

EPISODES FROM MY LIFE

by
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About the Translation

In translating this segment of Golde's first draft of Episodes, I too submit a first draft. If, therefore, certain passages are awkwardly phrased, it is the translation rather than the original which is at fault. Editing is minimal. Credit for the many typos must be assigned to me.

I've tried to be accurate as well as faithful to Golde's style and the subtleties of her word usage. I've succeeded or failed to the extent that the dignity and literate quality of the Yiddish original is visible in the English transcription.

One comment on the content: the golden glow one may perceive in Golde's accounts of her early childhood should not be taken as the expression of simple nostalgia. More than forty years ago I received impressive, and unsolicited, verification of the quality of the events and personalities she has set down from a person who knew Golde and her family in the old country.


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EPISODES FROM MY LIFE

I remember how my grandfather would speak of his father and mother who were of the old patricians of the shtetl, Lechowich. My mother also spoke often of her grandmother and grandfather. Charming anecdotes. From both I heard of how beautifully the old couple had conducted their life. Although they were not rich, and worked very hard, they hired the best tutors for their children. My great-grandfather would be on the road all week, and come home for the Sabbath with but meagre earnings, but always, his first act on arrival would be to pay the tutors. It is to be expected that such a home would raise children--my grandfather and his brothers--who would in time become kindly and loving men; who would recall their parents with affection; and who would themselves win the affection and respect of all who knew them.

My mother's other grandfather (her mother's father) I remember still. One doesn't forget Shimon Gershon from the shtetele Mush. He was famed and loved among all the Slonim chassidim. As Shimon Gershon the Shochet he was reknowned in all the towns of the region for his considerable virtues, his wisdom and his good heart. Not for his riches was he reknowned, but for his spiritual wealth.

How great a love and respect was tendered him by his children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren! The author of several books, he lived hale and wise, into deep, advanced age. At those times when I meet someone from the old hometown I need only mention that I come out of Shimon Gershon's family, and the talk and stories flow. The brilliance of the image he impressed on our memories defies fading.

I was named after Shimon Gershon's wife, Golde. I still remember being told, often, that it was an honor to carry her name.

I also remember my father's mother, whom I saw but seldom, but who left me with a very loving memory of her. With great respect, my mother would speak of my father's family as being learned and thinkers--like the Weitzmans to whom they were related. My father's family lived unassuming lives. Not wealthy, they were not concerned with riches, but with personal honor and righteousness. Their first concern in conducting their lives was not to hurt--not to encroach on--anyone. Learning and knowledge was the focus of their lives. My mother was happy to become one of them.

Even in childhood my father was known for his talent for learning. When he was barely ^{none} years old, and an orphan (he had lost his father earlier) a prominent wealthy Jew, one of the Phinuses, gathered all the boys in Father's cheder and asked them who was the best pupil. Everyone pointed at Father. The wealthy man supported several yeshivas, and he placed my father in one of them. He also took Father into his house and brought him up like his own son, until his marriage to my mother, an event which Phinus and his wife attended.

My parents would often recall and relate the story of the wedding, which resides in my memory like a shining legend: the excitement in the town raised by the festivities organized by my grandfather, Labe; and his great joy in marrying off his first daughter in his good years.

In the last days before I left for America my father spent more time with me than had been his custom, entertaining both of us with tales of his happiness and good fortune in his youth. Normally Father was taciturn. Never spoke unnecessarily because he regarded time as precious. When he had time he believed it better, more worthwhile, to spend it in his books.

My mother had died some years before. As time went by I believe he longed ever more for my mother, with whom he had been able to converse about anything and everything. She understood him, and studied with him. As I grew older I began to resemble, in appearance and mannerisms, my mother. Unknowingly, my father made me feel this. All this may explain why he spoke to me more freely at that time than was his wont.

I remember his tales of his wedding: how Grandfather had enlivened the festivities with his presence, the beautiful and joyous sight of Grandfather wearing a large, rich leather purse filled with money, which he gave to every extended hand--all with song and merriment which all who witnessed would never forget. For me it was wonderful to see my father in such good spirits.

In this mood, and with a broad smile, he told me one day about an experience of his when his benefactors were seeking a bride for him--a practice peculiar to that time. My father was not as young then as most yeshiva bochers. To be twenty years old and unmarried was unusual. He was asked to consider a girl who was wealthy and of good family. But she didn't possess the attributes my father sought.

Nevertheless, her family thought it would be easy to manipulate an unworldly scholar. After all, what does a yeshiva bocher know about girls? It was arranged that both parties would meet halfway, at a railroad stop; that if the parties were pleased with each other they would then decide when to settle the terms of the marriage and the date of the wedding.

The girl's family, however, went a step further. They thought that if they prepared a fancy reception, the yeshiva bocher and his family would be overwhelmed by the opulence and glitter, and the game won.

Several days in advance of the meeting they hired an inn. Brought cooks and waiters. Spared nothing to create an impression of pomp and wealth for the benefit of the prospective bridegroom and his party. But they didn't meet the yeshiva bocher they had expected to meet. When they seated my father in the brilliantly lit room, and my father saw the bride and the to-do, he remained in his seat, quietly observing the entire situation. He was looking for the most convenient exit. He found it, and unnoticed, left by the back door. Such was the outcome of a foolish enterprise of conning planned by foolish people.

When he related this experience, so many years in the past--how he had felt at the time, how he felt now as he recalled it, his joy over not losing his wits--it was with the same pleasure he showed in telling of his wedding. Even now I am moved to laughter over his reminiscences and his manner of telling.

As it happened, Fate decreed that he would be very happily married, and in the very same shtetl, Lechowich, but to my mother. That meeting was very different. They met at the train, and there, not at all like a yeshiva bocher, and without a trace of shyness, he went to her as soon as he saw her. Immediately took her for a stroll. There was no display, no fuss, only a casual meeting. I doubt that I can communicate how interesting and enjoyable it was to hear my father, and to see my father tell these anecdotes.

To return to Grandfather: in his house I remember the reign of perpetual holiday--if only because in his appearance and bearing he always created a festive atmosphere. I cannot forget Grandfather's sweet voice.

Even in the most ordinary conversations it was good to hear him. When he would return with Father from weeks of travel, no matter how urgent his business, he never forgot to bring something for every child in the family. Our joy in seeing our beloved father and grandfather was greater than could be aroused by any presents.

After all my travels and my experiences with people and business, that luminous time when my grandfather and father were engaged in large enterprises, and concluded deals in the thousands on the strength of a word, appears to me like a beautiful dream. At the handsomely set table, with the gleaming samovar, and over sparkling glasses of tea, they conducted business transactions in a spirit of friendship throughout those years. When merchandise would arrive from the large cities and from overseas the atmosphere in the house was of a celebration. Every meal a rich banquet, the table and room decorated with the expensive artifacts Grandfather had brought from the great cities, and displayed with his own good taste. There were others much richer than he in the shtetl, but the conduct and taste of Grandfather's house nourished the eye.

With joy and pride we children would wait in shul to see how Grandfather led the davenen and singing. To this day his voice rings in my ears. I don't believe I've heard any voice as sweet. So many years have passed, and I am now myself a grandmother with grown grandchildren, but my grandfather's chanting I cannot forget. His voice and appearance remain fresh and lively in the memory of the entire family.

He had troubles too, and not only his own and that of the family, but those of strangers too. He worried over and helped all. But none of this interfered with his great love for his children and grandchildren.

His wife, my grandmother, Rachel-Leah, I remember as a beautiful vision. Beautiful and dear, like her father, Shimon Gershnn. She died young, and when she was recalled in the conversations of those who had known her, it was as a saint.

We lived in Grandfather's house until he married for the second time, at which point my mother already had three children. Mother rented a dwelling not far from Grandfather's. She wished to be near her younger sisters and brother. After all, she had just about brought them up. She also had to look after Grandfather's house which was being run by a hired housekeeper. This was in accordance with how she lived. So it was that when her stepmother arrived, my mother, well-reared, welcomed her in most friendly fashion, embracing her, and turning over the entire household to her keeping. She made certain to introduce, as a member of the family, the housemaid who had served so many years.

