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# Their Life in Russia and in America

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**DR. M. LEVITAN**

**Their Life in Russia  
and in America**

BY DR. M. <sup>*Michael*</sup> LEVITAN  
" "



With Illustrations  
by E. LADUE

**To the country of liberty, freedom, equality  
and justice, the United States of America, is  
this volume dedicated by the author.**

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## PREFACE

The chief aim of this sketch is to show the contrast between tyrannical Russia and good America. In this connection it may be said that leniency of government cannot be conceived without knowledge of tyrannical rule. American government will be more appreciated by the American citizen if he will familiarize himself with the cruel treatment of other governments, especially the treatment Russia's subjects receive from their despotic monarchy. If the reader's conception of the good American government would be exalted through this volume, my task would be fully rewarded. My vocabulary is too scant to supply me with words sufficient to express my gratitude towards my adopted country, the U. S. A., which had given me the opportunity to be received in her embrace in my childhood when I was turned loose from the sharp teeth of the bear (Russia).

I shall never forget my school days of Russia. Many a day I had to stay late at school to wait until my Gentile mates were all gone lest I was marked black and blue by them. I have blamed the children, who were really not at fault, as they were the instruments of their parents and teachers. They merely practiced what they were taught at school and at home. They were not told to strike us Jewish boys, but they were taught to hate and despise the Jew. These teachings they grasped better than any of the other teachings and have proven it by striking the Jewish boys every

chance they got. What a contrast! Who can say it of America? Here they study together and play and live together. They are practically brought up together and meet again, as old chums, in business or in politics when they grow up to be men. Still I can't tell. Were I in Russia to-day I might have been there amongst the best people. I might have been in Siberia, where Russia keeps its most brilliant men and women. Who knows but that some ignorant official would have discovered a volume of John Stuart Mill or of Herbert Spencer in my library and would have had me sent to Siberia for such a crime. Many a Russian was sent to Siberia for no other cause, and why would I have been an exception? However, I'm more than glad to say that I find myself among the best people in my beloved United States of America.

The reason for selecting Jewish characters in the story is because the writer is not familiar with the real life of the Russian Gentile, as he left Russia when he was ten years of age and wasn't much of an observer then. He, however, remembers well the oppression and persecutions he and his family have suffered. Still, he feels safe to state that the Russian government doesn't shun the Russian Gentile. The Russian people are all cruelly treated, the Gentiles cruelly and the Jews most cruelly.

The short piece relating how the Russians adopted Christianity was taken from "The Life and Suffering of the Jews in Russia," by Joseph Boyarsky.

THE AUTHOR.

## Their Life in Russia and in America

St. Petersburg is one of the most impressive cities of the world. It is beautiful and monstrous. The long and broad streets are paved and give magnificent prospects. The palaces are enormous. The churches domed like the heavens blaze with Byzantine splendor. The colossal monuments in the streets and squares are artistically carved. The public parks and gardens with their ornamental statues add to the city's beauty. Commodious two-story cars run in the main streets. St. Petersburg is a city full of life, both commercially and socially. The huge magazines and stores, the theaters and gardens, and all other places of amusement are swarmed with people. To live in the metropolis of the Czar is quite expensive, especially so for the Jew. For the right to breathe St. Petersburg air the Jew has to pay with the blood of his heart and the marrow of his bones. For him there are special laws and every move he makes is very costly to him, as illustrated by the life of the Levinsky family, which is one of the many Jewish families of Russia thus persecuted.

On Vozneshenski Prospekt (a street in St. Petersburg) lived the family Levinsky. This family consisted of Mr. and Mrs. Levinsky and their sons Jacob and Isaac, the latter residing in Vilna. Mr. Abraham Levinsky, the head of the family, was a Nikolaevski

soldat (a soldier of Nicholas I). He served twenty-five years in the Russian army, thus acquiring the right to reside in St. Petersburg.

When ten years old, Abraham was taken away from the bosom of his beloved parents, never to be seen by them again. He was taken to a place one thousand miles from his parents where no Jews reside, placed in a military school where he was drilled and prepared as a soldier to enter the army when at age. He thus gave twenty-five years of his young life to serve the most cruel government, for which service he received abuse and beating and the legal right to live in the Czar's capital, St. Petersburg. Since he quit the service, he was doing odds and ends to gain a livelihood. Abraham had to pay a tax every three months for no other property than his faith, as that was all he possessed; and through his hard labor and that of his son, he barely made ends meet.

