did not attend synagogue and that he might be conducting business on the Sabbath. Of course, this information was in itself enough of a deterrent for my parents to object strongly to any serious relationship that might exist between me and this girl. But they did reserve any action until they knew more about the girl herself, and the true relationship between us. They tried hard not to acknowledge that the situation existed as a reality.

One time Father happened to come into the shop when I was standing by the counter waiting on Eva, my hand round her waist. Father made out that he did not see anything, but he did take a good look at Eva. Next, my brother Solly made it his business to see her, and one day he happened to be in the shop when Eva came in.

The first one to take me to task was brother Solly. He pointed out to me that he was not in a position to judge the merits or any demerits this girl might have, being that he did not know her well enough as far as that was concerned. 'However,', he said, 'I was very much disappointed when I saw her in the shop. Why pick on such a tiny little girl? You may be carried away by something you see in her, but after some time of married life one wants to know that he has a presentable person to go to the table with. One wants to feel that he has an able helping partner to share one's life with, to share one's problems and hardships with, and here you have a doll, a toy. She is a nice girl, no doubt a decent girl, that much credit I will give you, but life at best is a struggle, a struggle wherein the body, even more than the mind, has many strenuous hardships to wrestle with, and what I see in this girl is but a fragile body which might snap at the least strain.'

I offset his argument by pointing out that our own mother, who was hardly any taller than Eva, had brought nine children into the world, had worked hard all her life, and had been more efficient in her help to Father than could be many a woman twice her size, therefore I would discount his argument as not being valid. 'However,' I continued, 'nothing definite has as yet been decided upon, so there is no reason to make an immediate problem out of this matter. Let us wait and see how things develop.'

At that time I felt sure that the opposition my brother had expressed in his talk to me was not the main opposition of my family to this girl. Rather I took it for granted that it was religion rather than the size of the girl that bothered them, but they wisely did not use religion as their main objection at first. Of course, it did come up later when they saw that I kept up my meetings with Eva, and that the affair might already have reached a point of no return. Therefore further delay might prove to be too late.

Actually, it is quite possible that if our meetings had not become public knowledge we might have gone on meeting until that smouldering fire in our relationship, with no special flame to it, and no blast of wind to kindle it into a burning fire, might have died out through its own insufficiency. But with eyes all around gazing at us all the time, and ears on the alert for that final word, which seems to be so alluring to the uninvited gossipers, the objections in my family, and maybe in her family too, drew us closer together, and made us feel that we two were alone against an unfriendly world, and that we had to fight together in order to attain our desired ideal.

Next, my family came up with the religious question. 'No, David, you cannot be seriously thinking of marrying this girl, it just cannot be; you are two of an altogether different kind. She has no knowledge or understanding of our long inherited religious tradition. Her father does business on the Sabbath, we have found out her brother keeps his fur shop open on the Sabbath, and she herself goes shopping on the Sabbath, carries money, rides and is altogether unaware of this our holy day of rest.'

With pain and sadness in my heart I sat and listened to their arguments, and the worst of it was that I knew they were right. But what of Eva? I cannot, just like that, without a fight, without a

struggle, acquiesce. No, I must put up some fight, I must think of some argument to offset their point of view.

No Jew, I argued, is altogether a stranger to our Jewish tradition. In our long history there were many gaps, when the Torah of Moses was altogether forgotten, as was even the God Jehovah himself, and pagan worship took its place. Yet, time and again, recognition of the true God of Israel and the study of his commandments were renewed. It is the environment that counts; the prodigal always returns to his people. One does not inherit religion, but adopts the religion of his birth, and it is inculcated and infused into him from early childhood to his maturity. Liberalism in religion, disregard of some or even all of the commandments and rituals, is due to laxity within the community or immediate family, and can usually be remedied by a change in one or both of these environments. For some time these arguments continued, without either side giving ground. I resented their well-meaning interference because all their objections seemed to me to be trivial. Besides, one way or another, I wanted to resolve this matter by myself.

One Friday evening, visiting home in Pedley Street, I found Mother sitting alone by the fireplace reading the 'Tzeno Ureno' by the light of the Sabbath candles. We exchanged greetings and I asked regarding her health. For a while she sat quietly but most evidently troubled about something, then somewhat sadly and with a tear in her eye reflecting the light of the burning coke in the stove she said, 'David, I have all along been aware of your affair, and I have heard many of the arguments and objections which have been given by your father as well as other members of our family. You must realise one thing, and that is that however you may disagree with what they have said, they certainly mean your good, and they are only interested in your happiness and welfare'.

Without giving me a chance to interrupt she continued, 'However, if you really love this girl and feel you would be happy with her, why then we really don't want to interfere in this affair of yours. But the way you are going about it is not fair to the girl, to yourself, and to the way these things are done in our family. Meeting on street corners secretly is most objectionable. If you do not want an intermediary to make formal arrangements bring her here, let us get

acquainted and see for ourselves, and be in a position to judge the merits of your involvement.'

This was Mother speaking. Mother, suffering, pining for her offspring. Mother trying to protect, maybe, an erring son from taking a wrong turning. 'Bring her here.' These words sunk deep in to my mind. 'Bring her here.' Mother, waiting to embrace a stranger into the fold. Yes, Mother threw the whole matter right into my lap. Oh, why didn't they do that before? Much, much discussion, many arguments would have been avoided, and the mind would have been able to see and think more clearly. Yes, I was free, free to make up my own mind. Free to see, to examine and to scrutinise the situation in its true perspective. After days and nights of pining and suffering I came to realise that, after all, was I in a position to settle down? Am I in a position to assume the responsibility of a married man, a husband, a father of children? Yes, it is true others have been similarly situated and they took the plunge, but at what price glory?

No, I am not ready, and I have not been fair to this well meaning young girl, who innocently does not even know what she is getting in to. I wondered, does she realise what was likely to be in store for her as my wife? Would she, like my own sisters, be willing to give up the free life she is now leading, and be ready to harness herself to the rigours of a grocery shop? Be tied down to it from morning to night every day of the week, with but one day off on Saturday, and even this day fenced in by strict commandments and prohibitions, all strange and unknown to her. How would she fit in with my family, with whom my own life was so closely interwoven? The more I thought about this, the greater the problem seemed to grow. What shall I do? I decided to put this matter right in her lap, and see what she would have to say about it. After all, we never so far discussed our affair openly, we just took things for granted and let it go at that.

So that was the Wednesday that was. A memorable day not easily forgotten. A day when, intermingled with one's own pain and aches, one had to suffer the pains and aches of another, one more impressionable, more fragile and delicate. We rode by bus to our frequent rendezvous in Golders Hill Park, where we had spent so many happy hours together. But Eva, with her woman's intuition, soon noticed the absence of my usual enthusiasm and happy-go-lucky, carefree

mood. As we sat on the soft green grass admiring the panorama about us, the lawn rising and falling here and there, and the dense heads of clover swaying in the gentle breeze, carefree and without any concern, we felt sorrowful and aggrieved about our many fateful cares and tribulations.

I took her delicate hand in mine and pressed it hard in the palms of both my hands. 'Eva,' I said, 'we have played with fire, have been scorched and now we are in pain. Let us not aggravate the situation by letting it take its own natural course, for nature can be very cruel. In our innocent reposed sleep we have dreamed a beautiful dream, which might have become a reality but for the many obstacles unforeseen and not taken into consideration. We cannot allow this to go on without a clear understanding, for, painful as it may be, it may avoid more intensified pain and suffering.'

Eva's face went pale at these words of mine. Her hand became cold and shook with nervousness, and her eyes glazed with tears. Her body, now limp, slouched onto my lap, evidently unable to utter a word. In my sad and afflicted mood I felt ashamed and remorseful for the cruel words I had had to say to her. 'Know that in my very sad and cruel words I have hurt you very much. What can I do to calm your feelings and ease your pain?'

It was at this time that the fortified stockade, in which woman kept her womanly pride so closely guarded, fell suddenly apart as she completely surrendered and by way of a last effort to avoid defeat, she murmured, 'Marry me.'

It seemed to me that with the utterance of these two words of surrender she freed herself of much of the pain and emotion she had suffered. And so, with a restoration of her self pride and control, she suddenly sat up, wiped her tears away and ironically, but with confidence, said,' All along I instinctively feared that it might come to this, but I sincerely hoped it that it would not. Just the same,' she went on to say, 'I would like to know what it is that so formidably stands between us.'

'Eva,' I said to her, 'believe me that my own feelings and state of mind are as much hurt and outraged as yours are at what must be. For many days and nights I have been tortured, and I suffered, wondered and tried hard to determine whether continuing or ceasing

our relationship was the wiser policy to follow, in fairness to both of us. Yours, as well as your family's way of life is an open book, but ours is entirely different. It is a much more complicated way of life to an outsider, especially to one who has to some extent strayed from that strictly fenced in, and religiously protected form of behaviour that forms our life. Therefore, any one sharing wedded life with me, and because my own life is so intimately interwoven with that of my family, would have, for the sake of conjugal peace and happiness, to comply with and practise all the regulations, rituals and traditions, and uphold the mandates and prohibitions of orthodoxy.'

Hearing all this, Eva was quite puzzled and she remarked, 'You mean to say, David, that I would have to strictly adhere to all of these rules and regulations, that I would have to keep a strictly Kosher home, that I would not be allowed to handle money on Saturday, go where I please and do shopping on that day?'

'Yes, Eva,' I said to her, 'this is exactly what I mean, and lots more that I cannot at the moment say and about which you are entirely ignorant and unaware. It is a happy and contented life that we lead in our own way. Fenced in though it is by many laws, rituals and regulations we do not feel that we are deprived of any pleasures or privileges. We have our rest days, festivals, days for lamentation, but also days for rejoicing, and we cherish and enjoy them as no outsider is able to understand. Those who have estranged themselves from our way of life, and especially their children who are even further removed, would naturally find the road back to a religious life a rough and rocky road to traverse, a road not at all easy to follow, saturated, as one might find it to be, with problems and embarrassments.'

'I did not think,' Eva said, 'considering that you are a young man, and as it seemed to me of modern views, that you would make such demands of me. I do not feel I would be happy with such a life, or that I could possibly adjust myself to comply with the demands you just mentioned. It had never occurred to me that such a wide gap exists between us, and perhaps it is to our benefit that we have come to a clear understanding about this, before even more embarrassment confronted both of us.'