I remember my mother telling of her wedding, and the impression it made on the town, the guests from distant cities, etc. Nor did she ever forget to recall with pride the part her grandfather, Shimon Gershnn, had played in arranging the match. It was he who had chosen the yeshiva bocher, so different from the usual run, and who was too often misunderstood.

I remember the wedding of my mother's sister, Sarah. For weeks before the wedding the tailors and seamstresses worked in the house, not only for the bride's needs, but also for the entire family, including my sisters and myself. Beautifully designed and executed clothing made specially for us.

The wedding occupied two weeks. The week before the ceremony a banquet was given for the poor people of the town and from the poor villages around. A special huge entertainment, with music, was held for the tanners who although not Jewish, but Tartars, had become family

friends after years of working for Grandfather. And all the while cooks and waiters were busy with preparations, baking and cooking. Days earlier presents began to arrive from afar. The affair made for a cheery bustle in the town as well as in the family.

In general, a wedding, even the most ordinary wedding, was important to everyone because there weren't any other events to enliven the village life of those times. So it wasn't only one's own who would take part. Strangers would come to share the pleasure. The procession of gifts would consume a week, sometimes more. In the meantime, every day a holiday, with lavish meals for the guests. Such festivities impress themselves upon the memory, to be recalled and talked over years later.

I also remember the tradition my grandfather observed every year in connection with Simchas Torah, a welcoming of the joyous holiday in his home. After a whole day's celebration in shul, followed by rounds of visits to his friends, my grandfather would invite his chassidic friends to his home. There with hearty greetings, they would get together and entertain themselves until late at night with singing and dancing. We children often heard our father and mother speaking afterwards about how nice the evening had been, and how much they had enjoyed the good guests and their singing. But we children didn't witness any of this. We would be at home with the maid.

When I was older, however, I too was at Grandfather's house, and saw the entertainment. Grandfather was no longer as exuberant as he used to be. He was older and had lived through more sorrow. But he was not about to give up the tradition of past years. He invited carefully chosen good friends, good singers. To this day I remember his companions

and how nicely they entertained themselves, celebrated together. All worry was banished as they thanked the On High for his chassidim and the holiday; enjoyed the fine delicacies, puddings, tarts, and the like, and a little whiskey. Only those precious Jews were able to so express their ecstasy and joy. At parting they would wish each other another year and the chance to share this joy again.

On one of those evenings my grandfather opened the doors of the great room to show the new furniture he had installed for the holiday. All wished that he use it in good health. One did not want to look. Not at all because of envy. With his hand on Grandfather's sleeve, he said earnestly, "Labelke, have everything you wish, in good health, and have pleasure from it. Me, I don't need it and I don't want it, and don't have to see it. All that I need is a few potatos in the cellar and wood for the winter. More I don't need and don't want."

When everyone had left Grandfather remained seated, head propped on his hand. Thoughtful. And to himself, he spoke softly, "A wonderful Jew that Itzik. He wishes for nothing and wants nothing." Something like guilt was expressed in his pose as he sat and thought about Itzik. Why did he want and need more than Itzik?

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My mother hoped to provide a good upbringing for her children, so far as that was possible in the villages of that time. It was necessary to pay tutors--for Yiddish, Hebrew, and Russian. For that reason many didn't learn. But among us and our friends educating the children was the prime concern. My sisters, my mother's sisters, and I were schooled and brought up together. We had the best tutors. With our friends we found pleasure in our learning, and entertainment. One time, I remember, we had a teacher from Minsk, with modern ideas about teaching and entertaining. He discussed with my mother a project for a nature walk in the

nearby forest. My mother did what she could to make sure that all the necessary arrangements would be made. On a beautiful summer morning we boys and girls, all dressed up, went openly with the teacher to the woods. That made quite a spectacle in those days in our village. We had a good time, played various games, and sang. We returned, merry and proud that we had enjoyed ourselves so much. We were the first to spend the day enjoying the forest with a teacher. It's good to remember the happy times of youth.

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Much has already been written about the old-time Sabbaths in the Jewish shtetlach. But not about Sabbath preparation in the short days of winter, when the Fridays are too brief and the work too ample. That is seldom recalled.

The concern, the fear, of being late for the Sabbath was great. And in our house even greater than among our neighbors, who also observed the Sabbath. Why? Because my mother, in addition to being the mistress of her house and the mother of several children, was also a businesswoman, helping my father in his enterprises, handling the correspondence, and shipping the merchandise to distant cities. It was hard work, in a small village far from the railroad, to load the horse and wagon with the huge bales of finished hides. But it was necessary to help the teamster because he too was concerned about making the Sabbath. Sometimes it happened that the work consumed half of a Friday. In such circumstances it was necessary to suspend his work and journey until Monday.

It is difficult to understand today what this meant in that time in the old home--the fear of the possibility of being late for the Sabbath. The shipment packed off in tumult and confusion, there never remained enough time for proper preparation for the Sabbath: cooking,

baking, not to belate for licht benchen. Hard as life was, these duties made it harder. But they also gave meaning to life, and pleasure when it was all achieved.

Tired, and lacking the time to change clothes in honor of the Sabbath, my mother would quickly don her gold and brown satin shawl, and bless the candles. It was impressive to see how, when the little ceremony was over, she became another person. She would greet everyone with a cheerful Gut Shabbos. With a tranquil, beaming smile she would thank the On High for the gift of the lovely Sabbath. With me today, is the expression she wore on Sabbaths and holy days, making the entire house brighter than usual.

How is it possible today to understand the life of those blessed people? Every meal, a beautiful service. The holiday treats. The compliments to the mistress on her delicious dinner. To eat was to derive joy from each individual flavor. Singing hymns to the On High for the gift of the Sabbath--to rest and be happy. (Those also were mitzvahs.) It was another time, another life, and other pleasures, which helped to cope with living and to overcome hardship.

(I write all of this to inform, as best I can, my brothers and sisters who didn't have the luck to know what kind of person their mother was, nor how much was denied them through lack of her guidance. I remain constantly aware of this loss, and it hurts in the telling, no matter how little I reveal of all there is to know. But they, and also my children, have always asked me, and now is the time, I believe, to do what they have asked.)

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My mother was uneasy about my health. Doctors advised her to send me to a resort in the pine forests, but because of the needs of the younger children she couldn't take me there. By coincidence a woman from our town was preparing to travel to Druskenick to take the healing baths there. The air in the surrounding forests was known to be healthful. Mother arranged for me to travel with the woman.

I was eleven years old. I needed a passport. For this I had to apply in another town, the place of my father's birth. This would have taken too long, and the woman wouldn't wait. So I traveled with a Polish passport, that of my mother's sister, Slotke, who was but a month younger than I. This was very risky. I had always to remember to be careful about my name. If I should make an error, or should become lost, it would imperil my grandfather and his friend, the notary, who as a favor to Grandfather had stamped my papers with his seal. But it was all done for me, and for my mother, who otherwise couldn't have let me travel.

The years have flown, and I, an old woman, marvel, and feel good over the trust they placed in me, so young, in so serious a matter. As it happened, no one ever saw my passport. When I detected a possibility, or heard a rumor, that we might have to show our passports, I vanished--lost myself in the woods, each time in another hiding place. The experience remains fresh in my mind.

My companion's health improved, and she wished to return home, and to return me to my mother. But it wasn't time for me to return. One day on the way back from the baths I met an acquaintance from our town, and told her I was going home Saturday night. This was on a Thursday. "Have you consulted your mother?" she asked. "No," I said, "How can I when so little time remains?" The dear woman then said, "No. You will

not go. Here is a postcard. Write your mother immediately and ask her what to do. After so much expense and inconvenience are you to leave against the good advice of your doctor?"

