

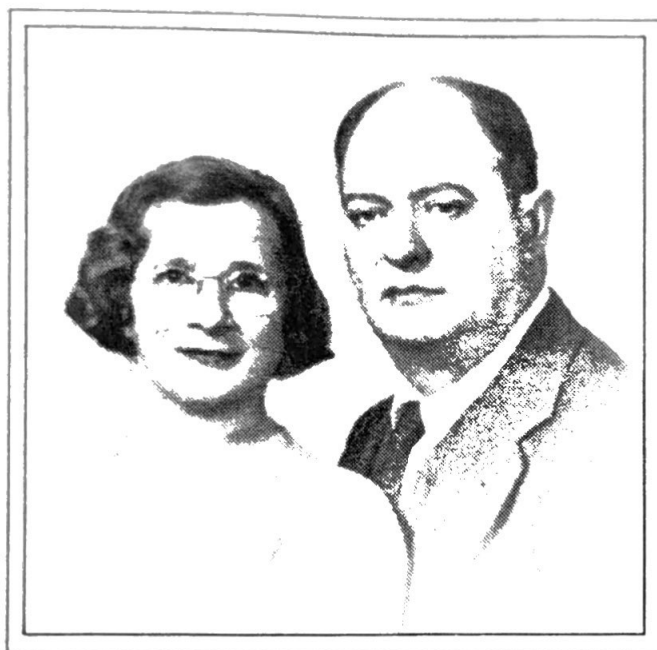
My Life in Retrospect

Albert Daniel Saporta

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Albert Daniel Saporta
(1898-1979)

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Albert and Aurelia Saporta

*To my dear Mother and Father
and to my Wife*

Albert Saporta
New York, N.Y. April 1976

Preface

Since my retirement in 1962, I have been debating in my mind the idea to write about my family, my beliefs and the high points of my life. On this sixth day of Passover, my birthday, I have decided to proceed with my story.

In my formative years I had good schooling and good tutoring with emphasis in the study of languages. Unfortunately, this did not include English which I started to learn when I emigrated with my wife to the U.S.A. in 1922.

Busy as I was earning a living, I had to neglect my literary pursuits. I have learned English by reading newspapers, periodicals and very few books. Despite this lack of formal instruction, I am able to express better my thoughts in this language.

Narrating my impressions and the salient events of my life will entail a literary effort that, I hope, will not be beyond my capabilities.

I will bring to this task a keen memory and a good sense of observation. I will also bring passion to this memoir that, at this point, I do not know if I ever want to publish. I am aware of the fact that the reading public is too biased nowadays to be interested in the vagaries of an unknown author who, late in life, succumbed to the writing bug.

I just selfishly wish to be remembered by my nephews and nieces, possibly by their children and grandchildren. My recollections are intended to describe to them their antecedents and an era in the saga of a segment of Sephardic Jewry.

The history of nations, families and individuals reveals their qualities and defects.

My foremost desire is to inspire with my story members of my family now living or still unborn in achieving material success and spiritual satisfaction. I wish them to be endowed with the qualities of their heritage and in correcting the shortcomings to participate in efforts to bring a better life on this planet, the only home known so far for the human race.

NEW YORK, N.Y. APRIL 20, 1976

My Life in Retrospect

The last decade of the nineteenth century has been called in America "The Gay Nineties." Side by side with a public attitude of frivolity here and there, some nations were engaged in war or internal strife.

Those years were marked by the Sino-Japanese, the Turkish-Greek, the Italian-Abyssinian and the Spanish-American Wars. It was also the period of the massacres of Armenians by the Turks, of the Zulu uprising and the assassinations of President Carnot of France, of the Shah of Persia and the Empress of Austria. The list of tragic events not related to each other seems never ending. The most blatant conflict nearer our home in Salonica was the Turkish-Greek War of 1897 in which the Turks were the victors and the Greeks paying them \$20,000,000 reparations. Newspaper readers were informed daily of these events as they occurred. Ladino periodicals informed Salonica's Jews of worldwide happenings.

The Jews all over the world were affected by the pogroms in Kishinev and other towns in Russia. It was also the decade of "The Affaire Dreyfus."

In the last two episodes, the Jews in general were apprehensive if not terrified like those directly involved. The savagery of the pogroms inspired revulsion in every decent person and pity for the Jewish victims. On the contrary in the Dreyfus Case, the collective honor of the Jewish people was placed in jeopardy in the world's public opinion.

An antisemite clique dominated the political scene in France. Alfred Dreyfus was a Jew and a captain in the French

army. He was accused of selling French military secrets to Germany. He was, of course, innocent and a victim of treachery. He was tried and convicted in 1894 and deported to Devil's Island, a French penal colony for hardened criminals in the tropics.

A few voices clamoring for justice were heard. Among others Emile Zola published his famous pamphlet "J'accuse." Jean Jaures and Georges Clemenceau rallied to the Dreyfus defense. The latter, known afterwards as "Le Tigre," wrote fiery articles in his newspaper revealing the intrigues leading to the condemnation of the unfortunate captain. Maitre Labori, the famous barrister, introduced pleas and his eloquence turned the popular tide in favor of the accused. In 1899 he was brought back to France, retried and pardoned. The efforts of celebrated great men did not cease until Captain Dreyfus was totally exonerated in 1905 and promoted to major. In the aftermath of this drama he was decorated with "La Legion d'Honneur" in 1935.

In Turkey, particularly in the thriving city of Salonica, the pogroms in Russia and the Dreyfus Case were discussed in cafes, clubs and all places where the Jewish public congregated. Although living under a benevolent Turkish regime, this Jewish population was following the daily events in both cases. By a twist of irony a Jewish young elite was educated in the Schools of the Alliance Israelite Universelle, imparting French culture to Jews. This group was frustrated for the treatment of Dreyfus by French justice. They were elated and relieved when the innocence of the accused was proved.

I was born in this "fin de siecle" in Salonica, in an atmosphere of fear and hope.

It is said of the month of March that it smiles through the rain, while nature is secretly preparing spring. In Salonica on a late March day, a few snow flakes were

still lingering in the air.

In this kind of weather, on the sixth day of Passover, my father was sitting with friends at the Cafe Crystal after a busy afternoon. Suddenly an uproar was caused in this relaxed atmosphere by an interrupting girl shouting: "It is a boy, it is a boy." This is how my father was informed of my birth in this friendly gathering. The bearer of such joyful message was entitled to a generous tip called "mooshdeh." This consideration was partly the cause of the eagerness of the servant girl of our house to bring the news of the happy event. Happy indeed, after the birth of two successive girls to my parents previously.

Since time immemorial the birth of a male child was cause of great rejoicing. To this day, some people greet newlyweds with the wish: "Good health and male children."

During their lifetime my parents had apparently a deep love for their sons and their daughters alike. On close observation one could distinguish a special solicitude for the girls. By this unconscious attitude they probably were responding instinctively to the old adage: "My son until he gets a wife, my daughter for my lifetime."

In certain Jewish circles in the past, the birth of many successive girls created many responsibilities for the head of the family. This prompted my father to take an insurance on his life after the birth of my sister Julie, his second baby girl. A father had to educate girls properly and accumulate enough money for their dowry, lest they remain spinsters all their life.

Before my birth my mother was offering charity and invoking divine providence to give birth to a son, for my father's sake and happiness. They were overjoyed when I was born.

The instinct of self reproduction in man is sustained by sexual desire and by the joys

of parenthood. A factor also is the wish to have the name perpetuated through future generations.

According to tradition in Sephardic families, I was named after my paternal grandfather. In the order of things, if I would have a son, he should have been named after my father. Destiny provided otherwise; I have no progeny.

All my brothers and sisters had children. The wish of my parents was anyway fulfilled when they held in their arms grandchildren named after them.

* * *

Some learned men have always tried to know about the mystical past beyond recorded history. Some individuals just try to trace their ancestry as far as possible. I am one whose curiosity is aroused by their family's past.

In my adolescent years, I was fascinated by my father's recitations of our illustrious ancestral lineage. This, I considered then as exaggerated tales. After reading some historical facts about the Saporta family, what I had defined as legends before, had indeed a solid historical base.

Sephardic Jews for the most part have adopted as family names, names of towns formerly inhabited by them or a description thereof. The Saporta family name originated with a description of a citadel (in the province of Saragossa?) whose peculiarity consisted in having six doors in its fortified walls. Six doors translates in Spanish "seis puertas," thus Sasportas, Saportas and finally Saporta.

Some Jews lived in the Iberian Peninsula when Carthage and Rome ruled there successively. A further Jewish population influx occurred after the destruction of Jerusalem's second temple by the Romans. When the dispersion started in the year 70 C.E., groups of Jews took refuge in towns

of North Africa. Looking still for safer havens, some of them came to live in what is now Spain. In the seventh and eighth century when Vandals and Visigoths invaded the peninsula, a sizable Jewish population was already established there. Sephardic Jews, jokingly, call themselves the original Spaniards. There is good reason to believe that they were there before the ethnic group forming the population of the country that is today's Spain.

Professor H. Graetz, the author famous for his monumental "History of the Jews," has devoted in it a few paragraphs to one Samuel Ben Abraham Saporta. He describes him as a young scholar of Catalonia who, in the thirteenth century, was engaged in a controversy with the rabbis of France. These were opposed to certain doctrines formulated by the great Maimonides. In a letter to them, young Saporta called them ignorants in a matter they knew nothing at all. At the end he was vindicated by the changed opinions of these rabbis who accepted the tenets expressed by the respected Doctor and Philosopher Maimonides.

Enoch Saporta, a Talmudist of the fifteenth century, emigrated from Catalonia to Turkey in the 1460s. Graetz credits him with being partly instrumental in overcoming the bitter hostility of the Karaites towards Talmudic Judaism.

Rabbi Finkelstein is an erudite and eminent contemporary historian. He is the author of two volumes of Jewish history. In it, he cites the same Enoch Saporta in having persuaded the sultan to give safe asylum in Turkey to Jews fleeing the persecutions of the inquisition.

In 1492 the expulsion of Jews from Spain took place. Most of them took refuge in Turkey. Since then, due probably to this man Saporta, Jews have lived in Turkey, unhindered in their religious beliefs. (The reflections expressed in the last paragraph are entirely mine.) Rabbi Finkelstein cites also the history of a Marrano Saporta family. They

were five brothers, all of them doctors in medicine. One of them, Antoine Saporta, was personal physician to King Francis of France. This Saporta family was reputed for the longevity of its members.

Rabelais, the French author and satirist of the Renaissance, on the first page of his book "Gargantua and Pantagruel," mentions meeting Antoine Saporta, in the "Auberge de La Reine Pedauque," the gathering place in Paris of the "bons vivants" of that epoch.

Based on the preceding historical facts, my conjectures are that the Saporta family was divided in two different concepts in the beginning of the second part of the fifteenth century. The Talmudist Enoch Saporta, inbred in Jewish tradition and reluctant to convert to Christianity like other members of his family, emigrated to Turkey. Others of the same lineage, in their desire to remain in Spain and avoid the persecutions of the Inquisition, abjured Judaism. This served them very little and they could not escape the cruel dictates of this tribunal. Their life was submitted, like other converts, to the scrutiny of Catholic zealots. Reluctant to submit to a life without privacy, the five brothers emigrated to France where their profession served them well. A grateful king conferred upon them noble titles with all its privileges for medical services rendered to the Royal House. Actually, Saporta families are scattered all over the world. The majority of them profess a liberal Judaism. Some titled Catholic families reside in France.

* * *

I have attempted to trace my ancestry but I could not go beyond my grandfather Saporta's life and even about him I do not know many details. I do remember when he died at age 82 in 1910. I have heard many times that his father, Isaac Daniel Saporta, died leaving him an orphan when he was eleven years old. He had a younger brother known in the family as "Hermano Yaco." He had also a sister known in the family as "Hermana

Pava." I ignore if she was older than my grandfather. My Granduncle Yaco lived his adult life in the town of Seres in Macedonia. I had a few opportunities to see him and his wife, known to us as "Hermana Bona" (Nee Alcalay). One daughter (they had no sons) was married to Liaou Simha and her name was Riketa. Although they were both born in Seres they came to live in Salonica where they raised a family. Another daughter, Estherina, was married to Salomon Fais and I knew some of their children when on occasion they came on a trip from Seres, their home town, to Salonica. One of them in his mature years found employment at the Discount Bank in Geneva. Izy Fais and his wife Rosine were among the circle of our few relatives residing there. They all were frequenting the house of my late sister, Mathilde, when she was residing in Geneva in the 1950s and 1960s. When I was a child, I remember visiting with my Grandfather Saporta, my father and my uncles, Isaac and Peppo, in the house of widowed Hermana Pava, she was living with relatives (a daughter?). She was a diminutive old lady and one could see in her radiant face the joy she felt to see her brother and her nephews with evident happy families visiting her in the festivals of Pessah and Succoth. As was the custom she gave each one of us a hard boiled egg to take home. This was symbolic that our homes should be full like the life contained in the egg. Besides knowing that this grandaunt had a son exiled for mysterious reasons to Tripoli in North Africa, I knew very little about her family.

My grandfather remained a widower for some-time, following the death of his bride of a few months. He married a second time and the name of his wife (my grandmother) was Mazaltov Hassid, popularly known as Alhassi which is a corruption of "El Hassid," an ancient Jewish name of the times of the Moors from Spain. She was fourteen when they had their first child. They had ten children, six boys and four girls. The names are: Diamante, Isaac, Daniel (my father), Joseph (known as Peppo), Doudoun, David, Flor, Samuel (at times known as Meluccio), Marie

and Leon. They all lived past the three scores and ten. The only exception was my Uncle Peppo who died at 48 in 1917. My aunts Diamante and Dodoun died in their nineties.

* * *

On my mother's family side, I know very little about her parent's relatives. I even ignore if my Grandfather Benusiglio had brothers and sisters. He married my maternal grandmother, Giudetta Mordoh, and these are the names of the six children they had, four boys and two girls: Liaou, Samuel, Shemtov, Moshon, Rahel (my mother), Grassia. I was fortunate enough to have known all my uncles and aunts and all my paternal and maternal cousins. As a child I played with some of them. My mother had a cousin named Shemtov Mordoh; he was a self appointed rabbi who could be seen at weddings, funerals, ect.. On certain days of every week he went to the house of relatives and friends to read a few psalms and other appropriate prayers of the day. He was a taciturn individual who would sit for some time and without uttering a word enjoyed sipping the coffee and the sweets offered to him during these visits for meager fees. Another cousin of my mother was Shemtov Saffan. He was the local supervisor of the Standard Oil Company, acting in this capacity under the direction of a manager delegated from America. His father at the time I knew him was a retired warehouse manager (magasinier) of the Alatini Flour Mills. He worked only a couple months every year as my Uncle Isaac's and my father's buyer in the town of Gumendja during the months of May to July in the period of the cocoon's new crop. It was necessary then to lay out large amounts of cash money and Liaou Saffan was reputed for his scrupulous honesty.

