

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL MEMOIR

by Bernhard Goldgar (1860-1940)

PART ONE

My native town, Kodna, is situated in the Polish province of Sedletz, about four or five miles from the famous Russian fort of Brest Litovsk.

It is an old town, and like most such towns or villages in Russia or Poland, where there is never the least encouragement given by those in authority, it has in all the centuries of its existence never shown any signs of progress, and never will, I fear. Its population of about four thousand souls, half of whom are Jews and the other half peasants, with Yiddish as the language of the former and a kind of mixture of Russian and Polish as the one spoken by the peasants -- intermingled with a few real Polacks and with a very few strangers ever finding their way into that place -- and, what is more, with never a newspaper read or seen there in a century -- it is really no wonder that the people there are steeped in ignorance and superstition. Now and then news of momentous events which happened years ago reaches this town and causes a stir and wakes the people from their everyday quiet life to talk in a disjointed manner, and talk for months and maybe years of what "just" happened in the great world outside of Kodna.

There is no exaggeration when I say that if it were not for the holiday in the "Calendar" that sometimes finds its way there, the people would have lost count of the days, months and years.

The Jews, as regular as clockwork, wake in the morning and, young and old, take their Talith and Tefilin or Sedar (prayer book) and flock to the Beth Hamedrash (synagogue) for the morning prayers, which last about an hour. They then return home, eat breakfast, and hie themselves to their different occupations. The same thing is repeated every evening; only then they spend a little longer as they have to pray twice. They use the interval between these prayers either to transact some

business or just to chat and exchange views about matters of interest to nobody and nothing in particular. So you could see them in groups of four or five talking and gesticulating, sometimes quarreling, about as deep a subject as the proverbial egg that the hen laid on Sabbath, whether it is kosher or trefe. Another group might be deeply occupied in the discussion of why the long promised and expected Messiah had not come yet to redeem them from the goloth or exile and bring them back to their long-lost but never forgotten fatherland, to the land of milk and honey, which is theirs still and promised by the God of their fathers to be returned to them: Zion, the land of their hope and only consolation.

In another group one may hear (and this ... sect
 called Chassidim) one relate of miracles performed ... Rabbi
 to whom he or they make a pilgrimage at least once ...
 one exclaims, "The world was ready to come to an ...
 but our great Rabbi, when he was in that trance ...
 went up to our great God and there met the Sat ...
 a great fight, finally routing him and demanding ...
 manding of God, that He withdraw the verdict ...
 world, because of man's sinful disposition ...
 chance for life."

At last stars appear in the heavens ...
 Sexton raps once or twice heavily with the ...
 the table and as quiet settles a Chaga ...
 prayer which only last a few minutes.

The Jews of our town as in ...
 only ones to carry on the trade and ...
 artisans, tailors, shoemakers, carpenters ...
 center of the town while the peasants ...

main business is done, or was done ...

the business houses on that day are ...

wagon loads of produce or live st...

trade is soon made. The stores are then filled with peasant customers and from the saloons you may hear the drunken songs, petty quarrels or curses of the usually peaceable peasants.

In my native town there is but one paved street, paved with large stones of unequal sizes. Not artificially trimmed or hewn like the Belgian blocks here, or laid joining one another as paving is done here, but indiscriminately set, some distance one from another with their natural flat sides up. So when walking in this street you have to pick your way from one stone to the other. This street is the aristocratic avenue where the better class of Jews live. In this street, in one of the largest houses (having more than seven rooms), I first, in November 1860, saw the light of this world. This house was built by my grandfather, for whom I was named "Boruch" or Benedictus. ¹⁷⁸⁹⁻¹⁸⁵⁵ I was told that he was one of the most prominent men of Poland, highly respected for his wisdom and learning; while he himself was not a rabbi, he had brothers and kin all over the province who were. I was told that he was red-haired, and so God-fearing that everybody, Jew and Gentile, paid him unusual respect. I learned that one year when there was a famine in the land he fed from his storehouse of potatoes, wheat and corn, half of the ^{town}, and that the blessing of heaven rested over his storehouse, that the more he gave away or used the more he found in that storehouse until the next crop was garnered, which was an abundant one. He one day found the storehouse empty, with not a grain in it where there was plenty yet the day before.

Somehow from that day on my grandfather began to fail in health, reverses in business set in, and to top his troubles his youngest son ¹⁸²⁴ Moses (he had but two, of which my father was one), a lad of but fifteen ⁽¹⁸³⁹⁾

years, very handsome and learned, was captured by the authorities under Nicholas I and sent off into one of the distant provinces of Russia to serve in the army. This was in the time when Jewish children, some but few years old, were captured, stolen, or by force torn away from the embrace of their mothers and sent away into far-off provinces for the purpose of conversion to the Graeco-Russian faith, and to serve later when grown up in the army. Thousands died in thus being deprived of their parents' care, thousands assumed the religion of their tormentors in order to be treated as human beings and got lost to our people.

Thousands afterwards returned, after a lapse of 25 or 30 years, to their native home and died in the Jewish faith again, while a great number of them never even remembered their native home or parents. The grief over the loss of his young son shortened the life of my grandfather and he died poor and in despair. My father, too, was broken-hearted over this affair and they said that for years and years no one ever saw a smile or any cheerfulness on his face. It made him morose and sad for life.

One day, I was about five ¹⁸⁶⁵ years old and was in Cheder with about 35 other children of my age in another locality of the town when somebody brought in a report that the Briskergass was on fire. We all ran out and for the first time in my life I saw the heavens red with flames. We all began to cry and started to scamper like a wild flock of sheep, but were soon gathered again by the grown son of our rabbi who, fearing that the whole town was doomed to be destroyed by fire, carried us all off to an orchard which his mother had rented about a half mile from town. There we were huddled together crying, but were soon appeased by being offered a quantity of pears and apples. For the first time in my life then, I stole myself away from the rest of the children, when the opportunity offered, and climbed a young fruit tree near a fence to observe the fire. After hours the flames did not seem to abate; they

were yet dying the heavens with their red glow. This and the wail of the women or shouts of the men (who were helpless as there was no fire apparatus of any sort), who were carrying buckets of water from the nearby wells or river, came to me through the distance as if hell was set loose upon earth.

From the direction of the fire I knew that our house was destroyed but what I did not know was that there was no insurance ever to rebuild it and that with it was also destroyed the little fortune we had in ready money and in stores of goods, and what I further did not know was that the effect of this fire would so break my father's courage that he would never be the same man of activity he was.

Why this last was so I did not know till later on in years, when I learned that in that land when one once loses his fortune there are nine hundred and ninety-nine chances that he will never regain it, because the opportunities are lacking and there is no helping hand extended to a fallen man as is the custom here.

That evening I was led home through streets dirty and muddy which I had never seen before, and finally landed on the outskirts of the town in a little two-room hut near a peasant. My mother, I found, was lying down with her two-year-old baby, my brother Jacob, huddled up on some old quilts on the floor. She was as pale as death, and when she saw me she began to cry so hard that I thought her heart would break. "My child, my child," she moaned, "what will we do? What will now become of us?" Of course I cried with her, and my little brother helped along. Father was not there, and when he came in later he paced the little room to and fro, I thought for hours. We all quit crying. Finally he sat down on an old broken chair, his head in his hands bent down on his knees. When he raised his head and saw me, he beckoned me to him and took me on his lap for a little while. Never a word did he say, but I

saw tears running down his cheeks. Some fell in his beard and some few fell on me and I began to cry again. This was the first and last time I saw him weep. Even at times when he met with worse reverses later on in life, he never cried as he did that gloomy night in the small room without furniture, without even a light and with not a morsel to eat. Did we sleep that night? Who can remember?

Somehow time dragged on afterwards, and all I can remember worthy of note is that my father took to butchering for a living, perhaps because this business did not require much capital, and eked out a poor living. Another thing I can remember is that when going every morning to the Cheder I had to pass a Jewish hat maker, who through sheer meanness used to run out of his house with a knife every time I passed it and threaten to kill me. Of course this was a joke with him but he certainly scared the life out of poor me. He did the same thing daily and I cannot, even today, imagine why a grown man would persist as he did in scaring a child.

It was about this time, too, when one afternoon the children were all dismissed from school and told to run home as quickly as possible. Such a thing never happened unless it was on a Friday or holiday. This day was neither, and we wondered about the cause of it. When we came home we found the grown folks in excitement and acting as if they were scared of something or other. Before night that day we observed great numbers of our people, men, women and children, running to the synagogue. Our father, too, left, but before going told my mother to lock up the house, stay with us inside and by no means leave the house for a minute through the night. When he left my mother began to cry in her quiet way, not loud like some women do. Of course we followed suit, I and my little brother. I tried to find out the cause of it all but my mother would not give me any satisfactory reply.