I acted immediately. Mailed the card without the knowledge of my companion. Perhaps this was bold of me, but the truth is she had done nothing for me. I had been buying and cooking my own food, and washing my own clothes. My mother had asked her to look after me so that I wouldn't be all alone.

Friday evening a telegram arrived from my mother: one word, in Russian, "Remain!" When the woman heard about this, that I had written without letting her know, she became wild. Screamed, and created a real scene. She was a very common person. Couldn't understand or imagine how I would feel if I returned before the appointed time, and without the permission of my mother. Her screaming frightened me so that I lost my composure and wept uncontrollably. The noise aroused all the guest houses, and much interest was generated in the story of the lonely little girl.

The entire affair turned out quite well, however. Among the guests were three girls from Vilna. Two were older than I, and the third, about my age, was there with a supervising companion. Her father was visiting her and her friends at the time. He was a clever businessman. When he heard the story, and grasped the situation, he asked to meet me. He arranged for me to stay with the three girls. They had a large and beautiful room, and we remained together there for three weeks.

When I needed help it was unnecessary for me to ask. One of the girls always seemed to sense my needs--knew when and what to do, anticipated my questions. She escorted me to the doctor as if she were one of my family, and quizzed him thoroughly, bringing up questions I never

would have thought of. The three weeks were the best of the summer, enjoyed in friendship and happiness.

When we traveled home together it was like old and true friends. They arranged for me to visit Vilna; and I remember how graciously they entertained me. I spent the entire day in Vilna. They took me to a restaurant, which in itself was an important event for me. We strolled the grand avenues, the Teitsche Gass and others. And with us was a young man who contributed much to the pleasure of that day--all was as if to make certain that we were to end the summer so that it would remain a beautiful memory--for me, the villager, who had never seen anything like this until this day in Vilna.

And for me this did mean much: my first time in a large city, a new world, with friendly people, though strangers who would never meet again. When I remember how warmly I was befriended when I was all alone, it helps me forget the bad experiences I had, and the world appears not too bad despite the unnecessary hurt inflicted by some people.

In the evening which ended this beautiful day my friends took me to the train, and I traveled home by myself. Not far from my town there was a "half-station" where I was to get off. But it was necessary to get off the train very quickly. I, young, with my rosy cheeks, and alone in the dark--I was afraid there would be no hack to meet me. I decided it would be better to ride to the regular station further down the line. It was a regular stop for the train from Poliesen where my father frequently traveled on business; and there the cabby, Reb Israel, would always be waiting at the station--until late, three in the morning.

I arrived from Vilna at half-past nine in the evening. Reb Israel approached me, took my luggage, led me to the waiting room, and said, "Sit, and wait." Tired from the long, arduous day and the travel, I fell asleep.

Three o'clock in the morning the cabby came, woke me, and said, "Look." And when I stepped into the yard I met my Father. He had not expected to see me, and puzzled, he asked, "How do you come to be here?" After all the train from Vilna does drop one off at the whistle-stop! However, surprised as he may have been, he was happy to meet me at such an hour.

I didn't know what to relate first--about the day, the night--it was a bit too much for me. It was a happy meeting for mother: two unexpected guests at the same time! She didn't know what questions to ask first. She observed that the several weeks had done well by me; and she was pleased at how well I had managed everything. I felt highly complimented when she said I had proved that one could now rely upon me.

Returned home. Lessons again with my sisters and friends. I felt worldly. A small matter? To have traveled by myself, to have seen large cities, and to have been on my own like an adult? I was happy to be home. My sisters, my mother's sisters, and I, so close to each other, had missed each other throughout the summer. We greeted each other with joy, and had many stories to exchange.

We looked forward to the resumption of our learning. My father, however, an important Talmudist, and sternly pious, did not believe we should study the Bible. He had his own theories about what we should learn. Of course a pious Jew, a teacher, had to be a scholar. But for us it was necessary only to learn the most practical things, and not much else. Apparently he feared for our future. He feared it would be difficult to arrange marriages for well-educated girls.

And yet I recall the pleasure he derived from being able to talk about anything to my mother, who was well-informed and able to understand whatever he chose to discuss. Mother studied at every opportunity, all her life. That is why she was a modern person, despite the piety which

at that time was an essential part of life as the wife of a man like my father, twice ordained a rabbi. So that is precisely why she studied--not wishing to be backward, wanting to be able to understand Father and to participate in all that interested him. No she could not be like the usual Jewish wife of that time.

I remember Mother telling Father that he was incorrect in his approach to living. "It is not fitting for you to fear the future," she would say, citing her own father as an example: "Look Jechiel, how the On High has helped my father. He began very poor, with no help, with a pack on his back, seeking mere sustenance, and he has lived to enjoy good fortune and a good name, precisely because he had faith. Faith leads one to work with more energy and belief in one's self."

I remember how she would speak, and how I loved to overhear, and the intensity of my father's listening. But one retains habits. He could learn, had a reputation as an outstanding scholar whose opinions commanded wide respect. But he was a businessman, and as such too carefull, to afraid he was undertaking more than he could handle; and this was a handicap. He understood how to conduct a business, all about how and what, but his insecurity was the source of much suffering for his family.

In business there are times when one must take risks.

We didn't live badly, even found pleasure in the world of business. There was always a maid in the house. We had good tutors. True, there were bad times, but things would improve again in line with the ups and downs of life and business. Yet Father was always seeking work for his children. This, and the stern piety of our upbringing made for a hard and gloomy life.

I still remember the nights when I was afraid to fall asleep because of not reading the bed time prayer. I couldn't say the holy words without washing my hands, and to leave the warm bed when the house was

icy cold was hard. Gloomy always. And worrying. How could children bloom in such surroundings?

When, as if by accident, there was an occasional leave from home, something of a change, we seemed to be different from others. My conscience wouldn't let me rest, because I would be doing things counter to the teachings of my parents. Therefore, when the Russian revolution of 1905 came, we felt the fresh breezes even in our old-fashioned little town. Something stirred, even in the pious and respectable households of the patricians. My sisters and I were too young to take part, but though silent, we did not repulse the new time.

My father was occupied with business and in searching for work for us girls. He persisted until he found a business for Mother and us. But in the process his own business was hurt, and brought us much trouble. Too much whirling--in which he eventually lost everything: his name, and the strength it had given him, just about everything. It was more than a loss of money: our entire life changed. It was easy to lose, but hard to find a replacement. And it was hard on the family.

My mother, broken and bewildered, had to reconstruct her life and her ways of thinking. Never before had she met the problems which now faced her. To tear the children away from their learning--all of this affected her health. It was a great tragedy to her that I had to leave home and go to a strange town to learn a trade. She aged before her time.

I went to evil stangers in the town Lachve in Poliesen. Until then I hadn't known there could be people so false and depraved. I worked for an old maid who dwelled on a past in which her father had tried to arrange a marriage for her to someone who would accept the business as a dowry. That in itself would have been a false move for a pious Jew, a Chasid. I'll never forget the arrival in Lachve because

I suffered too much there in the last years of my youth.

The factory, a small one, made confectionery. The procedures were antiquated: everything done by hand, without tools. Syrup was cooked on a tripod over a coal fire. One had to work swiftly when the syrup was hot. Hard work. Standing all day without relief. But most difficult was to be with the people who exploited me. They had told my father that this was a good business. He believed them. He paid them a good sum to teach me.

In a short time I was able to do everything connected with the work; but they wanted to hold on to me as long as possible. I never told my father how depraved the boss, the old maid's father, was. I was ashamed to mention how I felt and suffered. Nor did my mother learn about my experiences. How disgusted I was when that old person would call me "Goldele" with his false voice and false smile. I remained silent in the hope that I wouldn't suffer from their presence much longer.

The old maid, when she expected a visit from a merchant, would put me out in the street in the most bitter cold and snow. She didn't want the visitor to observe the difference between my appearance and hers. It became impossible to be with these people. I quit and returned home.