My Grandmother Benusiglio died of diabetes about one year after my birth at the age of sixty. My grandfather Benusiglio in his old age was semi-incapacitated and needed special cares. He could not live in the intimacy of his home with a woman. (I ignore if this was a social or religious rule of that time.) He married Tia Binbinou, a widowed sister of my Grandmother Saporta.

At the age of four, sometimes sooner, A child starts to register in his mind some impressions and his memory keeps the salient points of an event. The important happenings in our family before the year 1902 were eventually related to me or I heard someone talk about them. From that time on, I was able to record in my mind some facts about myself, my surroundings or some conspicuous public incident. Particularly, in the latter case and at such early age, reminiscences, although accurate, might not be cited by me in their chronological sequence.

* * *

I have some recollections of an earthquake that kept most of the population of Salonica living outdoors for a few days. My grandfather Saporta had a factory near the section of town where the arsenal (tophane) was located. In it a few spinning mills were operated with a quality of double cocoons (boudalak) producing a coarse silk thread. The major quantity of cocoons was sorted in this factory by girls as for size, color and quality and made ready for export in bales of about one hundred pounds. The factory building surrounded a huge yard. Tents were erected on it to accommodate a large crowd of relatives; it was my first encounter with aunts, cousins, etc., that I can recall. Finally the tremors subsided and everyone returned home. Generally, damages were confined to some plaster cracks on walls and breakage of glass and chinaware.

Among my souvenirs of that event, I will mention a trivial incident that became for me eventually a source of observation of the different behavior of cats and dogs. In a respite of the tremors, my father, mindful that our house cat was kept indoors without food, went home and brought the house pet in a sack to his warehouse where he could be fed with the other cats kept there of necessity to give chase to mice and rats that otherwise would create havoc damaging precious merchandise. Upon our return home, there was our cat roaming around the house. In escaping

from the warehouse, he had covered a considerable distance through tortuous streets to return to his habitual environment. While a dog will follow his master anywhere, a cat will ignore the most friendly person and remains only attached to his habitual abodes.

* * *

My brother, Jacques, was the first one of us children to be born in a house which we owned. At the dawn of the new century in the year 1900, my father bought the property for his increasing family. It was then known as the Pereira House, the name of the family who resided there previously and who sold it to emigrate from Turkey.

The house was built on a large plot between two parallel streets and on the other two sides it was flanked by an adjacent building. The only entrance to the house was from one of the streets. It gave access to a patio with a small blooming garden. A corner was covered by a pergola forming a ceiling of white roses in full bloom in season. Pots planted with lillies were forming a ramp on each side of the open stairs leading to our second floor apartment consisting of six rooms. The huge kitchen had an oven fit for a bakery. I remember my dear mother busying herself every Thursday afternoon and Friday morning preparing cheese pies (pastel y borrecas), baking bread and cooking a variety of foods to be consumed by the family on the Sabbath. One of the rooms nearer to the kitchen had no windows but on one corner of the ceiling it had one glass opening through which a precarious light pierced the darkness. It was known as the dark room (la ouda'scoura) and it served as sleeping quarters to the two servant girls of the house. Besides the bed, closets and trunks containing food, clothing, curtains and draperies etc., completed the furniture. Between this room and the kitchen, through an internal flight of stairs, we had access to two other rooms separated by a small hall on a third floor. Their windows were facing the patio below with its flower bed and the wall of the adjacent house. A gardener named

Dimitri was coming a few times every year and he managed to cover this wall with red roses in season and with ivy and other climbing foliage all year around. These two rooms were converted into a small apartment by adding a small kitchen and a toilet by erecting a partition in the larger room. It was forming an angle on one of the sides overlooking the street. Through four windows in a sort of dormer protruding through the wall, called "shayneeshee," we had a clear view of the entrance street and the size of the room was somewhat extended. From our second floor the rear of the house was fronting the other street. Three stores below our apartment were rented to small craftsmen and on this side our house had only two floors while on the entrance side it had three. Three rooms of our apartment were facing a huge court surrounded by small rooms. These served as shelter and workshops to gypsies who were hammering all day long forging small kitchen articles. This courtyard was called "zinganeria." The sale of these household objects permitted a meager subsistence for these folk's miserable lives. Their women were begging especially on Pass-over's eve. They were coming to Jewish homes when bread and other food not permitted during this holiday was given away to them. Eventually, this "zinganeria" was replaced by a furniture factory erected in its place. This building did not last long; it was destroyed by a night fire. The conflagration threatened our house at a certain moment when the iron shutters of the windows facing the fire were closed; they were placed there for such an emergency. It was a near miracle that the stores in that street, mostly workshops for the manufacture of cotton blankets, were not affected by the huge fire. From the windows of a "shayneeshee" in the parlor located between two bedrooms, we children were watching, when not otherwise at play, the day's lively scene and the quiet deserted street at night. Another spectacle that delighted us and we liked watching from these windows was when, on the last two days of Ramadan before the Moslem feast of Bayram, Turkish shepherds were bringing their herds of sheep to the city. On awakening in the morning, I was surprised to see from the "shayneeshee" of

our parlor room, the whole street occupied by the herds of sheep making monotonous noise with their incessant "beh." Every once in a while during the day, a customer would single out a sheep that had struck his fancy and after a price was agreed with the shepherd, the new owner would go with his sheep. It would be sacrificed on Bayram and the meat consumed by his family. During the feast the Turkish stores remained closed and the deserted street was white with lime that the health authorities had used to disinfect the dirt left by the herd.

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I do not know under what circumstances my father rented one bedroom, a couple years after he bought the house, to my dear mother's brother, Shemtov, married to Rahel Revah. He and my father had been friends and companions in their bachelor days. The tenancy of the couple did not last long because my Uncle Shemtov got sick and died after a short time. I do remember this period well because during the funeral and the seven days of mourning (Shivah), I was staying at my Uncle Isaac's house; my parents did not want their children to be confronted with sad events.

The third floor apartment was first rented to a pleasant couple, Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Afias, with whom my parents entertained friendly relations. After one year they moved to more ample quarters. The next tenants were my Uncle Yaco Assael with his wife, Grassia; she was my dear mother's youngest and only sister. She was a sweet dear lady and I will have other opportunities to refer to this couple in the course of my narrative. They never had children of their own and all their affection was reserved for nephews and nieces. My brothers and sisters being nearer, we had the best part of it.

The house had another apartment located in a semi-elevated basement. It was occupied by a family who did not pay rent but the woman of the household was coming to us upstairs two days a week, on Sunday and Monday, to work as a laundress. We had successively two such families as our

tenants. The first one consisted of a couple with an adult daughter. The girl was in love with a man without the approval of her parents. To dissuade her of her infatuation, her mother performed some acts of sorcery. I do not know of the outcome of this affair but, I do think now, that these incidences of sorceries were remnants of two centuries of obscurantism following Sabetay Sevi's death. The man of the house was employed as a gate keeper at a point of the city limits. His duties consisted in collecting a small municipal tax on wheat and other grain entering the city. He was not a municipal employee but he was acting in this capacity as a collector for the account of a merchant who had bought the rights to collect this tax at a yearly auction promoted by the municipality. This man, Liaou Strouti, was very devoted to my father and very partial to my brother, Jacques. He sat the child on his shoulders and paraded this way in the streets around the house. After a few years this family moved out following their improved financial condition. Another couple with an adult son moved in the vacated apartment. The woman, the same as her predecessor, was our laundress. He worked as a tailor in the house, sitting on the floor fakir style. His work consisted in sewing ornamental cordons contrasting in color with the cloth of tight legged but otherwise baggy pantaloons. These were popular among elegant Turks. Pants shaped this way but of cheaper cloth without the fancy cordons were the working clothes of Turks and other nationalities including Jews. The young man in this household was employed as a porter (hammal) in my father's warehouse. He was paid a half pound a week (about \$2.50). With this income he lived more or less comfortably and managed a certain elegance in clothing European style, in his leisure time.

The majority of the Jewish population was dressed up European style of the latest fashion except for the older men who were wearing a robe called "antaree." A silk or wool belt contrasting in color with the robe separated the upper and the lower part

of the body around the waistline. On top of the robe they wore a light caftan during the summer months and they called it "djuben." For winter wear it was of heavier cloth lined up with fur; this completed the wardrobe of these elderly and conservative Jews. Their head was covered with a red fez with a black tassel. Religious Jews were never bare-headed, in the house they wore a white yarmukle called "haratchin"; one never knows when the Eternal has to be invoked and his name should not be pronounced with an uncovered head.

Women were wearing the latest Parisian fashions but elderly and conservative women were wearing a robe opened up at the chest. This part was covered by a more or less elaborate plastron sometimes made of expensive lace or of coarse linen, depending on the richer or poorer wearer. On top of the robe for outside wear another garment made of heavy silk called "sayo" denoted the social position of the wearer. Below the waistline an apron was covering the robe and these three garments were long enough to cover the ankles of the ladies wearing them thus saving their modesty in front of the children in the house and strangers in the outside. In summer they wore a bolero called "capitana" and in winter a three quarter coat lined up with fur. The head of a Jewish woman had to be covered at all times and for housewear they used a thin multicolor handkerchief folded to form a triangle fit to cover the hair entirely and it was called "moomee." For outer wear they used a headgear called "tocado." It was formed by a sack of light green silk in which the braided hair were concealed. It was hanging on the scruff and the back for thirty or thirty-five inches. This oblong sack was finished at the end by a stiff velvet square decorated with baroque or seed pearls and a flat tassel of green silk threads was hanging at the end of it. The sack was attached to a veil cloth laying flat on the head and covering part of the forefront. The weight of the sack was continually pulling backwards this ridiculous headgear and the ladies were carrying a piece of carpenter's glue.

Everytime their "tocado" was slipping back, with a wet finger and the glue they fixed it on the forefront. Both of my paternal and maternal grandparents used these antique wearing apparel, as did the other conservative Jewish bourgeois.

* * *

My brother, Sem, was born sometime after the death of my Uncle Shemtov and he was named after him. (Sem is a diminutive of Shemtov.) My dear mother, who could not bear to call her baby by that name after the loss of her brother, recently started to call him "Fratelli." This is how he was called by everybody until his student years in Milan, when of necessity he resumed his real name of Shemtov.

The birth of my brother, Sem, coincided with an epidemic of typhoid affecting for the most part young children. My parents had a hard time caring for us. My Uncle Yaco with my Aunt Grassia devoted their best cares for the last born Fratelli. When my baby brother was well again, he became their favorite pet child. During the period that the disease prevailed, drinking water was boiled and other hygienic standards were adopted. For a time it was thought that an anonymous baker was the carrier of the typhus germ. Taking advantage of this situation, a modern bakery known as the "Forno de Frances" started business. Our distributor for this bread baked with sanitary methods was a rubicund little fat man named Matteo. The fresh loaves were carried in two huge hampers by a donkey. The supply during morning hours necessitated renewal as the supply was exhausted. Now in retrospect I see Matteo as another version of Tuvia the milkman, the character of "The Fiddler on the Roof." Their common trait consisted in having daughters of marrying age and both relied on luck to see them happily married. Their hard work did not offer a fair chance to accumulate dowries by delivering milk or bread. The difference between the two characters was that our baker lacked the exuberance of Tuvia and was rather morose in his dealings with his customers.

The fiction character and the real Matteo were two lovable individuals.

* * *

Jewish mothers in Salonica were putting their babies to sleep singing to them lullabies in colorful archaic Spanish. When their offsprings were a few months old, parents in the same ladino jargon, playfully cuddled them with these verses half melody and half recitation: Torah, Torah, (the name of the baby or child) will go to school with bread and cheese and the book tight to his chest. Where are you going child of God?

I am going to learn the law of God.

God keep you and your mother and your father who is a good Jew and the midwife who at birth assisted you.

I was reared in this atmosphere of reverence for God and I heard my parents repeating the same tune for each one of my brothers.

Since that early age parents were dedicating their sons to a life of work to earn a living (bread and cheese were considered the staples to sustain life) and to a life of learning of the Divine Law (Torah) contained in the Book. This was my first notion of God and its law. I have recollections of the time I was five or six years old. My Grandfather Benusiglio greeted the visit of his grandchildren with a melody whose approximate translation is something like this:

Abraham venerated ancestor and beloved father as you went out you saw sunshine.....

This was my first notion of an ancestor called Abraham. I kept hearing more and more of God but in my childish mind I was trying to find out who he was. Where was he, this God that everybody seemed to implore? He inspired me with more fear than love.

I imitated my father in his motions when he recited his prayers every morning. I felt a sense of frustration because I could not attach phylacteries around my arm and place the little square box on my forehead. I was saying "kadosh" aloud and elevating myself on my toes with a jerky move with closed

eyes. Later on I understood that this is caused by the fervor in beseeching God saying "the universe is full with His glory."

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The population of Macedonia consisted of Turks, Greeks and Bulgars. To this, other nationalities of mixed ethnic origin could be added. In Salonica a preponderant part of the population was Jewish. From this city a few hundred Albanians were shifting back and forth according to season to their vilayet in Albania. Some of them were Halvadjis, (they were experts in the manufacture of halva) and were residing in Salonica during the winter months. In the spring they were replaced in the same store by someone else from the same vilayet who made only yogourt (halva was not consumed during the summer months). In all seasons they kept the store open until late at night because they even slept in the place. Some of them worked during the summer sawing logs for provident people who were preparing a supply to burn in stoves during the cold season. Albanian boys of ten or twelve years of age were placed in houses to serve as errand boys and other menial jobs for their keep and a meager pay. They were treated kindly by their employers and it was a better life for them than in the home of their parents in Albania where they had to suffer the rigors of the cold weather. We employed such a boy for a few seasons, our supply of logs was made during the summer; they were cut to size by Albanian "yurukes" on the sidewalk in front of the house. They were neatly stored in the cellar located in the basement apartment. This supply of logs was enough to feed four stoves to warm our apartment; it served also as fuel for the oven in our kitchen. A funny experience existed when we thought of hearing suspicious noises coming from the vacant basement. My father would go downstairs accompanied by me and my brother, Jacques; armed with a log we thought of surprising a burglar. Our fears never materialized; it was probably a cat roaming around who had upset some object in the vacant apartment used as storage for discarded articles.