It was just evening when the father and son had come from their respective engagements. They were sitting at the table, enjoying their evening tea-drink from the somavar (a self tea-boiler) in the usual Russian fashion, when the door was opened and a letter was dropped on the table. Abraham opened the envelope and read the following words:

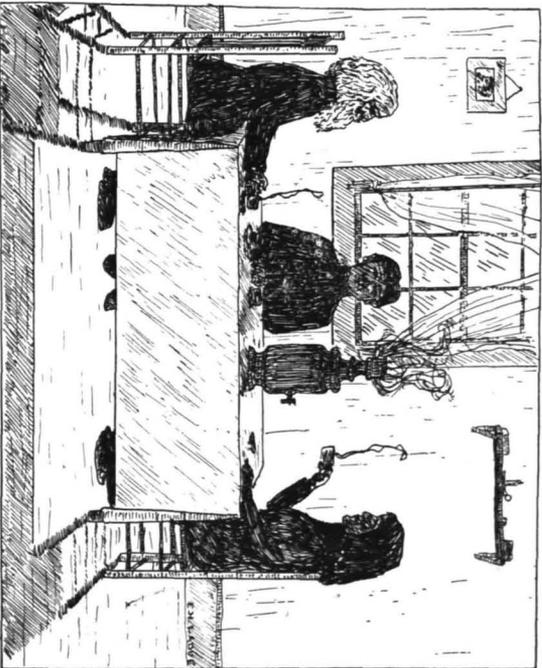
Dear Father:

Owing to governmental oppressions, I can't keep pace with my small business. Am coming to-morrow to deliberate with you.

Your beloved son,

ISAAC.

This letter converted the tea-party into a panic.



The Levinskys Enjoying their Evening Tea Drink from the Samovar



All members in the house were terror-stricken and dismayed. Fear and confusion reigned in Levinsky's house until the worse had come as they apprehended.

"What are we to do? God forbid, if he should have to stay over night again?" said Abraham to his wife. "We haven't recovered from the blow we sustained two years ago, and now they will surely be more severe with us, since this would make the second offence."

"Don't worry," replied Sarah, his wife. "God will help us. I should think that Isaac is aware of what would happen to us all if he should stay with us again. He'll come and talk things over and will go right back."

"I think I'll wire him not to come," said Abraham anxiously.

"You can't wire him now. The telegraph offices are closed at this hour," said Sarah.

"I'm shocked with the thought as I can't forget our last lesson. O cruel Russia, cruel Russia, why are you so barbarous?" exclaimed Abraham in his despair. It was only two years ago that Isaac came to his father on a similar vocation, when he missed the train to go back and had to take the risky chance of sleeping one night at the house of his father or walk the streets till the next day when he could get a train to go home.

For the risky chance Isaac took he and his father paid very dearly, the father with money and Isaac with his health. According to the laws of St. Petersburg, Isaac, who had no legal right to reside in St. Petersburg, had to go to his home in Vilna with the etape (exile under guard), walk from city to city, and from prison to prison until he reached his native city. For the sole crime of staying one night at his father's house,

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Isaac had to march so many miles under guard, spending some time on the way in the Russian prisons with all kinds of low and common criminals. Abraham, however, got off very easily by paying two hundred rubles fine.



Russian Escape



## II

On a bright, cold afternoon in the middle of February, Isaac arrived in St. Petersburg. As soon as he got off the train and started to call an *isvoschick* (carriage driver), his call was interrupted by a voice behind him. It was the voice of a *gordovoi* (policeman) who yelled, "Stoi! Stoi!" (stop, stop). Isaac stopped to turn back to see whence the voice came, and ere he had time to look back he felt a grip of a strong arm.

"Kto tai?" (who are you?) inquired the *gordovoi*.

"Gde tvoi passport?" (where is your passport).

"Ya Isaac Levinsky ot Vilna e zdess moi passport," stammered Isaac from fear. (I'm Isaac Levinsky from Vilna and here is my passport).

"Gde tai idesh?" (where are you going?) continued the *gordovoi*.

"Da moi otetzu Gospodinu Levinsky na Vozneshenski Prospekt," was the reply. (To my father on Vozneshenski Prospekt).

"Kotorai nomer?" (what number).

"Nomera tritzat piat" (number 35).

"Chorosho" (all right), said the *gordovoi*, and Isaac was carried to his father by the *izvoshchick*.

Meanwhile, the *gordovoi* reported to the police station of the district in which Abraham Levinsky lived that Isaac has come to visit his father so that he be watched. There was no need for the officials to look up Abraham Levinsky as they knew him through the bribes they so often received from him on pretense that he violated some anti-Jewish Russian law. The

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officials who are so eager to be bribed, therefore kept a watchful eye on Levinsky's apartments of which neither the father nor the son who had just arrived were aware.