I arrived at 3:30 in the morning, unexpected. My mother's feelings when she saw me at that hour, and alone, were beyond description. But at the same time she was glad that I'd arrived in time for the holiday, Shavuoth. In the morning Mother gave birth to a baby girl. I prepared everything for the holiday, as Mother would-- baked and cooked until I became tired. I lay down to rest, and fell asleep.

In the meantime my mother began to feel ill. She became sick. My father woke me to get ice for Mother. Unfortunately there were no qualified doctors in town. We couldn't get the professional help needed in such critical circumstances. By the time the out-of-town doctors arrived it was too late.

It's too much, too painful to recall the sorrow which afflicted the entire family, and the twon, in that dark time. Nothing helped. In one week's time we had lost our mother, but 34 years old, and the infant as well. Six children bereaved. A boy of eighteen months seriously ill, and a three year old girl also sickly. In such circumstances what was to be done with the two youngest? A friend of my mother's knew of an exceptionally kind and bright woman who would be an excellent mother to the boy. The dear woman arrived and with her firendly smile took the boy--became his devoted mother. The girl, also in need of a good home and good care, was placed in another village with the understanding that she was to be assured a proper diet and fresh milk daily. A sorrowful situation for all of us.

One may understand how we felt, I, a girl of fourteen and the oldest, and my thirteen year old sister. My sister, Clara, remained at home with the remaining two children, and I returned to my job--although to different lodgings. I no longer lived with my employers. Worked the day, lived by myself, and shared no meals with them.

I was better than before, but concern over the children, and the never-absent longing for my mother weighed on my heart. People were kind and friendly, sympathized, wanted to help. But the hurt was to deep. I couldn't attend to my own needs while I heard nothing from home. I just had to leave my work and return.

At home I found Father and my baby brother absent. The little boy, the woman who cared for him, and my father were in Minsk where the little one was undergoing an operation. Henceforth I didn't leave my home. I worked at home, for myself; and traveled around the neighboring towns and villages selling what I made.

Here I must honor the woman who, with warmth and friendship, offered help and a home to any who, sick and forlorn, were in need. This woman, Kraina, was poor and lived in a tiny house in one of the poorest sections of the town. Five people lived in the tiny house, yet there was always room for another who might need her help. Always she gave of herself more than humanly seemed possible. When my brother needed additional operations, she traveled with him and my father again to Minsk. But the operations were futile, and it was decided to seek help abroad. An uncle of my mother's was acquainted with merchants in Konigsberg. This uncle, who traveled quite freely on an English passport, took my brother and Kraina who cared for him on the way, to a hospital in Konigsberg. My brother stayed there for some months. When he was well enough to leave the hospital, our friends found a home for him where he remained until we were told he could return home. Again Kraina accompanied my uncle and brought the child home on the eve of Yom Kippur.

I will not forget Kraina's complete commitment during the entire course of my brother's illness. Followed the doctor's orders punctiliously. Whenever I could manage it I loved to be with her. Always serene, pleasant, with a kindly smile for everyone, she created a home in which, despite the poverty, everyone shared her serenity. I learned about something which until then I hadn't known or heard of. She had brought up a little girl, a foundling left in a shul, as her daughter and a sister to her two sons. Like the others, the little girl was serene and happy in her chaste home. The poor household taught me something very important: one could be poor yet happy. It's regrettable that such dear people and their good works remain unknown, are forgotten precisely because they are decent and quiet. Every visit to Kraina afforded me the greatest pleasure, and she remains

in my mind as one of my family. What would we have done without her?

During this time my sister, the two remaining children, and I lived in the gloom of our home. My mother's sisters would sleep over, so as not to leave us alone in our sorrow. My mother's sisters, becoming active in the revolution, emancipated the house--opened it to the companionable assmeblages of the activists. My sister and I became acquainted with the new ideas, although were were still too young to assume active roles. Bit by bit, however, we were pulled into the movement.

I remember attending a large meeting in the forest, on a Saturday after the Bialystock Pogrom. The bitter consensus was that we should not remain silent. Alexander Mugdaini, a good speaker, was there, as was a reknowned speaker from Slonim. It was decided that we would take to the streets and demonstrate against the police. I ran hoke to discuss this with Clara, and we agreed to take part. We prepared. Father was in shul. We joined the demonstration, and as soon as it was over, ran home. We didn't want Father to know. We changed clothes, readied the house, put the children to bed and put on the samovar. When Father returned everything was as usual and he suspected nothing.

I comes a neighbor to share a cup of tea with Father. And he says, "Nu! And what do you say about the vagrants? They'll bring trouble to the town! The Cossacks will be sent in! Your daughters were there too." "No," said Father, "They were at home. I found everything in order." "Just the same," said the guest, "I saw them there." My father became uneasy, but remained silent.

We often stole out of the house at night when Father was asleep, to go to meetings in the forest. One evening we were ready to go. We waited for Father to fall asleep. But he didn't. He merely sat outside,

near the door, until late at night. He never had done that before. We were unable to get to the meeting. And in that way he guarded us when he was at home.

I had more freedom when I traveled on my business. There I became acquainted with interesting young people in the movement, and savored a warm companionship. They would accompany me out of town when I departed, following me for quite a distance with songs and invitations to return soon. A beautiful time.

One day my father confided in me as the oldest of his six children. (I was all of sixteen.) He told me he was thinking of marrying again. He seemed a bit diffident, but in my heart I was happy to hear this, and I told him I was not opposed to the idea because I was weary and too young to continue carrying the yoke of the past two years. It was my hope to be freed to seek an out for my sister Clara and myself.

I remembered how my mother had described the manner in which she had received her step-mother. She had embraced her, turned over the entire establishment which gleamed from the care it had always received; had made certain to introduce the housemaid as a member of the family--which she had become through years of sharing.

I planned to do the same. The day before my father was to bring his second wife home I and my mother's sisters worked all day to put everything in order, preparing to welcome the guest as handsomely as we could manage.

But at the end of the day's heavy work, coupled with the excitement of anticipation, I quietly and without any warning fainted. When I revived I saw a lot of people standing around me looking very frightened. It hadn't been easy to revive me.

In the evening I bedded down near the door--so that I would be able to hear my parents' arrival. I wished to greet them in the manner I had

planned earlier. But things don't always turn out as we wish. When they arrived I arose and opened the door. As soon as I beheld the woman I forgot everything. Perhaps it was because her appearance was so strange that I became confused. I went to bed without saying a word. I couldn't help myself.

Early in the morning, before Sabbath, I arose as always to prepare for the Sabbath. Baked and cooked. The new mistress didn't even leave her room to see what was going on, or to meet anyone in the household. In the evening she finally came out to bless the Sabbath lights. She placed her candlesticks on the table. My spirits sank. I couldn't bear to see our table without Mother's silver candlesticks. To this day I don't whether I handled the situation properly.

I took my mother's candlesticks and placed them on the table. I thought to make the woman feel that the candlesticks were now hers, and that the table would appear as it always had. I don't know if she understood, and it's not important, but the incident sticks in my mind as a gloomy moment.

In the evening we were visited by friendly neighbors and friends of my mother. They welcomed my step-mother and related how nicely things were going at Grandfather's house with his second wife. It should be at least as nice here. My step-mother answered, "I don't understand how we can be like family. After all, we are total strangers." Every word she uttered was this clever.

Small details, but they hurt then, and the pain didn't go away. How can one forget? My sister and I began to prepare to leave for Kletsk, where we hoped to begin to work for ourselves--to become self-sufficient, a goal longed for and long awaited. After a half-year's struggle we won

Father's permission, and our Uncle Aaron's promise that he would help us through his business connections in Kletsk.

We began with just about nothing. Our joy over being on our own was great, but our poverty was greater. Though there were insufficient means with which to operate, the desire to be free gave us the courage to endure. No one suspected our real condition. We enjoyed the company of our friends every day. We read as much as we could. We wouldn't give in to poverty and loneliness.