Realising that our affair had actually come to an end, and that its resolution was not nearly as tragic as I feared it might be, I said to

Eva, 'I do hope that our parting will be without any ill feelings whatsoever and, though better it might have been if our involvement had never occurred, yet I feel that we should cherish those pleasant hours we spent together, and those dreams and hopes, at least in my own case, which made me to feel a better man, a happier man, and a more useful man to society, and which gave me a happier and more hopeful outlook on life as well as my future.'

Eva made no reply to all I had said, so I went on, 'We have been friends ever since I came to the Old Nichol Street shop, where I met you. All of this time I admired you, I admired the sacrifice you made on your family's behalf, and I sympathised with you because of the hard and thankless job which fell to your lot, and which you willingly maintained. In my admiration of you I wanted to share part of my life with you, sincerely and intimately. Now, the day is gone, the sun has set and the shadows have fallen, and even the night has passed away, and with it our dreams, our hopes and our desires have dissipated. Soon, the tumult and hubbub of life will erase even from our memory the pangs and throbs of a memorable episode in the springtime of our lives.'

In this way another 'tombstone' was erected by the wayside, and beneath that tombstone lies the 'life force', crying out to all eternity, 'Vanity of Vanities, all is Vanity.'

19

1913 – 1914

The days, weeks and months went by and the years followed, with little of importance to record. Of course, there are always some incidents, but I can remember none of any importance or worth while writing about. Hurt, and still smarting from my last encounter with affairs of the heart, I kept strictly to myself. I visited parks and museums and attended concerts. It was about this time that I read books on subjects that considerably changed my outlook on life. I will deal with these subjects later on.

1914 was a catastrophic year for almost the entire world, for during the later part of the year the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse were let loose upon a peaceful and unsuspecting world, and they brought death and ruin to Victor and Vanquished alike. But the preceding year, 1913, was our own tragic year, for during this year passed away our dear beloved Mother, may she rest in peace.

How far back my memory takes me to Mother I cannot say, but to be sure it was way back into my infancy. I cannot recall the time when, with all of my animal instinct, I lay suckling at her breasts, as did six of my elder brothers and sisters, and just as unstintingly she gave milk to her youngest twin daughters in later years. They were the years when Mother Love was first implanted in me, with roots so deep and strong so that neither time nor storm was ever able to loosen them. But the years of my childhood, though only but faintly, I yet can recall. Yes, I can recall Mother, her care, her kindness, her gentle touch and her sympathetic smile. Yes, truly, also her discipline, her stern look and her admonitions, all of which were so thoroughly saturated with love, goodness and care, all of these memories do come back to my mind.

Scenes of those years flicker through my mind so rapidly that it is hard for me to make a scenic description of any of them. But, in split seconds, I see Mother rising at early dawn, going outside in sunshine or rain to drive our cattle to pasture; going into our stable with pail in hand to milk the cows, drawing water from the old well, cleaning the house, cooking, serving us food, washing the clothes with no modern washing machine or even detergents to help remove the dirt, but with the use of burned out wood ashes, or potash as it is chemically known, for the alkaline and caustic cleaning properties it contains; darning the socks, mending the clothes, and not to forget the baking of the weekly family sustenance – bread. Not bread alone, but also various cakes, puddings, and not to forget the 'chale' for the Sabbath and the various festivals, with their individualistic ritual and symbolic shapes. There was the mixing and kneading of the dough, the shaping of the loaves and then setting them into the large baker's oven. Mother, as I remember her, was not just a mother, a wife and a housekeeper, she was also the doctor and the sick nurse to tend to her sick children as well as her healthy ones. She was all this and much more, all rolled into one.

Then there was that other Mother. That Mother, with her weekly work and duties done, now sitting humbly at rest, herself washed clean, her Sheitel neatly combed, the prayer over the lit candles recited; and the extra special Friday night supper prepared – so different from the daily simple food of black bread, herring and the boiled potatoes which we dipped into the herring brine – the butter, the cream, the sour milk and various cheeses, all of which were home made, most of them by her own hands. She cooked various soups: cabbage soup, beet soup (borsht), schav and those tasty wholesome 'kroopniks' so well and richly blended. Yet they were in no way to be compared to the especially prepared Friday night meal. But now, with the meal over, Mother would sit calmly, her tired and overworked body resting in a chair, her wrinkled face serene, and her tired but ever shining eyes scanning the yellowed pages of her beloved, 'Teitch-Chumash'.

From the deep recesses of my mind, a reel unwinds showing flickering scenes of Mother, first in the village of my birth, Swalbitch, then near Khozshike at the turpentine distillery and lastly, in the old

country, Buten, the town of Mother's birthplace. So many were her chores and duties, so many her weals and woes, so many her 'deiges' – how can they all be enumerated and written down for posterity?

In London, though already far gone in her illness, amongst her loving children she might have spent the best years of her life. Here, she did not have the fear of hunger and want, the fear of the peasants during their drunken orgies, the fear of the government agent who might catch her serving a peasant a drink; fear of her sons having to serve in the hated Tsar's army, fear of the elements, fear on all sides of her, enveloping her in their hard, cruel devastations. Yes, here, built into her fragile body a divinely obedient contentment for whatever little of pleasures and worldly goods she had, she could have spent her few, last years in pleasant surroundings. But, alas, the past had been too hard a taskmaster and had taken too much out of her slight and ageing body, leaving her with but pains and aches, coughing and short breath, in her young but last years of her life. It was towards the end of 1913 that her condition became serious. Dr Goodman, her attending physician, and the specialists he recommended gave little hope of recovery.

One day the family was summoned to her bedside, her condition having become very grave. Coming into the house it was evident that death was among us, for it could be seen in the faces of my brothers and sisters. During that day, Mother coughed a great deal and had trouble with her breathing, but during the evening, as the hour came close to midnight, she stopped coughing and her breathing became more regular. Our hopes that her condition had improved rose considerably but to her doctor, who had just come to visit her, it was a sign that her end was very close by. He told us that there was nothing more that he could do for her, and that in a short while she would be no more.

I went into Mother's room and sat beside her. She seemed to be sleeping calmly and for a while my mind wandered away into that world of make belief where everybody was happy and well and there, sitting at the decorated and nicely set table of some important festival, was Mother, radiant with health and youth. Awaking from my lethargy, I noticed that Mother had her eyes open and she was looking at me. I bent down to her and asked how she felt. 'I am very tired,'

she replied, 'I must rest and then I will be well again. There won't be any illness or pain. I am very tired,' she went on, 'I must rest.' And with these, her last words, she closed her eyes, and peace and rest came to her and but a short while later came rest in the form of everlasting sleep. Peace be unto you, dear Mother, peace and rest as you so well deserve. Peace unto you as you are gathered unto your forefathers, for ever and ever, Amen.

The funeral took place the next morning, attended by the entire family and friends who came from nearby and far away. Also strangers, who had known her but casually, came to pay their last respects. At the casket, covered with a black cloth with the Mogen David in the centre, standing in the middle of the room, father delivered a short funeral oration. First he spoke of her virtue, and the important help-mate she had been during their married lifetime, and then, in the way of an analogy, he said, and I quote: 'When Joseph brought his father before Pharaoh, Pharaoh, looking at the withered old Patriarch standing before him, asked him, "How many are the years of your life?" and Jacob answered to Pharaoh that they had been few, but bad ones.' 'Even so,' Father went on to say, 'it has been with this fine and worthy woman who, having descended from holy men of Israel, set herself as a worthy example of womanhood.'

Then Father, bending down humbly at the head of the casket, begged of her forgiveness for whatever wrong he had done to her during the years of their togetherness, and we all followed, each one in turn, and did the same. After this the casket was carried out of the house and placed on the funeral carriage. The mourners followed on foot behind the carriage rounding the street and then, sitting themselves in the empty carriages that followed, they wound their way through the busy London streets to the cemetery.

There by the grave, all ready to accept its tenant, the casket was placed and before being lowered the funeral service was performed by the Rabbi. We recited the 'Kaddish' and the casket was lowered into the grave. As is customary we, her nearest of kin, threw the first shovelfuls of earth upon the casket, and as the stony earth crashed onto her wooden abode, an echo seemed to resound:

And the body returneth to the earth, from which it came.
Peace be unto you.

With our heads bowed and with heavy heart, we slowly traced our footsteps back to the carriages which took us home where, with a feeling of loss, defeat and despair, we resumed life among the living.

For thirty days we neither shaved nor cut our hair, and we wore the waistcoat with the tear in it as a sign that we were in mourning. And so, in sadness and despair, 1913 went by, and late into 1914, that unholy year of World War One, our mourning continued, reminding us of our irreparable loss.

20

1915-1916

It was believed that a war on such a large scale as World War One, in which millions of combatants were engaged on many fronts, could not last longer than three or four months, because the enormous expenditure to supply food and ammunition to such large armies would ruin even the wealthiest of the combatant countries. Men rushed to enlist in the army in non-conscription England, afraid lest they should miss all the fun and glory of war play. But as time went on, and months passed into years, and hospitals and convalescent homes became filled with wounded soldiers, and England became a refuge for refugees from various belligerent nations, and the casualty lists appalled those who were too young or otherwise ineligible for combat duty, the recruiting offices could no more fill their required lists of volunteers, and conscription had to be resorted to.

As I was not a British citizen, and as foreigners were not accepted into the British army, I went on working in the grocery shop the same as before the war until the end of 1915, at which time I decided once and for all to quit the grocery shop for good. I was helped and encouraged by the sister of my 'yeshivah friend', Abe Rosette. Jeanie Rosette, who was a couple of years older than myself, was a very talented and ambitious young girl. She was a member of a very poor family. Her father, a shamas in a small synagogue, was hardly able to feed the eight or nine children in their home in addition to clothing them. The children were forced to quit school as soon as they reached their fourteenth birthday, at which age boys and girls at that time reached school termination.

Jeanie, most aptly, soon picked up the art of cutting, sewing, and hand embroidering of fine ladies blouses. In 1914 she opened a shop

in Fieldgate Street with three or four machines, and with the help of her younger sister Millie, and part time help from an even younger sister, Jeanie's shop was successful from the very beginning. Jeanie soon realised that she could use an outside salesman, but salesmen in wartime are at a premium, costly and unavailable.