Isaac at last reached his father with whom he talked things over and went right back. He left his father early enough to make the train which would bring him home at midnight, but misfortune blocked his way and he missed the train through an unforeseen accident. Not more than half an hour elapsed before Isaac returned to his father. His father fainted and his mother became hysterical at his reappearance.

"We'll all have to repeat our last suffering," they exclaimed with vexed countenances.

"Don't be alarmed, my beloved parents," said Isaac. "I will not stay here to-night. It matters not how cold and how stormy it is, I'll stay out walking the streets till next morning. Oh, terrible misfortune. One wheel came off that darned old rig and more than twenty minutes passed before he set it back. I arrived at the depot just as the train glided out."

"Hurry up, Jaky, bring water, mother is fainting," Abraham excitedly screamed, not with his usual voice.

"Mother, brace up. I assure you I will not stay here to-night. No matter how cold it is I will stay out all night. Good night folks," Isaac said and left the house. He opened the door to walk the streets all night.

Ere he had gone half a block a hand took hold of his arm. By the grasp he immediately knew that it wasn't that of a gordovoi and therefore was not scared. It was the tender hand of his mother.

"My dear son," she began, "don't go away, for

God only knows whether you will be able to stand this bitter cold; you are so frail. I implore you to come back. If it should come to the worst, we will all go. They can't do more than send us all to Vilna by etape."

Isaac being intoxicated with filial love could not remain deaf to his mother's imploration, and returned home to stay that night with his parents.

### I I I

The moon was shining bright and the city was very quiet. Everything but the cruel officials who are more loyal to bribery than to their country, was in slumber. Only they were awake.

It was about two in the morning when a heavy alarm was given at Levinsky's door. Before they got out of bed they heard the word "Otwore" (open) which sounded to them like the report of a cannon. They hastily hid Isaac in a nook and went to open the door when they found that it had been forced open by the officials. In came two *gordovee*, a *kolodosnick* (captain) and the *dvornick* (janitor) who is held responsible when a stranger is found.

They searched every nook and corner in the house and could find nobody. They finally searched in the cupboards and stoves where they discovered Isaac in an almost suffocated condition, as he was lying doubled up in a narrow stove.

"Aha papal (Ah, we got you), *podem*" (come along).

The *dvornick* was discharged, and Abraham, Sarah, Jacob, and Isaac were taken prisoners. Sarah, Jacob, and Isaac were sent the next day to Vilna by *etape*, while Abraham was sent to Siberia, not so much for his offence as for his lack of money.

It was three months before Sarah, Jacob, and Isaac reached their native city Vilna and were released. During this time and for several months after, they heard nothing of Abraham. They thought that he could not

endure the tortures and must have died from heartache, but in distress life hangs on the longer.

Isaac swore by his only child whom he loved more than his own life that he would not rest until he had brought home his old father alive or dead. He felt responsible for his exile to Siberia and he vowed not to rest until he had recovered him.

## V

At a distance of about ten minutes' walk from Isaac's home, there lived the wealthy Ivan Petrowitz, whose son received notice from the military authorities to appear for military service. Ivan was trying hard to get a substitute for his son but all in vain, although he had offered a considerable sum for the substitution. To evade military service one would not only forfeit money but would cut off a limb in order to be rejected by the medical officers of the army.

Isaac, hearing of the sum offered for the substitution of the son of Ivan Petrowitz, saw a way to bring his father from Siberia.

It was scarcely three years since Isaac had finished his own term in the army. He was, nevertheless, ready to serve another term for the sake of his father. He therefore appeared before Ivan Petrowitz with the following proposition:

"Gospodin (sir) Petrowitz," said Isaac, "I have come to accept your offer. I shall substitute for your son on condition that you give me sufficient means to free my father from Siberia."

"Do you really mean what you say?" asked Mr. Petrowitz.

"Yes, sir, I mean what I say," replied Isaac.

"Well," said Petrowitz, "I will give you fifteen hundred rubles. With this sum you should be able to release your father. This ought to be sufficient to bribe all necessary officials and to bring your father back in safety. Come, Isaac, sign this agreement and receive the money."

Isaac signed the agreement and gave a sworn statement before an attorney. He then received the fifteen hundred rubles.

The following day he prepared for his journey, kissed his wife and child whom he left to the care of his brother Jacob, and off he went to dark Siberia.

## V

After a month's travelling he succeeded in reaching his father and obtained his release through payment of heavy bribes to the Siberian authorities.

It was a bright and sultry day in the middle of July when Isaac returned with his father. Although Abraham was a man of sixty, he looked like one of eighty. The last eight months made him look twenty years older.