We finally went to bed half scared to death. Loud cries and shouts of triumph woke me up, and then there was quiet again. I must have fallen asleep again, when I started out of bed on hearing tremendous shooting and cries as if the whole town was murdered. This was repeated again and again and we were shivering from fear. When morning at last came, my father knocked on the door and when he came in he looked like a ghost, but said, "Thank God everything is quiet again but the soldiers shot a number of the riotous Polish insurgents, captured the rest and left town." Then it was that I learned that for months the Poles, acting under the Russian yoke, had gathered in the woods, swelled their numbers and ammunition until they thought they could successfully throw off the yoke and again become an independent people. They were mistaken.... This reminds me of a scene I witnessed when I was a little older:

A detachment of Cossacks on their stout little ponies and with their pointed spears about eight or ten feet long on their backs came up suddenly one calm Sunday morning and surrounded the Polish churches which were filled with the devout. They dragged these poor people out of the churches and whipped them unmercifully as if they were dogs with their terrible nagaikis, or cowhide whips, until blood ran from the bodies of men and women. At the end they tied several of the most noted men to the tails of their horses and dragged them thus over the streets. This all because they adhered to the Catholic religion and because they disobeyed the orders of the little father to join the Russian church. That is the way Russia tries to convert people, to evangelize the people -- in the case of Jews to take away their children by force from the arms of their mothers or to rob them of all rights, and the other people by whipping them, killing them, in any horrible way to make them accept the religion of their tormentors.

1865(17)

I must have been about eight years old when my Uncle Moses came home again after twenty-five years of service under Nicholas I. Alexander II was then ruler. He came home married and with a small family, seemingly well off. It seems that he paid my father some small sum of money for his share of the lot where the house was burned, which contained about 25 acres. So Uncle built a nice house and Father built a small one on another lot in the same street. We were a little better off now. I still went to Cheder and was so far advanced that my father had to get me a different rabbi, who only taught about a dozen children. I must have been then about nine years old.

My first teacher could not speak without stammering and the second one was a hunchback and besides very cruel of disposition. Whipping a scholar was a pleasure to him. We were all stout, healthy boys, besides one who coughed all the time and who we learned later was consumptive. The rabbi usually used to pull out a reed from the broom, heavy and stout, to flog us. He whipped me less than the others. I nevertheless one day organized the scholars into an organization, the purpose of which was self-protection. Soon afterwards one day, he came home from a Brith-Miloh half drunk and ordered a boy, my best friend, a quiet and very decent boy, to repeat to him yesterday's lesson. When he sat down to do so, the rabbi found fault with the way he sat down and ordered a boy to bring him a reed quickly. The boy did not care to hear him; he called him to him and slapped him hard on his face. To his astonishment, and probably for the first time in the history of Cheder life, a dozen reeds were raised over the rabbi's body threatening to descend on him with such force that it would have crushed him. His cheeks, a little while ago red from effects of brandy, now turned pale. He was told that if he continued in his customary procedure we would give him a taste of his own medicine. He said nothing, promised nothing, but ever after-

wards behaved like a little man towards gentlemen. But when our fathers found it out afterwards they whipped us for it.

I used to be the quietest of the lot. One day a boy who was older than I was did not know his "Gimra" (lesson) in Polish. I, who had but listened when he was taught that lesson, told the rabbi that I knew it; he disbelieved it but nevertheless, as in fun, asked me to take the boy's place and say the lesson. I did it to perfection. The astonished rabbi from then on put me on equality with the older boys and gave me the same tasks as he did them. My father, when he heard it, patted me on the head and said I was a good boy. My father generally was a man of very few words and this compliment was the only one I received while I was at home, or the only one in my life.

Our house and lot joined a flower and fruit garden which belonged to a German lady and her sons, and although the fruit used to project and hang over into our lot, I never to my recollection stole any from the trees, this not for fear of punishment but from a moral sense. I would permit myself now and then to ^{take} an apple or pear or plum which I found on the inside of our garden because I heard it said that as the fruit was on our land it was ours. But at the same time I envied them the flowers. O, how I used to stand there by the picket fence and watch the flower beds, admire the beautiful colors and enjoy the perfume with which on a morning the air was filled. If I only had them, I used to think, heaven would be mine. For this purpose I built me a little tent near the fence, made up of weeds and a little bed inside of grass, where on a Friday afternoon or Saturdays I used to lie down and dream, dream of how heaven looked in comparison to these flowers and delicious fruit, and why it is that these goyim, who have no religion at all, who live like animals and eat hogs, who die and never go to heaven like we do, and who can never even expect to go to Palestine, our own land, when the Messiah

will come -- how is it that they are so blessed with such flower gardens and we are not. My world was then as small as it is large now, my visions as short as my surroundings.

At that time I had two brothers with me, Jacob, who was three years younger, and Aushel who was only about two ^{b. 1863} years old and whose nurse, when at home, I was. I used to carry him around on my shoulders, feed him and keep him near me to relieve Mother, who very often suffered from headaches.

It was, too, when I was at this age, about eight years, that a group of acrobats came to town. They rented a large stable and charged five cents admission. I did not have the five cents and it was not of any use to ask Papa for it, and so I spent a miserable afternoon trying to think how I might get that night into that stable and see something that old people claimed they had not seen for forty years. I at last managed to make myself useful to one of the hands of the show and he gave me a ticket of admission and I was a happy mortal. Besides acrobatic feats they also had little wooden figures who talked and screamed and made all sorts of grimaces. Of course it was all performed by a ventriloquist, but I and the rest of the people there did not know it and it was the wonder of the town for years afterwards. A few months later a merry-go-round also made its appearance in our town. How I managed to get money for me and little Aushel to go riding on one little horse I do not know, but we both ^d rose on one and Aushel fell off, hurt himself. I could not wait for the machine to stop but flew off after him and carried him home crying all the way to get myself a licking from Father.

My ^{uncle} uncle had a saloon and was doing fairly well, but we hardly ever went to his house or he and his family to ours. We were of the impression that he did not treat our father right in buying his part of the lot he built his house on. He did not pay him enough for it. How-

ever, I begged Uncle, who could write Yiddish and Russian, to teach me sometimes when at leisure. He gave me no satisfaction, but after much insistence he began to teach me to write Yiddish, but soon tired of it. When I saw that he did not care to bother with me I got discouraged and quit. However, a year or so later I started again and with the same result. It was then that my baby brother of perhaps eight months died and we sat Shivoh, sat on low benches at home for eight days in mourning for the infant, studying, as is the custom, the Book of Job. If anybody had suffered in this world Job is the prince of sufferers, and if anybody is in trouble his trouble is as a picnic compared to the trouble Job had, and so we get comforted when we see others have a heavier burden to bear than we have. That is the reason we study or read Job when we have sustained a loss of life.

During this trouble my uncle did not come around to see us, and of course this broke the camel's back and I quit worrying him about any more lessons in Yiddish. But I learned a little myself as time went on.

When a boy, I never participated in the stunts of the other boys, never played with them or without them. I was of a rather quiet and unassuming nature. It is true, I had my little pleasures all by myself or in company with my little brothers. On a Saturday or holiday I used to take a long walk, mostly to a park called Surnazki's Garden. There I used to sit for hours admiring the giant trees. If it was Saturday, I used to bite off some small fruit or berries from the thorny twigs, as it is not permitted according to Jewish law to tear them off with your hands. I used to love to get myself lost in the many passages and alleys of the great park, which with its dilapidated castle was once the life and joy of a Polish nobleman who was then either in Paris enjoying life or in Siberia as a convict at hard labor for political offenses. Hard by, too, runs the river "Big," which, with a branch called the

Bura?

"Small Big," runs through our town and is the joy of our small children for bathing and frolicking. The Big is a considerable stream, and many is the time that I plunged in it for a swim and not once nearly got drowned.

About a quarter of a mile from our house stands an old ruin. Once it was a castle, but in my youth it was so dilapidated that it was risky to go inside. Yet that was not the reason people shunned it. The devil, they said, took up his abode there. At night you could hear all sorts of noises. Sometimes it sounded like the great frolics that the Polish noblemen used to carry on, with dances and fair women and champagne; and again it sounded as if some lady were crying and begging for pity's sake not to kill her -- the answer to this cry would always be laughter and scorn. So it was said, although I never heard any noises, perhaps for the reason that I never visited the neighborhood after dark. In town, too, was one old Jewish woman who really looked like a hag, who it was said had dealings with the devil. He visits her every night, makes some kind of trade with her, and leaves her a lot of money. In the morning, in the wintertime when the snow was fresh fallen, anybody who cared could see around her house the fresh marks of the devil's feet, which resemble those of chicken feet.

Our town boasted of a Beth Hamedrash, which was used as the old place for the people for their daily prayers, and for the young men to study the Talmud night and day, the poorer ones of these eating free at the different houses whose owners felt it an honor to feed them and clothe them; and also a synagogue which was used only in the summer on each Sabbath.

On entering the synagogue the first thing one saw in the hall was a coffin like a box in which every dead person was carried in to the cemetery, carried on the shoulders of men, and a wide board on which

everyone who died was washed and prepared for burial. Every night, it was said and firmly believed, the dead came to this Shul to pray and then return to the cemetery. Many a man had seen these dead walk either from or to the cemetery.

On every doorsill of a Jewish house there is a parchment with an inscription or a part of a chapter of the Bible, nailed up so as to keep his majesty Satan from entering the house. When a child is born, there must be some inscription attached to every door and window and to the bed of the mother so as to keep the devil away from injuring the infant; especially the first eight days it is dangerous to be without these holy inscriptions.

If it happens that there is a dangerous case of sickness in a house, the women of the house run in haste to the cemetery and fall on the graves of their nearest kin, crying and begging that they go up to the Most High and intercede in their behalf and use their influence that the patient may get well again. Often they run into the synagogue or Beth Hamedrash, fall into the Ark where the Torah is and cry for help until they are almost hoarse crying. When a sick person is young, they often change his or her name in order to carry astray the angel of death so he will not know whose soul he came after and so let the patient live. These are some of the many superstitions which encompass young and old, not only in my native town but all over Russia where our people live, but mainly in the little towns. The intellect of the young is dwarfed, and it is a wonder if it is not forever ruined.