I often visited Abe on my days off from the grocery shop in his home, and becoming friendly with his family we used to have lots of fun together. Abe's parents, though poor and humble, nevertheless were good company. His father in particular was a jolly, witty and frolicsome man, who liked to joke and play with his children and their visiting friends, just as though he was their own age. Their home, rather small for the family, and with hardly room enough to bed all of them, was always very much in disorder and somewhat in cleanliness. This did not seem to bother any one of them, and contentedly and happily they went about their daily chores. Being a member of a family as large as the Rosettes, I could not recall there ever being so much commotion and disorder in our home, and the devil-may-care neglect of order often amazed me.

One time when visiting their home on one of the rare winter days when it snowed, I found the whole family, with their father in their midst, throwing snowballs at each other in what was their kitchen, dining room and living room all in one. The walls and the floor was all spattered with snow, and tiny rivulets of melted snow squirmed like worms all over the place, and all in jolly good fun.

Whether it was because Jeanie needed an outside man to bring in business, or whether Jeanie entertained other motives about me, I am not aware, though I later had reasons to believe that the latter may have been true in part. Whatever, Jeanie asked me whether I would like to be her outside man. With this Jeanie put a bug in my head. Being that I really hated the grocery shop it was a good enough excuse for me to speak to my sister and brother-in-law, and though they did not think much of this proposition, they said that if I wanted to try it out they saw no harm in my wasting a little time on it. That was enough for me. I wasted little time, got myself a traveller's sample case and one morning in January 1916, my sample case filled with fine hand made, hand embroidered blouses, and instructions from Jeanie where to go and how much to charge, I was off full speed and

enthusiastic to the West End of London to seek luck and fortune there, amongst the fine young and old ladies who might buy my offerings.

Rather than be paid wages or commission which might prove to be a burden for Jeanie if business was poor, it was decided that she charge me so much per blouse and I make my own profit depending on what the market could bear. This worked out satisfactorily for me, as it relieved me of maintaining a fixed price on the blouses and gave me a chance of accepting whatever price I was able to get, as long as it gave me a little profit. However, in the end it turned out to be even better than that, as I found that I was able to obtain a better price from private customers, and made more profit this way than wages or commission could have resulted. I also found that I could sell to small retail shops who traded in better merchandise, and though my profit was much less, selling in quantity made up the difference, and quantity was what Jeanie needed most.

I rode by bus to the West End and from thereon I walked. Although the hours during which I could enter any shop or any other place were limited to nine in the morning to noon the same day, I nevertheless trod during this time many miles of pavements. Believe it or not I sold, to Jeanie's surprise, almost as many blouses as she could spare me from her own clientele. I also found that by selling in the theatrical district I could get much more than the price Jeanie suggested, and thereby doubled my profit. When, after one full week's work, I found myself with five pounds profit I was very happy, and with much zest and enthusiasm I doubled my efforts and made out very well indeed. I had cards printed 'D.Sheinbaum, High Class Hand Made Blouses', but I soon noticed that some, to whom I handed my card as an introduction, looked at me and returned my card saying they were not interested. It soon became evident to me that my name of German origin was the cause, and so I changed it and printed new cards, which read:

David S. Shannon
High Class Blouses
Hand Embroidered

There were no more returns of my card, and I did very well for myself.

It was January 1916 when I started selling blouses, and it lasted until November of the same year, the month and the year I sailed away to my new home and country, the United States of America. But more of this a little later. There was much of interest during the short period I was a blouse salesman. Even if it is only for my own sake it may be worthwhile to recount that short period, for it was the happiest and most pleasant time I spent in London, during my life there of twelve and a half years.

Between January and November of 1916 I lived what to me was the good life. It was not wine, women and song that meant a good life to me, but good fresh air in the open spaces, and nourishment for my mind which would be both entertaining and instructive. Now I had plenty of time for all of this. By twelve noon or one o'clock, my samples back in Jeanie's shop, my orders given for the next day's business, I was a free man and visited many parks, made trips into nearby country, went to museums, theatres, music halls and concerts, sometimes to a matinee in the afternoon and a theatre in the evening. Henry Irving, Lawrence Irving, Sir Beerbohm-Tree at His Majesty's Theatre, especially during the Shakespearean season, were my favourite actors. Forbes-Robertson in Hamlet, I consider to have been the best portrayal of Hamlet of the many Hamlets I have seen. I attended all the Promenade concerts at the Queen's Hall during the Promenade season, with Sir Henry Wood and other prominent conductors leading that famous orchestra. I attended many operatic performances, though the one I heard at the Covent Garden with sister Sophie was the only one I can remember having heard at that famous Opera House.

For my holiday that year I went to Brighton and a wonderful holiday, both amusing and adventurous, it was. I went there with brother Solly and Fanny, who stayed but a day or two at a small kosher hotel which our family patronised at this seaside resort. On the evening of the day that Solly and Fanny returned to London, I took a walk on the famous Brighton Pier. It was a pitch dark, moonless night and due to the war the resort was blacked out with hardly a glimpse of light anywhere and one could not see more than a few inches away. I came across a figure, which looked like that of a young girl, having some trouble with one of the slot machines on the pier.

I picked up a conversation with her, and we soon became quite friendly. Actually we could only see our forms, no details could be discerned. In a little while we could also make out the forms of a couple who seemed to be tottering in what looked like a drunken couple falling over themselves. 'That must be my sister with her gentleman friend,' the young lady said. 'Look how they are behaving. He is quite a nuisance and he won't leave her alone.'

As they came closer to us a high pitched voice called out, 'Is that you Ann, and who is it you are talking to?'

'It is me alright, and this a young man I just met here.'

When they came very close to us Ann said, 'Meet Dave,' and turning to me she said, 'Dave, meet my sister Rose and Mr Jacobs.'

All I could make out of Rose was that she was shorter than her sister who was about my height. It was evident that she was very fair, with two sharp eyes which seemed to penetrate the very darkness like two searchlights.

'Oh, Dave,' Rose remarked suddenly, 'I do hope you don't think badly about me, because of the way we have been behaving. This Mr Jacobs just won't leave me alone.'

'Well,' I said to her, 'in this darkness I can't see you, but from what I can make out it is quite possible that you would find me just as much a nuisance as Mr Jacobs.'

My last remark seemed to please Mr Jacobs, for he shook my hand and turning to Rose said, 'See, I told you that one can't help behaving with you in any other way.'

Rose seemed to take this as a compliment rather than an insult, and once more she repeated her previous remark to me, 'I do hope, and please tell me, that you do not think badly of me.'

By now I was magnetically attracted to Rose and very much desired to meet her again, so I said to her, 'If you really want to know what I think of you, you must give me a chance to see you in the light of day. Therefore, let's make an appointment to meet somewhere tomorrow at whatever time may be convenient for all of us?'

We agreed to meet the next day at the foot of the Pier at eleven in the morning, and with this we decided that it was time to go back to our hotels. Rose and Mr Jacobs went ahead of Ann and myself, and Rose called back to us and said, 'Meet us at X Hotel.'

'Is that where you are staying?" I said to Ann.

'No,' Ann replied, 'Mr Jacobs stays at this hotel. We are staying with my sister who has a country home here.'

With Mr Jacobs staying at X Hotel, then the most expensive hotel in Brighton, and the girls with a sister who had a country home there, it made me feel that perhaps I had attached myself to the wrong company, a company very much above my means, which in the end might prove an embarrassment to me. But I was already in it, so for the time being I had to play along with them.

'Who is this Mr Jacobs?' I asked Ann, 'he must be quite well-to-do to stay in this hotel.'

'Oh, yes,' Ann said, 'Mr Jacobs is quite wealthy. He owns a woollen factory up north, in Lancashire.'

'A woollen factory up north in Lancashire? Then he must be the Mr Jacobs I heard of and even met a couple of years back through an older brother of mine, who happens to be well acquainted with his family. What a coincidence!'

At the hotel we took leave of Mr Jacobs and I escorted the girls to their sister's home. On the way I remarked to Rose, 'You should be more attentive to Mr Jacobs. After all he is a wealthy man.'

Rose understood what I meant and said, 'Mr Jacobs is good company, he is liberal with his money as a mere friend, but he is not the marrying kind, and if he was I don't think I would want him as a husband'.

' Merely as a friend,' I thought to myself. 'True, I haven't his kind of money to spend, but a friend I can also be.' There and then I made up my mind that I was going to take Rose away from wealthy Mr Jacobs. A big deal perhaps, but I was going to try – 'No, I am *going* to take her away from him.'

I went back to my hotel full of enthusiasm and determination yet, as I lay me down to sleep, a feeling of doubt and frustration crept into my mind. I thought to myself, money plays an important role in the lives of young women in choosing their companions, and Mr Jacobs has plenty of that and I, I may say, have none, so how can I battle with this man of wealth? What could be my weapons with which I might hope to get the better of him? I felt tired and sleepy and so, with a big yawn, I fell into a deep, youthful sleep.

Next morning I awoke when breakfast was already being served, so I just brushed my teeth and washed my hands and face, and went down for breakfast. I ate a hearty meal of several courses and then went up to my room to shave, dress and get myself in readiness for my appointment. I arrived at our appointed place at eleven sharp, sat myself down on a bench and I waited for my company. Eleven thirty went by and twelve and then one o'clock and yet not one of them in sight. By this time I had to go back to my hotel for lunch. I felt very much hurt and disappointed; I was defeated without being given a chance.

After lunch I went out for a walk again on the Promenade, and as I was walking I heard my name being called by a male voice. I looked round and noticed a young soldier beckoning to me. I recognised a young man from Pedley Street with whom I used to play in days gone by. I sat by his side and we talked about the war and the many wounded soldiers who were being wheeled about on the Promenade by nurses, some of them crippled beyond recognition, others with hands or legs missing; it was all a pitiful sight and very much discouraging. Then, suddenly, the young soldier said to me, 'Dave, look what's coming.' And there was a young blonde woman with skin like milk and honey, leading a little dog on a leash. 'That's some class,' the soldier remarked, but I paid no heed to the soldier. The young lady seemed to fit the form of Rose.