The Jews of Salonica formed a compact block of more than one half of the city population of 180,000. It was the only group that was not a cause of trouble for the ruling Turks. The Jews were left free to attend to their religious, social and commercial activities. All the ethnic groups were intent to create incidents and destroy foreign property to force the intervention of other governments for the protection of the interests of their nationals living in Turkey. Bands of Bulgarians and Greek rebels called "comitadjis" were roaming the mountainous countryside and harassing the authorities with armed skirmishes and bombings in the cities. They were fighting for an independent Macedonia. Kidnapping of persons for ransom was not unusual. I vividly remember such an occurrence: A brother-in-law of my Uncle Isaac Saporta was abducted by Bulgarian comitadjis during a business trip in the mountainous region of Macedonia. No wonder Judah Yacoel was seized as a hostage: he was also a brother-in-law of Jacques Nissim Pasha who was an influential medical doctor in the army. The abductors expected a rich ransom to be paid for his release. A regiment of soldiers was dispatched to comb the mountains and run down the kidnappers. After a few days of anxiety for his family the prisoner was released. It was said at that time that the price of one thousand turkish gold pounds was paid for his safe return. Following his release, Yudah Yacoel was employed as buyer in the town of Gumendja a couple months every year at the time of the new crop of cocoons. In this capacity he was acting for the account of my Uncle Isaac and for my father.

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Since I can remember, my father had his main warehouse and office in the "Ishteera" section of the city. An enclosure in the warehouse was the office. It was large enough to contain two desks, two safes and a few chairs. One of the desks was permanently occupied by my Uncle David during office hours who had at his right one of the safes. The main product stored in this warehouse

was cotton. It arrived continuously mostly from Seres and other points of Macedonia where it was cultivated. It was sold to other merchants, to the Sides cotton mills and at retail one bale here, two bales there to manufacturers of cotton blankets. Another quality of cotton received from America consisted of layers of the product contained neatly in packages in compressed bales. It was sold to craftsmen for the manufacture of clothing lined up with layers of cotton. I see my Uncle David explaining to customers how to use these layers of cotton (bou pambouk douroudan dourouya mintanlara yededjek). They were the first ones in Salonica to introduce this quality and their pioneer work consisted in giving instructions to buyers how to use this product which saved the users efforts and time. Another inside man in the office was Yusse Dassa, an employee in charge of book-keeping. He was married to my Aunt Doudoun, a sister of my father. His other functions included the collection of dues to the firm on Friday. This was the day that generally transactions for cash concluded during the week were settled. The banks were very busy on Friday and as the Sabbath was approaching, everyone was rushing to finish up the collection and other business at hand. Every adult Jew was rushing before sunset to barber shops to get a shave and to the "kalouptchee" to put his fez in shape as to have a neat appearance on the Sabbath. It was time also to pick up plastrons and shirt collars brought in during the week to be starched. In short a feverish pitch seemed to pervade the atmosphere before the quiet of the Sabbath (Shabath Menouha).

My father had another warehouse in the "Ishteera" and it served for storage of wheat and other grain. It was opened only to receive merchandise or for shipment abroad or for transfer to a buyer's place locally. Another activity of the business was concentrated in a store located almost in front of the municipal building very near to our house. It was the place for the manufacture, storage and the sale of cotton blankets. This store was near also to an adjacent street where the

carding of cotton was concentrated in different stores. It was the same street where the rear of our house was located and, as the streets had no names, it was called "The Carding Street " (La Caleja de Los Alatches). From our windows, we kids were watching the activities going on in these shops. The artisans for the carding of cotton were all Turks. They did not have the intricate machinery for their work done entirely by hand. They had a long contraption, a sort of wooden arc in which a wire was attached at the two ends. The craftsman sitting on the floor was holding the contraption with one hand and with a heavy round block on the other hand he was hitting on the wire on top of a certain quantity of raw cotton. It was very hard work but it was a perfect job of carding. The material was ready to go into the blanket; it was then necessary to sew the entire surface in intricate designs and this last job was done by experts in the art of sewing. The store on Municipality Street was designated as "David A. Saporta, Depot de Couvertures" although totally owned by the firm Daniel AB. Saporta. It was managed by a very capable Turk. He was sitting on the floor sewing blankets with two other subalterns who called him "oostaa" (supervisor). He was also in charge of the sales. I cannot refrain of thinking now how progressive we have been in the last fifty years when machines have replaced work done by hand in the past. Tuberculosis was rampant among Turk workers who were absorbing cotton dust continually.

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A regime of capitulations in Turkey consisted of a set of privileges and powers reserved by some western nations for their citizens residing in Turkish territory. The prevailing policy of the Turkish government was to avoid incidents involving foreigners. The scheme used by the comitadjis was to destroy property to force the intervention of western governments for the protection of the interests of their nationals living in Turkey.

Among the privileges was the one permitting Austria, England, France and Italy to operate

post offices in Turkey with extra territorial powers. We had four such post offices in Salonica, each one displaying the flag of its respective country, distributing mail, selling stamps and transacting postal business as done in their respective national territory.

The Turkish postal administration was less than perfect. The circulation of internal mail was hampered with good reason because the streets had no names except the principal avenues and the buildings were not numbered. For instance, our house was designated as "the second from the corner of the street facing the municipal building on the right." The distribution of the mail to business establishments proceeded more or less regularly. Anyway, those receiving bulk mail rented a box at the Turkish post office.

The telegraph office was administrated by the Turkish authority with fair efficiency. I remember the daily delivery of telegrams at my father's office or even late at night to our house. The Bulgarian comitadjis were intent in disrupting the postal service at a sensitive point and they choose the Austrian post office for this purpose.

The plotters rented a store on Colombo Street and from there they started to dig a tunnel under all the width of the street reaching underground the Ottoman Bank Building. They placed there a big charge of dynamite due to explode at the same time as the bombs placed at the Austrian post office located a couple hundred yards away. The city experienced a night of terror. The impact of the explosions created a nightmare with loss of life in the vicinity of the affected buildings. Material damage was extensive; the Ottoman Bank Building was partially demolished.

Repression and punishment of the culprits by the Turkish police and armed forces was swift and suspects were detained. The popular saying of the day was "the janissaries are in town." They were the Turkish version of the cruel Russian cossacks, although the corps serving for the sultan's guard had been disbanded many years before. Every Bulgarian on city streets that night or the following morning had to give a good account for his presence there otherwise

he was summarily executed. The Jewish population was totally exonerated because the Turks knew too well that the Jews kept aloof of plots against them. A few Jewish citizens, innocent bystanders, were momentarily detained. After proving their religion by reason of their circumcised penis, they were immediately released. This was the case of an old milkman, an uncle to my Uncle Yaco Assael. He did not want, even in these tragic circumstances, to miss his delivery of milk on that morning. I also remember with these mass arrests and executions the pitiful case of a couple living in a small house opposite to us. She was the daughter of a Greek priest and midwife by profession. He was Bulgarian and employed as a clerk in a textile wholesale house. To all appearances they were innocent of any wrongdoing but they remained indoors for quite a few days, scared to circulate in the streets. My sister, Mathilde, was robbed of a cape she was wearing on top of her coat by a soldier. After this incident, we children would not venture out of the house unless accompanied by an adult during this troubled period.

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The Jews of Salonica and Turkey in general were left undisturbed in carrying out religious, social and commercial activities; most of the trade was under their control. On Saturday when the Jewish population of Salonica was congregating in synagogues, cafes or clubs, the whole city assumed an air of festivity. On that day my father went for his morning prayers to a small synagogue near to our house. My Grandfather Benusiglio who was residing nearby was also a congregant there. My father, after returning home from morning services, headed a special Saturday morning breakfast partaken by the whole family. Then, I accompanied him for a visit to his parent's house. From there in company of my grandfather and my Uncles Isaac and Peppo we went for a visit to my widowed Aunt Diamante. With small children to raise up, this weekly visit served to

boost her morale. She owned a beautiful house on the quay and I enjoyed the sight of the small boats swinging on the water. It was time then to return home for lunch. After the afternoon siesta, I accompanied my father out again. Our first stop was at the big "Kahl Mayor" where we joined one of the many succeeding "Minianim" for the afternoon prayers. At the age of five or six all I could do was to repeat, amen, when everyone present was saying so and wishing the services to be terminated quickly. From there it was a short walk to the main square named a few short years after "Place de La Liberte." It sounds pompous, but let's not forget that after Ladino the French language was spoken by the major part of the Jews of the Near-East. Generally my father would meet his friends at the Cafe Crystal, one of the four on this main square. From there one had a superb view of the gulf with the peaks of Mount Olympos far away on the horizon dominating this splendid scenery. While the group was engaged in conversation my mind was concentrated on the mountains that fascinated me. Across the quay on a marble jetty were two kiosks topped by a cupola, they served as headquarters to the harbor police. I was hearing continuously of the comitadjis and I imagined the police force so near pursuing the rebels through Mount Olympos. Since my early childhood I was on the side of law and order in my day dreaming.

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I was intrigued when on Saturday night upon returning home after a Sabbath of prayers and leisure my father would recite the "Avdala" to greet the new week. All the adults present would join him in melodious tunes after the sniffing of a lemon. The procedure seemed strangely mysterious to me. Little children are confused by visions of this sort when they are not able to comprehend the meaning of it.

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In the first decade of the twentieth century there still existed in Salonica several small

synagogues. In connection with their function as such they were schools. They were the domain of self appointed rabbis who were teaching children of four to ten years of age the rudiments of the Jewish religion and how to read the Sacred Books. The discipline was severe without regard to children psychology. Rebellious children were punished by having an iron contraption, called "sepos," attached to their ankles keeping them close together and in this way unable to walk. The punishment did not last long but the shame of being submitted to it was a deterrent of bad conduct. Such a synagogue was located in front of our house. It was known as the "Kehila de Yaco Comprado." I could never understand if "Comprado" was his real name or this designation was the corruption of the more common name of "Benforado." Anyway, he was the landlord of a vast court to which a flight of stairs gave access on descending it from the street. At the left was a group of shabby apartments and at the right the synagogue was located. I remember a group of women sitting in the open air outside of it on the high holidays of Roshashana and Yom Kippur. They were trying hard to catch a glimpse of the services going on inside. My dear mother was among the group of devout ladies but a chair had to be carried from our house for her when the weather was good, otherwise the women could not attend services because no place was provided inside for them. Yaco Comprado was the rabbi in charge and as Hazan at the services. He was also the sole teacher of children entrusted to his good care by the parents who did not want their offsprings to travel far to go to school. As very small children, I went with my brother, Jacques, to this "Havreca" for a very short time. Once my brother tried to escape but he was caught by our long-bearded teacher who submitted him to the shameful sepos; it was a good lesson in discipline. More serious institutions called Yeshivoth were teaching more mature boys Torah and Talmud. Learned men were assembling in them to discuss certain points of Judaic law assuming sometimes academic proportions. Some of these erudite individuals were paid by the community for such

discussions and their society was called "Assara Batlanim" (The Ten Idle Men). They were generally discussing some obscure point of law. At times when a cultured individual went beserk, the popular saying was that he had studied Kaballa.

More adequate education was provided by the "Asile Pour Enfants," an extension of the school for younger pupils of the "Alliance Israelite Universelle" functioning in the Near-East and North Africa. It was founded by a group of French Jewish philanthropists headed by the French Jewish statesman Adolphe Cremieux. Conditions of poverty and ignorance in those regions were appalling in mid-nineteenth century and this was the principal reason for the foundation of schools imparting French culture in this part of the world. Another kindergarten was established much later by the "Hilfsverein Der deutschen Juden," but by that time French was very popular and it met very little success. My parents were very happy when I reached the age to see me educated by outside instructors. On a rainy morning, the same servant girl who had announced my birth to my father took me in her arms to the "Asile" located a short distance from our house. These classes provided me for the first time contact with other children. The surroundings were pleasant and under the guidance of a motherly lady teacher, it was more play and songs than instruction.

Another kind of kindergarten existed then. Women busy with their last born did send their children from three to five years of age to a house nearby where they were attended by a woman called "La Mestra." After my asile hours and on Saturday, my brother, Jacques, and I were sent to such baby sitting sessions. It was the reverse of what takes place nowadays: the baby sitter comes now to your house; then children went to the house of the baby sitter. On a Saturday afternoon while my father was having his siesta, his rest was interrupted by an earthquake. Mindful of

what happened a couple years before in similar circumstances, he ran through the streets in house clothes to make sure of our safety. It was a false alarm without consequences. On coming home I related to my parents that very same day my brother, Jacques, asleep leaning his head on a table, was awakened screaming after other children had poured water to his ear. This marked the end of our going there.

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After a few months I started to go unaccompanied for the short distance from the asile to our house. Even in such a short way, one is able to encounter situations that leave indelible memories. Returning home from school one afternoon, I heard screams coming from across the street. My curiosity was aroused and I went to take a peek through the shutters. I witnessed then a frightful scene. Two women were weeping and screaming in contorted gestures as they were going around a corpse. They were shouting the virtues of the dead person laying on the floor covered in a white sheet. Professional weeping women were waiting for a moribund to expire to start the lamentations. A deceased person ought not to leave this world without some tears shed for him or her. The duration of this dismal display was in accordance with the amount of money paid for the performance. This was my first vision of death and in those few moments I did not realize the mournful scene I was witnessing. My mother, conscious of the psychological effects on a child's mind confronted with sad events, always segregated us in a room concealed from street view when a funeral procession was passing by. It was frightful indeed for little children to witness such a procession when even the two horses pulling the hearse were covered from head to feet with a black fitting coat.

Instruction in Turkish was not obligatory and scantily regulated. In Salonica, they had a few schools teaching the Turkish language with a high curriculum for the benefit of the rich and bureaucrat Turks. Two such schools were the "Feziyeh" and the "Idadyeh." They were mostly attended by Turks with a few Jewish boys among them. My Uncle David, after completing his formal education in the French language, attended a Turkish school. This permitted him to be prominent in writing Turkish. Upon graduating from these schools those students who wanted to enter the professions as doctors, lawyers, etc., had to go to the university in Constantinople. The capital city of Turkey was the only place where such courses were taught. Among the Jewish students graduating in these institutions I will cite the renowned surgeon general, Jacques Nissim Pasha and the famous lawyer, Emanuel Salem. Another lawyer was Emanuel Carasso, better known as a political figure. The percentage of illiteracy among Turks was great.

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Each ethnic group was maintaining his own school in Salonica. Here too, with a majority of Greek or Bulgarian students, occasionally, a Jewish student was among them. My father attended classes for one term in a Greek school. After that he was enrolled in the private school of Federico Filardi. Subsequently, it was replaced by the Scuola Elementare Italiana and by the Scuola Commerciale Italiana, established by the Italian Government. The Italian language taught there became second in importance to French taught in the Alliance Schools. These were divided in the "Asile Pour Enfants," the "Ecole Primaire et Secondaire" for boys and the "Ecole Primaire et Secondaire" for girls. Another division was a school known as the "Ecole Populaire" with a lesser curriculum of studies. My father was an impatient

student and he quit school for business at the age of thirteen when he ran away to Seres to his Uncle Yaco Saporta. He remained there for one year. Those families who wished their children to receive only a Jewish education, enrolled them in Talmud Torah. Those students attaining the higher classes, besides receiving an excellent education in the Torah, were taught the rudiments of the French language. Upon graduation, those who wanted a rabbinical career were taught in the seminary "Beth Yosseph." This was the alma mater of some erudite Salonica rabbis.