When I was about eleven years of age ¹⁸⁶⁸ another fire broke out in our neighborhood and consumed our house and all that was in it. My father was in despair. He built at little cost a dugout which we were to use for a temporary abode. This was done by digging about five feet deep in the ground and building five feet above it of cheap planks, covered

with straw on the roof. It had two large rooms, was somewhat damp in the winter and in blizzards fully covered up with snow, windows, doors and all. At such times, we had to dig away the snow starting from the inside out. The only good thing about it at such times was the large oven of bricks we had, on the top of which I used to sleep and enjoy it more than a bed for the simple reason that it was warm from the baking or cooking that Mother did in it. I remember as distinctly as if it were yesterday, that very often, when I used to lie awake in the night on that warm oven, I used to think that if I ever were a man I would not content myself with such a miserable dugout, such a poverty-stricken sorrowful life, but I would strive to at least have a house like Uncle's, that I would learn at least three or four languages, that I would endeavor to see a little more of the world than the mudhole called Kodna. That I should eat three meals a day and not feel as I did then very often the pangs of hunger. Aye, I would -- I would -- so I dreamed, so I thought. I rebelled against fate and that itself was a sin, and because I so sinned in my thoughts I looked for worse punishment from God. And it soon enough arrived.

It was on a stormy winter night. For days and days it snowed and stormed as if there were never an end coming. Every day we, Father and I, worked to keep the snow from burying us alive, and that night the wind was blowing a gale. We heard it whistling and raging and we knew that all our work was in vain, that we were entirely buried, that a passage would hardly be possible for days to make through the tens of feet of snow over our heads. And here we had so few supplies, such little food for five people and such a little wood besides. For hours and hours I could not shut my eyes, and when I at last fell asleep a heartrending sigh from either one or the other of my parents would wake me again. Then I heard my father get up, go out into the little hall,

stay a little while and come in again. He did this several times. Finally I must have fallen soundly asleep when I heard a heavy body fall on the ground and a terrible scream from my mother. I ran from off the oven from my laplet and Mother and I struck against each other in the darkness looking, or rather feeling, for matches. When we at last struck one and lit a piece of candle, we saw Father lying on the floor, or rather on the ground because there was no plank floor, lying unconscious. How we ever brought him to life again or put him into his bed I cannot now imagine, as we were both weak and frail. We brought him to life again; he opened his eyes but never a word could he speak or utter.

Now what? Run for a doctor? Ha-- run-- run. There was never a doctor living in our town. That is Russia: a town of four thousand people and no doctor, no druggist or drugs. There was a Jew there who understood how to bleed a man, how to cure a headache perhaps, and that was all. But even him I could not call on account of having been snowed in. Oh, how I worked that night, with a shovel, with my hands, in the snow, but never the least progress could I make. At last day broke. The storm somewhat abated and I still worked in the snow, half frozen, to make a passage out. I succeeded at last in making a hole big enough to get a man through. I was out in the free, but even then could proceed but slowly in the knee-deep snow. I fell, got up again and fell. So all the way to the "Peldsher," as he was called. I found his doors barred. I knocked and waited. I knocked again and waited, freezing all the time. I must have waited a few minutes but to me it appeared an eternity. When the door opened I fell in a faint. They soon revived me. They made me drink a glass of tea from the boiling samovar on the table and I told the peldsher what had happened. The good man half carried me back home in his arms and we somehow managed

to crawl in through the hole I had made. My father was still as I left him.

The feldsher examined him and murmured as to himself, "Paralyzed." I heard him but did not understand the meaning of it. He made Mother make some warm water and then he stuck in the back of Father's neck a needle as big as a lead pencil. Blood came from the wound in a stream and we screamed. Our means were limited but we sold everything we could lay our hands on and ate but once a day and called a doctor from Brest. He made several visits and took away the last cent we had but Father remained the same. After a year or so he regained a little of his health and could make himself understood somewhat, but he was never the same man he was before.

My brother Heiman David, ten years ^{b1845} older than I, would come several times from Brest where he lived to see us, but being poor himself could do very little for poor, sick Father.

Somehow, I never did like this big brother of mine, who was a blacksmith by trade and very strong and healthy. The last time I saw him was one year before Father took sick. He came home with one of his eyes, or rather eyebrow, so swollen that it entirely covered up his left eye. He told Mother and me that an accident had caused it, but I later on learned that this operation cost him 25 roubles and that he had had it done in order to be counted out of army service, which really was the case. Serving in the Russian army for a Jew, who is treated with contempt, is cursed and mistreated, is not a pleasant thing, and a good many young men go to any length, cripple themselves or fast so long until some really ruin their health, in order to be counted out. I said I did not like him; none of us did, perhaps because I had heard Father and Mother speak in very uncomplimentary terms of him for marrying beneath him, that is in marrying a tailor's daughter of our town who was

not in our class and even to speak with whom Father would feel beneath his dignity. As low in worldly goods as we were, we still held our heads up and not everybody was our equal. This reminds me that a friend of Father's once, before he took sick, advised Father to give me over to a shoemaker in order to learn the trade. "What! A shoemaker? My son? I'd rather see him dead"-- exclaimed Father. They did not know I was listening.

It was with us as with that Pole who, hunted by a Cossack, hid in a Jewish oven, which happily was cold. He was lying there shivering and in great fear, and when the Jew asked him in a friendly manner how he felt, he answered, "Oh, so-so, but why don't you take your hat off in talking to me?" I cannot describe how we suffered that winter. We simply suffered cold and hunger.

We ate one meal a day and that was a small piece of bread and sometimes a little thin barley or oatmeal soup with now and then a potato in it. Often, too, Mother would buy a herring, and ask when buying it for a quantity of the salt water or fluid in which the herring were packed. That herring she divided for all of us children, and it was a luxury to us; for the next two or three days we would eat the piece of bread with the salt water which she obtained with the herring. Often Mother would observe how little I was satisfied after such a meal; she saw that I was as hungry after it as I was before it, and she often would break up a piece of bread that she apportioned to herself and hand it to me on the sly. And poor animal that I was, I accepted it not questioning the justice of such an act and the wrong I did her by accepting it.

One day a young chicken got astray and came very near our feet in its quest for food. My mother saw it, she looked at Father on his sick bed, looked at the chicken with longing eyes, then she looked at me as

if one would consider the advisability of catching it, right or wrong, catching it to give Father a morsel of really nourishing food and a couple of bones to her starving children. I saw her blushing at the thought, then turning pale and shaking her head as in despair.

Our uncle all this time used to come once or twice a week visiting Father, but to my recollection, never offered any assistance.

A neighbor and relative of ours by the name of Hannah Miriam had a bakery and was quite prosperous. I often used to come to her house and to the bakery. I will never forget how the smell of the fresh bread affected me. Often, when I stood there with the pangs of hunger nearly killing me, I used to bite my lips hard and tight and think what a cruel, miserable world this was and why it was that God punished us so -- that the crumbs lying around there would be a blessing to us, and yet... and yet.... I remember that sometimes she would ask me why I bit my lips so. "A bad habit, a very bad habit it is," she would say, and then turn away, and I would run home crying in my heart. I used to see children come and go from this bakery buying bread and bagels, I used to see them eating to their heart's content, but I -- I would run up to my pallet on the oven and bury my head hard in the old pillow and cry.

Happily, my brother bought out or rented a shop in our town, the owner of which had lately died, and the following spring moved his family back home and took possession of this shop. I engaged to assist him in his work. He smiled bitterly when I made him this proposition, as I was then about eleven years old, going on twelve, small of stature and not too strong. But what could he do under the circumstances? So I helped him along in his work. At first the fiery sparks from the beaten heated iron scared me and the lifting of the heavy hammer and striking it on the anvil exhausted me. But I would sooner have died than give it up, because no matter how little the remuneration was it helped some and I

was happy in the thought that I could render some assistance to our sickness- and poverty-stricken family. Unfortunately I could not hold out long at this task. After a few weeks I began having light hemorrhages, which I at first tried to conceal but did not entirely succeed in doing so. Both Father and Mother begged me to give up this work and I did.

A few weeks later Rabbi Josele, my first rabbi, visited us and begged Father to allow him to employ me as his assistant. He offered to pay me five roubles for six months' work and feed; that is, I would eat "days" in the houses of the parents of the children who learned in his Cheder or school. I was personally against it, but my wishes were not consulted and I entered upon my new duties. Every morning I had to visit my scholars, some of whom were not older than five years, help dress them, as is the custom, say the morning prayers with them, and if they lived any distance, bring them to school. Sometimes they were rebellious, and I, a mere lad myself, had to carry them by force. Then I would assist the rabbi in teaching them. When dinner came I would have to bring some of the richer ones their dinner and in the evening accompany them to their respective homes. For this work I had enough to eat, it is true, but I ate every day at a different house and as there were about thirty children in school it was a month before I came to the same house for my "day" to eat again. I slept at home and many an evening I stayed up late, sitting up with Father. The consequence was that I was tired and sleepy the next day. Besides, I disliked my work and did it with but half a will. Many a day, especially when the rabbi was ill-disposed and whipped the little fellows when they could not satisfactorily do their lessons, or when he forbade them to go out into the yard and they simply were obliged to commit the unavoidable, I used to run out, get myself lost in a nearby vacant field, lie down on the soft grass and cry till I fell asleep. Then I dreamed of the beauties of the world to

come -- of how happy little children are there when they become angels -- and the rough voice of my boss, the rabbi, woke me up and I was sorry I was not dead and buried where I could forever sleep and dream.