'Get lost,' I said to the soldier, 'I am going after her.'

'Don't, David, you will get yourself into trouble. She's not your kind.'

But by the time he had said this I was already on my way towards the girl, leaving the soldier with a sarcastic smile on his face.

I went up to the young woman and actually forced her to stop. 'How do you do, miss,' I said to her. She looked up at me and, with a sort of challenge, said to me, 'I don't know you.'

Hearing her voice I was sure I was not mistaken, it was Rose.

'Do you still want to know what I think of you?' I said to her.

'Oh, you are the young man my sister met last night, is that right?'

'Why, yes,' I said, 'and I thought we had an appointment.'

'Oh yes,' she said, 'I am sorry we disappointed you. My sister had to go for an important errand for my older sister and Mr Jacobs

received a telegram from London that he must be there early Monday morning for an important meeting, so he had to get ready to return. He will leave at six o'clock this evening. In the meantime my sister and I will meet him after lunch by his hotel, and we will go for a swim and then have tea at the cove. Of course,' she went on, 'you are invited too'.

'I should say I am,' I thought to myself, 'I am not letting you go now that I have you again'.

As I walked away with Rose I noticed the soldier now on his feet with arms folded, shaking his head from side to side, seemingly saying, 'This is not the greenhorn David I used to play with many years ago. What luck!'

We met Ann and Mr Jacobs waiting for us at the hotel and we decided not to go swimming as the weather was not too inviting. Instead we walked and sat around until it was time for tea. The Cove, as it was then called, was an underground Tea House, built into the cave which looked out to sea and was quite interesting. We had tea and some refreshments and sat around until it was time for Mr Jacobs to go to his train. That was the end of Mr Jacobs.

We took leave of him at the railway station and as it was time for supper the girls went to their sister's house, and I to my hotel. Before leaving me the girls asked me to come to their house after supper, and this I readily accepted. I found their sister's house to be very nice with comfortably furnished rooms. Their sister was a very pleasant and congenial woman, a little older than either of the girls. After conversing for a while Ann excused herself saying she had some work to do and went off upstairs, and I, not wanting to impose on their married sister, asked Rose if she would like to come out for a walk. Rose accepted my invitation and we went out into the by now dark streets of blacked-out Brighton.

About a half hour's ride outside Brighton by horse and carriage, there was some sort of amusement place where young couples went for a bit of fun. Rose readily agreed to go there, so we hired a carriage and went off to whatever that place was called. No sooner had we gone a short distance, but Rose suddenly became very emotional and amorous. I was somewhat amazed as I had never before been handled in that manner, but being that it wasn't necessarily an unpleasant

experience, even for a novice, I just left it all to her. When we arrived at our destination the driver called out, 'Here we are, sir.' I turned to Rose and said to her, 'What now? Shall we go out?' 'No,' Rose replied, 'let's go back as it might get too late. So I called to the driver to take us back, and around he turned his carriage and we were on our way home.

Riding back Rose said to me, 'You know, Dave, you are a real gentleman.'

'May be so,' I said, 'but you didn't know that, so why did you take a chance and act as you did? I suppose now I should ask you to let me go to bed with you?'

'Ah, there,' Rose said in disgust, 'you men are all alike. No sooner does a girl act a little more intimate and friendly, than you men think right away that you are being given the key of her bedroom door. It's unbearable and disgusting, I am very much disappointed. Please, David, take me home.'

Seeing that Rose felt very much offended and upset I said to her, 'But Rose, I didn't ask you for your bedroom key, I only said that I suppose that I should ask you to take me to bed, for you did act in a most amorous way.'

'Maybe I did become more emotional than what is considered proper for a girl, but I want you to know that it was not meant for you to take advantage of me. I did consider you to be a nice young man and I do like you.' The expression on her face was of much sorrow and regret and as I noticed a tear roll down her cheek I said to her, 'Now you have answered a question which rather puzzled me. I have no doubt but that you are a nice girl – I just wanted to see your reaction to this kind of remark.'

With tears glistening in her eyes, Rose turned to me and said, 'Oh, David, you have made me very happy,' and with this we fell into an embrace and kissing, which lasted until the horse and carriage came to a standstill and the driver called out, 'Here we are, Sir.'

I took Rose home and we kissed good night. Rose invited me to come to her sister's house right after breakfast and stay for lunch so that we would be able to spend the whole day together. Not only the next day, but the rest of my holiday in Brighton except for main meals, to which I was also invited but refused, I spent with the three

sisters in their pleasant company at their home or at outings. When the sister's husband came for the weekend he joined us, and altogether we had a good time. I could not have enjoyed this holiday, no matter what might otherwise have happened, in more pleasant company, in greater comfort, pleasure and fun. As it is said, all good things come to an end, and so it was with my pleasant holiday in Brighton. It too came to an end – much too soon for my liking.

Though I may have shown some partiality to Rose, I did not make this too obvious as I did not want to become involved in a too serious an affair. True, Rose was an attractive young woman and good company; just the same she was not my type. I therefore acted towards Ann, and sometimes even to their married sister, with the same informality and friendliness as towards Rose. Rose was much too attractive for my conservatism. For an adventure and some amorous entertainment, Rose was made to order for one who is away from his home environment, but in London I would be very much embarrassed to walk with her in the street. I had noticed with my walks with Rose on the Brighton promenade everyone, whether man, woman or child and, of course, men in particular, who passed us by turned around to look at her, embarrassing me and making me feel as though I was walking in the company of a freak.

On the day I was to return to London I had breakfast in my hotel, paid my bill, packed my valise and I went off to say good-bye to the girls. I took leave of the married sister, thanked her for her hospitality and the many pleasant days I spent in her home. Rose and Ann accompanied me to the railroad station, they gave me their address and telephone number in London and they asked me to keep in touch with them. I promised to do so, and I meant it too for I felt I did owe them a debt for their share in making my holiday a very pleasant one.

I returned to London and to selling more blouses. I was immersed in the war-time life of this big city, normal in most respects during daylight, but saddened and fearsome during the blackout nights when the German Zeppelins came sailing high above, dropping their destructive and death dealing bombs upon this open city and its civilian population. Many were the nights when the sudden shrieking of the air raid alarm would wake people from their sleep, and they

would come tumbling down into their cellars or lower floors, and those who happened to be on the street would run to the nearest basement, under railroad viaducts or, if near enough, into the London underground stations to escape death. Unprepared and unsuspecting were those who happened to be in the path of the falling bombs. There was the case of a bomb that fell upon members of a wedding party, when many guests were killed and many more injured. Another time when a bomb fell on a railroad station and caused many deaths and much damage.

I myself was once caught away from home and sheltered during one of these air raids. I was walking in the street when the sudden alarm alerted me to danger. The sky filled with searchlights leaping from one cloud to another in search of their prey, forming an 'Arabesque' enough to frighten the bravest of men, and through the darkened streets men and women, some with frightened children, struggled to reach a haven of safety. It was a most scaring and discouraging scene. One felt so helpless and frail; if only one could fight back one would not feel so bad, so much at a disadvantage. At such a time one has to use discretion rather than bravery though many there were who in the face of danger, unable to curb their fighting instinct, stood out in the middle of the street with clenched fist waving and shouting at the cigar shaped monster sailing high above in the sky.

These Zeppelin raids during the First World War were nothing compared to the missiles which came raining down upon this city during the Second World War, causing thousands of deaths and destroying a great part of this city of London.

Rose's parents owned a hall where weddings and other social dances or affairs were held. They were supposed to be doing quite well and their hall had a good reputation. Their home was in the same premises and when I came there for the first time, in a street in the Clapton area of London, I was welcomed by Rose and her parents and made comfortable. We had tea and some refreshment, talked for a while and later Rose and I went into the hall where a social dance was in progress, and we joined in the fun and danced with the rest of the crowd. After spending a pleasant evening, I left promising that I would call again. I must have made about three visits in all to

Clapton when something more serious came up, which took preference over such trifles in time of war.

The war, still raging fiercely on the Eastern and Western fronts with enormous casualties to all belligerents, settled down to trench warfare in the West with neither side gaining much advantage. On the eastern front the war was still in a fluid stage and the Russians, in particular, after their disastrous defeat by Marshall Hindenburg, suffered enormous losses which even they, with their large reserves in manpower, were unable to sustain. They therefore suggested to the British government that they should force all Russian citizens of military age to return to Russia for military duty. This Britain refused to do, much to the joy of Russian citizens in Britain but, having failed in this request, the Russians suggested that a Foreign Legion be formed in Britain of these citizens to fight in the Western zone under Russian generals. The British government hesitated in their reply to this latest suggestion, therefore those of military age of Russian citizenry became very much alarmed. They feared in particular that should they be forced to join such a brigade, and even if they did survive to the end of the war, they might then be forced to return to hated Russia, Therefore they began to scheme for a way to get out of the country, and go to a neutral country where they would escape this kind of disaster. The United States of America became their first choice. But how a foreigner, registered as an alien and unable to leave his police district without police permission, could get out of this island country became a problem hard to solve.

An opportunity, the story of which I may tell elsewhere, presented itself to me, and without hesitation and loss of time I took advantage of it.

On my last visit to Rose I told her about my going to America. She was very much surprised by what I told her, and outwardly seemed to be much disappointed. However, she asked me to do her a favour. An American young man, known somehow to her family, had visited London several years before the war, stayed in their home and became very much interested in her. Though at that time she was but thirteen or fourteen years of age, he insisted that in a few years he would return to London to marry her if she would want him. It was a promise without any strings attached to it

Since the war broke out and he was unable to come to London, he wrote many letters asking her to come to America if at all possible, and that he would marry her on her arrival there. Otherwise he would wait for the end of the war and come to London to marry her and take her back to America. He was much older than her, of course, but that would not stand in their way. What she wanted me to do was to find out about his character, his financial standing and his family connections. I promised to do so if I should ever get to New York, and I meant to keep my promise.