My father wouldn't help. He had other plans--for me to work with him and to live at home. Eventually, he moved to Kletsk, with the children and his wife. My sister was opposed to the idea of returning to the family. She went to Grandfather's to prepare to travel to America, and I remained with the small children and my step-father in a strange town: had to look after the children and the house, to work, to sell, and to worry about everything. My step-mother, a slattern in the best of circumstances, could not manage a home, and didn't want to know about the children who, frightened, didn't let me out of their sight. They even slept with me. Determined not to be swallowed by my circumstances, I would visit my friends, who well understood what I faced. Their sympathetic friendship, I am certain, helped me greatly to bear up.

The thought that my father had reached so low a point as to be dependent on my help, led me to undertake everything. But he wasn't happy. He didn't feel at home in Kletsk. He had a sister in Baranovich, so he went there and found himself a home--with a Chassidic house and friends of his youth, who welcomed him as a brother. The place was better for business too, a larger, new city which was booming.

With his sister's help Father rented a place to live, and brought us all to Baranovich. It was hard to leave friends who had meant so much to me. I asked Father for more freedom: to go out with friends,

to entertain friends at home, to join the library--my dearest pleasure. Although the library cost money, my father promised that to me. In the meantime, lonely and friendless, I expressed my feelings in voluminous letters to my friends in Kletsk. Their warm replies and good wishes lightened the dull days.

In this time my step-mother bore a little girl; and there was no one to take care of her and the child. My father had hoped that I could help, for "Golde can do everything." But even I could no longer bear to be exploited. Not only because I found the woman repugnant, tolerated living in the same house with her only because of the children, but because one night I overheard her telling Father she didn't know how to do a certain chore in caring for her child, and then Father's reply, "Golde knows how, and she will."

This was on Sabbath eve, after the housework, and taking care of the children, as well as the work of earning our living. Now they expected me to help with the new baby of my disagreeable step-mother. This disturbed me so that I went to my father's pious sister and told her that I hadn't done it for my mother, and I certainly wouldn't do it for my step-mother.

To this day I cannot forget how my father took my patience for granted, although I know he thought highly of me. Years later, when I no longer lived at home, he missed me terribly, not only for the material help I provided, but as a conversational partner. He had no one to talk to--as he used to talk with Mother, and later with me--so my brother told me when he arrived in America.

To return to my aunt--I told her I was leaving for Lechowich immediately, to my grandfather for the Sabbath. She promptly sent a woman to help the incompetent with her baby.

Arrived in Lechowich, I learned that Clara suffered much from the

treatment accorded her by Grandfather's second wife and her daughters, so I went to Clara and brought her to a poor home of our own in Baranovich. She went to work in a store there and distinguished herself with her talents and bearing. Bit by bit we became reacquainted with friends from the former movement.

Baranovich was a new city, much different from the towns I had known. Fresh impressions. More lively. We decided to spend our free time in learning--and reading. We were determined not to be backward. The forests and a beautiful park were near. We exploited this opportunity, reading serious books and discussing each book with our friends, who were older than us, and teachers.

During the time we were in Baranovich we became acquainted with Russian and world literature. Our interest, and the satisfaction we derived from reading, gave us the strength to endure our life. This period also saw the flowering of modern Yiddish literature. Sholem Aleichem was in constant demand for lectures in the towns and cities. Baranovich was also in its blooming time. The city was building. Every-day a new street was cut through the forest which had always attracted summer vacationers. Everything was fresh and lively, young and progressive.

Baranovich also invited Sholem Aleichem; and the news created a great stir in the poor little towns surrounding it. The anticipated event evoked a communal unity which is hard to grasp today, or to feel. The thought that we would have the honor and pleasure of seeing and hearing the great writer was enough to arouse curiosity and excitement. The town prepared for the event weeks in advance. Even people who were not aware of what was to happen, sensed it was something important.

On the day he was expected to arrive, a spirit of holiday captured the city. No one worked. Almost every house had guests from the neighboring towns. Young people, finely dressed, filled the streets. A delegation met him at the train, welcomed him, and escorted him to the Count's guest house. The summer theater in the brilliantly illuminated park surrounded by woods was crammed with the expectant and serious faces of the listeners. The audience listened in complete silence, to avoid losing a single word. The amateur theater troupe presented "Only a Doctor" by Sholem Aleichem. The guest read from his own writings. A joyous audience. An evening not to be forgotten.

The day after that wonderful evening something happened which cast a pall of sorrow and anxiety over the city. In the morning Sholem Aleichem was at a reception in the home of one of the local intelligentsia, the Tetses, who always were involved in the interesting and important affairs of the city. There, in the evening, he became ill. He was put to bed in the Count's guest house. His wife and children arrived, and remained in Baranovich the entire summer. He was attended by the best physicians in Baranovich and the nearby military installation. Doctors also were brought from Minsk and Vilna. Everything known was done to help, but from that time on Sholem Aleichem remained a sick man. The illness tarnished the joy he had brought to the city.

Events such as this interrupted the gloom of the life we lived. At home things became worse and worse. I had wanted to wait before I would leave--leave the children and the life in my father's house, but the time came when I could not bear waiting. I escaped, seeking a way out among strangers--bearing a recommendation to acquaintances in the town of Gorodia.

Arrived in a strange town, in the evening. Searched in the darkness.

The people had a small factory. Worked by themselves. A girl took care of their children at home. They told me they needed no help, but if I wished I could stay with them--and we'd see, perhaps something would turn up from which we both could profit. The couple made a good impression. I knew their family. Very friendly. The town was lively, and not far from Minsk. It looked quite promising. I decided to stay. I'd make out better than with Father.

But I couldn't forget what I had abandoned at home. Nor the farewell my step-mother had bestowed on me, screaming as I left, "You are going away? Take the children also!" When we finished supper in my new place, and began to talk about my home, I dissolved in weeping. I couldn't help myself. I felt unable to desert the children.

I slept overnight, and left for Kletsk in the morning. Now that I had made a break I wished to spend some time with my friends there, and to enjoy a Sabbath in their company; perhaps because I had no one else who could understand and feel for me as did these friends in Kletsk. I entered the darkened streets of Kletsk late on Thursday night. It was too late to go to my friends.

I was very weary from the long journey by horse and wagon. I put up at an inn. Friday morning I sought out my friends, everyone of whom wanted me to spend the Sabbath at their home. When I went with my friend Ettl to pick up my things and pay for the nice room and the comfortable bed, the inn people refused to take my money. I remember this generosity well because it was a great help, without which I would not have had the money for the return home. After enjoying the Sabbath with my friends, I left on Sunday morning for the house of my dear grandfather in Lechovich.

When I entered the house I was told that my Father was looking for me. I rested a few days at Grandfather's and returned home. The traveling, the time spent with friends, and with strangers who tended me with kindness and friendship, and the time spent with Grandfather, served to quiet me, and to convince me I must wait, be forebearing, and silent.

When the children were a bit older I again sought a way out. After writing to my relatives in Warsaw, I traveled to them. I could write much about my time in Warsaw, but it's too painful to recount all that I experienced there. Possibly the worst time of my youth. But it's difficult, and unimportant to make comparisons among bad experiences. Enough to say that this was bad. One had to be strong to endure the psychical suffering--more than the physical. Never before had I felt so beaten-down as in Warsaw, perhaps because when I was younger I was more resilient. With increased age I saw more and felt more. Felt the full enormity of my loss. I was helpless, and the feeling of isolation was all the more unsettling.

My Warsaw friends were in an utterly different situation. They were studying and anticipating a good future. Their lives were full with the expectation of important and interesting accomplishment. Although they were friendly and helpful, and wanted to make my life more interesting, to lift me out of my despondency, I tried to avoid meeting them.

In that time of life when one hopes for a good future I was broken, didn't see the opportunities facing me--better, perhaps, than what was available to girls in comfortable circumstances. No I know and understand much of what I refused to let myself see. My life at that time was like an evil dream. That is why I remained blind to what was important for me.