Often on a day when the rabbi left us to go to a Breth Milloh or wedding or funeral I used to permit the tots to go out and play on condition that they behave. The older children I kept more in bounds. I used to love to see them sit in groups telling each other tales, not of wars or glory of which they knew nothing, but of the great Messiah which is daily expected and how they would all go back to Zion. Aye, they would pass then the great rivers on bridges made of no stronger material than paper yet strong enough to hold all the Jews, while if the Goyim would dare follow them out of jealousy, even if they passed on iron bridges they would break down and drown them.

They would also tell tales of sinful souls which after death of the bodies in which they were possessed would be incarnated or reborn in animals and fishes, etc., or are forever lost in the great universe, flying without any rest from on end of the world to the other and then back again forever and ever. Blessed are they when they can reach hell to burn and burn, because after this punishment they have a chance to be redeemed and get into Paradise.

When, after such a gladsome rest that I gave them, the rabbi came home half drunk, there was really a hot time in the old town for me and them.

Nearly two years I was thus employed. After that a man who was employed in a neighboring forest engaged me to come with him and instruct his only boy. I did not care to leave home and my parents, but the pay was better and the relief from my unpleasant work was some consideration. So I promised to come the following week. The walk was about five American miles and I had to cross the river Big. As this was my first time

to go out of town, my mother accompanied me. We spoke little on the way, but once she suddenly observed that as I was now leaving home to enter the great world, it was not amiss for her to say that this was a dangerous world, that I must guard my steps as the least misstep would hurl me into an abyss. Furthermore, as I would undoubtedly soon change clothes, it was very likely that with them I might change my sentiments toward home and parents. Would I do so? I said no, that she need not fear. And here I wish to say, that this promise always stood in blazoned letters before me and that in all the years that passed between that day and the day she died, I tried, to the best of my ability, to keep that promise.

Arrived at the village adjoining the forest, I took leave of my mother, who with tears in her eyes looked long and silently at me and finally with a choking voice bade me goodbye. I asked a peasant the way to the forest and my employer and started on my way, arriving there in about an hour. It was a warm morning in May. The woods were alive with the songs of birds and the air was perfumed with the scent of wild flowers and the newly developed green of the trees. I stopped in wonder, before reaching the house, in a cool spot under a natural arbor, where the tops of oak, birch and other trees had interwoven and held themselves as in an embrace of peace or love. I approached a little hill, pulled off my coat and threw it on the little knoll or hill, when suddenly there was a terrible hissing sound and no less than a dozen snakes began to uncurl and I jumped away and ran as never before in my life, running up against my employer who smilingly greeted me and brought me into his house.

The family I was with was small, the boy I taught was about eight years old, so my task was light and the treatment I received was as one of the family. I lacked in nothing and needed very little, yet I was

not satisfied. I visited home every two or three weeks and came once near drowning in attempting to cross a branch which had swollen to three times its size from the melting snow and ice at the end of the next winter I was there. As I have said, I was dissatisfied because I did nothing towards my own education, It seemed to me that I was getting dwarfed in the midst of my best years, and although I had no examples before me yet I felt a longing, a crying desire in my heart to learn, learn something. My Hebrew, in the midst of which I was cut off by misfortune, or something else, like reading and writing the languages in which books are printed and which must undoubtedly teach those who are able to read them, something of this world of ours, of the different people living in it, of the bright twinkling stars in the heavens above us and of the thousands of other things so mysterious and attractive and of which we lived in total ignorance.

I was raised, it is true, in the belief that the world was created for the benefit of us Jews, that it begins and ends with us, that God in heaven is our God alone, that He watches only over us and that when He permits other people to live, he does it because of the sins of our ancestors visiting His punishment upon us, their descendants, through those goyim who have the upper hand in this world, and only in this world, while we will have all the glory in the world to come.

Yet I did not quite believe in all this. I wanted to learn, to be able to investigate things for myself. But how? It was this question that worried me until I made up my mind that I must leave here, leave even my native town, but how? But I must. I must. So one day, I told my good people goodby, went home and took leave of my parents, packed up my tefilin and a couple of shirts and a piece of bread in a red checkered handkerchief, and started out for Brisk or Brest.

I arrived after a whole day's traveling towards evening at Perespol, a town three times as large as Kodna and but one mile from Brisk. I had

no money at all, as I had left all I had at home. But I had to stay the night somewhere, so I went the first thing, as is the usual custom, to the Beth Hamedrash or Shul. There I met a rabbi of such small children as I used to assist in teaching at home. After hearing who I was, he induced me to go home with him and stay the night at his house. Next morning he had a long talk with me and induced me to remain with him and a nephew of his, to assist him, on a salary of 15 roubles for six months. I promised him that I would try to stay with him a few weeks and see whether I would like it. Among the scholars I had to attend here was a twin; smart and bright, whose mother, a widow, had a wine saloon in one of the principal streets of the town. She had also a grown daughter named Alte, very beautiful and highly educated. They originally came there from Warsaw, the one-time capital of Poland, where she was educated. Mother and daughter took a special liking to me, perhaps because I liked my bright scholars, the twins, so well. Anyway they persuaded me to stay with them every night, eat and drink there and feel or make their house my home.

Now this was exactly my wish, as only the highest class of people and officers of the fort and garrison frequented this saloon. I accepted their kind offer. A month later I persuaded Alte to teach me the Russian language, and two months later she taught me the rudiments of the German language. I learned every spare moment I had, and the more I did so the more I wanted to, but what I did not reckon was the poor reputation this family enjoyed in town. Complaints soon came in to the rabbi as to why he allowed me to stay there. He told me of these complaints and I laughed at them, assuring him that I saw nothing wrong there and that people merely talked because they were jealous. However, I felt that the bottom was being knocked out of my castle. A couple of months later I was given the alternative either to leave that house and just visit it

when duty called me to do so, or give up the position with him. I gave up the position. Oh, how I ached to leave that town and my friends, but I had to do it, and that too just as I had begun to learn something.

Some weeks before this happened, I had a position offered me to teach his son by a country saloon keeper who lived about two miles from Perespol. Now, not knowing what else to do, I went there and accepted the place. But before entering on my duties I visited home. I went there in company with a friend, a boy about my age, who carried the mail once a week to my home town. We started late in the night on a horse and drashka, or buggy, and before daybreak -- the darkest part of the night -- were about a mile and half from our town. Up until then, we had been telling each other tales of the "bad one" or devil and of dead people who have a habit of wandering from place to place through the night. The part of the road where we were then had an especially bad reputation, as a murder was once committed there. We were both scared to death and we saw somebody in a white shroud running in advance of our horse, enveloped as it seemed in a cloud of fire. I asked my friend whether he saw it as I did. He declared he did. I was then driving, and not thinking what I was doing drew the reins as hard as I could to my right. The horse gave a sudden turn and both of us rolled down a steep hill. Down, down, we tumbled and rolled, and the horse and buggy after us, fortunately a little farther from us. At last we landed and laughed as hard and hearty as we had never laughed before. We either had to cry or laugh over our plight and somehow chose the latter. As we rolled down a grassy hill we were not much worse off for our accident. We waited till dawn, found the horse grazing, dragging the overturned buggy after it. We soon had things righted and rode into town like princes.

Father and Mother and my smaller brother were overjoyed at seeing me, and they could not stop wondering at how much better, stronger, and

quite aristocratic in new and modern clothes I looked. Mother cooked and was busy preparing even at extra expense the best she could find to satisfy me and my friend. I found Father, although far from being well, yet stronger, so much that he could go out to do some trading with the peasants. We were of good cheer all day.

There was one incident that day which causes me pain even to this day, whenever I think of it. Father asked me to take a stroll with him through town and I, not wishing to leave my friend by himself, declined. When I looked at Papa he looked down at his old and shabby clothes, sighed deeply and was for some length that day depressed. He thought that I was ashamed to go out with him. This I regret from my heart, and I have never excused myself for not changing my mind that minute and going out with him.

Returning to Perespol, I entered on my duties as a teacher to the saloon keeper's son, a lad of about ten years of age, as wild as any country boy and with as little brains as a gander might boast of. However, as I could not make any progress at all myself in that forsaken spot, which was really worse than my first destination, the forest, I tired of it in less than a year. And as I had a position offered me through the recommendation of a friend, with a rich dealer of cattle in Brest, and as that city was really my goal from the very first, I accepted it and there I went. This man was really a distant relative of our family, although he never admitted it.

I was there in that house a year, and during that time suffered more than all my life before. I was not starving as when at home, I had plenty of good things to eat and drink, but I suffered from humiliation. I was treated worse than the two servants of the house and looked down upon as being something of a lower order of things. The gentleman of the house, although somewhat stuck up, was not quite so bad but he was very

little at home. His wife was sick, or at least she was always complaining, and besides the boy I instructed there were two young daughters, the elder of whom was heartless. She was the one who tried her best to humble me and who never left out an opportunity to say something to me or to others in my presence that deeply wounded and hurt my pride. At the table she would often forget me, and because she did so the younger sister would pile up on my plate the best of things. Then they would quarrel in my presence until their mother would interfere, and as the elder daughter was the housekeeper whose services she needed more she would invariably justify her. Many a night that girl would visit my apartment and would take away the pillow from under my head even when I was fast asleep. When the maidservant would thus find me sleeping without a pillow she would take it up with her young mistress and pack up her things to leave; the mother would at such occasions interfere and beg her to remain. This was not the case once but dozens of times. I would have indeed been an angel if I did not curse her in my heart. I was at times begged to sing for the family as I had then a good voice and knew a number of Jewish songs. When this happened and others praised me, she got angry and began abusing me and the rest for doing so. I was a heartsick boy then, but what could I do? Later on, when I was no longer there, she married a very rich young man, but in giving birth to a child gave up her own sinful soul and, I am sorry to admit, on hearing it I was glad. I was only human.