It was in the early days of November, 1916, one misty early morning, that I boarded a ship that was to sail to Montreal, Canada. After scrubbing the decks for several hours, together with several other young men, among whom were several Jewish boys of English birth who evidently were working their way on this ship with the same destination in mind, we went down to the Chief Steward's office, and there each was allocated to his particular duties and locations. Some of the boys were given duty in the Engine Room where they had to shovel coal into the boilers – a very hard and nasty job. Luckily for me, I was asked whether I knew how to wait on tables; my answer had to be in the affirmative for, according to my papers, I had been a waiter on other ships. I was appointed waiter to the Captain's table and I had to wait on ten persons amongst whom, in addition to the Captain, were the Chief Officers, the ship's Doctor and a passenger who was a Canadian doctor returning to Canada on leave.

Our crossing should have taken us ten days but eighteen days passed before we docked in Montreal. We had a very rough crossing. This ship was due to leave three days later with three hundred passengers on board, but for some reason or another it left three days earlier without any passengers and with very little freight, if any. Therefore, the almost empty ship became a victim to the mountainous waves we encountered, and at one time during breakfast she rolled to almost thirty degrees, scattering most of the dishes, forks, knives and spoons off the tables, and frightening the Captain and the rest of us. Some of us, unable to keep our balance, went tumbling over chairs and other obstacles in the dining room. The Captain, after making sure that everything was under control on deck, told us

that had the ship rolled one or two more degrees she would not have been able to steady herself, and she would have turned over and gone down. It was a very perilous voyage, a journey never to be forgotten.

No sooner had we left the Thames estuary [I think Uncle David meant the Mersey estuary, see page 155 - Ed.] that our troubles began. Hardly one day had passed when we were informed by wireless to look out for German submarines, reported to be in that part of the Atlantic. On the next day we had to stop to pick up some French sailors whose ship had been torpedoed, and who perilously clung to a raft which could not have remained afloat much longer with that many sailors aboard. Eighteen of them were hauled aboard our ship, after which the raft was destroyed by gunfire from our ship. Several days later we ourselves were chased by a German submarine and we had to change course. Instead of following a straight course towards the St Lawrence River we sailed close to the sea channel to New York. We then sailed close to the US. coast until we entered the St Lawrence Bay and felt safe from attack. By this time our ship looked more like a ghost ship, because the cold was severe and the cables attached to the ship's masts, and the railings and everything else that was exposed to the weather, were encased in ice inches thick.

My leave taking from the family was most pathetic for it was sudden, and the voyage was known to be very dangerous for more than one reason, and also foolhardy. Many sobs could be heard and many tears were shed by those members of the family who gathered, on the evening before the morning of my departure, in the back room of the shop in Old Nichol Street. In fact I felt more at ease than anyone present, for I had steeled myself to my task with courage and determination, as only a time of peril is able to call forth that dormant strength and endurance.

With this I have come to the end of my story and life in London. Twelve and a half years I spent in my birth place in Russian-Poland, and twelve and a half years in London. It was two months after my twenty-fifth birthday that, for a second time, I was uprooted from the fertile fields of a land, truly an adopted land, into whose rich soil I had deeply sunk my roots, and I was forced to abandon its social set up, its culture, customs and traditions, and wander away to yet another land, one unknown and strange to me.

QUO VADIS? WHITHER GOEST THOU?
Whither goest thou, O man of no destiny,
Steered as thou art throughout your life
Like a rudderless ship upon a stormy ocean?
Wandering aimlessly, over land and sea.

You have become like a stepfather unto your own self, an orphan, lonely and forlorn. You grope and wander among the collective masses of humanity, who for ever toil and struggle to find and identify themselves from out of the morass of perplexities into which they have been mercilessly marooned, and have become estranged from their own being.

People are born, love, marry, suffer and move reluctantly towards death, but in the midst of this unfolding panorama there is a *Life Force* for ever driving you on, but alas over which you have no control and must humbly submit to its directive.

Moving away from one's birth place, seeking and looking for fame and fortune in strange lands and environments, habitats to which one is not acclimated, may have the earmarks of adventure but it is also a distortion of the pattern into which, by birth and tradition, Nature has moulded a way of living. Better it would be if one stayed home in his birth place, the cradle of his childhood and adolescence. There, where he first learned the principles of life and existence, learned of its hardships and pleasures, sadness and joys. Travel for exploration, sightseeing and pleasure? Yes, by all means, but make sure you return to rest your weary body in comfort and peace, at home.

I have up to now recounted two important chapters of my life, the preparatory years for my life yet to come. As to whether I will ever have the inclination, will power and patience to further relate my story during the ensuing years of my life, I cannot at this moment say. I am already advanced in years; I am tired, and my memory does not any more serve as well as it used to.

My world is nearing to its end, and my life will soon be over. My personal story no doubt parallels the story of the lives of most of mankind. It is only in its minor essentials that it differs from others,

if at all. I am of no particular individuality, but just a segment of the whole. Any departure on my part from the general mass behaviour is due to an evaluation and rebellion on my part against the strict and rigid and narrow demand of tradition to adhere to the ideals, rules and regulations of the sages of the past. They no doubt were wise men, and we are indebted to them for much of what we think to be our own. Whatever errors they may have made we must not consider such errors to be their wilful extravagances or the ravings of insanity, but simply hypotheses, justifiable as such at the time they were propounded, but which a fuller experience has proved to be inadequate.

I am not a follower or even a fellow-traveller of any 'ism' or dogma; none of them seems to have withstood the test of time. I prefer to follow what my simple mind considers to be most reasonable and probable, and I conform my conduct thereto. Not theory nor rationalism will ever solve the hidden secrets and problems of life. Science has unveiled many of the physical wonders of the universe, and will undoubtedly reveal many more, but for ever will there remain the question, *What is life, and what part does man play in it, and where does it lead?*

So now I will take leave from any and all who may find some interest in what I have had to say, and what I have written in these pages. As a writer my abilities are most limited, and I should not be judged or criticised for the many errors I may have made, and for the poor description I have given of many of those who are dear to me. My intention was merely to leave behind me a story which, though I seem to play the leading role, is the story of many others in my family that I desired to reflect. It is they who were the main characters about whom I wanted to leave a lasting memory for generations to come.

David Sheinbaum,
New York, 1966.

Appendix

Introduction

We have included this Appendix in order to supplement David's own manuscripts with background information:

1. A note on David's life in the USA after 1916 written by his daughter Mildred.

2. An article describing briefly the history of the Jews in London from 1066 to today.

3. A chart showing a line back to Judah Mintz in the 15th century with notes about some of the notables on the chart.

4. Individual charts that show the descendants of Hirsch and Schprintze Sheinbaum to date.

1

David in the USA

In 1916, David arrived by ship in Canada. He apparently had used some sailor's papers to board the ship. When it reached Canada, he jumped ship, and stayed with some friends until he was able to travel over the border into the United States. David often told the story of traveling to a border station late one cold and snowy night, and passing across the border unimpeded. Except for three visits overseas to London, he spent the rest of his life in New York City.

He was introduced to the Sharon family by Molly who worked with him in a factory that made hats. He said that he enjoyed the lively and colorful conversations that went on in their home, and also he enjoyed playing cards, and chess with the four brothers in the family. In March 1921 he married Frieda, one of the older sisters, at the home of Rose Chernevitzky, the oldest Sharon daughter. As David often lamented, he had very little formal education, and so made his way mainly as a salesman. He sold jewelry and insurance. He had an office where he sold antique silver and in his late years he worked for his good friend Isaac Cohen in the Fifth Avenue Card Shop, at the cash register.

Although his working career was rather bland, he led a rich and full life. He had a great deal to offer as a friend, father, and grandfather. He was always up to date with the politics of the day. He spent much time with his father-in-law Michael Sharon in the study of Talmud. He kept up with the latest scientific developments, and was well read in philosophy, both ancient and recent. He enjoyed classical music, and his home was always a gathering place for people to hear his collection of recordings.

David got along with everybody, but he especially cherished his relationships with the younger generation. Whenever he returned from a trip to London, his enthusiasm was centered about the nieces and nephews. In his last years while living near the shore at Rockaway Beach he was known as the 'Bard of the Boardwalk'. He recited many of his poems to the groups of youngsters gathered, as he also helped them through some difficult chess moves. Those of his grandchildren who had the privilege of knowing David remember him as a loving and inspiring human being.

Mildred Schoenbrun
1996

2

Jews in London

The first Jewish settlers in England came from France at the time of the Norman Conquest in 1066. They settled mainly in the eastern part of the City of London in an area still known as Old Jewry. Small communities were established in other parts of England. In spite of periodic anti-Jewish activity the communities increased but, in 1290, when they numbered a few thousand, they were expelled and made their way to France and Germany. Some poor Jews still came to London on the promise of payment for converting to Christianity. In the 15th century some Jewish refugees from Spain and Portugal arrived and, mostly illicitly, continued to practise their religion. In 1656 a petition was presented to Cromwell asking for protection but it was only some years later, after the restoration of the monarchy, that a formal promise of protection was given by Charles the Second.

The Jewish community grew in wealth and importance. Its numbers were increased by immigration of Sephardi Jews from Amsterdam, Spain and Portugal and, in 1701, they built the Bevis Marks Synagogue on the eastern edge of the City. This building, one of the City's architectural monuments, is still used as a Sephardi synagogue. Later, Ashkenasi Jews, originating from Germany and East Europe, arrived and formed their own congregation. Their main synagogue was Duke's Place, also on the eastern edge of the City. By early 19th century the Ashkenasi community was by far the larger.

There was some co-operation between the Sephardi and the Ashkenasi congregations but, in the main, they developed separately, particularly in social life. Intermarriage between them was rare and the divisions continued right up until after World War Two.

During the 19th century the emancipation of the Jews continued and by the end of that century very few trades or institutions retained formal barriers to Jews and immigration was unrestricted. The mass emigration of Ashkenasi Jews from Russia/Poland/Lithuania etc started towards the latter part of the 19th century, and over a period of 25 years the Jewish population of London rose from about 47,000 to about 150,000, of whom about 100,000 settled in the 'East End'. This comprised areas just to the east of the City, such as Aldgate, Whitechapel, Spitalfields, Shoreditch and Mile End. These areas are now in the Borough of Tower Hamlets. The immigrants were brought by ship to docks to the east of the Tower of London, a short distance from the area in which they settled.

Most of these Jewish immigrants were engaged in the tailoring, shoemaking and cabinet-making industries. They were poorly paid and lived, by today's standards, in terrible conditions. Fresh charities were created to assist them. Among themselves the common language was Yiddish, and Yiddish newspapers were published. An active trade union movement developed and, in 1889, a six week strike by 10,000 Jewish tailors in London attracted great attention and reduced their exploitation.