The old man embraced his wife and children and bitterly wept from his excessive joy, as he had never expected to see them again. As they were rejoicing on their father's return, in came a military official to call Isaac to military duties, and before he had a chance to kiss his wife and child and beloved parents good-bye, he was ordered to leave the house and enter a military 'bus in which he was taken away.

The joyful tears suddenly changed their aspect and the shadow of grief darkened their home. They all cried and lamented, but no one listened to them. Isaac was gone.

Jacob, who was exempt from military service on account of his defective right hand (lost two fingers), wiped his tears and tried to console his father and mother.

"Stop your sorrowing," said he to them. "Isaac will finish his term of service and will come back to us and the sun will shine in our windows too. The clouds of grief will disperse and happiness and joy will take their place."

"It is easy for you to say that," said Jacob's father. "You have never served in the Russian army and you therefore don't know what it means."

"Truth, dear father," said Jacob, "but your lamentations won't change the situation; then what's the use of crying and taking to heart? The three years will run by and dear Isaac will return to us and you and mother will rejoice in my wedding celebration."

"Wedding celebration!" repeated his mother. "You first have to be engaged to be married. Why don't you try to find a good life partner? I would like to see it already. It is about time that I should see happier days for all the grief I have had," said his mother with a hopeful countenance.

"Believe me mother, that I will not have to search for a life partner," said Jacob looking at his girl, whom his parents had not noticed during the excitement of Isaac's departure.

"Why! do you have a kaleh (intended bride), already?" asked his mother, anxiously.

"Yes, mother," replied Jacob, "and this girl, Sonia, the beautiful Sonia, is my kaleh."

Jacob took Sonia by the hand and introduced her to his parents. "This is Sonia Petrowitz, the merchant's daughter," said Jacob in a most happy manner.

Sarah almost fainted and Abraham ground his teeth from grief upon the introduction of Jacob's intended, but neither of them would utter a word for fear that it would put them on bad terms with Mr. Petrowitz, who was instrumental in accomplishing Abraham's release from Siberia. They only sighed and murmured "a shikshe, a shikshe." (A Gentile girl, a Gentile girl.)

Jacob, fearing that he would awaken his father's anger, which would make it unpleasant for Sonia, left the house to accompany his sweetheart to her home.

The house remained very quiet after they left, the silence being broken every now and then by a deep sigh from the old couple. "Woe unto me, woe unto me," cried Sarah, "I hoped to see happy days in Jacob's new career of life and now my hope is lost. No more happy days for me. I always hoped kind Minnie (a Jewish girl of whom Jacob's mother was fond) to be my daughter-in-law," said Sarah.

"How will I be able to face people in the lodge or in the synagogue?" said Abraham in a very excited manner, walking back and forth with his cap turned up and his hands behind him. "They will all be pointing at me. No, Sarah, he is no more my son; I disown him. He can't come here any more. Let him go with his shikshe! let him go! let him go!" Just as the last word came from Abraham's lips the door opened and Jacob came in. No sooner had he come in than his father opened the door for him and told him to leave the house.

"Get out of here, you are not my son—I disown you. I am a Jew and you are a convert—nay, worse than that, you are a criminal, a robber, an oppressor, a Jew hater like all the Russian Gentiles. Get out of this Jewish house! Get away from my sight you mshumed (convert). While your old father was suffering in dark Siberia from the cruel hand of Russia you were making love to a shikshe. Leave this house at once, or I will wreak my vengeance on you."

"But father, let me explain," said Jacob gently.

"Not a word from you. I don't want your

explanation. Get out—get out, I say!” Abraham grabbed his son by the collar and pushed him out of the house.

“Abraham, you acted too hastily,” said Sarah to her husband. “You should have spoken to him at first and talked him out of this affair in a fatherly manner. Maybe you could talk him over and he would forget her. You ought to give him a hearing at least. I’ll call him back and we’ll try to enlighten his mind,” said Sarah.

“Well, perhaps you are right,” said Abraham. Sarah ran after Jacob and caught him just as he was about to enter the house of his beloved Sonia.

“Jacob, Jacob!” called Sarah. “Come, papa wants to talk to you.” Jacob answered his mother’s call and returned home to listen to what his father had to say.

In twenty minutes Jacob stood before his father, who pleaded with him to abandon the shikshe.

“Listen to me, Jacob,” said his father. “You are young and inexperienced and intoxicated with love—you, therefore, need advice. Just let me put your affair in the right light and you’ll agree with me that you ought to give her up.”

Abraham was old and experienced in life, but very raw in love matters. He did not know that love can convert the sane into insane; the wise into fools, and the millionaires into beggars. He did not know that love can break the fetters of religion and convert one into an infidel.