However, light follows darkness, or when need is greatest relief is nearest, as the old folks say. Neighbors, it seemed, learned of the treatment I received at this girl's hands, and it also became known that I was not a common boy, so one day a Mr. Ginzberg, also a cattle dealer and while not so well off, yet of a reputation far above anyone else in the neighborhood, approached me with a proposition to accept a

position as teacher to his two young children at a flattering salary and a promise of gentlemanly treatment. Of course I unhesitatingly accepted it and moved over to this house. Now if there was ever a change from misery to happiness, that change occurred at that time to me. Mr. Nachum Ginzberg's family consisted of himself, a man of about 35 and although a Hasid yet of the educated and modern class, ^a man with a golden heart and likeable disposition; his wife Pessie, whom I will never forget for her gentility and cheerful disposition, who could not bear to see anybody near her sad and on finding one near her disheartened would comfort him until he would part from her with a smile; their older daughter Helena, a girl about 12 years of age, who at that time went to the gymnasium or German school and besides took lessons at home in Yiddish from a private tutor; another girl; and twin boys, whom I was to instruct. There was a considerable library of Hebrew books, and translations of a good many classical books or books of an educational character. Besides, he received weekly a Hebrew periodical, Hashachar, issued at Vienna by one of the best Hebrew journalists of that time, Mr. Smolenski, and The Hamagid, The Hametiz, The Hazfiro, newspapers in Hebrew.

My eyes, as if blind and suddenly cured, were opened to see and behold a world, a great world before me. I was no more a prisoner locked in within four walls, or a child of the ghetto enclosed in its limited space. I became at once a citizen of the world, with the sun shining radiantly over my head and the earth as if dancing and vibrating under my feet. The world, like a book, opened before me; on opening and reading these newspapers St. Petersburg, London, Paris and New York were right before my eyes. Science, philosophy and the mysteries of the heavens begged me to embrace them. With every book I read I felt new life, fresh vigor, a new soul enter my poor young body. I read, read

and learned, everything without a system, incessantly, day and night. I could not yet get along well without a teacher and I got one. I did not have very much time during the day so I turned the nights into days. So it happened that for months and months I never laid my head on a pillow, never pulled my boots off my feet, all the time reading, studying my German, my Russian and Polish lessons. I had a hard task before me, a hard steep hill to climb up and hardly any outside assistance, scarcely anyone to show me the way but my irresistible will, my strong optimism to carry me on and on. I hoped soon to leave there and go to Germany and enter college, but I was mistaken. My mother would visit me again and again, and seeing her distress caused me to empty my purse and start anew. I remember my dreams of that time, how I was enveloped in a network of illusions, with bright stars shining and worlds dancing like fairies before me, and a future so alluring as mortal being ever reached. Yet in all these, as in all else before, I was doomed to disappointment. I was after all like a derelict ship, abandoned in mid-ocean, with her rudder gone, no one to lead her to harbor, to any destination, but always a prey to the waves, to wind and storm.

I must have been then about seventeen years old when Father died. He again was laid up for some time, but they kept it from me and I did not even see him before he died. I sat Shivoh, seven days in mourning, in a shul near an uncle of mine in Brest. They sent me meals there and I said daily Kaddish. I was an orphan then, but was I less so before? I began to be dissatisfied with myself, more and more so when I grew older and saw no aims before me. No matter how hard I would strive to educate myself, yet I had sense enough to understand that this unsystematic education was not qualified to lead me to any fixed purpose or aim in life. In my despair I fell into the way of reading novels. This more to deaden my heart pangs than to learn the great authors of German

and Russian fame. While this tended to get me more acquainted with these languages, it merely worked on my imagination, as whiskey works on the heart and head of the drunkard. It carried me away farther and farther from myself. Nearly a year later I made up my mind that this life of mine had lasted long enough and that I must do something for my future. But what to do I did not know.

I hired a droszko and went on a visit to my native town, Kodna. Arriving there the driver put up at an inn. It was in the morning and I took a stroll through and to the places where I used to play or dream away my time as a child. It had been years since I was there and I knew I looked different in my modern clothes and almost grown than I did when a mere lad. I came by an old well, where an old man, a water carrier, who used to have a kind word for me when a child, was still drawing water for people, his same old customers very likely, and saw me. I greeted him and told him who I was and he burst out in glowing terms about how much I had improved in everything. He was really glad to see me. I went further, passed the haunted old castle where the devil and his cohorts hold picnics every night, and then went to Surmazki's garden. I then crossed the Little Big, came to the old one, then lay down on the Bliony (meadow) where as a child I used to rest on my back after bathing, rest up and look into the sky with its great patches of fleeting blue and white. I went back to town and -- the water carrier must have given out the report -- everybody seemed to come out and greet me. I looked up Mother -- she seemed as poor and as emaciated as ever and the dugout in a state of dissolution. Ah, if anything had changed it surely was for the worse. As I sat down to rest and think, in comes a message from my uncle, who begged me to visit him. I hesitated but Mother begged me to do it and I went. When I opened the door Rebecca, my cousin of my own age whom I had admired even as a child for her beauty and charming

manners, met me more charming than ever. Soon I was surrounded by my uncle's family, all as nice and friendly to me as if I was never neglected and almost driven from their house, as if they had ever been kind and helpful to my poor father and his family and as if nothing had happened to mar our relations.

I was there half an hour and came back to Mother's hovel. Soon a man I had known as a Shadchon came in and called me aside and asked me in a whisper how I liked Rebecca and why couldn't we make a Pnocim (engagement). I told him to come back later and I would give him my answer.

I was left in a deep study. Now what? It is true I like Rebecca. But what about a higher career for myself? Is there no more hope for it? Must it end right here and now? It was true, I saw no way to reach it, difficulties everywhere. But on the other hand, did I see my way clear when I first left this hole of a town? Now see how far I have advanced since then, so why can I not advance farther? Right here I got an idea. I asked myself the question, how it was that I, when almost a child, had the courage to leave my native town for the reason that it was too small to hold me, a child -- and why could I not leave Brest, where I was now limited in my way and could not go any further? No, I will not marry my false uncle's charming daughter and remain here all my life. I will not even remain in Brest with my kind employer and friends. I will go farther away into the world and brave it for advancement in a more learned career and for a more brilliant future. I left my home immediately and went back to Brest.

Six months later I was at Koenigsburg, Germany, with recommendations of friends to their prominent business associates in that city to befriend me and help me enter college. These gentlemen received me kindly but did not seem enthusiastic in helping me or in making any efforts in my behalf. A month or more I spent in a boarding house waiting for an

answer to a petition they sent in to allow me an examination. In the meantime, in that boarding house, people who went to America and others who returned from that great country stopped and exchanged views upon its merits. I used to be a silent listener, and as the discussions always turned out in favor of this land, it had the tendency to make a favorable impression on me. They all made money but went back to Russia just to enjoy themselves or to marry their daughters, etc.

My capital was limited and the stay in that boarding house helped to greatly reduce it. Every day I went to one or another of the gentlemen to hear when I could be permitted to stand my examination -- but with the same disappointing result. So one day, I became disgusted and left for Hamburg and bought my ticket or half ticket for the United States of America.

and cost me seven roubles, as I loved to dress well at that time, being in good society all the time.

From Berlin to Hamburg we were on a third class train. There next to me sat a well and modern dressed young man, who on seeing me very disheartened made me feel worse by telling me a number of hard luck stories of young "immigrants" in the New World who were starving on the streets in New York because of lack of work etc. He told me he was a son of Rabbi Weiss of a reformed synagogue in New York, that he was just travelling, and he offered that on my arrival in Hamburg and going to his hotel, the name of which he gave me, he would give me a letter of recommendation to his father which would be of great benefit to me. Here I will say that on my arrival at Hamburg I made several attempts to find this young man at the given hotel but failed to locate the hostelry, nor have I ever seen him since; and while there was a Rabbi Weiss in New York, he had no son, I discovered later.

I spent three days in Hamburg at a boarding house for emigrants and in company with about twenty-five more candidates for the New World, accompanied by an agent, we procured tickets. After paying the agent 120 marks I was left with just a few dollars, and on going to the steamer we were all advised to buy a hundred and one things that we were told were absolutely necessary on our voyage. So when we stepped up on the gangplank we were loaded with mattresses, tin dishes, cigars, whiskey, lemons, etc. After paying for all these things I had about one dollar and a half in American money left me to start a new life in the new land, besides my colored handkerchief in which were wrapped up my tefilin, a Sidar (prayerbook), and a couple of suits of underwear and two or three shirts, which I had had the precaution to have laundered at Hamburg.