Sometimes I think it foolish to recall all of this. Because in

later years also, here in America, I handled things no differently--not like a practical person who exploits their talents and opportunities. That is how I was. Always. And have remained--wanting something difficult to attain, and doubting that it was possible to reach. It might have been better for the whole family, perhaps, if I had understood things differently.

Returned, I seldom went to my grandfather's house, now run by his second wife. Better not to eat than to feel like a poor relation. This offended my relatives, but that is how I felt. The only way out I could see was America.

My grandfather, and my family, were opposed. How could they approve my being cast adrift in the world, all alone? There was no one to whom I could travel. No one to receive me. My concern for the children didn't let me rest, or think about myself.

Years later I would understand how childish I had been. I could have helped the children much more had I been concerned with myself first; and I could have achieved more. Thus it is always: one sees clearer when it's too late; and for the foolishness of our youth we pay the rest of our life.

When my Warsaw friends learned I was thinking of going home to prepare for America, they asked me to delay long enough to acquaint myself with the interesting world of Warsaw. I would have something to remember them by, and they wouldn't forget me. Together we saw Esther Rachel Kaminski in her famous roles--performances which remain with me to this day. I was ready to return home when my friend, Gelfand of Kletsk, asked me to stay so that he could show me the Lozenkas (?) and other well-known places. On a beautiful Saturday morning we rode out and had a good time until late in the evening.

I knew I would never see any of this again, nor have the feeling that a friend cared that I should see, remember, and realize that all was not yet lost. It was important to remember that I had friends who wished me the best. The day with Gelfand remains among my most beautiful memories. I wonder, do people today know such friendship?

Brought to mind is an evening in Kaminski's Theater in old Miranovner Park, a winter evening, dark, and not for strolling. He wanted to take my hand, but he remembered from Kletsk, my demeanor, and most of all my milieu. He asked, therefore, if I wouldn't object, for it was difficult walking. That is how careful we were in our relationships with one another. I answered him differently, told him I'd been reading Verubitski and other modern writers, thus indicating that I too was modern. I mention all this to evoke the period, the atmosphere in which we lived. Yet true friendship occupied the highest place in our lives. I cannot forget the evening I left Warsaw, and the hearty good wishes to meet again in freedom.

When I returned to Baranovich my sister told me of the founding of a literary club which featured readings and lectures. It was nice to meet young people, she said, and our friends go there. In the winter of 1909 we had the pleasure of seeing and hearing the critic, Samuel Niger. He was young then but already known as an important talent and thinker. I remember him speaking on the evolution of modern Yiddish literature, and inspiring evening which our circle remembered as a great holiday.

In the meantime I was preparing to journey to America. One of my friends who didn't want me to leave begged me to wait another half-year until he could return home. He was in military service in Warsaw, as a band musician. A Bachelor from Kletsk, he was wealthy and quite

handsome, yet he was infatuated with me. I couldn't understand in those days how a young man, not common, could be so conventional. He took part in no movement associated with the revolution. He was, therefore, strange to me. I hardly answered his letters. Only once did I write him--that I must go to America. He answered, asking to go with me. I didn't write to him again. Instead I wrote to my friends to tell him I had no more to say. I am moved to laughter over my young and foolish actions, how I had brought myself to so ignore my circumstances.

What would have happened, or what could have disturbed me, had he traveled with me? He could easily have returned too. He was rich, and not common. His one sin: that he was not my kind of person. Wanting to show me that he was acquainted with literature, he began to read Hebrew books and attend Hebrew lectures. But the book he read I had read when I was eleven. Think of what an impression this made on me. The book was current when my mother was a bride; and when my sister and I began taking lessons Mother bought a copy for us. This cooled me even more towards my friend, who in his 24th year desired to become a reader only because of me. It's curious that I wish to remember this.

Bad as things were for me, I wouldn't give up. I didn't wish my family to know of this opportunity to remain, and to arrange a better life for myself than others who has thousands. Should my grandfather know anything of this he would surely not let me emigrate. I remember the words he used in begging me not to go, not to leave everyone: "I have loved the One Above, married off my children, and to me you are also my child. That is why I have sought to avoid creating the impression that I wished to arrange a marriage for you. I couldn't tolerate that..."

I once told my young friends in Warsaw--who also insisted that a girl like me didn't have to emigrate to America--that it was precisely for that reason that I wanted to leave. I didn't want my marriage to be arranged. I'd arrange my own marriage, chose my own life, pay my own way, wanted to be given nothing. I don't know, and it is not important, whether I handled this correctly. But I always did as I wished, by myself, and according to how I felt.

Meanwhile I journeyed to Lechowich to Grandfather to see what I could do about money for traveling. Spent some interesting days and nights with friends, my one consolation in that time. I knew that I risked much, too much, perhaps.

After much hardship I departed--without a passport, without an agent, alone, on a cold January night. I was accompanied to the train by my mother's youngest sister, Slotke, my mother's dearest and closest sister. She brought many good things for me to eat on the way. Home baked goodies. Tied a teapot to my suitcase, a folly which was to cause much anxiety later, because it was a recognized sign that the bearer was going to America.

With an exit passport it wouldn't have mattered. But I had only an exit passport for Russia. My father and other relatives went first, and Slotke, my friends and I after. My dear Slotke, although younger than I, was not flustered by the sorrowful mood of the occasion--who knew if we would ever see each other again? She had the presence of mind to remind me to walk with Father, to be with him, not to leave him alone at this time, the last moment he would share with me in his life.

He had much to say but found it hard to speak. It was at this time that he instructed me, asking me to be careful, to keep my excessive pride in check. "Why do you think of me that way?" I asked. "Who knows," he answered, "a pretty girl is sometimes overly prideful. And you are different in other ways also. That is why I am uneasy. I know and understand your attitude toward life and toward people."

When, carrying the suitcase with the teapot, I entered the train with my father, the conductor asked to see my passport. When I offered him my passport, didn't he say, the fool, "No, the foreign one. You're traveling to America, aren't you?" The teapot had given me away. My father left the train in fright. But as soon as Slotke saw what was happening to Father she shouted through the open window that I was to leave the train at the next station and wait for a second train.

I left the train at Slonim, late at night, and asked a cabby to take me to a place where I could stay until the arrival of the next train to Bialystok. He brought me to a baker, where I stayed the night. He knew when he was to pick me up, came very early in the morning and brought me to the train. The interruption of my planned, direct journey, however, resulted in my having to spend an entire day in Bialystok--with my bundles and the betraying teapot--frightened every minute until the arrival of the train to Grayevo. From there one could steal across the border, if one had someone to help.

Our family knew a merchant in Grayevo, by the name of Lichtenstein, a good friend. My step-^{grand} mother who couldn't wait for me to emigrate, had told me she had written to Lichtenstein, and he would help me. When I arrived at his house, he greeted me with fright. At that time many were being arrested for helping illegal emigrants across the border.

"Why didn't you write to me?" he asked. "You could destroy me with this kind of behavior." I then understood that no letter had been sent. My step-grandmother was too clever to have asked Lichtenstein for this favor. He was a respected merchant and a fine person, and didn't need to run this kind of risk. She had anticipated his refusal, knowing that when one arrived as I did, without warning--and he knew my mother was no longer living, and my father was poor--then he could not refuse to help. So had my good step-grandmother planned. This was one time when she did what she wished, by exploiting my desire.

I wasn't frightened. I didn't understand what I was doing. So Lichtenstein had to find a way to send me off. He took away everything from me, money, addresses, papers, and sent me away from his place accompanied by a little girl, a stranger. She brought me to another house in a distant neighborhood, there to spend the night. In the morning the same little girl led me to a wagon which was used to take cattle to the slaughterhouse. Filthy. Standing in the wagon, a young man and I, both of us soiled while climbing in. I fell and lost my hat. That's how we rode to a village, where a small boy led us to a German family. We were in Germany. From there the man of the house led us into Prussia, where the emigrants waited for a ship. And there I received all my papers, my ship ticket, and the remaining few pennies.