“Listen, my son. You know how the Gentiles like a Jew, and especially the Russians. Look what we have withstood in our lives for no other reason than our descent. For nearly twenty centuries our race

has been and is still being persecuted by the Gentiles. From the destruction of our Holy City to the present day, Jewish blood has been shed by the race whose daughter you want to make your wife. There isn't a country where Jewish blood was not shed. In the dark, middle ages Jewish subjects were brought to the stake by the hundreds and burned alive. How many Jewish victims did the inquisition of Spain, of Portugal, of France, of Germany and of England bring? and how many Jewish victims did cruel Russia bring and is bringing them to-day. There isn't a month in the year that a pogrom (riot) is not held, in which our Jewish brethren are slaughtered, irrespective of age and sex; the grey-haired old man and the babe in the crib are butchered alike by the brothers of her whom you want to make your wife.

"Just think, for a moment, of their Easter. To celebrate the Resurrection of Christ, the barbarous Russians sweep our brethren through the streets, outrage the womanhood of our innocent daughters, and butcher the aged and the nurslings in cold blood, under the song of 'Te Deum;' and you are going to marry a woman who is of the flesh and blood of those who thirst for human blood.

"Don't forget that such people have no love, and if they do possess it, it is only momentary.

"You'll never be able to associate with any of her friends, for they will disgrace you, mock and sneer at you, scorn your nation and create a disgust for your wife against you. Nay, your whole life may be miserable and dangerous. Therefore take my advice, my son, and give her up. Wound not the heart of your old parents, and avert a life-long misery which is in store for you."

Jacob listened to his father very patiently, and when the latter finished, he began:

“My dear father,” said he, “while your talk is very wise and your historical facts very true you have’nt given any sound reason why I should give up my beloved Sonia. You speak of the cruelty and the persecution of the Jews in the dark, middle ages, when ignorance and its consequences, such as bigotry and superstition were at their height. You speak of barbarous Russia, which is several centuries behind. When the Jews were slaves in Egypt they were similarly cruel and barbarous, because of the ignorance and superstition which prevailed among them at that time. They became refined and godly after they had been delivered from the Egyptian bondage and received the Ten Commandments, which was the guide for their civilization. It was then that the Jews became civilized.

“The Russians are still in slavery. They are slaves to the Czar, just as the Jews were slaves to Pharaoh. They are untaught and uneducated. They are supposed to be Christians, but are not. In proportion to the population very few know the Ten Commandments or the meaning of Christianity or Judaism. It is, therefore, the fault of their ignorance, rather than the fault of Christianity, for isn’t Christianity Judaism in evolution? Isn’t the Christian religion intrinsically Jewish? Weren’t the founders of Christianity Jews? Wasn’t Jesus, who proclaimed ‘Peace on Earth, Good Will to Men’ a Jew? Didn’t he teach not to do unto thy neighbor that which is hateful unto thee? Didn’t he teach to love your fellowmen? Didn’t he teach to love the stranger and the neighbor, and to prejudice

nobody? Then, the fault lies not with the religion, but with the people, who are ignorant of their religion. Ignorance and nothing else is the cause of all the past and present persecution in our dark country—Russia.

“Do you know how the Russians became Christians? I’ll tell you: In the year 987 A. D. the Russians were a wild and savage tribe which worshipped idols and brought human sacrifices. Their chief Vladimir expected the idol Peroon to perform a certain miracle, which the idol failed. Vladimir therefore decided to get another god. He therefore invited the neighboring peoples to explain their religion to him. The first tribe that appeared was a Jewish tribe.

“‘Where is your country?’ asked Vladimir.

“‘In Jerusalem,’ they answered.

“‘Do you still possess it?’ Vladimir asked.

“‘Our forefathers sinned against God so He scattered us all over the world.’

“‘Do you desire that we should have the same fate?’ asked Vladimir, and dismissed them.

“Next came a Mohammedan tribe. They presented to Vladimir the teachings of the Koran that Islam demands temperance. ‘Russ lubit vapit (the Russian likes to drink),’ exclaimed he and sent them away.

“Vladimir was then advised by the other chiefs of his tribe to go to Constantinople to learn of the Greek religion. Vladimir sent emissaries to investigate and these emissaries were strongly impressed with the golden images, with the glow from the many candles, with the vestments of the priests and with the singing in the main church. They reported to Vladimir that when they witnessed the Christian worship they didn’t know

whether they were in heaven or on earth, and upon this report Vladimir decided to become a Christian.

“Being too proud to ask the Greeks for a religion, he first showed them his strength. He besieged Constantinople, and after a short fight sent word to the Greeks that he would cease hostilities if the king’s daughter would become his wife. The answer came from the daughter herself that she would marry him if he be baptised. He was baptised and married her.