In taking my steerage berth I was advised to lie down and make out

that I was sick. This by the same man who bought my ticket. On my inquiring why I should do that he shamelessly told me that he had bought me but half of a ticket, that the money I gave him was not sufficient to buy a whole ticket. This was not true since the others, I found out, paid no more for their tickets. There I was in deep water, lying cramped up in a hole of a place scared to death of being thrown out of this hole at any moment and left stranded, without friends or money in a strange place. Finally the crucial test was over; the tickets were examined and to this day I believe that the officer in charge of the examination of the tickets was a silent partner in the graft. He lightly passed by me, hardly looking at me or my ticket. We were swimming on the North Sea, swimming from Hamburg to Glasgow, Scotland, there to board a ship for America. We were all on deck. It was noontime and the fall sun shone brightly, reflecting with a million golden rays on the dark green surface of the sea. We were departing from one great continent to another, leaving parents, home, friends, and a world of memories, playful years of childhood, everything behind us -- for what? -- for something unknown. I leaned over the ship's rail and cried, cried for the little I ever enjoyed, for the home I never had and for the sweetness of life, of childhood, which consisted of dreams and illusions only. Yet I cried, and soon after got seasick, so sick that for two days until our arrival in Glasgow I did not even think. I was almost dead until we stepped again on terra firma and changed ships after a few hours' rest and a good meal.

The "Georgia" it was. What a coincidence that was. The big ship in which I left Europe was named after the state in which years later I made my home, and where my children were born and raised. But so it was, and never in the fourteen days I was on her was I sick one hour. We had several heavy storms and were very nearly wrecked one time, but I

was so careless as to see all the other passengers pray on their knees while I roasted potatoes which I secured from the steward for dinner, as I did not eat trefe meats.

On the steamer there was a crowd of passengers of more than a thousand persons, mostly Germans and Englishmen and very few Jews. Some of the Germans were antisemitic and worried the life out of us poor Jews. Of the Jews there was but one young man, of Galicia or Hungary, whose friendship I courted and gained, and he was as friendless and poor as was I myself, but a little more fortunate than myself in being physically stronger, and also in having an acquaintance or friend in New York, whose address he guarded more than his life. Before I made his acquaintance, I used to sit for days and way into the night in a corner of the great ship's deck, deeply sunk in melancholy thoughts. I felt like a lost sheep or like a derelict in mid-sea, deserted and on which the terrible waves wash and storm incessantly, always expecting to sink and disappear in the great deep sea. Mr. Weinberg used to pace to and fro on the steamer deck and see me fifty times a day until, on the third day on the ocean, he spoke to me and sat down by me, and from then on until the last day or minute when we landed we spent our time together talking of our past and making plans for the future. He was fairly well educated, but there we were both of us with several languages at our disposal yet unable to speak a word to any, even the lowest, of the English-speaking ship's crew. Besides, weren't we going to a country to remain, to make our future home, to a country where nothing else but English was spoken and understood? We tried hard to pick up some English words from the sailors and passengers, we studied them and memorized them as if they were part and parcel of our future, as if our life depended upon them -- which was partially true. It helped to while away our time and occupied our minds.

However, this did not prevent us from having occasional sinking spells, when my friend Weinberg would again pace the deck and I would sink down in my corner where for hours we would be lost in thought, of people and places, of dreams and hopes we left behind, and of the unknown land and life, fate and fortune which we were daily and hourly approaching, and like the waves we would rise and sink in our spirits, feel happy one minute and miserable the next, yet all the time looking forward to the day and hour when we would land in the great unknown country.

I do not know how I ever gained the impression at that time that America was composed of a number of large and small islands, inhabited by a semi-barbaric people, free and brave but very much below the standard of the Europeans, and I was thrown often into a blue study of how I would ever be able to settle and live in this new land and under the altered conditions.

When at last we approached New York, our hearts were filled with misgivings, with now and then a ray of hope and gladness penetrating them. On passing the Statue of Liberty we looked at that great monument with unseeing eyes and unfeeling hearts, ignorant of the great ideal it represented and what it really meant for the oppressed of the world, who seek the shores of this country as an asylum, as ^a haven of rest and peace. It was on a late evening of October of 1879 that we landed at Castle Garden, and about an hour later, after passing through a light and inconsequential examination, we were permitted to depart,

By this time it was nearly night. Before us we could see miles upon miles of streets lined with great tall buildings, streets and windows in a glare of gas lights with now and then, at some distance one from another, an unusual large, moon-like globe giving forth a greenish but brilliant light suspended high in the air, seeming to be used as

stars hanging low over the great city. We saw people moving in the streets, hurrying and scurrying in throngs so great as to take our breath away. Later on we learned that these were the usual crowds in New York on an evening going home from their shops and offices. But at that time we were awe-stricken.

A good many of our shipboard companions were leaving us, most of them in company of friends or relatives who came for them, who were kissing and hugging them on the way. Others left taking cars and inquiring their way from policemen on their beats. We alone, Mr. Weinberg and I, lingered and waited, waited for whom, for what? We did not know. We finally were accosted by a one-legged man who had just arrived, asking us in Yiddish whether we were waiting there for friends, since if not he would be glad that we accompany him to his restaurant not far off on East Broadway, where a night's lodging cost only one dollar and a meal 50 cents. My whole capital at that time was just 80 cents. I changed my German money in Castle Garden for American money and got a lot of nickels and dimes with some pennies. Exactly how much I had I did not know. I knew I did not have much but I did not know I had so little until the next morning when our crippled host brought us in the bill, which somehow was two dollars for my share of staying with him one night and eating two meals of coffee, bread and butter. When I handed him all my money, telling him to take out what was due and give me the rest, he half angrily took it all, telling me that I still owed him more than \$1.20, which I promised him to remember and repay in the future. My companion paid him in full, wherefore he was very kind to him and smilingly gave him information about where to find his acquaintances.

We started out on this errand, searching the faces of the sea of people we met on our way for signs of Jewishness, as you may say, to whom we might address our inquiries for the address of the people my

companion was looking for. When we finally succeeded in finding them, we discovered that they lived in a dark basement consisting of two rooms, largely filled up with lodgers who were as poor as they who for a little stipend of 50 cents a week engaged to cook their meals and lodge them. Mr. and Mrs. Rice were, however, very goodhearted and religious. They were not over elated with their new landsman, my companion, but took an instant liking to me. I can see yet the picture, as I have often seen it in the years that have since gone by, the picture of that first evening in the new land, in the land into which fate, more than my will or wish, had brought me on wings of her own making and for the sight of which so many, oh, so many, unfortunates in the lands of oppression, dream such sweet dreams of sometime reaching. The picture of the first evening in that dark basement on Stanton St., New York, where I sat on a broken chair, my host, Mr. Rice, with his old pipe in his mouth, and his wife and two children surrounding me on all sides, deeply thinking what I could do, with no money, with not even one cent in my pocket, to support my little self, and they, poor people, not able to assist me in the least financially.

Every now and then, he would take his pipe from his mouth and while striking a match to relight it, would say in his broken English, "Never mind, never mind, you will not get lost, you will find something, must find something to do." All at once an idea struck him; he got up and was gone; he came back soon, coughing and breathing hard but with a smiling face said, "Nu, nu, it's all right, you will go out in the morning peddling." "Peddling with what?" his wife asked. "Oh, with closet paper, shelf paper and lamp wicks. I made it all right with Schlesinger, who keeps the stationery store near here. He will credit him the first stock; I guaranteed it for him."

The next morning, provided with three gross of shelf paper, all

colors and on one side ornamentally cut out, and about two or three dozen lamp wicks by the yard, I began business, that is peddling. And as that day was Friday, I was cautioned to go only in streets where Jewish people lived, as they were more likely to buy these wares to fix up for the Sabbath. That morning, with the goods tied in a string under my arm, up, up, still higher up, I would climb the stairs, then down again, running to each door and timidly knocking. "Shelf paper, shelf paper or lamp wick," I would shamefacedly say when a lady would answer my knock on the door. Arrived again on the street, and since the houses looked all alike to me, I would often reenter the house I had visited before visiting the last one, but would soon discover my error and correct it.

By 12 o'clock I had sold enough to find by a close count that I had earned 50 cents, and I hurried home to my good people in the dark basement, where my news was cheerfully received and I was greatly encouraged in my enterprise, although my feet hurt terribly and my heart was by far not the same heart I had had only a few months or even weeks ago. It was light then, light although full of hopes and cheerfulness that I would reach, if I but strove to it, a career in the world of learning. But I consoled myself that it was just a beginning, of a stranger in a strange land. If I could but learn the language, I thought, everything would soon be changed for me, and in time, I hoped, things would be as I wanted them to be.

As time went by and I made very little progress in learning the language by myself, I entered a night school; but with all that I was not satisfied with myself. My life, in that dark basement in a crowd of five or six lodgers who were very ignorant, sleeping on the floor on an old mattress among this crowd and hearing their conversation, which was far from being refined, eating old bread and only once a day something cooked, unable to spend even one hour a day in the house all to

myself and having no friends or acquaintances in that large city with whom I could decently converse (even my friend Weinberg was gone to another city to live), was far from pleasant. I felt my ambition dwindling and my spirits became more and more depressed and waning.

As to making a living -- when I made, selling these papers, 50 cents a day, whether I had to work one hour or ten, I returned home. I cared nothing for money, and right there was one of my greatest mistakes. If I had possessed the quality of saving, I would have striven to earn more and in time would have reached the goal of my ambition. The only excuse for this error of my life was my youth and inexperience, as well as the surrounding conditions, with no one to advise me, no one to look up to. So I spent about a year of my valuable time, as I was destined later to spend more of it in the same or similar ways. I was simply floating with the rest of the crew on the sea of life, leaving the beacon of light, which was in my earlier youth always before me, farther and farther behind.