Much strain. We hardly slept during the week we waited for the ship which was to take us to Bremen, where we would board the large ship. All moves were made at night, cold, dark, wet. After three weeks of wandering in old ships I arrived in America. Waited again, two days in the cold, without a coat, until my unknown relatives took me off the ship.

These were people to frighten one, with their cold reception, as cold as that January day in 1910. The woman was a sister of my step-grandmother, who had arranged all this in her cunning way. The woman was bearable but her man could have frightened anyone with his wild appearance and behavior. I only wanted them to take me off the ship, because I had here my mother's cousins, two brothers, one of whom thought that I was traveling to him. His father and mother were already referring to me as his bride. That is why I didn't want them to take me off the ship. (It was said at home that if a man came to take you off the ship, you would have to marry him immediately.) As soon as I arrived at the house of my step-grandmother's sister, however, I immediately got in touch with my cousins--and went to the married one. He lived with his wife and child on the sixth floor of a tenement. Three small rooms shared with a boarder. I had to sleep in the kitchen, which had no door. I had to wait for everyone to go to sleep before I could undress and go to bed. In the morning I had to be the first out of bed, for the same reason.

But! I am in America! After all, this is what I wanted, and have achieved! I was careful not to create trouble in the household. The bachelor brother could not believe other than that I was his promised one. I had my own ideas. I rested for two weeks and then went to work.

In most matters I had little say. What does a greenhorn know? The attitudes my relatives had towards greenies at that time was hard to bear. Perhaps not everyone's relatives were like mine. It would be consistent with my life's experience that I would suffer at the hands of good relatives. One incident may suffice to explain why I found it so difficult to accomodate to the life and conditions in which I found myself.

In Bremen I spent several days. Became acquainted with a man who was traveling to America for the second or third time. I had lost my hat along the way, so I sought to buy a hat in Bremen. The man offered to go with me to purchase the hat, to insure that it would conform to American fashions. I chose a hat in line with my own taste, one which could be worn anywhere anytime. Arriving in America, no sooner did I enter my cousin's apartment, than he opened the window, and without any warning tossed my hat into the street. The entire winter, until Passover, I went without a hat.

That's how the greenhorn was taught--to dress, and everything else. There was no concern with what suited the personality. They screwed my hair around some big object buried in it. I looked like a savage. When I saw myself in the mirror I frightened myself. The same with things I was made to wear. This is America. One must follow the mode. My habits, my taste, mean nothing. A greenhorn, what does she know?

About this time I sought out a friend from home, Sam Loss, the only person I felt I could talk to with the certainty I would be understood. I had, after all, been in Warsaw. Bought pretty and suitable things made to my order, garments in which I felt good. Until Passover I let myself be guided by my relatives. But as soon as I had saved a little money I went into a store on Essex Street and ordered a dress to my taste, simple and pretty. Ignoring the fashions, I chose what I wanted. But the Hair! This still disturbed me.

One time I went with Sam to meet a number of acquaintances from the old home. I felt unhappy over the prospect of meeting people while wearing the bird's nest screwed to my head. Uncertainly, I asked Sam, "Listen. I want to ask you something. Would it be allright if I

combed out my hair and wore it as I always wore it at home?" He answered, "Why not? You will certainly feel better, and it will be nicer, more natural--as suits you." And so bit by bit I began to do as I wished.

I wanted to settle in a room of my own, but my earnings didn't permit it. Sam suggested that until I could have my own room I might perhaps move in with his sister. I couldn't remain with my cousins because they disapproved of my having other friends. And when sometimes I would go out I dared not stay out too late. In general it was not good to live in such an atmosphere, helter-skelter yet dull. So I moved to Sam Loss' sister, also a sixth floor apartment, on Cherry Street. I slept in the kitchen, as before.

When I would go to sleep the others would be awakening. When I returned from an evening out, the mistress of the house would get up to make something in the kitchen. And as before, there was no door to close. Three rooms. The kitchen in the middle, open. That's how I lived while having to get up every morning to go to work. As for what and who I had to deal with, ther's too much to tell.

Friends introduced me to a girl, and we rented a room. This turned out to be a new misfortune: sleeping with a dirty stranger in the same bed. It was worse than before. In the meantime Sam had bought a restaurant in partnership with a woman with a family. There were five, the woman and four daughters. Separate beds. But it didn't take long before we realized that the restaurant was good for the woman and her four daughters, but not for Sam Loss. He lost almost all the money he had saved from the hard labor of several years, and had no work to turn to. From my own and my friend's troubles I became ill, could no longer continue in this kind of life. My bachelor cousin heard of my luck and came to take me to his sister's in Newark, so that I could rest and become well.

My hosts struck me a strange. Aloof and foolish. And a brother who was a queer kind of clod, and ignorant. They got on my nerves. It was part of the hard life I led that my good-hearted friends who didn't understand me hurt me more than they helped me. As always I didn't lose myself, but sought a way out of my entanglement.

In all these unhappy circumstances there were tragi-comic incidents which cause me to smile when I recall them after so many years. My cousin worked not far fram his sister's house when I stayed there. He wanted me to get well, so when he came to lunch at his sister's he always brought me a bottle of milk. But I made sure, when I saw it getting close to noon, to be in bed resting. Everytime he ran in with the milk I would be asleep. His sister would say to him, "Ah, you see? She just went to sleep. Whenever you come she sleeps." No sooner did he leave, I would get up. Whereupon the sister would say, "Ach, what a shame. He just left, couldn't stay any longer. It's a pity. He rushes everytime, and never can meet you." With such intellects I had to live.

One time he scolded me angrily for my refusal to go anywhere with him,even for a stroll. I told him I was waiting for my friend in New York to bring me my things. He became even more angry, always I brought up my friend and again my friend. I explained plainly, "I speak of my friend often because he understands me even when I say nothing, while you cannot understand me even when I speak to you directly."

What to do? There was nothing to return to. I remembered how good it was when I lived in the kitchen of my mother's cousin, and after that with Sam Loss' sister, in her kitchen. Here I had to place to eat or to cook something for myself. I had no place to go.

I returned to the woman who had taken me off the ship. Back to her, even more ill, and beaten. When she saw me she wouldn't let me return to Newark. I stayed with her, and went to work even when I was incapable

of working. After a day's work, and traveling back and forth, I had to help with the house work, the heavy work. A young girl is ashamed to say she finds it hard to wash clothes in a bathtub. It is hard to describe what I lived through and saw among these people. Crowded and dirty, this was the harshest punishment I endured during the time I lived in the Golden Land. In so short a time--I believe a year, maybe a bit longer.

Meanwhile my friend Lisa arrived in this country with her parents and sister. When she visited me, and saw where and how I lived, she arranged for me to stay with her family. They were poor people, but they made a home. They were the first people in this country who received me with kindness. I felt part of a close family. I saw that in America one could live as humanly as anywhere else--and pleasantly. They too were crowded, yet it wasn't disturbing. It was to them that I brought my sister Clara, who was a close friend of Lisa's in the old country, where Lisa had been a teacher.

Living with the Harkavys we felt as if we were in our own dear home. Clara and I slept on a makeshift bed, in the middle of the house, in everyone's path. I remember the poverty; can't believe we could live that way today. Every cent meant so much that eating was a luxury. Yet though my sister and I felt guilty because of the place we took, we knew this family was of our own people, with whom we could get along under any conditions.

When Clara arrived the mood in the household was so merry that she immediately felt at home. Looking at her, serene and beautiful, we were moved to make the first Sabbath evening after her arrival into a celebration.

My friend, Sam Loss, and I invited a few friends, landsleit who were known to my sister, and everyone enjoyed the reunion. My sister

brought some good things to eat, and dear Madame Harkavy greeted everyone in motherly fashion, setting out cookies she had baked. She made it a festive evening.