“His subordinate chiefs were baptised also, because they said what was good for Vladimir was also good for them. Vladimir ordered to destroy the idols first and then ordered the whole population—men, women and children—to be baptised under the penalty of death. There was no preaching, no praying, nor converting; the Russians were ordered to become Christians and they obeyed. This is the way they accepted Christianity, and this is how they practice it. If one is not a Christian it is a virtue to torture him, to rob him and even to kill him, for this is how they are taught from generation to generation. I’m sure that, with the giving of an opportunity, every one to be taught and educated, the persecution and murder of our unfortunate brethren, or of those who are not of the Christian faith, would cease.

“You take, for instance, the intelligent and educated Russian. He knows of no prejudice. Jew and Gentile are alike to him. He is a true Christian; he follows the doctrines of Jesus, which are the humane virtues taught in the Old Testament. By reason of his civilization he practices Judaism, and is, in a sense, a Jew because Christian virtue is Jewish virtue, and Jewish virtue is Christian virtue, and virtue is the basis

of religion. The German writer, Lessing, said: 'What makes me a good Jew makes you a good Christian.' Therefore any one who wishes to be taught and educated and pursue a virtuous life practices in accordance with the Jewish faith, and is a Jew irrespective of what church he belongs to, for it is the deed and not the creed which counts.

"My beloved Sonia, father, has great thirst for knowledge and for good deeds. She is familiar with the Old Testament and Jewish history and will surely lead as virtuous a life as most of our Jews. More so, she is even willing to practice Jewish rites and customs. So you see, father, that my future wife is not a shikshe, but a Jewess, according to morality and virtue."

Abraham, who was neither bigoted nor superstitious, took to his son's words and finally asked whether Sonia's father, Ivan Petrowitz, knew of their affair.

"No, father," replied Jacob, "Mr. Ivan Petrowitz doesn't know it."

"How can you come to tell him that you want his daughter," asked Abraham.

"Sonia, herself, will speak to him about it to-day, and I am sure that he will not be against our match," said Jacob.

"Although Mr. Petrowitz isn't narrow-minded, he isn't fond of a Jew, and a poor Jew at that," said Abraham.

"I shall not be a poor Jew when I'll be his son-in-law," said Jacob, with a joyful smile. "Mr. Petrowitz loves his daughter too much to object to our match, and he will surely let her choose the one she loves," said Jacob, convincingly.

At these words in came Sonia with an extraordinary countenance. She called Jacob aside and told him that her father consented after a long talk.

Jacob turned to his father and said: "Dear father, Sonia brought us good tidings. Her father consented to our match and I see no reason why you should be against it."

"Well," said Abraham, "if you are good enough for Mr. Petrowitz, so Sonia is good enough for me. Come here, children, shake hands and may the Lord bless you both," said Abraham, with an air of contentment. In order to avoid racial differences on both sides, Mr. Petrowitz and Mr. Levinsky agreed that the latter, with his family, should emigrate to free America with the former's daughter.

The Levinskys, who longed for liberty, were only too glad of the opportunity. They, therefore, sold their store and household furniture and prepared to depart.

## V I

The Levinskys settled in New York and established a general merchandise store on Grand street. Although in a new country and among strange people and with a new tongue, they nevertheless succeeded in business, and were very prosperous in every way. While they were enjoying life in the free United States of America, Isaac was receiving abuse and beatings in the Russian army, and mourned the loss of his beloved wife and child, parents and brother, as the letter his parents sent him, while they were on the way to America, did not reach him, and Isaac thought that they were surely killed in the recent pogrom of Vilna. Isaac read in the Russian newspapers that his parents and his brother were accused of stealing Mr. Petrowitz's daughter for the purpose of ritual murder, which resulted in a pogrom in which, as Isaac thought, all his beloved before mentioned paid their death penalty. Isaac was more abused and beaten in the army now than ever, because of the recent occurrence in Vilna. He also had to pay three hundred rubles for the escape of his parents and his male child from Russia, or serve a prison sentence after the expiration of his term in the military service.

As he was bewailing his present deplorable situation he received a letter from his parents from America. He almost fainted from joy when he read of his beloved people being alive and enjoying life in the country of liberty and equality. He suddenly became inspired with a new idea. He decided not to wait until his term of service had expired, but would leave the

army and at the same time his native country and go to his beloved wife and child in America, and thus avoid either fine or imprisonment which he would have had to suffer at the expiration of his service. That very same night he escaped from the armory and started off. The following day he bought an old-fashioned lady's dress and a grey-haired wig and in the guise of an old woman he succeeded in reaching the German border, from which place he safely journeyed undisguised until he landed at Castle Garden, Ellis Island, New York.