Peddling as I did, I often went out on trains or ferryboats into the neighboring towns, and walking one spring morning in a woods on the Jersey side of the Hudson, I found a German newspaper, The New Yorker Volkszeitung, lying there. I sat down, threw my bundle of wares down, picked up the newspaper and began to read the editorial. The paper was socialistic and edited then by a highly cultured Russian, Schevitch by name, a count it was said he was, who like Prince Kropotkin chose exile rather than to see the oppression of his people. All this I learned later. That spring morning in the Jersey woods, with a host of birds singing over my head in the thick, green-leaved branches, flying and frolicking hither and there in the happiness of their existence, with to my right the great Hudson whose waters mirrored the sun's rays as with millions of golden lights, sending forth at the same time a light

breeze, fanning the trees over my head and lovingly bending the tall grass by my side and all around me as with a lover's breath -- yet unobservant of nature's beck and call for gladness, I sat and read and re-read those editorials. A new world was revealed to me, a new realm on this old earth of ours. Oh, it was so full of sadness, so full of vile crime and oppression of the poor masses by the upper classes. That it was true I knew, I felt it in all my bones and in my heart and soul. Was not I one atom of the body, of the masses, of the great throng of the world's inhabitants who through unjust laws which even in time came to be customs, through prejudice which in time came to be a deep-rooted belief, superstitions called religion -- aye, was not I myself one of the millions who are entangled in that great spiderweb called social system, struggling no less than so many flies to get free, yet getting more deeply entangled, the more we struggle until death relieves us?

As I sat there deep in thought, a new light lighting up my sorrowful past appeared before me and I became a son no longer of Israel alone; the great world became my country and the whole human race my people. Were not the masses, like myself suffering from the same causes, was not their cry for freedom my own? I embraced socialism right then and there in that dark woods of New Jersey. I suddenly found an aim in life. Needless to say, for years I took an active part in socialistic propaganda and helped along with all my heart the little band of workers in spreading the light as we saw it to the blindly groping masses.

My friends and companions were at that time for a year or two German people. I had then moved already into a room for myself; however, I still continued peddling for a living. Early in the spring of 1882 I made the acquaintance of a Russian Hebrew medical student who had studied in Switzerland but on finding himself without means to continue his studies there departed for New York with high expectations of somehow

gaining a small fortune in America, then returning to Switzerland to finish his studies. When I made his acquaintance he was barely making a living from translating Russian and other languages into German for New York German papers and magazines. After finding that I was fairly fluent in the English language, an idea took possession of his brain that he and I could together compose a book for Jews to learn the English language, a book Yiddish-English and English-Yiddish, samples of which he had before him at that time in German-English and English-German. He was to finance its printing, etc. Saying this we both had a good laugh as neither of us had a single dollar. There would certainly be no trouble at all either to find a publisher who would furnish us the means, buy it from us for a fair price; or we could get money in plenty from the rich Jews and Jewish societies whose aim was the elevation of the immigrants to a higher standard and Americanizing them. He was so confident of the success of his plan, and he talked so much about it to me, that I commenced to believe in it myself, and for nearly two months I worked like a beaver to have it finished the sooner. In the meantime I lived on ten cents a day, in fact almost starving myself.

When the book was nearly completed he took the copy one day and went out on a hunt for funds. He found but little encouragement from the societies he visited and we both trembled not a little on being thus discouraged, and that evening we spent in a long discussion of what was best to do in this matter and came to the conclusion that we must do two things before applying to anybody for money. We must first of all get the moral assistance of the Jewish-English press of the city, and secondly, favorable opinions of men high in standing in the community. To do that we must both work together, as Mr. Meyerovitz's poor English made a very bad impression on the people he addressed when he went out on this errand himself. So the next morning I put on my best suit,

which was the one and only one I had, and we both took a car downtown to seek Professor Heilpern, a member of the Historical Society of the United States, and Felix Adler, the great Ethical Society chairman and lecturer, both gentlemen of the highest standing, not alone in the Jewish elite, both really in the city. As beggars have nothing to lose, we stood with our heads high and our hearts sinking before these gentlemen. However, both received us kindly, looked over for about ten minutes our -- rather my -- work, expressed their highest approval, wrote letters of recommendation, and begged us to visit them again.

We were happy, but that was enough work for one day since it would not do to rush matters. I was so elated that I spent that day 25 cents for eating, not forgetting that it was my last piece of money, while my partner went out to see his friends to try them for another loan of one dollar. We were a happy pair. The next morning we looked up and visited both the Jewish Messenger and American Hebrew. On seeing the recommendation we had, they received us and expressed their willingness to look over our manuscript and write us and our book up in their papers. We left the manuscript first with one for a couple of days and then with the other. In that week's issue of their papers we had splendid write-ups, and the week following we started out to see our great financiers and bankers. Mr. Seligman, the first one, subscribed for 150 copies and gave us a check for that many dollars. Mr. Jacob Schiff did the same for 200 copies and gave us a check for \$200. Then came smaller subscriptions. The week ended with over \$600, and we decided to find a publisher.

At that time there were but two Yiddish publishing establishments in New York, in fact in this country: the Jewish Orphans Home and Sarahsohn's office of the Jewish Gazette, that weekly struggling for a living. The editor, Mr. Yalamstein, Sarahsohn's brother-in-law, whom

I knew, induced me to make a contract with them, which we did. We were to pay them so many hundreds of dollars for the first edition of 3,000 copies and a reduced sum for the next, etc. They were to help us sell them and get a commission. We had our book copyrighted, and as it was the first of its kind in existence we were advised to also have it printed and copyrighted in Europe, or rather Russia.

As we had already given Mr. Sarahsohn all the money we had, and as we were very desirous of following the advice of having the manuscript printed and patented in Europe, having no doubt that we would find a publisher there who would do it for a consideration or in partnership, we had to make a further contract with Mr. Sarahsohn to procure funds in advance for this purpose (the expense of going to Europe). He gave me only about \$100, which he claimed was all he could bring up. I then naturalized, procured a passport, and took an old Dutch steamer, since it was less expensive, and after three weeks' sailing I landed at Amsterdam and from there I started out to Russia.

When out on the sea but a few days I got sick. I was not really sick or abed but felt very poorly. Living on ten cents a day for months as I did, while I did not feel it at the time, had not contributed to strengthening me much and the reaction set in. Besides, they had nothing -- it seemed to me -- but beans to eat on that ship. Beans every day for three weeks, this alone was sufficient to make anybody sick. However, I came to Eidkunim, the Russian frontier on the German side, after stopping over for a day to have my passport visaed by the Russian Consul, a matter which cost me a good deal of anxiety and which only succeeded through the kindness of the American consul there, who spared no trouble and time in this respect. In Eidkunim my host of the boarding house where I stopped asked me what I had in my trunk, because on the frontier or in the Customs House, the Russians were very strict about any

books or contraband goods. Why, I told him, it was filled up with books. In fact, every cent I had for the last three years was spent for books, English and German, and I was foolish enough to take them with me. There were no help, my heart nearly broke, but I had to leave them there, thinking I would return the same way and would get them back. But I never passed there on my return trip, and of course never put my eyes on them any more.

I had all the trouble in the world to hide my copy of the manuscript on my person, but I did it successfully and passed the frontier, going from there to Kovno where I stopped over for a few days with the parents of a friend of mine by the name of Lieberman whom I learned to know in New York. There I was in Kovno tramping the streets for nearly two days, yet never dreaming that it was the birthplace of my future wife, where her parents still lived. From there I went to Vilna, the largest known Yiddish publishing city in Russia. For days and days I trotted to the offices of the publishers, but I could not by any means come to terms with them. If I had money to pay them they would do it, but without money they couldn't. They were very kind to me but steadfast in their refusal. From there I went to Warsaw, the capital of Poland, the next largest publishing city in Russia. There too the result was the same.

As I have said, I was sick before, but was feeling worse now from the many disappointments. I had by this time very little money left and from this I paid out the largest portion for doctors and medicine. I lodged with a poor Jewish family whose son and daughter were studying in the polytechnic school. I had to deposit my American passport in police headquarters, and from there obtained a Russian permit to stay, which I had to change every month by paying 80 kopeks. Soon my money gave out entirely. According to promise, my partner, Mr. Meyerovitz,

was to send me every month a certain sum of money, which Mr. Sarahsohn was to furnish. For this money I waited with anxiety. In the meantime I had to borrow some small sum from the poor people I lived with, who could hardly spare it.

After two months I received a small sum with a letter from Mr. Meyerovitz, that the sale of the books was very unsatisfactory and Mr. Sarahsohn was not willing to furnish advances, at least that he had difficulties in getting them from him. However, I must keep my spirits up as he thought matters would soon change for the better. I must keep up my spirits! There I was in a strange city -- a strange city and yet only 25 miles from the place where I was born and raised, only a few hours' travel and in the very city where they came every week to do business. A strange city indeed. But there I was sick and penniless, and what was worse, sick at heart from disappointment. And what was still worse, as I was travelling and living under an American passport as an American, I could not even show myself before anyone who knew me before, could not permit myself to be recognized as a Russian because I was always, as is the case with every stranger, under the surveillance of the secret police, and the least suspicion would put me in prison where even the American government would find it difficult to have me released.