Every Jew wanted at least his children to read the prayer book before going to earn a living and in many parts of town there existed schools called "Havra" where those children of the poorer families were taught. Another institution for French learning was the "Mission Laique." Most teachers there were French born. In other schools where French was taught the teachers were locally born and educated for the exercise of their profession. The Lycee Francais was located in a rich part of town and as the name implies no religion was part of the studies.

Contrary to this the Catholic "Mission des Freres" maintained a school for boys and the "Soeurs" were teaching girls in separated classes. The majority of the students were Jewish. It seems a paradox to send a Jewish child to a school to learn French from teachers who were Catholic priests. Jewish pupils were excused during catechism classes and boys and girls were so thoroughly indoctrinated at home in the Jewish religion, that no risk was contemplated in their attending classes in a Catholic institution. The tuition fees were moderate and the courses excellent.

Among the private schools, I will mention the Altchek School for Boys. Another

learning institution outstanding for the greatest number of successful men who had graduated there was the "Ecole Franco-Allemande," so named because French was taught and German as a second language. During the First World War the name was changed for obvious reasons to "Ecole Gattegno," the name of the principal owner.

After my kindergarten years, I was enrolled in this school where I have received my primary and secondary education. This was the time of my happy adolescent formative years and my memory is crowded with episodes of that period of my young life.

Classes in our school were conducted until late July when vacation time started. It finished after Succoth when a new term began. During my first year at this school, in 1906, because of the terrific heat on a July afternoon, classes were dismissed early. Coming home, I noticed a joyful agitation. My mother had given birth to my sister, Allegra. The sexes of the children had evened up, three girls and three boys. All the attention was devoted to the new born baby for the next few months. To record this happy period, my father took the whole family to the best photographer in town. The familial group was displayed after for posterity, including Leah, the servant maid, considered part of the family, holding baby Allegra in her arms. My brother, Leon, was born one year and a half after and was designated by my parents as "the son for our old age." His birth occurred on a Saturday night. My father was not home yet and my uncle, Liaou Benusiglio, passing by and waiting in the living room (called varandado) with we children, thought of having heard the midwife call "bemazaltov," denoting that a baby girl was born. As my father was entering the house, the midwife emerging from the bedroom greeted him with a resounding "besimantov" indicating that he was the father to another son.

My Uncle Liaou had erred in hearing the first greeting of the midwife, assuming that a baby girl was born. This happy event was the occasion of elaborate festivities. As it was customary my father presented my mother with a pair of heavy gold bracelets, one of which my wife proudly displays now. For many years it was a continuous fondling of the last born by all of us.

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My brother, Leon, was born during a period of political agitation in Turkey. The cruel Sultan Abdul Hamid was ruling the country as an absolute monarch. He disposed of his political enemies by summoning them to his yildiz palace. It was rumored that in his devilish mind he devised a way to make his opponents disappear, causing them to glide through a contraption to the bottom of the Bosphorus with a heavy piece of iron attached to their feet. On July 24, 1908 a popular uprising caused by a party known as the "Young Turks" forced the sultan to accept the promulgation of a constitution and free elections to a legislative chamber of deputies.

For some time the country was busy with celebrations for the newly acquired liberty for the Turks and the different nationalities in the Turkish Empire. Enver Bey and Niazi Bey were the two heroes of the revolution. I was very much impressed when I saw them on horseback, parading through the streets of Salonica with the comitadjis forming a guard of honor. The crowds were greeting them with shouts of "long live liberty." At night festivities were celebrated by illuminating the outside of government buildings whose walls were covered by lanterns containing a candle. In addition pipes with hundreds of gas-burners kept the streets in the vicinity illuminated in fairy scenes. We assisted to such spectacles because our house was located

near the municipal building.

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An unprecedented period of commercial activity developed. My father while actively conducting his business had time also for spiritual and intellectual matters. He joined the Freemasons of the Lodge "Veritas" of the Grand Orient de France. He had the passion of a novice for the goals they were trying to attain. One of their aims in that period was the prevention of cruelty to animals. The most flagrant example of inhumanity was the way horses pulling carts were whipped. Where public authority had failed, a few spirited citizens took charge in educating the carters for more compassion for the animals helping them to provide a livelihood for themselves.

My father was undergoing then, what I will call, a religious crisis. It was noticeable that he did not put his phylacteries on his forehead and around his arm when he recited his morning prayers. He just read aloud a few psalms instead of the Matutine Orations; he no longer wore on top of his underwear the cloth with strings on the four corners with God's name spelled in knots. From then on, no more in our home the separation of dishes of milk food and meat. The festivals were celebrated with more emphasis on their historical and spiritual significance but less on their religious solemnity. He would explain those changes as not caused by capricious fancies but by the teachings he was receiving and after he was convinced of their truth. My dear mother who was brought up in a strict conservative Judaism, as a loving and dutiful wife, did not raise any obstacles in the gradual changes of religious observances in our home. Gone were the days when on the Sabbath, we had to wait for the "Turkito," a non Jew Turk, to tend

the fires in the stoves and even to put out the lights before retiring on a Friday night. On the Sabbath a Jew is supposed to do these things only when life is threatened. The separation of pots, pans and chinaware for Passover use was not observed anymore.

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As soon as I was able to read French, I was given a book. It was an abbreviated version of Holy History, (Histoire Sainte). On its first page, creation according to Genesis was briefly related. The book was also illustrated. God was represented as a robust man in ample robes and a nicely trimmed beard. He held a baton in one hand and He pointed it toward the sky where the sun, the moon and the stars were shining at the same time. This early impression of an anthropoid deity haunted me during all of my childhood. So, he was the God to whom my father's prayers were addressed every morning. He was also the God of the crowds assembled in synagogues. An aura of solemnity was conferred upon Him, considering the fervor of the chants of folks assembled to worship Him, when young and old were imploring His mercy. I noticed my Grandfather Saporta, staying in our house overnight on rare occasions, making his ablutions in the morning before going over the prescribed seven steps. He recited then his morning prayers alternating them with silent devotions.

A grocery store was located at the corner near our house. The owner was a middle-aged man with a bushy beard known in the neighborhood as "Davico El Bacal." His store had always in evidence a few jars of pickles but was otherwise poorly furnished in merchandise. My dear mother sometimes sent me on an errand to this store to buy some pins, (un papel de alfinetes) used to secure the wash hanging on the terrace to dry. Our man could not make a living selling this sort of things and as a supplement to

his grocery trade, he sold hard liquor in the back of his store. Everytime I entered the place a lone customer was sitting there. The tall thin man was a municipal gendarme who had found a convenient place for his drinking sprees; the municipal building was right across the street. He was a Moslem to whom hard liquor is prohibited and he saw no danger of being seen in that secluded place. His sabre was leaning against his seat and his uniform was open at the chest because of the heat of the semi-dark place. Everytime I see a drunk person I think of this man, the first individual I have observed in this pitiful condition.

My Grandfather Benusiglio, on his way home in mid-afternoon, leaning on his cane stopped to join the group of no less than ten men assembled at the corner grocery store of Davico El Bacal for the short mid-day prayers. Regular business was interrupted for a few minutes to permit these devotions. All around me indicated a well established pattern of religious behavior.

I presume that it took a great deal of courage and inner conflict for my father to run against this routine and habits formed since his childhood. Despite my young age or rather because of it, I admired him for opposing the order of things. After all, he seemed to rebel against the dictates of a God, that in my mind, assumed human proportions. He was a rebel against laws devised by men. Other men that he considered superior used different methods to serve and worship, not my anthropoid God but the spiritual God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. My adolescent years were marked by the influence exercised over me by my father. My religious ideas took shape at the same time he was educating himself to get rid of superstitions. He was eager to learn and our whole home atmosphere was dominated by his newly found militancy in religious

matters. His convictions were expressed in genuine simplicity for my young intelligence to absorb. Included in the blessings for the new year there is a prayer in the form of a curse that, "our enemies shall be smitten." He changed that curse in a prayer that "our enemies shall become our friends." This trait of his character revealed to me, later in life, the depth of his feelings concealed in a matter of fact attitude. He preached to us children the rewards of education. He said that a well informed mind is apt to revolt against superstitions and rules that served a purpose in the past had no significance with the modern style of life. He remained basically a Jew but of a progressive brand of Judaism.

My anthropoid idea of God did not cease abruptly. During the years my religious feelings underwent changes and modifications. I think now that I should be gratified for not having received a formal religious education. The intensive indoctrination of children tends in creating in their young mind more superstitions than love for their fellow men. Beliefs acquired in childhood have a general tendency to be stiffened and it is hard to get rid of them.

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The conservative Turks believed that the party of the "Young Turks" had acquired their liberal ideas leading to revolution in Masonic circles. A spirit of tolerable co-existence was tried between the Turks and the heterogeneous population of the Turkish Empire. A few adherents of the international freemasonry were Turks.

My father was a commission merchant involved in exclusive commercial dealings with a client in the town of Zihna, known as Omer Effendi. His older brother had studied law, he was a gentleman farmer and I suspect he was a Mason; his name was Said Effendi. The sultan,

who had spies everywhere, became suspicious of the liberal ideas of said Effendi and ordered his incarceration in Salonica in the prison of Yedi Coule. This took place a few months before the revolution of July 1908. My father, sure as he was to be immune to reprisals, visited regularly his friend in jail; he brought him food and clean underwear. The capitulations treaties conferred to the Saporta families Spanish protection and this privilege served well the cause of said Effendi.

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The city of Salonica was conquered in the thirteenth century by the Venetians who wrested it from the Byzantine Empire. The most famous landmark is the "White Tower" which was erected by the Venetians. They surrounded the town from the hilltop to the edge of the gulf with fortified walls. The prison of "Yedi Coule" was used for this purpose subsequently by the Turks and was incorporated in these series of fortifications on one corner on the south side on the hill summit. From it one has perfect view of the whole city and its surroundings. The Turks used it as an arsenal of ancient cannons. Until the Greek conquest of Macedonia in 1912 the Turks fired these cannons to signal a fire to a corps of voluntary Jewish firemen. Two blasts were indicative of a fire in the city proper. Three blasts was the signal of a fire north of the city beyond the walls in the most popular section of town. Finally four blasts indicated a fire in the southern and richest part of town named "Quartier des Campagnes." The fortified walls on the water edge were demolished at the end of the last century.

As the saying goes: "A quelque chose, malheur est bon." At the time of the visits to jail, my father was afflicted with severe rheumatic pains and he had tried every possible remedy to alleviate

his sufferings. One of the jailers gave him a bottle of oil, filled up drop by drop, used to lubricate the cannons. He instructed him to rub the oil in the affected parts. My father returned home on that day and he was skeptical of the medicinal qualities of the concoction offered him by the compassionate jailer. He saw no danger in making use of it; anyway it was to be used externally. He woke up the following morning and the pain had miraculously disappeared. The jailer's remedy for rheumatism could have been a miraculous drug had it been discovered by a man of science. Has not penicillin been discovered casually?

Following the revolution of July 1908, Said Effendi was released from jail. A reception for him was held in the patio of our house and, respecting Islamic custom, no alcoholic beverages were served. He resumed then his professional activity in the office of Emanuel Carasso. He was sitting also as an alternate judge in a tribunal. I do not know if he held these positions successively or at the same time. Sultan Abdul Hamid after a few months of procrastination tried to go back on his word for free elections, temporizing for the promulgation of a constitution. The revolutionary committee chose the Jewish lawyer Emanuel Carasso to notify the sultan that his ruling days had come to an end. Abdul Hamid was deposed and transferred from the capital to Salonica. He was detained as a palace prisoner in the Villa Alatini, expressly acquired for this purpose.

Mehmed Rechad, a brother of Abdul Hamid, was proclaimed sultan of the Turkish Empire and Caliphe of all Islam. He had for many years been held palace prisoner by his brother. Upon his ascension to the throne he was a senile old man not prepared to rule over an empire. He even offered a poor appearance as a figurehead. The Turks instead took pride in the heroes of the revolution

and Mahmoud Chevket Pasha emerged outstanding in this last episode.

Elections for deputies to a parliament were held and Emanuel Carasso was one of the candidates for Salonica. His house next to ours was the scene of demonstrations of his many Jewish supporters. He was elected and remained for many years in Turkish politics.

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The first decade of the twentieth century was notable for many political or otherwise tragic events. On the tragic side I will mention the catastrophic earthquake of the Island of Martinique with a toll of victims running into the thousands. I remember my Uncle Yaco Assael taking me to a small store selling foreign newspapers and periodicals. While he was engaged in conversation with the owner I was permitted to peruse through the pages of the periodicals. My two favorites were "Le Petit Parisien" and "La Domenica del Corriere" for the vivid colors of their illustrations. I was fascinated by the sinking of the Russian fleet by the Japanese, the vicissitudes of the trial of Alfred Dreyfus conducive to his pardon and eventual exoneration. Later on, when in the course of my lessons in history, I knew of the facts of the Peace of Portsmouth promoted by President Theodore Roosevelt between Japan and Russia, it seemed to me, that I had assisted at those events. The death of President Felix Faure at the Elysee Palace was recorded in rich colors in one of those illustrations. Names of Kaiser Wilhelm II, Ministers of State Monsieur Delcasse and Monsieur Pichon came to be mentioned several times. Now in retrospect, I see myself fascinated by historical events. The world was like a stage to me and I was assisting at the spectacle without making any sense of it. My liking or

disliking of a person or a situation depended on the judgment of the adult persons around me but my father's opinion I respected the most. In 1908 another earthquake devastated the cities of Messina and Catania in Sicily. My sister, Julie, was among the school girls who accompanied adult persons through the streets of Salonica to collect money for the victims of the catastrophe. It was my first experience of human solidarity confronted by natural disasters.

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My brother, Jacques, was enrolled in the school Franco-Allemande and after one year my brother, Fratelli, came to join us there. My mother was too busy with her last two born babies and devoting special cares to them. For this reason we did not go directly home after classes. We were left under the supervision of a teacher, Monsieur Barzilay, who took the three of us to his house for another couple hours before taking us home after, it seemed to me, a very long day. On Saturday also we were spending our leisure hours in his house or in a cafe in the outskirts of town, mostly in the open air, with this teacher and his friends.

On a hot summer evening Monsieur Barzilay took us home. My father already there offered him his monthly pay. The next day I overheard my teacher gloating to his friends that he was paid twice, two weeks in succession, for one month's work. I reported to my parents for what I thought was their mistake. My father retorted with a smile that he well knew that the payment was not due but he wanted to reward the teacher for taking good care of us children; it was not the delicate thing to do to offer him a tip.

With the public disturbances caused by the revolution of 1908/1909, my parents,

always fearing for our safety, were sending someone to take us home during class hours. The principal of the school, conscious that this might have created a panic, excused the Saporta children at the least sign of public agitation.