The extensive immigration aroused opposition among the general population, and also among some established Jews who feared that their own secure position would be prejudiced. In 1905 the Aliens Act to a large extent limited further immigration.

Between the two World Wars the more prosperous Jews moved away to the newer and more salubrious suburbs of Hackney and Stamford Hill thus diminishing the Jewish population of the East End. In 1936, however, when the anti-Semitic fascist 'Blackshirts' under Sir Oswald Moseley attempted to march through the East End, Jews from other parts of London and elsewhere in England, together with many non-Jews from all over the country, rallied with the remaining Jews and other inhabitants of the East End and, in the famous Battle of Cable Street, physically stopped the march.

The persecution of the Jews in Germany, which started in the early 1930s, brought about an influx of refugees from Germany, Austria and other European countries. Many of them were highly qualified in science, commerce, medicine, theatre and art etc. This

had a stimulating effect on life in London and England generally. For example, they brought with them cafe life and 'delicatessen' and played a great part in the development of clothing manufacture and distribution and in the retail trades generally. Their arrival also encouraged the growth of the more 'progressive' synagogues such as Reform, Liberal and, more recently, Masorti.

During World War Two the docklands of East London were a prime target for German bombers which inflicted great destruction of life and property. This led to movement of the population, including Jews, to less vulnerable areas further west. After the war the economic and social position of London Jews improved markedly and more and more Jews moved from the East End to pleasanter areas such as Wembley and Edgware in the north-west, Finchley and Palmers Green in the north, and Ilford further out in the east. Somewhat nearer the centre was the 'gilded ghetto' of Golders Green. Uncle David used to visit Golders Hill Park with Eva on his Wednesday afternoons off. The Jewish population of the East End, which was about 125,000 at the beginning of the 20th century, fell to about 85,000 in 1929, and to about 30,000 by 1970. By then the Jewish population of Greater London was some 280,000. As transport systems and car ownership increased many Jews moved further afield to outlying suburbs and the home counties.

At the beginning of the twentieth century the Jews of the East End were a close community. Families tended to live within walking distance of each other and their synagogues. Now they are spread out widely in all directions. This has had a considerable effect on the organisational aspects of the Jewish community, from both the religious and secular aspects. Many religious, educational and social institutions which used to have their headquarters in the East End have become decentralised. At the beginning of the century the great majority of the East End Jews belonged to 'Orthodox' synagogues which were in close proximity to each other but, with the rise of Reform and Liberal Progressive movements the number, variety and spread of synagogues has grown.

A marked feature of Jewish life in London, and in the East End in particular, was the large number of welfare organisations catering for the sick and needy. Charity is a feature of Jewish life.

Jews have always had, and still have, an affinity for the theatre. In the early part of this century the Yiddish Theatre played a big part in Jewish social life. Until sometime after World War One, Yiddish would have been the language spoken at home and among their families and friends.

Between the wars East End Jews began to enter politics, almost entirely left wing. During the Spanish civil war in the 1930s, a number of young East End Jews went to Spain to join the Spanish Republican Government in their vain fight against the Spanish fascists who were supported by Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. The Jews who entered politics a decade or two after World War Two were, for the most part, Conservative.

As Jews merged more and more into the life of the majority population, the purely Jewish aspects of their cultural and social life diminished. The foundation of the State of Israel in 1948, and its subsequent fights for survival, revitalised Jewish awareness of their history and culture. It also helped to counterbalance the horror felt by Jews at the almost total destruction of Jewish life on the mainland of Europe brought about by the Nazis.

In the 19th century Jewish immigrants settled in areas in the East End that had been vacated by earlier Protestant Huguenot refugees who had escaped persecution in France. In the same way, as London Jews moved around London, generally in an anticlockwise direction, later groups of immigrants, such as Bangladeshi, Indian, Pakistani, and Afro-Caribbean, moved in to take their place. Today, in the original settlement areas of the East End, there remain almost no Jewish population or institutions. Wartime bombing, subsequent rebuilding, and the modern development caused by the expansion of the City eastwards, have all but obliterated the original structures.

If a Jew from early in this century visit the East End today there would be little familiar to him except the names of the streets...

C.S..

3

Family Origin

The chart showing a line back to Judah Mintz in the 15th century, first appeared in 1960 in my book *The Book of the Family*, published privately and circulated among our family. The chart was compiled from our *Yichus Brief* (a document setting out our family genealogy), from the *Book of the Children of Moses* produced in 1928 by Mordechai Rabbinowitz of Tel-Aviv and supplemented by information extracted from the Encyclopaedia Judaica. The Yichus Brief and the relevant part of Mordecai Rabbinowitz's book were written in Hebrew and translated by Rabbi J. Heshel of Edgware, Middlesex. The lettering on the original chart was drawn by the Scrivener of the College of Arms, London. The information was faithfully extracted from these documents but, of course, it is not possible to verify independently the complete accuracy of the original sources.

Readers may be interested in the following notes about some of the names that appear on the chart.

Rabbi Judah Mintz was a member of a family of scholars and bankers who derived their names from the town of Mainz in Germany, where he was probably born. He, presumably, left Mainz in 1492 when the Jews were expelled, and he settled in Padua, Italy, where he became Rabbi and Head of the Yeshiva. His library and most of his manuscripts were destroyed in 1506 when the Germans sacked Padua, but some of his responsa were subsequently discovered and published in 1553 by his grand-daughter's husband, Meir Katzenellenbogen.

Meir Katzenellenbogen was born in the town of Katzenelnbogen in Germany, where the river Rhine is shaped like a cat's elbow. The

family spread throughout Eastern and Central Europe and their fame was such that many men who married into the family adopted the wife's name. Meir became Head of the Padua Yeshiva, and his son, Samuel Judah became Head of the Venice Yeshiva.

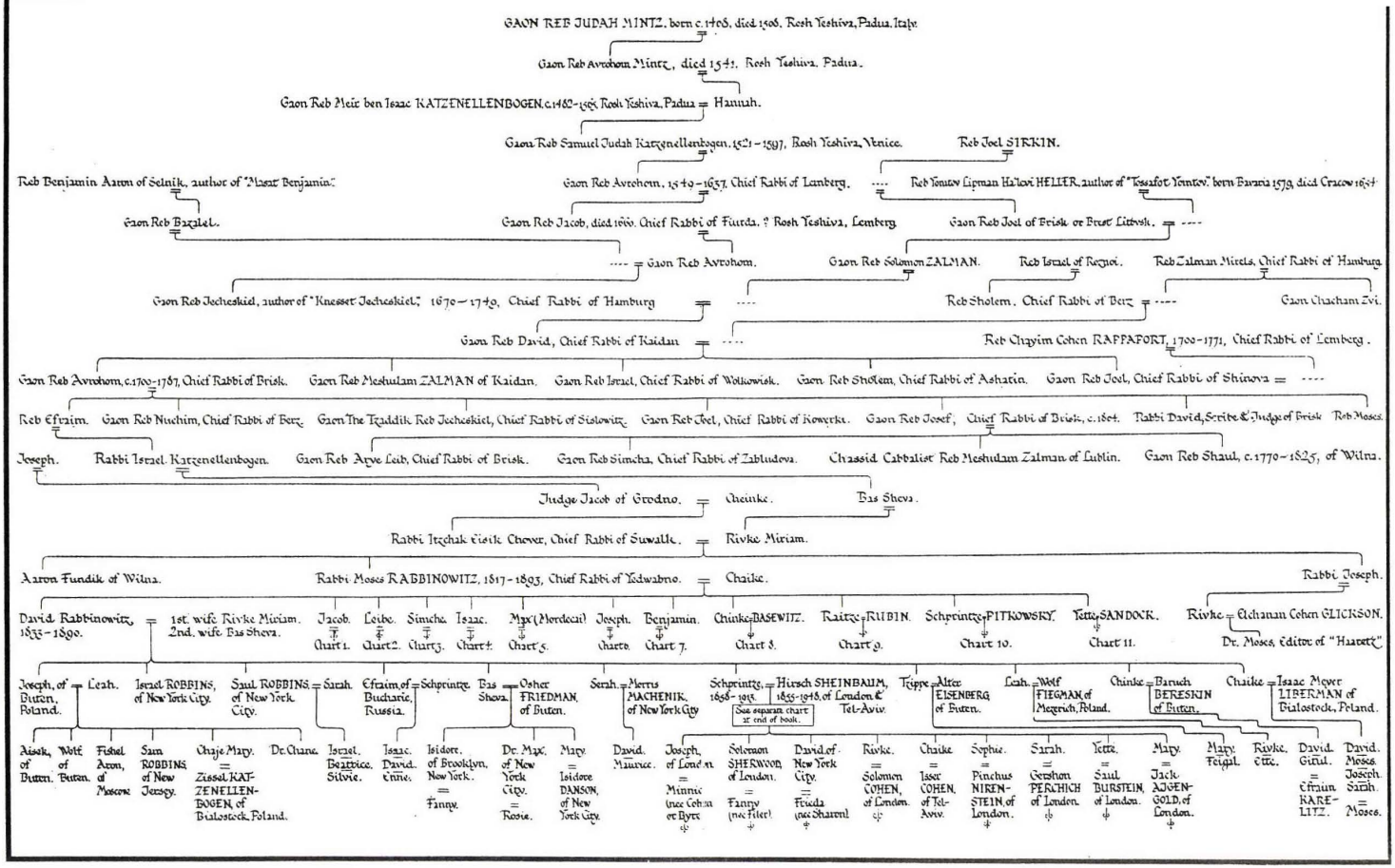
Samuel Judah Katzenellenbogen had a son, the legendary Saul, later to be known as Saul Wahl or Saul Judycz. One of the legends is that this remarkable Saul at was one time King of Poland! It appears that Samuel Judah performed at Padua a great service for Prince Nicholas Radziwill of Poland at a time when the Prince was in need of help. In return the Prince took Samuel Judah's son Saul, then a student in Poland, under his protection and gave him every opportunity to study. Saul became extremely wise and learned and his fame spread throughout Poland. When King Bathori died in 1586 Poland was divided into two factions who could not agree upon a successor. There was a law that stipulated that the throne must not remain unoccupied for any length of time, and if the electors could not agree upon a successor then an outsider had to be appointed 'rex pro tempore' (temporary king). The honour was offered to Prince Radziwill but he refused and suggested that Saul, as an independent person far superior in wisdom and goodness, should be appointed. As a result Saul was elected to this high office and occupied the throne of Poland for perhaps a few days. He is said to have passed some wise laws, some of which eased the conditions of the Jews in Poland. The name Wahl is from the German 'erwählen' - to elect.