There was only one consolation for me: I had a return ticket to the United States. But how get there? I needed at least 25 roubles to get to the seaport. Besides, I owed over 25 roubles and there I was, after paying up a part of what I owed from before, without a cent again. I did not know what to do, whether to go to the hospital, to prison by letting people know my identity, or commit suicide and thus make an end of it all. I was in this mood when my landlord came to me one day to ask why I did not try to get a few pupils for instruction in English,

fortress. For one of the holidays, as is the custom, he was invited by a rich but very religious Hassidic Jew to eat at his home. There he made the acquaintance of, and soon afterwards fell in love with, his host's daughter, a charming girl of 18 years. His love was returned, but they had to see each other away from home on the quiet. They were happy in each other's love but their bliss soon passed. Somehow her father found it out and raged over the "outrage" wildly, forbidding his daughter to ever see her soldier lover again. However, the young folks managed to see each other now and then and they were waiting for his term of military service to terminate, which happily soon came to pass. On the day he received his discharge he discovered that he had just money enough to buy his marriage license and probably have enough left to live a week after. She was used to a luxurious life, and naturally he felt that he would do her a great injustice to marry her then. He saw her again and tearfully explained his condition. If he had but money enough to go to America, the golden land, he would work himself to death to make a fortune and with it come back and openly beg or demand her as his wife from her father. She -- both of them -- cried like children when she handed him soon afterwards a purse -- the means to go to America. But they were happy in the thought, in their youthful dream, that the end of their trouble would soon come. Perhaps six months or at the longest a year more to suffer, and then a long life of happiness. They parted with the golden land sweetly beckoning him on and the fortune he would make smiling from across the ocean.

Six months long did he hunt his fortune in New York, trying everything in the world to come nearer it, but was never able to approach near enough to this Queen Fortune to even enjoy her least smile. He followed her once to Boston, then to several cities in the South. The pain in his heart, the sad letters from his sweetheart and his own

misfortune drove him almost insane. But he still hoped against hope. However, even this was one day dispelled, after spending two years in this country, by a letter he received from the girl that she was betrothed over six months ago, a matter she hesitated to mention before, and that her marriage was but one month off. She begged him to hurry, money or no money, and come back and save her. He hurried indeed but came to Warsaw to her wedding, too late. He saw her afterwards but she looked down on him with contempt and refused to even talk to him. It was just a few days after this that I met him. He was in despair and on the point of suicide.

We were strange companions, I sick and broke, he too broke and sick, yet I was the more fortunate of the two. I begged my pupil, the manager of the department store, for a position as clerk for my friend. I begged harder than I did for myself, and succeeded. We saw each other almost daily afterwards. He was always melancholy. I never saw him or even heard from him from the day I left Warsaw.

Once I nearly fell into the hands of the police while there. I was in company with a number of students in a public park one evening, when all at once a young man who had known me at home recognized me. He asked me how I was and called me by name. Of course, I made out like I never saw him in my life. He got offended and began to abuse me as a boor. I dared not answer or there would have ensued a quarrel. Just at that moment a police officer approached us. My companions saw my embarrassment and began talking very loudly to each other. That saved me, yet I could not even thank them for the timely and wise interference, for I could not give myself away even if they understood my identity and they certainly knew who I was. This and other matters that occurred made me wish more than ever to leave that country where every day seemed to me longer than a year. But how could I?

At last, after six months, I one day received a sufficient sum to pay up what little I then owed and to have enough left to reach Hamburg. On the day I set my foot again on the train, I was the happiest mortal on earth. If I did not really dance, my heart was dancing within me. Oh, that the train was now so slow; if it would just move faster, faster away from that cursed land where a policeman follows one wach footstep, where a shadow of suspicion is enough to bury one alive and where our poor brethren suffer agonies through no fault of theirs. When at last I saw this country again, I felt like one redeemed from a dark prison and in freedom again. In freedom under the glorious Stars and Stripes -- on the land under the smiling sun of liberty, under a sky full as the stars with blessings and among a people brave and tolerant. The steamer hardly was anchored at Hoboken, N. J., when I ran away and took the ferryboat to New York to discover that all my dreams about ever accomplishing anything higher in life through the the means of the book I made were vanished.

My partner, Mr. Meyerovitz, had gotten what money was due from Sarahsohm, sent me a little and with the rest left this country for Switzerland to continue his studies; while at the same time Sarahsohm showed me a contract made between him and Mr. Meyerovitz in which he virtually sold him the book, rights and all. Fearing, however, a lawsuit, he promised me a certain percentage on the sale of the book. Which never amounted to very much.

Long before I became acquainted with Mr. Meyerovitz, I had learned the cigarette trade, and after coming back from Europe and finding myself cut off from any other source of making a living, I went back to the cigarette factory, where I made from seven to ten dollars a week. I stopped with my foreman's family, who considered me as one of their own kin and treated me well. Mr. Rothstein, my foreman, did everything

in the world to instill into me the virtue of saving some of my wages. But being full of socialistic ideas, I considered money as being the cause of all evils and really the root of the present damnable economic conditions. I despised it and what little I had left after paying for my poor needs, I gave away to others in distress. Notwithstanding this unpardonable habit of mine, my landlord and foreman recognized some good traits in my character, must have done so because he and his wife's family did all they could to induce me to marry a younger sister of Mrs. Rothstein.

Life then in my twenty-second or -third year was monotonous for me. I had by that time given up all ideas of reaching a higher goal in life. I worked all day and considered myself as lifeless as any piece of the machinery, driving, revolving, involuntarily running because of a higher power behind it, pushing and forcing it in this great Mechanism called industry. When night came and the whistle blew for our release -- when I went out into the fresh air I lost myself in the crowds as despondent, as listless and as weary of life and as unfeeling of its hopes and pleasures or happiness as if such were but idle dreams. I doubted myself, doubted the existence in this world of anything else but misery and despair. I lost all delight in reading, I found no pleasure in the beauties of nature or museums. Not one ray of sunshine penetrated into my heart to console, to lighten its aching, bleeding chambers.

However, when after supper I went out to the meetings of the discontented, the revolutionary socialists and heard their oratory and arguments, their hopes for the future in glowing terms expounded, I felt strengthened and my spirits revived. I lived in the future then and dreamed of a better world, one of righteousness, of a united humanity, one not divided in nations or races, clans and classes. A world in

which superstition and persecution, jealousy and hatred, insatiable lust on one side and starvation on the other, vice and crime and oppression -- would be known as past history. A world, in short, where all would have equal opportunities to live and enjoy the fruits of their labor and live in peace and harmony as befits intelligent beings. Aye, thus I dreamed and lived and hoped; and even at times, when I calmly considered the odds against which we few people were fighting, when the social fabric, erected and added to in strength in the past thousands of years, when my mind's eye measured the gross impenetrable ignorance of the masses, the Stygian darkness into which we sought to bring light, the millions of slaves whose eyes we were trying to open for their own good, the difficulties we met in their midst, the obstinacy we had to combat right in their own ranks and the sacrifices we brought daily, hourly, the world over, the irony of the enemy -- when I even calmly considered all that and more -- I felt proud as any soldier feels when he performs his duty to his country. Moreso, because I did my duty to the work, to humanity. These were my night dreams -- my days were gloomy.

It was at one of these meetings on a frosty evening ...

... my future wife.
 ... who was left by her husband in New York
 ... introduced me to her. She held a little
 ... when we met face to face. I liked her from
 ... She looked so beautiful, and genteel, I could
 ... eyes off of her.

The speaker that night was a famous socialist-anarchist, who had just arrived from the old country, who had spent off and on more than twenty years in the different prisons of Germany and England for his brave advocacy of his ideas. He was thundering, criticizing loud and

sharp the existing conditions, condemning them in words of fire -- but for the first time since I had become a member of the organization, I paid more attention to the lady near me than I did to the speaker.

Often afterwards we went to the meetings together. Often did I carry the little girl in my arms then going to these meetings. My heart and soul were still for the cause and I believed that my promised wife was in full accord with me. I did not question her, since I did not doubt it until after our marriage, when I found out that in this respect I was badly mistaken. Still I loved her but rather pitied myself because she did not share in my ideals.

A few months after our marriage I left for North Carolina where I was engaged as cigarette maker with about twenty others. A little later my wife and child came down and we settled down in a small cottage. About a year later our first daughter, Hannah, was born.

Dear Bennie:-

I send you herewith the rest of my autobiography. I did not finish it- leaving out a little over 25 years of my life for obvious reasons. I do not know whether this last part will ever be written. Save this manuscript and when you will ever have time you may rewrite and correct it as I have not the patience nor the time to do it. I wrote it in haste, never even reading over the written pages to correct errors. I have endeavored to give you an authentic picture of my life, not hiding from your view the least incident worth mentioning. My virtues and faults, my life storms and moments of bliss are as those of thousands of other men, who like myself, were reared in poverty, without guide or advisor. I had all the long way, these many years, to grope in almost abject darkness, following only instinct and my heart. If I lost my way often in the dreary waste, or went astray, it was no fault of mine. Looking over my life there is only one thing that I may accuse myself for and that is that I was too much idealistic. That I did not seek the gain of money and the power that comes from its possession. I did not do it, not because I did not understand its value but because it was against my nature. But as I look back and look into my heart I feel that I could not act differently or more honorably than I did and so excuse myself.

Your loving father,

B. Goldgar?