The classrooms for the very young were located in an adjacent building. The premises were damp and semi-dark. My two younger brothers were catching cold very often. My brother, Fratelli, was operated on to remove a polyp from behind one of his eyebrows. This was mistakingly attributed to the bad school atmosphere. My parents then enrolled Jacques and Fratelli at the "Scuola Elementare Italiana" and in ensuing years after completing their courses there they pursued their studies at the "Scuola Commerciale Italiana" where they eventually graduated.

In my school we had teachers rated from excellent to mediocre. Leon Recanati was among the very best. He was educated in the Salonica schools. During a short stay in Paris he attended some lectures at "The Universite des Annales." He came then to teach in the higher secondary classes of the Ecole Franco-Allemande. He was the most respected teacher by colleagues and students alike. From him as a school professor and later on as a private tutor, I have absorbed the best knowledge I possess. I was an average student but having the highest marks in history, geography and literature. In correcting my compositions, Monsieur Recanati never failed to remark: "Saporta, vous avez une feconde imagination avec des grands mots." Otherwise it was noticeable by his attitude and the marks he gave me, that he was pleased with my reports. His teaching career came eventually to an end, when his older brother, Zacharia, died and he took a share in the succession of his business as a representative of foreign manufacturers.

Leon Gattegno was another good teacher of French literature. He not only taught the beauty of the works of the best authors but he took time to quote the lesser writers and poets. He liked to repeat these verses of Lefran de Pompignan:

Jusques a quand mortels farouches
Vivrons nous de haine et d'aigreur?
Preterons nous toujours nos bouches
Au langage de la fureur?
Implacable dans ma colere
Je m'applaudis de la misere
De mon ennemi terasse,
Je me releve, il succombe
Et moi-meme a ses pieds je tombe.....

Le nil a vu sur ses rivages
Les noirs habitants des deserts
Insulter par leurs cris sauvages
L'astre eclatant de l'univers.
Cris impuissants, fureurs bizarres
Tandis que ces monstres barbares
Poussaient d'insolentes clameurs,
Le dieu pousuivant sa carriere,
Versait des torrents de lumiere
Sur ses obscurs blasphemateurs.

This author died heartbroken for the ridicule poured on him by the cenacle formed by Voltaire, Rousseau, D'Alembert et Diderot. Yet, these verses alone, replete with meaning, should have been enough to secure for him an elevated position among the philosophers of the eighteenth century. Like my teacher, Leon Gattegno, I am always haunted by the advanced ideals expressed by this obscure poet. The question asked by Lefran de Pompignan remains still unanswered. Until when will selfishness and stupidity prevail among men?..... until when?.....

* * *

I have a vivid souvenir of an incident that is a revelation of my character. During the course of a lesson I had some difficulty in resolving a mathe-

matical problem. My teacher then asked me the elementary question to add up, two and two. I thought this was an insult to my intelligence and I preferred not to answer. My teacher interpreted my silence for ignorance. He summoned his young son who was a pupil in a lower class and asked him the same question in front of the entire classroom. The child immediately replied: four. The satisfaction of the proud father was evident. He was convinced of his offspring's precocity and of my retarded mind. How simple it would have been if I would have replied to his question in the first place. During my entire life I seem to be unable to reply with an insult to other people's affronts to me. This is due to my inner anger that I am not eager to show and to my curiosity to phantom the self esteem of an adversary. If, on occasion, I am tempted to oppose the aggressive arguments of others, my wife is always there to dissuade me from exploding my wrath. She says that a civilized way to show contempt for an insulting opponent is by keeping absolute silence. Anyway since early childhood my temperament was never ready for retorts and potential adversaries have taken my hesitations for the righteousness of their argument. I was always slow in expressing my opinions and views; but this do not make the other fellow's idea right.

* * *

Salvator Djahon was our teacher in German; he was also teaching bookkeeping in the higher secondary classes.

A sort of faculty existed and it was formed by the dean, Leon Gattegno, his brother, Isaac, and their brother-in-law, Salvator Djahon and last but not least, Leon Recanati. Other teachers among many included, Monsieur Altchek, Monsieur Barzilay, Monsieur Bension, Monsieur Botton, Monsieur Cohn, a recent arrival from Austria,

and Monsieur Ouri. This last teacher was the cause of an unforgettable incident that created furor in our school. Light corporal punishment of a pupil deserving it, was not unusual. On one occasion in the course of inflicting this sort of reprimand to one of the boys of our class, the teacher had hardly touched him with a ruler for a minor offense. The next day the irate father of the punished boy erupted in the classroom assaulting the teacher with sonorous slaps to his face. An uproar was caused by some pupils who were not too unhappy to see this punishment inflicted to the unfortunate teacher in retaliation for the thrashings they had suffered from him on previous occasions. From that day on, corporal punishment was abolished in our school and discipline was nevertheless maintained.

The Sabetay Sevi story of the seventeenth century has been too often repeated. Anyway, after his conversion to Islam, his most faithful followers converted also. They were, for the most part, concentrated in Salonica where their descendents families, as the popular saying goes, some of them, practiced secretly Judaism. Two men of this sect were teaching the Turkish language in our school.

Every teacher had his own peculiarity that did not escape the critical mind of the students. Musleuddin Effendi, one of these two teachers, used to repeat in a loud voice the bad marks of the pupils deserving them. The monitor in charge, a good boy who did not miss a joke, anticipating the teacher's reply, was asking always: "Quime, effendi?" (To whom the bad marks, sir?) and Muslueddin Effendi did not fail to reply: "Shoo esheyeh" (to this jackass) and his index pointed in the direction of the boy deserving this designation. The hilarity of the whole class doubled the punishment of the unfortunate student. A sad note to this otherwise amusing incident was the fact that this monitor, named

Jacques Chibi, (pronounced Sheebie) died of typhus fever shortly after his graduation, causing a deep sorrow to all of us his friends.

In the elementary classes women teachers were prevalent. Among these I will mention Mademoiselle Benjamin, Mademoiselle Yoel and Mademoiselle Djahon. The last one had been my teacher in 1906/07 and twenty or thirty years later she was a teacher to my Nephews Recanati.

Accompanying Monsieur Barzilay I have attended my teacher Abram Botton's wedding. It was held in the evening in the courtyard of his house where three hundred people were assembled. It was the first such ceremony I had attended. Shortly after and following my brother Leon's birth, I have assisted at the festivities of our maid Leah's marriage. As was the custom of that time, the wedding procession composed of the most important guests who in open and horses drawn carriages toured the city before reaching the house where the wedding was to take place. The bride was a maid in our house for fifteen years. She was there while seven children were born to my parents. She proved to be irreplaceable. Many years later when my wife accompanied me to her first trip to Salonica, Leah came to see us. It was in 1924 and she had still the same singing tone in her voice common to our Jewish working class who spoke only our colorful ladino dialect. She greeted my wife with the exclamation: "So, you are the wife of Monsieur Alberto?" With this outcry it was evident that she expected my bride to have the aspect of a princess. She was clearly disappointed to see a plain young woman. I was told in New York a few years later that one of her married daughters had emigrated with her family to America. I never knew them because I ignore their family name. In the period I assisted

at these two weddings the following incident took place in our school. The woman in charge of the cleaning of the classrooms was living in the basement of the building. The premises were burglarized and she lost her savings. It was said then, what the burglar had left, the fortune teller took away. The soothsayer told her to hang an axe at the main entrance of our school. Despite the fact that the axe should be securely fixed, it would fall down on the person who deprived her of her hard earned money. What is amazing in this matter, is the fact that this nonsense was permitted without consideration of the psychological effects on the children attending school.

On my way to school I had to come near the Mosque of Hamza Bey and the Islamic cemetery located on the opposite corner. The tallest minaret in Salonica was the one of this mosque. A few times I took a look at the interior; as for walking on it, I never tried because I had to remove my shoes to walk on the rich carpeted floor. The fidels were called to prayers by the muezzim stopping four times in all directions. He recited in a loud singing voice a few verses of the Koran from the balcony high on the minaret. I observed the Turk devotees lined up at the entrance, washing their feet and arms up to the elbows with water running from faucets before going in to prostrate addressing their prayers to Allah. This vast mosque had his back to a main artery called Tartakaleh. With the conquest of the Greeks in 1912, the name was changed to Odos Egnatia. On an enclosure protruding to the sidewalk one could see through the jalousies a lone tomb, a saintly sheh was buried there. The devout Moslems believing in miracles were attaching strings to the jalousies in expectation in a providential cure for all kinds of ailments. This was the longest street

of the city and prior to electrification a horse drawn tramway was making the run from one end of the artery to the other end. At certain points of elevation two horses were not enough and an additional team of two horses were attached to the carriage always crowded. I watched the fidels entering the mosque and in my childish mind I was wondering to whom these devotions were addressed. Was he the same God of the Jews?

A cafe in front of the mosque was a center where Jewish craftsmen were congregating. It was a huge place always crowded by Turks and Jews alike. Everytime my father needed a mason or a painter to do some work in our house he always met his man there. It was the center for the Jewish musicians called "tchalghidjis." They were, what I will call, legitimate musicians but two characters that appeared at every wedding, circumcision, etc., were "Tramuz" and "Bona la Tagnedera." He played the fiddle and she played the tambourine. They were like cat and dog, always arguing over the emoluments paid to them for their required or sometimes unrequired services.

Once I ventured to the entrance of the Catholic church in the Rue Franque. With a trembling heart from the threshold, I watched two nuns on their knees. They were silently praying in front of a huge cross with the statue of a seminaked man with extended arms and feet nailed to it. I shivered at the sight of the pitiful and cruel spectacle. According to the Christian faith, he is the Son of God. Was his father the one illustrated in my *histoire sainte*? Was not his mother a Jewish maid that the Christians call the Virgin Mary? I was already shaken in my anthropoid idea of God. In my young mind I was trying to find another form or definition for God the creator of all things. I was realizing that he could

not have been the man with the beard
of my histoire sainte.

The Rue Franque besides the church and the adjacent stores included the baths operated by the Mission des Freres, The Ottoman Bank and across the street the Austrian post office and the Passage Lombard, popularly known as the "Han de Lombardo." It was a vast office building giving access from the Rue Franque to a parallel street through a flight of stairs. In this street, one of the ends of the Ishteera section, the wholesale trade in raw hides was concentrated. In the passage the inevitable "Cavedji" was located, always busy bringing aromatic small cups of Turkish coffee to stores and offices. The "Han de Lombardo" was considered the exchange of the cocoon market. Twice a day at certain times of the morning and afternoon, the cocoon merchants assembled in the tiny establishment of the cavedji where the intermediaries between sellers and buyers (corredores) came to conclude their deals. Past Colombo Street the Rue Franque included the School for Boys of the Mission Des Freres and the School for Girls of the Mission Des Soeurs. At that point the street made an angle with the Street of the Arsenal (Tophane). It was mostly a deserted street at the end of which the factory of my Uncle Isaac, (Fabrica de Cocouyo) was located. The adjacent building housed the German school.

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It was a Friday evening of 1909 when every Jewish shopkeeper in town was feverishly giving the final touches to culminate a week's work and preparing to close up shop for the celebration of the Sabbath. My brother, Jacques, and I with Monsieur Barzilay were on our way home when casually we saw our cousin, Leon Benusiglio, accompanying his father,

Liaou. By the expression of their faces our teacher surmised that some sad event was taking place. In fact upon reaching home we learned that my grandfather Benusiglio had died a couple of hours before. For my part the specter of death was something happening to others leaving members of my family untouched for ever and ever. Until the funeral on Sunday, I had time to think and came to realize that inexorably it affects every person and nobody is immune to it. My mother and my Aunt Grassia with their brothers went every day to keep the seven days of mourning (Shiva) in their father's house. This was the period that I learned a great deal, including some anecdotes related to my grandfather's life. He was living in a house that he owned at the end of a short street "En Cul de Sac." The building was old but meticulously clean. Another worthwhile house was occupied by the well known banker, Aron Matarasso, and his family. The rest of the block was composed of decrepit houses in which people of modest conditions were living. The only thing that could be said of these folks is that they were keeping their dwellings clean. One of those was "Esther La Forastera" known by this designation because she hailed from Monastir. On one corner of the street one could see a flock of geese in the courtyard of a cocoon factory. It was the property of the Asher family. The geese thrive for their nourishment on the worms of the cocoons produced abundantly after the spinning of the cocoons. Another spot to give character to this serene section of town was the property of a "Hodja" (one pilgrim to Mecca who had the right to attach a white or green cloth around their head-gear) and he was cultivating flowers in his huge garden. These were the surroundings of the house of my Grandfather Benusiglio that I remember. The building was located at the end

of a slope, the windows in the second floor leveling almost with the adjacent street. He had his bedroom on this second floor. His son, Moshon, with his wife, Mazaltov, occupied another bedroom. Two other bedrooms were occupied by another couple paying rent with an adult son and daughter; the lady, Gioia Carasso, was a sister to my Aunt Mazaltov. Every person on this floor had the privilege to use the large living room called "varandado" as well as the common kitchen. On the floor at street level a few relatives in modest conditions were tenants at very low rent. A courtyard in the rear had a lone pomegranate tree. Around the festival of Succoth it was plundered of its fruit by us children. A sort of wooden balcony gave access to the second floor; it was considered precarious and my grandfather was always enjoining his grandchildren not to venture in the "tchadrac." I liked the adventure because it was the practical way to reach the branches of the tree below. About the age of seventy-five, following an ancient tradition my grandfather bought a shroud in which he wished to be buried. On this occasion festivities were in order to give thanks to the Almighty that permitted to reach this age. Relatives and friends were invited and a large crowd was assembled. My grandfather mindful that the floor of the upper apartment might have collapsed, some supporting beams were placed on the first floor to sustain the floor above.

When my Grandfather Benusiglio retired he sold his hardware store to a man named Benveniste Gattegno. In that store a brother-in-law of my Uncle Liaou was also working. I ignore if he was a partner or in some other capacity. Anyway, I remember the man, Yaco Benmayor, always smiling and full of jokes. At the time of my grandfather's death, his real estate holdings

included his house, the building on Sabri Pasha Street where his hardware business was located and a parcel of land in the Tabana section of the city. Tabana meant the processing of hides after the carcass had been removed from the animal in the slaughter house.

My Grandfather Benusiglio was a shop-keeper dealing in building materials and hardware. He was the first one in Salonica to import European hinges; until then hinges forged by gypsies were in general use. By the standards of that period he was considered a rich man. The money he had accumulated derived from his trade and from real estate speculations. I could never find out the truth about a story circulating in the family circle regarding an old safe that he sold to my father. Upon reaching his office my father proceeded to clean the webs that had formed in an enclosure at the bottom of it. He was surprised to find a small sack containing two hundred Turkish pounds in gold coins. Was this true or was it a story showing the old man's concern to hide money and forgetting about it? My maternal grandfather was a man devoted to his family and I missed his generosity after his death in his giving silver coins to me and my brothers every time we were visiting him. Among his real estate speculation, he bought on one occasion a row of houses in one ill reputed section of town. The income was good but the collection of rent was a problem. His son, Moshon, who was in charge of it, assisted to an altercation between some men armed with knives in the course of such a collection. Although he was an innocent bystander he got scared and since then he got moody and subject to mental aberrations. He was sent to an institution in Constantinople. During a visit there of his wife, Mazaltov, she noticed the treatment to which he was submitted and not

bearing the cruelty of it she took him back to Salonica. He was kept in his father's house in seclusion with his wife assisting him faithfully during a few years. He died on the first day of Roshashana following his father's death. I remember that prior to his mental condition, when I was a very young child, he took me for walks on the quay. He died childless.