One doesn't forget such things. Still, Clara and I sought a room of our own because we knew we were crowding the Harkavys. We rented a room from strangers. Found it impossible to live there. We had a problem: every month a new residence with new people. One fine morning, after five such changes, we found ourselves with no place to live. The people with whom we were rooming had stolen away at dawn. They were wanted for debts owed on their furniture and for non-payment of rent. If we should leave for work we would lose our possession and end up in the street. While Clara remained to guard our possessions, therefore, I went to our friends, the Harkavys. They were still at home when I entered. I began to weep. Couldn't stop. They were overcome with concern as they asked me to explain what had happened. I told them.

Friend Harkavy began to laugh, "Is that all? Get a pushcart and bring your things here. Here we had thought you were unhappy with us." And so again we were with our dear friends. We remained there until Rae, my second sister was about to come over. From acquaintances we rented a large flat for all of us. Sam Loss had learned a trade, and he moved in too.

But this didn't work either. Too many people, eight in four rooms made for too much noise and bustle. When Sam began working we rented a three room apartment for him, myself and my two sisters. With a few dollars--I believe the furnishings and accessory items in the house cost no more than thirteen dollars--and with a few gifts from friends, the place was furnished, and Sam and I were married.

We established a home for ourselves and our friends. Guests often stayed for several days. There was room for everyone. Those were different times. Even in poverty we were happy. When I was expecting my first baby we rented a larger apartment on a lower floor.

It was when my first child was born that I first felt the misery of being alone. I didn't know how to manage this situation. I didn't take proper care of myself, and was unable to care for the child. I was sick for a long time, and lost my child. Depressed physically and psychically, I thought I would never straighten myself out. But we know not how strong we are when we must be.

Lived through it all. Got a grip on myself. Would not be defeated. Hitched myself in the traces again and busied myself with the details of daily life and family problems.

Sam, a beginner in his trade, a seasonal trade at that time, would work a few months and then be laid off. Wages were low in those days, even when one worked. We had to find a means of living; and the only solution at that time for such as we was to get a larger apartment and rent out rooms. Together we might accomplish something. But could we accomodate ourselves to such circumstances? To become a landlord and take care of a large household?

Cooking, and nights spent baking. For me this was no novelty. I had done this for my father's house when I was fourteen. I undertook this regime again. A golden land for others, not for me. It wasn't the work which frightened me, but the responsibility, and the fear of becoming old before my time.

But I did it. I was ready for anything. I expected no easy life. I took care of all that had to be done, and also found time to go out

and enjoy myself. The home, of course, was for all friends, who always, even in sickness, had a home to come to.

I remember how my family feared my going to America. They were concerned over my health. They knew my nature: to reject help when I most needed it, to refuse sympathy even from relatives who could and wished to help. And now I was unaware of what was happening to me until the burden became too heavy. After much suffering and some learning I came to realize it was not always possible to carry out youthful dreams and caprices. I became weary of the heavy load. Had to give up.

We rented an apartment for ourselves and my sisters. Gradually we put ourselves in order. Sam became more secure in his job and his union. We made new friends. We had a home for ourselves and , as always, for our friends in need.

Two years later my second son, Ezra, was born. It was 1916 and his birth brought much joy to the family. Times were bad, and the rearing of the child difficult because of a succession of illnesses. I feared a repetition of the bitter experience with the first child.

It was a hard struggle but I succeeded, to the surprise of everyone, even the doctors and nurses who knew how difficult it was for me to comply with all their instructions.* On my weekly visits to the milk station the nurses would pull me aside to remark on the miracle I had accomplished with the child. **

* Today we know that Ezra was a celiac baby. About the time of his birth a doctor in a nearby hospital had discovered a cure for this fatal condition. I forgot the name of this doctor, but Golde never forgot it; and learned about the near-miraculous rescue of Ezra when I showed her, about twelve years ago, an obituary of the doctor which memorialized his discovery. E.L. 3/80

** Golde's miracle was that she refused to accept the resignation of everyone, including the expert who considered the condition hopeless. She banged on the door of the hospital (after hours!) until a nurse came and took the baby away telling Golde to come back next week. E.L.

In the meantime America entered World War I. Sam went to work for the government, making gas masks. He was not happy that he was doing war work, but at the same time he found a rationale in that his work would save lives, not destroy them. I recall this to show that we never forgot the ideals which played so large a part in our young lives.

The war ended. We were happy for being able to hear from the old home, from our family, friends, and others. We knew that a new day, with new problems and concerns, was coming, but still it was better than war. Friends who had worked with my husband now sought for something to replace the war work.

One of my husband's friends proposed that the three of us, in partnership, open a restaurant of a new kind, a modern, Parisian style. He had been in Paris, and he made the plans. It was to be open from 1 P.M. until late at night--for tea and snacks, and featuring home-baked pastries--everything home-made. All of this thanks to the meals he and his wife had enjoyed at our house. Besides dining, there was to be room for socializing in the evenings.

We rented a house of three stories and a bright basement in which we organized a kitchen equipped with modern appliances. A huge oven, and a dumbwaiter on which we would send up the orders. The first floor was a large salon with windows on all sides, and handsomely furnished. It made a fine impression, the good appointments, the good silver, and music. We chose the name, "The Art Dining Room."

This was in Harlem. At that time Harlem was a Russian colony. The restaurant soon became well-known, and had a good reputation. It even catered banquets, quite often, and that was very hard work for me. Everyone helped but the most important work I had to do by myself. Sam, however, was not happy with his too clever partner, and didn't want me to be working so hard.

My baking drew an enthusiastic trade; and often we would run short. Frequently I'd go down to the kitchen late at night and bake more--because the hubbub and sociality would arouse the desire to keep in touch with my friends in the neighborhood as well as in the restaurant, which was becoming ever better known.

But we had to leave. The work and the poor ventilation in the kitchen were hard on me. But all the money in the enterprise was ours, for our partners had never had any money. We realized that from the first the relationship had not been honest. It ended with us being swindled.

The Parisian macher was an expert in such matters, but we didn't go along with him. We discussed the problem with him every day, from different angles. Finally we agreed to submit the tangle to arbitration. Our partner had a brother, a serious and wise person who was a manufacturer of raincoats. So the partner thought he would leave us with the restaurant and go to work for his brother. We asked our friend, Liss, to be one of the arbitrators--to help us end this worry, to get out with our skin whole. When our partner heard that we would have our own representative, he said, "If that's so I will ask my brother." We became concerned about the prospect of a fruitless struggle, and agreed to accept the brother, though he was connected to our opponent. We felt that the truth was with us.

We came out of this with our investment and some earnings besides; and the next morning Sam went to work at his trade in the plant of his former partner's brother. One is reminded of the Purim story, in which Haman preparing all kinds of trouble for Mordecai, ends as the victim of his own plans. That's what the brother accomplished for those who thought they had a great opportunity to bilk us. Still, I was chagrined. How could we have trusted such a partner? But that's how one learns to guard oneself against fraud.

While our partner's reputation suffered because his manipulations had been too obvious to cover up, we came out of this whole and satisfied. But it was hard to find an apartment at this time just after the war. We found it necessary to move in with a strange family who also had one child. We had to share a kitchen with people who didn't know how to live. Very poor circumstances, in which my son Irving was born. I had no place to leave my son Ezra, four years old, so I had to remain at home in the strange crowded apartment.*

* The story continues, but I've had to turn to other things. Translation will have to wait. A note about this family: Their name was Fabyash, and it lives in my mind in infamy. They were loud, rough, and to my four year old sensibility, repulsive. Their infant son stank from diapers which were always loaded. The mother beat up Golde regularly. It was my job, while Golde fended the harridan off, to run to the neighbors for help. That I remember sunny, pleasant days of play during this period, as well as a pretty little blond playmate with whom I played indoors (in her house) is a testimony to the resilience of the human spirit. E.L.