I was horsewhipped.

 One afternoon in late August I wandered past the wheat fields toward the beet sugar factory. Part of the main road at this point was in a valley. The road was just wide enough for a wagon to go each way. There were steep hills on both sides of the road. At this point a train of wagons loaded with beets were on the way to the factory. My clothes indicated clearly to the peasants that I was Jewish and I feared, what actually came to pass, that they would strike me with their horsewhips.

 The peasants were a mixture of kindness and brutality. When I met them personally they were kind and somewhat like children. But in a situation like this they were beastly. The first dozen or so drivers let me pass without molesting me. I wondered. I watched their faces and detected them winking to those in back to let me pass. I sensed that they were waiting until I was caught in the middle of the train when they could whip me no matter in what direction I ran. This is exactly what happened. In desperation I began looking for a spot where I could climb above the hill and get out of their reach. I finally found such a spot and got away from them. But until then I was in a trap. They struck me mercilessly and laughed loudly. I received blows on my face, my hands and back. These were much more severe than my rabbi’s kantchick. I was in pain for several days and the marks on my face did not disappear for a long time. I had no business being there, of course, and my father made this clear to me in no uncertain terms.

By David B. Schreiber

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