* * *

It was the second day of Succoth of 1910; my parents had gone to a movie theater when towards evening relatives were looking frantically for them. Their message was a sad one; my Grandfather Saporta who was in relative good health had passed away the victim of a stroke. He died at age 82 and considering the lifespan of those years it was a ripe old age. Both my grandfathers had died of a stroke, easily avoidable with proper care. Visits to a doctor were for extreme cases. Saltless and other diets were unusual. The two popularly used medicines were castor oil for constipation and quinine for Malaria Fever. The most advanced families kept a liquid called "sublime" used externally in affected parts of the body to avoid infection.

Six sons and four daughters survived my Grandfather Saporta. He was loved and respected by all his kin and by all who knew him, for his wisdom and honesty, and by his sons and daughters to the point of veneration. He was a giant of moral qualities, rare today in our world of skepticism.

* * *

Since I can remember my Grandparents Saporta were living on the Rue Parallele or vicinity. This street was designated as such because it was parallel with the quay. My Uncles David and Samuel who were still bachelors were living with their parents. My Uncle Leon was a

student in Italy. For one reason or another they moved to three different apartments in a period of six years. Finally they found a suitable house and bought it. It was known as the House of Han David Shuto. The shares of the purchase were equally divided between my Uncles David and Samuel. This last one had 50%, the ratio of the other half was 62% for my father and 38% for my Uncle David because this was the percentage of ownership of the firm Daniel AB. Saporta whose funds were used in acquiring the half of the property. The building had three floors and the upper floor was occupied by my grandfather's household. It was fitted with all the comforts of the period including electric lights just innovated. The tenant on the second floor, Tio Raphael Perez, hailed from the town of Monastir where he was well known and respected. This household consisted of the couple with an adult daughter. Friendly relations prevailed between the two families and the young lady, Gentille Perez, becoming eventually the bride of my Uncle Samuel Saporta in 1916. The street floor after considerable work and transformation was converted into a store and rented to a dealer in household articles, mostly tinware. It was a corner house and the next building, recently constructed, was occupied at street level by the offices of the Gaz Company and the vast second floor was the center for the "Association des Anciens Eleves de L'Alliance Israelite Universelle." To complete the block on the next corner were the offices and material stores of the "Compagnie des Eaux de Salonique."

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After the death of both my grandfathers I started to think of a life beyond life. I was hearing so much of a paradise for the just and a hell for the wicked that I was making every effort

to be on the side of the upright. Our maid, Leah, was responsible for the greatest part of this attitude telling us stories in early childhood at bedtime of the needle pit (el poudjico de las agoujas) for naughty children.

As I was emerging from my childhood years I was in a state of perplexity as to my religious feelings. I definitely knew that the bearded man of my *histoire sainte* was not the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

* * *

Lieto Noah was a popular figure among the Salonica Jews as an impresario and the owner of the Eden Theater. He became famous taking the greatest part in instituting in Salonica a shelter for the insane (asile d'alienes). The first person to be recovered in the asile was a Jewish man, evidently insane sleeping in doorways and fed by charitable hands. He was running back and forth in the "djadeh" of the municipality and talking to himself incoherently. The Turks, who are compassionate for this kind of people, cared for him in many ways. In summer everytime they were watering the streets, they placed the unfortunate man under the hose in a forced shower to clean him up. With the opening of the asile, he was not anymore in circulation as a public disgrace to the Jewish community.

In this period an Italian actor came to town. I ignore if he was brought to Salonica by our impresario Lieto Noah. Anyway his artistry consisted in the hand is quicker than the eye technique. I have assisted to two of his shows. One was held in the courtyard of our school where all the classes were assembled. Everyone was amazed at the powers of divination of Signor Procacini and the students had no doubts about his veracity. Someone in the audience planted a pin in a wall while our "prestidigitateur" was

not looking. He came among us and he took one of the kids by the hand leading him to the exact spot where the pin was planted. Everyone was puzzled but no one doubted the powers of our artist. I have seen this scene repeated in another school where Monsieur Barzilay took my brother, Jacques, and myself as paying guests.

The real travesty of the supernatural occurred during a performance for adults only at the Eden Theater. Signor Procacini pretended he could talk to the dead. My dear mother who was in the audience came home in the evening, still under an emotional spell. She thought of having seen the shadow of her dead brother, Moshon, in the darkened stage. Our artist was playing with the emotions of the good people of Salonica.

* * *

A small synagogue was located in the courtyard of Monsieur Barzilay's house. The shelves on its walls were replete with old big books. On occasion some rabbis assembled there to study and comment on some point of Mosaid or Talmudic law. I was impressed by the sight of a man with a long beard among them. He was poorly dressed in a caftan that had seen better days on another richer person. He remained silent while the others were discussing and he seemed to absorb knowledge from these debates. When the proceedings were over, he talked incessantly to whomever was present, laughing and joking broom in hand sweeping the floor of the synagogue and the courtyard.

I do not recall his real name but he was designated at "Beguilgoul," denoting he had come back from the dead. I ignore any explanation for it but in my imagination then he represented one who after being dead, came back to live again.

A few rickety trees were in the same courtyard and while my teacher was absent I always climbed up them, to the desperation of Mr. Barzilay's parents who were afraid of my falling down.

This courtyard had many apartments in two floors. They were shabby but kept very clean by their tenants. One quality common to every nationality of the Near East consisted in keeping the interior of their habitation neat and clean at all times. Contrary to this, the streets were dirty but the principal arteries. How could it be different with so many stray dogs roaming the streets? The landlord of this courtyard and the tenements was an old and eminent rabbi who was presiding always at gatherings of erudite men who were discussing Mosaid and Talmudic laws in the yeshivah on his property. It was indeed a huge piece of land between two streets, of course, without name, on one side the street running parallel with the baths designated as the "Bagnos del Kapan" and on the other side flanked by the Errera Factory weaving men's underwear. Afterwards this factory was sold to the firm, Florentin, Saporta & Beraha and was designated as the "Fabrica de Moomees de Peppo." The only possible way to designate a property was to mention a landmark near-by. In this case, all were comprised in the "rogos" section of town. Properties like these were called "cortijos." The most famous was the "Cortijo del Passo" and the "Cortijo de Han Rabeno." This last one was the property of Rabeno Botton, a well known jeweler in town.

Among so many apartments in Rabbi Benveniste's "cortijo" a lonely small house was standing on one corner of the courtyard. A Perahia family was living there. It consisted of the couple with an adult son and four beautiful daughters. The widowed mother

of the lady of this household was living with them; she was an older sister of my Grandmother Saporta. On one occasion she came out of the house while I was passing by. She had a message for my father; she wanted a sack of "blancoura." In telling me this she seemed certain that her nephew was eager to help her. Coal is black and the color of mourning and she did not want to remind loved ones of that color and she used the opposite term "blancoura," the symbol of purity. Every time an ugly thing was mentioned the term "afuera de tus caras" was employed thus wishing the listener to avoid being confronted by this thing.

* * *

The year 1910 marked the end of our going with Monsieur Barzilay after school hours. I was already a big boy and my brothers, Jacques and Fratelli, were attending the Italian school located in another section of town. They managed to go and come back home by themselves.

I started to enjoy my newly found independence by going out with my friends especially on Saturday afternoon when we assisted to football matches between inter-school teams of senior students. Another place where boys congregated was the "Beshtchinar" park located northwest of the city. In this connection I will cite an episode in which I almost lost my life. Horse drawn tramways in a few long streets were still the mode of transportation in Salonica. In the year 1906/1907 a Belgian company built an electric power plant and the antiquated horse drawn cars were replaced gradually, line by line, by modern trolley cars. The distance between "Beshtchinar" and the vardar section (la puerta de la velona) was the last one to be electrified until 2/3 years later. On Saturdays and holidays the open cars were always crowded and kids were climbing to its

platforms. Once a group of noisy children and myself among them, were riding precariously hanging on the car. I fell, my head striking against the paving stones barely one inch from the platform. The tramway was stopped and the consensus of the passengers was that a guardian angel saved my head from being crushed in this accident. Since this frightful experience, I have been careful in all matters.

Coincidentally with the electrification of the tramways, electric lights started to be installed in stores and private homes replacing gas burning lights and cumbersome kerosene lamps. From the very beginning our house was fitted with the modern electric lighting devices.

* * *

In this period a band was formed in our school. I was eager to join and my parents acceding to my musical desire enrolled me in it. Gaetano Beppe was our instructor and conductor. He was Italian and had lived in Salonica all his adult life. He had attended classes at Federico Filardi School while my father was a pupil there. He had the exuberance of his Napolitan origin and he was very popular as a bank leader of every musical group in town. Although I had a good ear for music, it was too complicated for me to march and read the notes attached to my instrument. Signor Gaetano had me switched from bass trombone to trumpet. It was the shiniest trumpet in the whole band because I took it home and cleaned it incessantly but it did not help me to play "in tempo" with the band. Our conductor who had a good sense of humor, told me bluntly that I would become a good musician the day he will become a rabbi. This was an impossibility because he was Catholic. In desperation he put me to beat the "grand cassa" and there I was beating the big drum, parading with the band in the streets of Salonica during

the visit of Sultan Reshad in the vilayets of his empire in Europe.

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After a short lived honeymoon between the Turkish authorities and the revolutionary exponents of the different nationalities, the Turkish government thought of the idea of showing the new sultan to the populace. This was in contradiction with the predecessor, Abdul Hamid, who had lived as a mysterious recluse in his Yildiz Palace in the capital. The visit of Sultan Reshad resulted in a boomerang. Local authorities in the European provinces and private organizations tried their best to promote public enthusiasm. Many triumphal arches were erected and all the City of Salonica was decorated with flags and signs extolling the virtues of a benevolent sultan bent in uniting the many nationalities in the country. During the sultan's few days in town it was incessant parades and all the bands were out playing martial tunes. I was part of one beating on my big drum with sonorous bangs. Our group was stationed in a corner of Midat Pasha Boulevard. When the sultan emerged on the thoroughfare riding in his landau, the vociferous clamor of the crowd could be heard from far away: "Padishahimiz Tchok Yasha" and "Yashasin Huriet" (long live our emperor) and (long live liberty) were echoing continuously in the air. He seemed absent minded and unconcerned at all these demonstrations. He offered the image of an unshaved old man dressed up in a resplendent uniform decorated with golden frills and at times, it seemed to me, incredulous that the events taking place were for him. The popular saying was that he was addict in drinking raki. This did not befit with his position as sultan of the Turkish Empire and Caliphe of all Islam.

The apparent enthusiastic mood of the

crowds belied the antagonism of the revolutionary segments of nationalities who wished to be united to a respective mother country bordering Turkey in Europe on all sides. The tour of the sultan included Albania where dissident elements of the population were more and more restless in their demands for autonomy. The government of Austria-Hungary was creating trouble for "the sick man of Europe." This was the term used to mention Turkey in that period. The Turks, to counterbalance this trend, encouraged a more or less overt boycott of Austrian goods. Patriotic men were changing their head-gear from the traditional fez to kalpack. The fez was among the boycotted articles imported from Austria. Another source of trouble for the "Sublime Porte" (the Department of Foreign Affairs of Turkey was called by this name) were the dissident elements of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The irredentist patriots of Crete headed by Eleftherios Venizelos were more and more outspoken in their demand to be united to Greece. In Salonica the Turks organized meetings of protest attended by few dozen Turks shouting "Yerith Vermeyiz" (we do not give away Crete). This was the only public demonstration of refusal to cede the island.

All these episodes had to wait some time more to mature to a final solution. What was at hand in the year 1911 for Turkey was the invasion of Tripolitania by Italy. The Turks were not a match for the invading Italians. The Turkish military forces in the provinces of the North African continent, who fought fiercely, had to give up, overwhelmed by superior armies. All the Italians in Salonica, mostly Jews conserving their Italian citizenship for many generations, were deported to Italy. Among those I will mention my Uncle Liaou Benusiglio's daughter, Donna, with her husband, Moshon Venezia, and their children, my friend and neighbor,

nario Modiano, with his brother and parents were also deported. This did not result in any hardships for the deportees and for the children it was some kind of adventurous experience. I was jealous for not being Italian and having an opportunity to travel.

While this was going on, the superstitious popular belief was that the sultan's visit was ominous to sad events. In fact, an epidemic of cholera made many victims. As usually is the case, the poorest part of the Jewish population was affected. A section of the Jewish cemetery was reserved for the daily victims who were buried in a common grave. Sensible folks adopted hygienic precautions like boiling drinking water, avoiding raw fruits and vegetables, etc... The coming of the winter marked the rapid decline of the disease. Those affected were not following elementary rules of hygiene. They would eat, to cite an example, too mature melons, provocative of stomach cramps. My father was very careful in this respect. He would buy them direct from the Albanian yurukes bringing them to market. The quantity forcibly was too big; he divided the lot with Hanania Saporta, a distant relative, who lived with his family not far from our house. Another source of contamination was the drinking water cooled by descending it in zinc recipients in wells in almost every kitchen. Poor people could not afford regular refrigeration in ice boxes and were cooling their drinking water in the dampness of the well. They even bought their water from "Shalom El Aguador," a character who made a living by carrying drinking water to customers who did not have running metered water in their house furnished by the "Compagnie des Eaux de Salonique." In order to save money, servant girls were bringing up water from the well for any other purpose than drinking. Metal

utensils were too noisy in touching the walls of the well and leather sacks (couvos) were employed. At times an unfortunate servant girl did not attach properly this couvo to the cord and it fell in the well 30/40 feet deep; it remained floating in the water. Rather than buy a new couvo, some households had a contraption consisting of a metal circle with several pending hooks attached to it called "gantchera." With it, the servant girl went "fishing" until the couvo was brought to the surface again.

The well was used by an individual in desperate circumstances who wanted to commit suicide. He hurled himself in the well and before drowning he had hurt himself against the stones forming the walls of the well causing him to lose consciousness. During my young life I have heard of people causing self death by this method (se etcho al poggio).

I cannot proceed with my story without mentioning a character around our section popularly known as Haim La Vaca (Haim the Cow). He was selling melons neatly arranged on the sidewalk in front of our house. He was there until late at night shouting the sweetness of his melons. He had character and he refused to bargain sticking to a fixed price until his melons were mature enough to sell at whatever price possible. At night he would cover his melons with straw carpets and leave them unattended on the sidewalk. How different it is from today's conditions when one has to be careful watching his property.