Reb Yomtov Lipman Ha'levi Heller was born in Bavaria in 1579. Besides his great knowledge of Talmud, Kabballah and other Jewish subjects, he studied mathematics, astronomy and natural sciences. He was a prolific writer, the most famous of his works being, 'Tosafot Yomtov', a commentary on the Mishna. Some of his writings led to false accusations against him and in 1629 he was arrested and sentenced to death. The sentence was later commuted and he appointed the day of his arrest, the fifth day of Tammuz, as a fast day.

Rabbi Itzchak Eisik Chover (1789 - 1853) is referred to in the Encyclopaedia Judaica under his alternative name of Wildman or Chaver. He was rabbi in various communities, including Suwalk. He was a prolific writer and is well known for his publication 'Magen ve-Zinnah' which was a defence of the Kaballah against its attackers.

His son, Rabbi Moses Rabbinowitz, Chief Rabbi of Yedwabno, is acknowledged as the Father of the Rabbinowitz part of our family. He wrote many manuscripts that were later printed. He had twelve children and it is to be noted that, of his many descendants who emigrated from Poland, the great majority settled in the Americas, mostly in the USA but also in Canada and Argentina. In effect, it is only the descendants of Schprinze Rabbinowitz and her husband Hirsch Sheinbaum who settled in England, an exception, of course, being David Sheinbaum who emigrated to the USA in 1916.

C.S.


GAON REB JUDAH MINTZ, born c.1408, died 1508, Rosh Yeshiva, Padua, Italy.
Gaon Reb Avrohom Mintz, died 1541, Rosh Yeshiva, Padua.
Gaon Reb Meir ben Isaac KATZENELLENBOGEN, c.1482–1565, Rosh Yeshiva, Padua = Hannah.
Gaon Reb Samuel Judah Katzenellenbogen, 1521–1597, Rosh Yeshiva, Venice.
Reb Joel SIRKIN.
Reb Benjamin Aaron of Selnik, author of "Mazat Benjamin."
Gaon Reb Avrohom, 1549–1637, Chief Rabbi of Lemberg.
Reb Yomtov Lipman Ha'Levi HELLER, author of "Tosafot Yomtov," born Bavaria 1579, died Cracow 1654
Gaon Reb Bezalel.
Gaon Reb Jacob, died 1660, Chief Rabbi of Furda, ? Rosh Yeshiva, Lemberg.
Gaon Reb Joel of Brisk or Brest Litovsk. = ----
---- = Gaon Reb Avrohom.
Gaon Reb Solomon ZALMAN.
Reb Israel of Regnoi.
Reb Zalman Mirels, Chief Rabbi of Hamburg.
Gaon Reb Jecheskid, author of "Knesset Jecheskiel," 1670–1749, Chief Rabbi of Hamburg = ----
Reb Sholem, Chief Rabbi of Berz = ----
Gaon Chacham Zvi.
Gaon Reb David, Chief Rabbi of Kaidan = ----
Reb Chayim Cohen RAPPAPORT, 1700–1771, Chief Rabbi of Lemberg.
Gaon Reb Avrohom, c.1700–1787, Chief Rabbi of Brisk.
Gaon Reb Meshulam ZALMAN of Kaidan.
Gaon Reb Israel, Chief Rabbi of Wolkowisk.
Gaon Reb Sholem, Chief Rabbi of Ashatin.
Gaon Reb Joel, Chief Rabbi of Shinova = ----
Reb Efraim.
Gaon Reb Nuchim, Chief Rabbi of Berz.
Gaon The Tzaddik Reb Jecheskiel, Chief Rabbi of Sislowitz.
Gaon Reb Joel, Chief Rabbi of Kowerki.
Gaon Reb Josef, Chief Rabbi of Brisk, c.1864.
Rabbi David, Scribe & Judge of Brisk.
Reb Moses.
Joseph.
Rabbi Israel Katzenellenbogen.
Gaon Reb Arye Leib, Chief Rabbi of Brisk.
Gaon Reb Simcha, Chief Rabbi of Zabludova.
Chassid Cabbalist Reb Meshulam Zalman of Lublin.
Gaon Reb Shaul, c.1770–1825, of Wilna.
Judge Jacob of Grodno. = Cheinke.
Bas Sheva.
Rabbi Itzchak Eisik Chewer, Chief Rabbi of Suwalk. = Rivke Miriam.
Aaron Fundik of Wilna.
Rabbi Moses RABBINOWITZ, 1817–1893, Chief Rabbi of Yedwabno. = Chaike.
Rabbi Joseph.
David Rabbinowitz, 1835–1890. = 1st. wife Rivke Miriam. 2nd. wife Bas Sheva.
Jacob. Chart 1.
Leibe. Chart 2.
Simcha. Chart 3.
Isaac. Chart 4.
Myr (Mordecai) Chart 5.
Joseph. Chart 6.
Benjamin. Chart 7.
Chinke BASEWITZ. Chart 8.
Raitze RUBIN. Chart 9.
Schprintze PITKOWSKY. Chart 10.
Tette SANDOCK. Chart 11.
Rivke = Elchanan Cohen GLICKSON.
Dr. Moses, Editor of "Hazefe"
Joseph, of Buten, Poland. = Leah.
Israel ROBBINS, of New York City.
Saul ROBBINS, of New York City.
Sarah.
Efraim, of Bucharie, Russia. = Schprintze.
Bas Sheva. = Osher FRIEDMAN, of Buten.
Serah. = Merrus MACHENIK, of New York City
Schprintze, 1858–1913. = Hirsch SHEINBAUM, 1855–1918, of London & Tel-Aviv.
See separate chart at end of book.
Teipe. = Alter EISENBERG of Buten.
Leah. = Wolf FIEGMAN, of Megrish, Poland.
Chinke. = Baruch BERESKIN of Buten.
Chaike. = Isaac Meyer LIBERMAN of Bialostock, Poland.
Aisek, of Buten.
Wolf of Buten.
Fiskel Aron, of Moscow
Sam ROBBINS, of New Jersey.
Chaje Mary. = Zissel KATZENELLENBOGEN, of Bialostock, Poland.
Dr. Chane.
Israel, Beattrice, Silvie.
Isaac. David. Annie.
Isidore, of Brooklyn, New York. = Fanny.
Dr. Max, of New York City. = Rosie.
Mary = Isidore DANSON, of New York City.
David. Maurice.
Joseph, of London = Minnie (nee Cohen or Byre)
Solomon SHERWOOD, of London. = Fanny (nee Filer)
David, of New York City. = Frieda (nee Sharon)
Rivke. = Solomon COHEN, of London.
Chaike = Isser COHEN, of Tel-Aviv.
Sophie. = Pinchus NIKENSTEIN, of London.
Sarah. = Gershon PERCHICH of London.
Yette. = Saul BURSTEIN, of London.
Mary. = Jack ADGENGOLD, of London.
Mary. Feigal.
Rivke. Ette.
David. Gitul. = Efraim KARELITZ.
David. Moses. Joseph. Sarah. = Moses.

4

Family Charts

Rabbi Moses Rabbinowitz (Father of the Family)
1. Joseph Sheinbaum
2. Rivke Sheinbaum
3. Chaike Sheinbaum and Hetty Sheinbaum
4. Solomon Shinebaum (Sherwood)
5. Sarah Sheinbaum
6. Sophie Sheinbaum
7. David Sheinbaum
8. Mary Sheinbaum

Rabbi Moses Rabbinowitz Chief Rabbi of Yedwabno = Chaike



1817-1893

David Rabbinowitz = 1st wife Rivke Miriam

1833-1890



2nd wife Bas Sheva

Hirsch SHEINBAUM = Schprintze

1855-1948





1858-1913

Joseph(Yossel) *Rivka* *Chaike* *Solomon(Solly)* *Sarah* *Sophie* *David* *Yetta(Hetty)* *Mary*



















CHARTS *1* *2* *3* *4* *5* *6* *7* *3* *8*



Descendants of Joseph Sheinbaum



CHART 1

1 **Joseph SHEINBAUM = Minnie Cohen**
b. 1876 Bereze, d. 1963 London — b. 1882 Poland, d. 1957 London

2
- David — b. 1911, d. 1991
- Isidore = Bella (Perchick) — b. 1912, d. 1994 — b. 1912, d. 1994
- Mossy = Tilly
- Hetty = Mark SILVERMAN — b. 1909, d. 1988
- Priscilla (Shulamit) = Avram GLASS — b. 1915, d. 1990 — d. 1973

3
- Gillian = Bernard LEE — b. 1945, d. 1983
- Anthony = Ruth(Weinberg)
- Gita = Tommy FREUD
- Zvi = Sara Friedman
- Sara = David REICH — b. 1953, d. 1985

4
- Joel = Cindy(Lloyd)
- Andrew
- Karen
- Michal
- Avram
- Rivka
- Shulamit
- Miri
- Yehudit
- Yocheved
- Orti
- Jeremy = Mylene Philips
- Paul = Stephanie (Tibber)
- Miri = Jonathan KANDEL

5
- Zachary
- Saskia



Descendants of Rivka Sheinbaum



CHART 2

1

Rivka Sheinbaum = Solomon COHEN
b. 1878 Bereze, d. 1938 London
b. 1880 Poland, d. 1930 London

2

- Hetty = Israel DRUCE (b. 1902, d. 1972)
- Lily = Benjamin TAITE (b. 1906, d. 1980)
- Millie = Mark LEBRETT (b. 1910, d. 1967; b. 1911, d. 1984)
- David = Nora(Matthews)
- Priscilla(Pat) (b. 1915, d. 1992)
- Bella = Mark LEBRETT (b. 1918, d. 1992) (2nd Marriage)