## VII

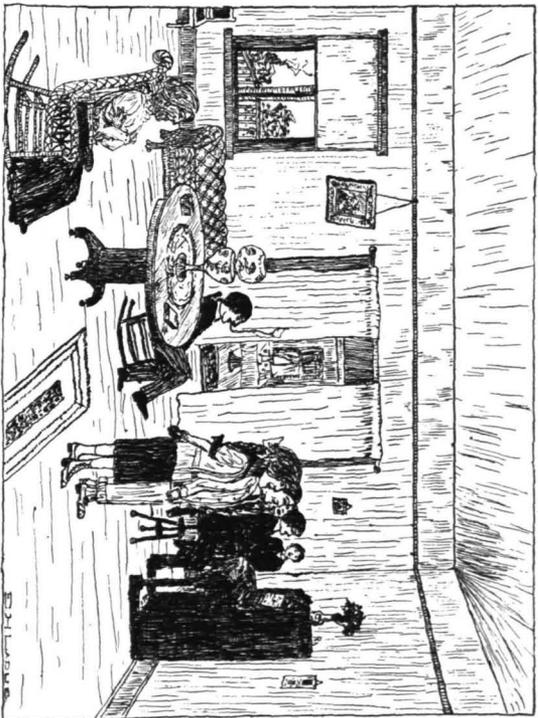
Although the Levinskys worried about Isaac, who remained in dark Russia to serve in the army, their home was full of merriment. Almost every day friends called on them to entertain them. All lights were turned on, Isaac's boy, Samuel, who was now nine years old, played the piano, and several young ladies were singing, while others were joking and laughing. Suddenly the door opened and a messenger boy came in, who asked for Mr. Levinsky. Mr. Levinsky was called and the boy handed him a telegram. He opened the envelope in which he found the following message from his son, Isaac:

"Have arrived this evening at Castle Garden.  
Come to meet me. Your son,  
(Signed) "ISAAC."

The old couple were almost completely overcome from their sudden joy. With these tidings the merriment only increased. Samuel played the more and the girls sang the louder.

Abraham and Sarah wanted to go at once to meet him, but were told that it was too late for them to receive admission, as the clock struck nine and Castle Garden closed to visitors at 5 P. M. They therefore waited patiently until the following morning, when they went to meet him. Their meeting was very pathetic. They strongly embraced each other, and kisses, mingled with tears, were exchanged.

Isaac and his parents got into the ferry which brought them to Battery Park. From there they took a carriage which brought them to their home. Isaac



Levinsky's Home in America



dearly embraced his wife and child and kisses, mingled with tears, were once more exchanged. He told them of his sufferings, abuse and maltreatment while he was in the army; how he escaped and how he came to the United States.

"Thanks to Heaven," said his old mother, raising her hands to Heaven, "at last we are free from the hands of Russian persecution. Here we can live and let live. Here there is no *gordovoi*, no *kolodosnick*, nor other devils to disturb our peace or our nocturnal rest."

"Lord bless this country of liberty and justice, which keeps its doors wide open to receive the oppressed and the persecuted," said old Abraham, devoutly.

"At least when one serves in the army of such a country of equality it is worth the while," said Isaac.

"Yes," said Abraham, who was already a little Americanized and acquainted with some of the laws of the country, "here there is no compulsion to serve in the army; it is with pleasure that they voluntarily join and serve in the American army, for which service they are humanely treated and rewarded."

During this discussion in came Jacob and Sonia. The two brothers fell into each others arms and kisses were again exchanged.

"Do you know this lady?" asked Jacob.

"No," said Isaac.

"This is Sonia—Mr. Petrowitz's daughter and my future wife," said Jacob. We would have been married if it were not for you. We felt that we could not celebrate our wedding in your absence; we were, therefore, impatiently waiting for the expiration of your military service, and now that you have acted wisely

and came to us sooner we will celebrate our wedding sooner," said Jacob in a most happy manner.

"Yes," said Isaac, "I read in the Russian papers about the pogrom which happened in Vilna on account of it. They accused you all of ritual murder and I mourned until I received your letter from America, as I felt sure that you were the first of those who were killed. Thus you bought your wife at the expense of the lives of our brethren, who were the victims of the pogrom," said Isaac.

"What!" said Sarah, surprisedly, "there was a pogrom on account of it? Woe unto me! Woe unto me! Maybe because of the sin that Jacob committed by m——," said Sarah, keeping in the remainder of what she had to say.

"I implore you, mother, not to speak of such nonsense," said Jacob. No people on earth sin more than the Russians and still there are no pogroms for them."