* * *

The annexation of the Turkish vilayet of North Africa by Italy was the prelude of the vanishing power of the Osmanlis over territories of Turkey in Europe. It was Succoth of 1912 and all the signs spelled the forthcoming events that were to change

the map of the Balkans politically. Nowadays when radio and television disseminate news of important events as they occur, it is hard to imagine the eagerness of the public to know what was going on at the beginning of the twentieth century. The Jewish population of Salonica had its source of information in the local newspaper, "La Epoca," edited in ladino who ceased publication when its editor, Samuel Levi, established residence in Switzerland and "El Avenir" edited by David Florentin. Another ladino newspaper was published weekly by Moise Levi. It was a satirical weekly publication and well known figures were castigated in the columns of the "Kirbatch" to the hilarity of an eager public who on Friday night was kept laughing for the jokes of its contents. Two more serious newspapers were published in French daily. They were "L'Opinion" and the "L'Independant," this last one published by two erudite editors, Albert Matarasso and Lazare Nefussy. In connection with events going on in this end of September of 1912, L'Independant published an article having for headline "La Turquie Ne Craint Pas La Guerre" (Turkey Does Not Fear War). Nobody expected what was to follow. Tiny Montenegro declared war on Turkey and this was followed by declarations of war on Turkey by Serbia, Bulgaria and Greece. The Turks were optimistic on the outcome thinking in terms of a repetition of the war of 1897. Ex-Sultan Abdul Hamid, informed of the events taking place, deplored the fact that the sublime porte could not outmaneuver the Balkan countries to unite to wrest territories under Turkish domination for the last four centuries. In prevention of all eventualities Abdul Hamid was transferred from the Villa Alatini in Salonica to another residence in Constantinople.

The armies of the Balkan countries coalition made a swift march through

Macedonia, Albania, Epirus and Thrace. The only place where the Turks made an effective resistance was in Andrinople, saving the city from the onslaughts of the Bulgarian army. As frustrated children for the defeats of the Turkish armies, the students did provoke daily comments from our Turkish teacher, Musleuddin Effendi. He replied to all questions concerning the retreat of the Turkish armed forces with the affirmation "bou bir pilandir," inferring that it was a strategic plan. After the capitulation of Salonica when the Greek army was well entrenched in the city, a sarcastic student asked the bewildered teacher: "Ve bou nedir effendi?" (and this is what, sir?), to which the desperate teacher bitterly replied: "This is a shameful defeat." The newspaper L'Independant replaced its headlines with more sober accounts of current facts. Thus ended the Turkish domination over most part of Turkey in Europe.

I have assisted from Sabri Pasha Street (subsequently named Venizelos Street) on October 12, 1912, to the triumphal march of the Greek army on its way to install its commander in chief, Prince Konstatinos and Greek authorities to the "Hukiumet" (Prefecture). My father had come home and called up my Uncle Yaco Assael, shouting from the floor below: "Ya vinieron" (they are already here). In saying this, he did not betray any emotion and this was a trait of a fatalistic character, to let the past go by and hoping for a better future. My Uncle Assael, on the contrary, did not utter one word remaining in his apartment upstairs in silent desperation. He was pessimistic of what the future was holding for the Salonica Jews. Since 1492 they had been unhindered by a benevolent Turkish regime. Would it be the same under the Greeks?

A delegation of religious authorities

had gone previously to the headquarters of Prince Konstantinos to bring him the traditional bread and salt reserved for ancient conquerors. The three faiths were represented. The Greeks by the Metropolitte, the Turks by an Ulema and the Jews by the chief rabbi, Jacob Meir. The meeting took place a short distance from the outskirts of Salonica in the farm of the leading private banker in town, Jacob Modiano, known popularly as Signor Yaco. The local Greek population was, of course, jubilant and offered a rousing welcome to the Greek triumphal army with some of them throwing flowers at the victors. The rest of the population, Turks and Jews alike, were apprehensive not so much of the oncoming army but of some of the local elements. In fact, in the first few days they became insulting and the restraint of the Jews saved them of more dire consequences. In the interior, the local Greek and Bulgarian populations used excesses against the local Turks in retaliation for wrongs accumulated during centuries of Turkish domination. A gradual change occurred in the Jewish community of Salonica; the fez was replaced by the western hat. Some of the hard core Jews who persisted in their behavior by wearing the fez typifying Turkish rule, were put to ridicule and at times suffered ill treatment from local Greeks. The new Greek authorities were more subtle and did not press their rule with brutal vigor.

A new pattern of life started to develop in all Jewish institutions. As young people interested in sports, we had clubs formed to compete with each other without any political motives. It was purely an escape for the exuberance of young age. Numerous such clubs existed; the most important was the one of Graduated Students of the Alliance School. Another was the "Progres Sportif" formed by inter-school senior students. I was president

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of a club named "Excelsior" formed by students of different schools. The favorite sport was football association (soccer), less brutal than the football played in America. We were playing on vacant land in the outskirts of town in a location between a famous landmark, the "Villa Ida" a private residence and the Hirsh Hospital built in 1906/1907 by the Jews of Salonica mainly due to the efforts of Doctor Moise Mizrahi, popularly known as "Signor Moyse" also known as "Le Bon Docteur." He was appreciated in the Jewish community as a compassionate person caring for the rich and poor alike. He was referred in our family in connection with the mother of my Grandmother Saporta who lived to be a centenarian. She was sick and her daughters wanted the advice of a real doctor. They called on Signor Moyse who advised them that the complaints of the old woman were due to her advanced age. My great grandmother who had overheard this conversation got up from her sick bed and remonstrated with the doctor who had called her an old woman; she lived a full year after this incident. Since the erection of the hospital this section became a more familial spot. Everything around spelled Jewish influence, from the opulent residences of the rich to the hospital caring for Jewish patients. The young Jewish folks playing football in those fields thought it was their prerogative not to let any Greek team play football in this vicinity. Was it not true that Jewish youngsters could not even approach the "Calle Antcha" a wide street, considered a Greek domain? Everytime Jewish kids ventured in the vicinity they were stoned by alert Greek boys.

With the advent of the Greek conquest, Greek boys ventured to play football in the fields of near-by Villa Ida. We did not dare to remonstrate anymore. Relations between the two groups improved to the

point that football matches were played between Greek and Jewish teams. Some time later when a Greek club played against a Bulgarian team, the assisting Jewish public started to cheer the Greek players shouting: "Embros Tsikirikis" and thus encouraging the hero of the Greek team. Youth has short memories.

* * *

I was always an avid reader. Although the books did not relate religious subjects specifically, a general outline of their author's religious feelings could be discerned. I always tried to find among them those friendly to the Jews and those with apparent antisemitism. I liked Emile Zola defending Dreyfus in his pamphlet "J'Accuse." I did not like Victor Hugo when he described one of his characters in "Le Cid" as keeping his word "even to the Jews." I did not like Henri Murger when in a dialogue between friends in his "Scenes de la Vie de Boheme" he quotes one of them as "going through Judea, where you leave your wool in the bushes." I, too, like many of my co-religionists, asked the question in any important event: "Is it good for the Jews?"

* * *

On attaining the age of thirteen a Jewish boy is supposed to have received a religious education permitting him to become a member of a congregation of ten men, the minimum to conduct regular religious services. The event is marked by festivities in the synagogue and at home. The father of the "Bar Mitzvah" divests himself of any moral responsibility of the future ethical conduct of his son. At this age, he should be able to act as a man and not as a boy needing parental direction.

As for me, when I had reached my thirteenth year, I could hardly read my

Hebrew prayers. In my first year at school I was taught the Hebrew alphabet but nothing beyond that. To acquire a formal Jewish education it was necessary to attend special Hebrew classes or to get private instruction; I did not get the benefit of either one.

On the sixth day of Passover, on attaining my thirteenth birthday, I noticed the joy of my parents. I had become an adult. My father presented me with two volumes of the Larousse Encyclopedia and exhorted me to acquire knowledge and that was that, without the festivities at the synagogue and at home. None of the presents that a "Bar Mitzvah" receives nowadays from relatives and friends of the family. Everything around me indicated Jewish life. I was part of it, yet I did not take part in any outside manifestation. My only presence in the synagogue, my father's as well, was when I accompanied him there for the high holiday services. I watched the proceedings but ignoring the language in which they were conducted, I felt frustrated.

At intervals between the services, a group of congregants and my father among them, voiced criticism of some feature in the prayer but not of its essential scope. Everyone was at its earnest mood in certain periods during solemn prayers to the God, that I knew was not anymore the one illustrated in my "Histoire Sainte" but the invisible God of Abraham. I did not feel a constraint for being a Jew; I felt even a degree of compassion for those of a different religion, for not thinking right. Having learned the fundamental differences between Judaism and Christianity I preferred to be born a Jew and to be endowed with a pure soul while the Christians believe to be born with the stigma of the original sin cleansed only after baptism. Another difference between the two faiths is confession. Catholics put special emphasis on regular confession to a priest who despite his vows to serve

Jesus, is subject to human frailties. Other denominations of the Protestant Church encourage public confession. There is no part in the Hebrew liturgy of confession of man to man, but a Jew in his daily prayers pours off his soul to God in confession for his voluntary and involuntary sins.

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The "Association Des Anciens Eleves De L'Alliance" and its counterpart of the Ecole Franco-Allemande were organizing kermesses that lasted late at night in the "Beshtchinar" park or outings at the "Mivlahane" and the "Ferme Modele" in the outskirts of the city during the day. The boys rented bicycles to go there. I was borrowing mine from my cousin, Albert Isaac Saporta. Once I rode a horse to an excursion and for a few days I was walking bow legged because I was riding a horse too big for me. Same as bicycles, horses were for hire too. Unless the owner knew his customer well, he would run along at the pace of the animal on busy city streets. The Turks who were in this business had a proverb: "at kimin binini" (the owner is the one who rides the horse). Those engaged in this business who believed in the truth of this adage, had to be running after their horse because some out-of-town individual might run away to some far away place where it would be hard to locate him. The place to rent a horse was outside the "Cafe Del Amanesser" at the corner of Colombo Street and Tarta Kale (afterwards designated as Odos Egnatia).

With the advent of the Greek regiment was the end of an era concerning peculiar aspects of life with an oriental flavor. The Jews of Salonica were until then the one element to keep open a trend to more modern European fashions. The Greeks started then to dictate the rules abolishing a public behavior reminiscent of the Turkish style and assuming more and more a western pattern.

The Jewish community started to experience hard problems. Under the Turkish administration, Saturday was a day of rest for the Jews but for the Greeks and Turks who worked or traded with them as well. From the beginning the Greeks tried to enforce the rule of closing the stores on Sunday. To this, they met with resistance from the Jews who could not afford to close up for business Saturday and also on Sunday. Anyway the time for economic considerations to supersede religious qualms was not too far off.

Macedonia was under Turkish rule for about four centuries and the non-Turks lived under a severe domination. The Jews were an exception, enjoying an almost autonomous position. In Salonica we had numerous synagogues, religious schools and a rabbinical academy. A "Beth Din" whose decrees were not enforceable by Turkish authorities was functioning. It did not matter much because, sooner or later the defendant had to reckon with the sentence, generally the payment of a debt to a private person or the community. The occasion was present when a wedding, a burial and a circumcision occurred. It could only be performed by order of the ecclesiastic authority and the recalcitrant defendant was obliged to pay. Gone were the days when the saying was that Salonica was more Jewish than Jerusalem. With the new rulers the possibility of a Jewish religious authority superseding civil authority became impossible. The Greeks considered it was civilized enough for them to let a minority practice their own religion without infringing with the law of the land. After all the state's religion was Greek Orthodox. Like my fellow Jews I felt a sense of frustration because we did not enjoy anymore the autonomous condition of the past.

The period following the Greek occupation of 1912 was marked by the exodus of the major part of the Turkish population of Macedonia to Turkey in Asia Minor. My

father gradually transferred his business to Smyrna. He thought with pessimism of his future in Salonica without his Turkish customers. In this he acted contrary to the local Jewish trend of a "wait and see" attitude. To build a base for his new commercial venture in Smyrna, required many trips and long absences from home. Even the weak stimulation of my religious feelings caused by his morning reading of the psalms was missing for me.

* * *

Until a treaty of peace with Turkey was signed a good contingent of the Bulgarian army with some Serb armed forces were stationed in Salonica. The time of rivalries for the distribution of the spoils between the victors was not too far off, but not before an assassination took place in our city.

The German battleship "Goeben" which became notorious afterward for escaping the British fleet during the First World War was anchored in the Gulf of Salonica in March 1913. The public was invited to visit the latest wonder of the German fleet. In that period I had already left the "Ecole Franco-Allemande" and was enrolled in a "Vorbereitungs Klasse" in the only genuine German school in the city. All the teachers, non Jews, were German or Austrian born. At the same time, Monsieur Recanati, who was no longer a teacher but a business man, accepted me as a private student. I was going twice a week in the evening to his house for courses for the baccalaureate level. On March 18, 1913, I had to go for my lesson. In the afternoon I went with some friends on board the "Goebben." After a couple hours of visiting and admiring the ship, we came ashore. We noticed some kind of public commotion and we interrogated some passers by; for same reason, they remained mysteriously silent. Finally a Jew said to us: "Mataron El Gadol,"

indicating that King George was assassinated. We hurried back home worried about the identity of the assassin. Special editions of the newspapers announced to the public that good King George was killed by a Greek of the town of Seres who was sick with tuberculosis. He had addressed a petition that did not reach the attention of the king. Frustrated in his hope for help, he became a regicide. A few days later he committed suicide by hurling himself from a window on a high floor on the way from his prison cell to the tribunal where he was to be arraigned.

The City of Salonica remained for a few days in deep mourning awaiting royalty and other foreign dignitaries to assemble for the imposing funeral of the king, first in Salonica, then in Athens. The dead monarch was extolled as a kind person but as is customary it was a matter of "The king is dead, long live the King." Prince Konstantinos was proclaimed successor and public opinion assumed that he would be more militant than his father ever was, by refusing the demands for conquered territories by the Balkan allies, especially Bulgaria. In fact, after a few weeks, hostilities broke out between Greece and Bulgaria.