3

- Stanley = Audrey (Saper)
- Sydney = Rayna(Newman)
- Ruth = Colin KLOOT
- Stuart = Judith(Barak)
- Barbara = David WINTER
- Susan
- Jonathan

4

- David = Roberta(Gilbert)
- Rosalind = Ian SHANE
- Sharon
- Alan
- Nicola
- Simon
- Karen
- Rosalind = Michael WIEDER
- Deborah = Anthony HARRIS
- Malcolm

5

- Sara
- Elliot
- Rina
- Benjy
- Michael = Sheiny(Shapiro)
- Shoshana
- Ashi
- Jeremy = Libby(Rubin)
- Malki
- Deena
- Gerald= Debbie(Myers)
- Mikey
- Menachem
- Shimi
- Moishi
- Malka
- Doniel
- Malka
- Eli
- Chavi
- Yossi

CHART 3



Descendants of Yetta Sheinbaum



Yetta(Hetty) Sheinbaum = Solomon BURSTEIN

b. 1895 Swalbitch — b.1887, d. 1970 London

- Ivan Maurice
- David = Simone Bensaid
- Sheila Lillian = Henry HALL
  - Michael Barry = Ruth(Wernick)
  - Robert



Descendants of Chaike Sheinbaum



Chaike Sheinbaum = Isser COHEN

b.1882 Swalbitch, d. Israel — b. Israel, d. Israel

- Malka, d.7 years old



Descendants of Solomon SHERWOOD (Sheinbaum)



CHART 4

1

Solomon SHERWOOD = **Fanny Filer**

b. 1884 Swalbitch
d. 1974 London

b. 1886 Poland
d. 1963 London

2

Lily = Morris SHANSON
b.1907
d.1992

David Moss
b.1911
d.1982

Ian = Muriel (Silver)
b.1914
d.1977

Joss = Kitty(Katanka)

Archie = Lily(Benaroya)
b.1919
d.1993
Div.1981

Cyril = (1) Hedda(Berkhoff)
Div.1981
(2) Penelope (Sinclair)

Renee = Sol ROGOL

3

Avril = John FOX

Rodney

Rupert = Melanie (Smith)

Jane = Paul ELLIOT

Alice

Nadine

Alexa

Tanya

Maureen = JohnTAYLOR

Ondine = Stephen KRISS

Janet = Max DIXON
b.1950
d.1991

Peter = Shirley (Marsh)

4

Richard = Susanna(Davis)

Kevin

James

Katharine

Aaron

Rachel

Jessica

Samuel

Benjamin

Ilana

5

Joshua

Emma

CHART 5

Descendants of Sarah Sheinbaum





Sarah Sheinbaum b. 1888 Swalbitch d. 1991 London

=Gershon PERCHICK b. Poland d. London

1

2

- Philip = Hetty(Goldstein) — b. 1912 d. 1994
- Rebecca (Becky) — b. d.
- Bella = Isidore SHERWOOD — See Chart 1
- Priscilla (Prissy) — b. d.
- Hetty = Paul GILBERT — b. 1911 d. 1986

3

- Graham = Anita(Felton)
- Sandra = Arnold PRAIS
- Dr. Geoffry = Judy(Goldstein)
- Martin = Maralyn(Cornel))

4

- Gaby
- Edward
- Simon = Sybil(Silas)
- Jonathan = Sari(Gotleib)
- Daniel = Hilary(Davis)
- Michael = Amanda(Fisher)
- Paul
- Victoria
- Talia

5

- Ariella
- Shimi
- Binyamin
- Adam
- Daliah = Bension LEVEY
- Arieh
- Ilana
- Sarah
- Benjamin(Benjy)
- Avrom = Karon Levy

CHART 6



Descendants of Sophie Sheinbaum



Sophie Sheinbaum = **Pinkus NIRENSTEIN**
b. 1889 Swalbitch — d. 1973 London
b. 1889 Riga — d. 1940 London

1

2

- Phylis = Max HILLEL (b. 1912, d. 1987)
  - Peter = Vavi(Levine)
    - Nicky
    - Emma
  - Steven = Judy(Lund)
- Frieda (b. 1918, d. 1940)
- Phillip (b. 1920, d. 1940)
- David = Ann(Taylor) (b. 1923, d. 1980)
  - Adele = Ramon NISSAN
    - David
    - Daniel
    - Jonathan
    - Joshua
  - Susan = Tony CAPLAN
    - Louisa
    - Gemma
    - Rachel
- Lily = Martin MITCHELL
  - Laurence = Shelley (Sollinger)
    - Jed
    - Scott
    - Abigail
  - Frankie = Graham HALE
    - Jevan
    - Nathan
  - Sharon = Paul Hatchman

3

4

CHART 7



Descendants of David Sheinbaum



David SHEINBAUM = Frieda (Sharon)

b. 1891 Swalbitch
d. 1975 New York

b. 1890 Russia
d. 1990 Florida

1

2

Shirley = Harry ROTHMAN

Mildred = Dr. Gerald Victor SCHOENBRUN
b. 1923
d. 1991

3

Rochelle(Mindy) = Bill MOORE
Div. 1994

Alicia= Jim SLUSARZ

Beth(Riva) = Robert MARION

Mitchell Alden = Elva(Granat)

Lewis Andrew

Harry Manuel

4

Isadora Kate

Davida Meryl

Jonah Seth

CHART 8



Descendants of Mary Sheinbaum



Mary Sheinbaum = **Jack AJGENGOLD**

b. 1895 Swalbitch — d. 1991 London

b. 1897 Warsaw — d. 1993 London

1

2

Audrey(1) = Louis AGAR = (2)Lilian(Gillard)

Div.1962 — b. 1928 d. 1984

Rene = Moshe KAPLAN

Rhoda = Ivor PERL

Marion = Dr. David RYDE

3

Yehudit = Zev FRIEDMAN

Shlomo = Deanna(Davidou)

Ronan

David

Susan = Ronnie NACHMAN

Rosalind = Barry RAJUAN

Michelle = Richard WALKER

David = Ruth(Burley)

Judith = Simon BRATT

Danielle = Richard PAYNE

Suzanne = Ian BURGESS

Simon = Alison(Morris)

Karen

Lisa

4

Louis

Jonathan

Adam

Ben

Yael

Michal

Natanel

Lewis

Lee

Nicole

Lewis

Hannah

Isobel

Daniel

Emma

Jessica

Benjamin

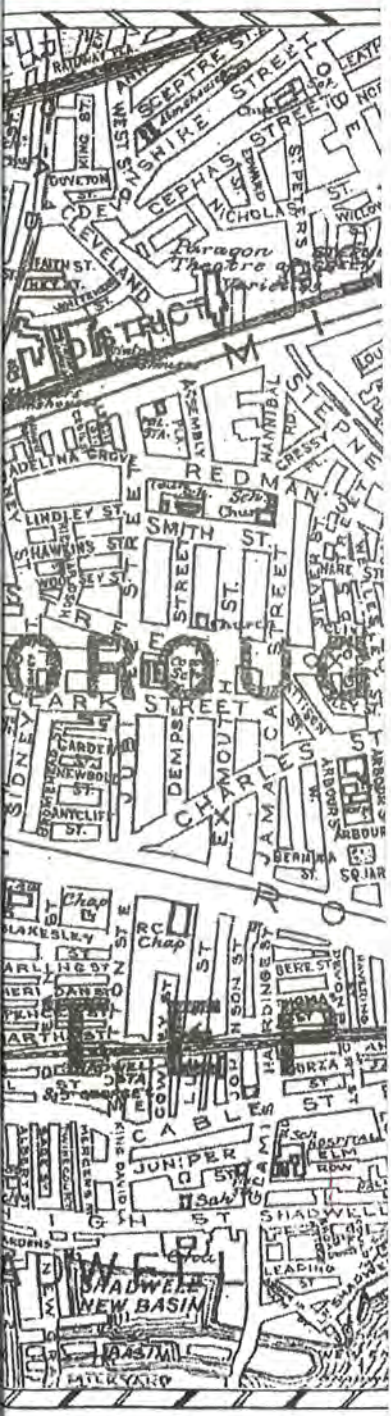


Where the family lived, prayed and worked

By 1888 (see Fishman *East End 1888*) the Jewish settlement in the East End was solidly established in Spitalfields. The earlier immigrants had settled in the west or City side of Commercial Street, in areas around Petticoat Lane and Goulston Street (just visible on the left edge of this old 1908 map). In his *Life and Labour of the People of London*, 1892, Booth describes how the Jewish immigrants had flowed across the divide of Commercial Street (7) into Hanbury Street (10), Fashion Street (9), Pelham Street (slightly to the north) Booth Street (1), Old Montague Street (12), 'and many streets and lanes and alleys have fallen before them; they fill whole blocks of model dwellings; they have introduced new trades as well as new habits and they live and crowd together and work and meet their fate independent of the great stream of London life surging around them.'

Key

1 Brick Lane, ch.10,
(Shevzik's, ill. 28,Truman's Brewery)
2 Pedley Street ch.11
(Parents grocery shop at no.33)
3 Church Lane, ch.12
(Joseph's grocery shop)
4 Old Montague Street, ch.13
(Rivke's, later Sarah's grocery shop)
5 Old Nichol Street, ch.14, 17
(Rivke's grocery shop)
6 Alie Street, ch.15
(Solly's butcher's shop)
7 Thrawl Street, ch.16
(Chaike's, Sophie's grocery shops)
8 Wentworth Street
(Shapiro Vallentine bookshop, ill.19)
9 Old Pavilion Theatre, ill.18
10 Flower and Dean Street
(Lodging House, ill.27)
11 Fournier Street
(Machzike Hadas, ill.23)
12 Tower of London
13 London Hospital



DAVID SHEINBAUM WAS BORN IN Poland in 1891, emigrated to England at the age of 13 in 1904, lived in the East End of London for 12 years and, in 1916, left for New York where he lived until his death in 1975.

In Poland he had an intensive education in the orthodox Jewish religion. By contrast, his formal education in England lasted only fifteen months before he began working in the family grocery shops. Driven by a desire to gather knowledge he acquired a remarkable fluency in the English language.

In England and the USA he studied a wide range of secular subjects and developed his generous philosophy of life that is so warmly reflected in this chronicle of a generation of immigrants.

The Author