"Well, Sonia," said Jacob, to his sweetheart, "you probably have forgotten my brother, Isaac. Well, meet him again, then."

"No, my dear Jacob, I cannot forget your brother, Isaac, for the good he has done my brother."

"Let us talk of something gayer," said Jacob. "Let us make plans for our wedding to-day, in honor of Isaac's early arrival and let us all enjoy a merry time."

The wedding was planned the very same day as Jacob suggested, and the date set was to be the first Sunday in the month following. A hall for the wedding reception was hired and all necessary preparations were made.

On the appointed Sunday in the latter part of the

afternoon, the ladies in silk and satin and the gentlemen in full dress suits, accompanied the bride and bridegroom to the synagogue (Beth Hamedrosh Hagodel on Norfolk street) where the wedding ceremony took place. The bride and groom were led to the chupe (canopy) by the unterfurer (leaders), according to the usual Jewish custom. The band played and the cantor with the chorus sang wedding hymns.

After the ceremony the bride and bridegroom with all the guests went to Clinton Hall, where the reception took place and a supper was served. After the wedding the bride and bridegroom went to their newly-furnished home and the guests went to their respective homes. All had their share of enjoyment, and everybody was happy.

Had the wedding occurred in Russia it would probably have ended in the loss of some lives, as quite often happens. Some musicks (peasants) always seek the opportunity to make a riot at a Jewish wedding, in order to mar a Jewish entertainment.

## VIII

Six years passed when Jacob and Isaac both became naturalized. They mastered the language in that short period and took a great interest in politics and in general public affairs. Out of love to their newly-adopted country they studied United States history and the Constitution with little Samuel, who was now in his third year at high school.

"I thank the Lord every time I see Samuel with his books," said Isaac. "Where in the world could a man of my means send his boy to gymnazie (high school) in Russia?"

"Blessed be this humane country," said Jacob. "Many and many a poor boy, who could never see a university in Russia, acquire here a very fine education and become lawyers, doctors, architects, engineers, etc. It is true that they are poor financially, but are rich intellectually and are by far better off than a good many of a like profession, who are financially rich in Russia.

"In this great country there are no restrictions against one's advancement. No matter how poor one is he can attain the highest positions in life—if he has the ambition and the perseverance.

"There are no savage laws nor race prejudices to bar the entrance of a university. The Jew and the Gentile, the Italian and the Irish are as welcome as the American, provided they have complied with the laws of education; provided they have gained sufficient knowledge to follow a college course.

When Isaac had been long enough in the country

to qualify him to hold a political office, he was nominated and elected assemblyman.

In his campaign addresses he urged the Jews to become naturalized and to be loyal citizens, for in no country are the Jews safer than under the "Stars and Stripes."

His good work was in proportion to his love for his adopted country. In the Assembly he did all in his power for the citizens of his district, and set an example of loyalty to all who knew him.

Not only was he a good citizen, but was good, kind and charitable in general. He was always ready to assist his fellow-creatures morally and financially, to the extremes of his power. To every institution he lent his moral and financial aid and took an interest in public meetings.

At a recent Zionist meeting at the club of Ahavath Zion, where he was invited, there came up the vital question of a Jewish State. Upon this question a good many maintained that no matter in what country a Jew lives his aim should be a country which he could call his own. Mr. Isaac took the floor at this point and declared that it is one's duty to consider his own the country that guarantees him safety and liberty. He declared that the American Jews have a country of their own, and that this country is the U. S. A., and that the Jews of other liberal Republics have a country of their own—the republic whose flag gives them protection.

"The only Jews who have no country of their own," continued Isaac, "are those in Russia and in similar barbarian countries, where the Jew is unprotected, and that it is for these Jews that we all ought to work in

common to secure for them a country of safety."

Isaac having been persecuted so many years in Russia, appreciated American freedom and, therefore, proved to be a most loyal citizen of his adopted country.

The Levinskys, who were oppressed and persecuted, with no right to raise their heads in the country of tyranny and barbarism, have attained high positions of life in the country of liberty and justice. Their descent made no difference, and they enjoyed all the rights and privileges of equality with the American Gentiles. Here they were not known as Jews but as American citizens. The Americans, through their system of schools, are an enlightened people and know that there is nothing base or low in the name "Jew." They know that it means a descendant or follower of Judea, whereas the Russians see a devil or low being in that name. In this great civilized, educational United States of America the Jew and the Gentile understand each other and live like brothers, and God sends equal blessings upon them and upon their country.

While this country is not absolutely free from race prejudice it is more so than any other country in the world and proves the fact that the more civilized a country is the more liberal it is and the less race prejudice it exhibits, and with the advance of civilization and liberalism race prejudice will be wiped off from the face of the earth.



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