My father who had established part of his business in Smyrna, left it there under the direction of his brother and partner, David. He returned to Salonica for the buying and manipulation of silk cocoons starting in May. For thirty years he was busy in this period of the year attending to this business for himself and on behalf of his father and then in partnership with his brother, Isaac, in the Macedonian town of Ghevgheli. In this market the villagers of the region brought their product for sale. The new crop season lasted six or seven weeks and entailed strenuous specialized work. It was the first year that Ghevgheli was under Serb administration

and the buying and manipulation was left under the direction of Judah Saias who for many long years had been a trusted and permanent representative there. My father assumed the buying that year 1913 in the town of Doyran which was under Greek rule. The buying proceeded at a brisk pace and after a great deal of money was invested in the purchase of merchandise, the town was attacked by Bulgarian armed forces and comitadjis. In a matter of days Doyran changed hands alternating from Greeks to Bulgarian and finally to Greeks again. During the hostilities fires were burning in town and one of my father's warehouses burned in a huge conflagration. Caught in a cross fire he saved his life by descending in a deep well. He remained there for a couple of hours until the Greek army was well in command of the situation and shooting had ceased. Part of the losses of the fire were covered by insurance and part by profits of cocoons purchased in other localities.

In Salonica hostilities were fierce between Greeks and Bulgars. The population remained indoors for a night of terror. By morning the Greek armed forces had the city under its control. The Bulgarian soldiers not killed during the night were made prisoners.

The town of Seres underwent a siege that lasted a few days. We had relatives there, the Simantov and the Fais families. My Uncle Menahem Simantov who was married to my father's youngest sister, Marie, was Honorary Consul of Italy in that city. They had to protect their young children and they had to attend also to a big crowd of refugees who begged protection in their house where the Italian flag was prominently displayed. The Italian newspapers, particularly the Corriere Della Sera of Milan, heralded the story as heroic, considering that many lives were saved due to the courage of the Consular Agent of Italy. The feat did not spare a tragedy for the Fais family. In fact Leon Fais' wife

gave birth during the hostilities to a baby boy but her mind was impaired for the rest of her life necessitating her recovery in a sanitarium indefinitely. The European spoils of Turkish territories were divided between the former allies. Ghevgheli was the boundary line between Greece and as part of Serbia. Dedeagatch remained Greek, dividing Greece in Thrace from Bulgaria who had to cede part of Dobroudja to Roumania. The eyes of the world were focused in our corner of Europe. I was fascinated by the events taking place and I joined the "Registre Echangiste De Cartes Postales." Some interesting or famous occurrences gave occasion to exchange comments with correspondents who generally remained anonymous. I composed for myself an anagram derived from a few letters of my name and wrote under the "nom de plume" Tresor. My souvenirs of that period included the sinking of the Titanic in which Mr. and Mrs. Straus, the Jewish philanthropist couple who had been welcomed at the Alliance School with an address by my sister, Julie, as a representative of her class, tragically perished in it. I had comments (inquiries) for the assassination of King George and I tried the best I could to satisfy the curiosity of my correspondents.

I was an avid reader and enjoyed the lecture of books of classic authors as well as novels. My activities included excursions organized by my Club Excelsior. My leisure hours were spent at the club house or at the "Bouyroun." This was a sort of cafe dispensing oriental pastries, ice cream, etc. Ours was located at the corner of Venizelos and Egnatia Streets. The owner sometimes went to the village of Hortiatch for his supply of natural ice. A few friends and I were accompanying him a few times and this constituted an adventure for us to spend a night outside of our home. Permission to do so was granted by our parents. Once while my father was

in Smyrna, we went fishing during the night, oblivious that we did not inform our parents of our intention. My dear mother was frantic because she did not know the cause of my absence. My Uncle Assael remonstrated the following day with my friend and escapade companion, Samuel Sciaky, who was already working as a custom house agent. Orphaned early in life he took the succession of his father's business. His principal client was the well known merchant of colonial products, Yoseph Beraha. (Wholesale dealers in sugar, coffee and spices were called colonialistas.) My Uncle Yaco Assael in functions as salesman of Felix Amar who was the representative of firms exporting Brazilian coffee called several times a day at the office of Yoseph Beraha where he met my friend, Sciaky. He tried the best he could to explain the cause of our adventure. Anyway the remonstrations served for the future, we did not dare anymore to stay out for the night without previous notice to our homes. My Uncle Yaco was a little man smoking cigarettes in chain to the point that his moustache was singed by consuming his cigarettes to the very end. He had a bachelor friend, Israel Salem, fitting the same description. They decided once to take a slow boat trip with my Aunt Grassia who invited my sister, Julie, to go with them. It was summer and the passage aboard ship was a pleasant one. They were a few days at sea and the last port of call was Smyrna. I envied my sister who had traveled and my great curiosity was to find out what was behind Mount Olympos. Every evening my uncle met his friend at the same cafe usually at the same table drinking a quantity of raki silently and rarely one would notice they had been on a drinking spree. My Uncle Yaco was known to his friends and in the family as "Yaco Tshamish." In the evening while drinking he remained silent but he made up in the morning for the taciturn hours of the previous evening. He woke up early, and with loud shouts he poked fun at my father who was watering

his flowers. It was an exchange of invectives, all in fun, my uncle from his third floor window and my father from his small garden. It was a period during which all this fun ceased; it was during the cholera epidemic. My Uncle Yaco had a married sister and she was invited with her husband to stay for a few days in my uncle's home. It was his privilege to care for a dear sister who was undergoing a period of nervous tension but otherwise healthy. My father thought for the sake of his children to tell his brother-in-law to desist inviting his sister during the cholera epidemic; the apartment upstairs was not suitable for two families. The couple came anyway to stay for a month. It was very painful for my Aunt Grassia and for my mother of the consequences of this controversy. Access to the third floor apartment was through our living room. My Uncle Yaco would come home at night and walk directly and silently upstairs leaving a sense of sorrow to all of us who were used to an exchange of greetings and gossip of the day's news and above all the laughter caused by jokes of our uncle every time he came home at night. Relations between the two men improved eventually but they never reached anymore the degree of congeniality as before. In all this, the affection of the couple toward us, nephews and nieces, remained unchanged.

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Once I ran up a bill amounting to twenty drachmas to my club. My sister, Julie, came to my rescue by giving me her savings of one gold napoleon. My brother, Jacques, who saved his weekly allowance, every once in a while gave it to me. He figured that I as big brother had expenses that his age did not require yet.

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typhoid diseases were endemic and my friends, Manuel Errera and Isaac Bendavid, were two victims claimed by them. The first named was our football hero and a band conducted by Maestro Gaetano played funeral marches from the house of his distressed parents to the cemetery. The Boulevard Hamidieh (although Salonica was Greek for more than one year this boulevard was still designated by us with his old name) was lined up with government officers and soldiers standing guard at all times and they presented arms at the passage of every funeral procession. The Greeks in this were different from the Turks who considered a funeral a private matter without any public demonstration for an unknown dead person. Among the friends of our two dead companions I will mention Yoseph Levi who despite a limping foot was playing goal keeper in our football team, Samuel Sciaky, Albert Covo, Moise Benveniste, Samuel Medina. This last one was just emerging from his apprenticeship as a carpenter and was taking some work. He used the club house as a workshop and his friends were glad to oblige. He was living in the same courtyard as my ex-teacher, Barzilay, where his parents kept an apartment with Fermosa, a married daughter. Her husband, Yaco Molho, was a brother of my Aunt Mazaltov. He was a colorful character always laughing and full of jokes and was known as a "Luft-mensch." About the time I knew him he was coming two or three times a year to our house to reimburse my mother for coupons of the Credit Foncier Egyptien. Every holder of those obligations was waiting impatiently for the yearly drawing of a lottery in conjunction with the amortization of parts of the debt. It was considered a good investment but, of course, housewives bought a share or two for the opportunity to gamble for the grand prize and practically investing their meager savings. A younger sister of Medina had the colorful name of "Djandja" subsequently changed to Jeanne.

Our Sephardic folks had exotic names reminiscent of our Spanish ancestors like Esmeralda for a woman. Those who preferred an oriental flavor named their girls with names like Djamila and Nadir for a man. My Uncle David was called by his Turkish friends Daoud Effendi.

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The hostilities in the Balkans encouraged my father more and more to leave Salonica and establish residence for the family in Smyrna. To prepare me for my future tasks as part of his commercial activities there it was essential that I should speak Turkish. To this effect before leaving for Smyrna for the second time, he engaged my ex-teacher, Muslueddin Effendi, to give me lessons. He came twice a week to our house to teach me the intricacies of the Turkish grammar. I was his sole pupil because since the Greek occupation he could not find employment as a teacher. With Islamic fatalistic resignation he was peddling coffee among his acquaintances, one pound here, half pound there.

My formal studies in French continued under the guidance of Monsieur Recanati and I was going to his house twice a week for this purpose. His family occupied one of the six apartments located at the end of a huge and well cared garden. It was a long walk to reach the apartments under a pergola that in season was blooming with heavy scented jasmine. It was the property of Doctor Isai Sakok and the youngest of his two sons was my class companion at the Ecole Franco-Allemande. Those doctors who had graduated in Europe were wearing the "haut de forme" instead of the fez and Doctor Isai was one of them. Religious Jews would not tolerate the writing of a prescription on Saturday; my Grandfather Benusiglio was in this category. The two popular medicines were castor oil for constipation, especially on Saturday when Jews were indulging in abundant heavy food and quinine for malaria attacks. Doctor

śadok, eager to please his religious patients, carried these two medicines with him, thus avoiding the need to write a prescription. I was well acquainted with the routine of the Recanati household before my teacher married my sister, Mathilde, in 1916. During the hot summer months upon arriving for my lesson, I would find my professor's father sitting in a porch at the entrance of his second floor apartment with his younger son, Raphael, reading a newspaper to him. Generally it would be "El Avenir" published by David Florentin, known as David Palestina, one of the original Zionists of Salonica. The elder Recanati had the eyesight already impaired and it was hard for him to read. In winter when I arrived it was already dark and it was necessary to light up a lamp, the task diligently attended by Rebecca, my professor's younger and only sister who was my sister Mathilde's friend and casual companion. In this light the two big volumes of the Littre Encyclopedia were often consulted to find the etymology of a certain word. I was at the time well acquainted with Abraham Recanati, an older brother of my teacher. He was a familiar figure among the younger generation of Salonica Jews. He was instrumental in elevating the Maccabi Club to a first class sport organization. It was rumored that he was trying to incorporate the different Jewish football clubs to the Maccabi. My Club Excelsior was promoting some intellectual subjects besides its sport activities. Abraham Recanati came once with a committee of his Zionist organization and I supposed with my friends they were trying to rally us to Zionism. I wished to impress him with my erudition and I recited for them the list of the kings of France, starting with Pepin Le Bref and finishing with Louis Philippe. Nothing resulted from this encounter. Was this because we were not ripe yet to Zionist propaganda or they judged us too

puerile for such a high scope? Anyway the whole Jewish population of Salonica was not ripe yet to absorb Zionist ideals. The three principal exponents of such ideas in that period were, David Florentin, Abraham Recanati and Isaac Molho. The satiric newspaper "El Kirbatch" published weekly and generally read avidly in Jewish homes Friday night once castigated my future brother-in-law in its columns stating that Leon Recanati has a fly of Zion in his brains and he should come to us to get rid of it. Destiny plays tricks sometimes, Moise Levi the publisher of "El Kirbatch" committed suicide in Paris in the 1920's for reasons unknown to me. Leon Recanati, David Florentin are posthumously honored and their children occupy positions of honor in Israel. Those of us old folks alive today must wonder how an idea defined a dream about seventy years ago came to be reality in our lifetime. How many Jews of Salonica could have saved their life by emigrating to Palestine, now Israel, instead of perishing in Hitler's camps of death?

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My sisters, Mathilde and Julie, after finishing their formal studies, were preparing to complete their education by learning the art of sewing. To this effect Mathilde went to Mirou, a cousin of my father who was a dressmaker. She had a few apprentice girls and not enough chairs to accommodate them all. The problem was resolved by sending her a chair from our house. Meanwhile my sisters were learning how to play the piano and their teacher was a Madame Saporta (no relation of ours) who came from Volo in old Greece; the territories annexed from Turkey were called new Greece. The acquisition of a piano was met with the opposition of my father. He felt he did not have to imitate his brother, Isaac, who had bought a piano for his daughters. The problem was resolved by my dear mother who produced the necessary twenty-five

gold pounds toward the acquisition of the coveted piano for my sisters. This money represented savings accumulated by her during many years.

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My father's return to Salonica was marked by a stormy voyage. The trip by ship took twenty-four hours but an equinoxal storm delayed the vessel considerably. Of the few passengers on board he was the only one who kept his composure trying even to attend to sick passengers, among those the wife of a real estate man named Barzilay. Upon arriving in Salonica everyone knew that the risk of the sinking of the ship was indeed a real one. In fact two smaller vessels were lost with all hands. Ships engaged in coastal trade were not equipped with wireless to call for help in an emergency.

A few days later a grateful Mr. Barzilay called on my father to thank him for his help in a time of peril. A certain compatibility developed between the two men. Some time after the real estate broker came with an offer from a client who wanted to buy our house for four thousand napoleons. One napoleon was the equivalent of twenty francs and roughly nine percent less than a Turkish gold pound. At this price my father would have realized a big profit but he did not even consider the offer because of the problem of where to relocate the family.

Buildings in Salonica were "kiavghir" or "boulmeh." The first one consisted of a construction of bricks or stones put together with a mixture of quicklime and cement. For the second one a skeleton of beams had to be previously erected from the foundations to the roof and the bricks filling afterwards the spaces between the beams. The first one was, of course, considered a more solid building and fire retarded. The insurance premium for this type of building was lower than for the boulmeh. Yaco Mano was a real

estate man and my Uncle Isaac's family resided for a couple years in a house erected for this contractor. It was considered a modern building of three apartments and the third floor apartment had the latest improvements available. It was not far from our house. Some time later my Uncle Isaac acquired a big comfortable house consisting of three floors. His family came to occupy the third floor. My Uncle Liaou Benusiglio's family was already the tenant on the second floor. The ground floor was occupied rent free by the family of a man that was taking care of the garden and the general upkeep and sweeping of the big courtyard. A long balcony on the third floor was covered with a pergola with jasmine flowers emanating strong pleasant scents and nice to look at. At street level a bakery actively operated was occupied by a tenant baker. The acquisition of this house created at first some resistance on the part of my uncle's family. It had been the property of a respected citizen, Jacob Simha, who was abandoning the popular section of "rogos" for the more aristocratic section of the "quai." (He became a third floor tenant in my Aunt Diamante's house.) Why should the family of my Uncle Isaac live in a popular section of town abandoned by the Simha household? Anyway the reluctance was dissipated considering the many conveniences and comforts of the house. The apartments occupied by my paternal and maternal uncles gave us the opportunity to visit often the house. Another opportunity to go there was when I had the task to carry large sums of money, generally gold coins, contained in small sacks to my Uncle Isaac. I was barely twelve years old and it was safe to circulate in the streets for a child of my age with large amounts of money. A thing of this sort seems inconceivable at the present time when a holdup occurs many times a day. It would be folly indeed to entrust large amounts of money to children, placing their life in

jeopardy.

* * *

In 1914 the weather was humid with heavy spring rains. This did not help the breeding of the new crop of cocoons. The worms depend on mulberry leaves for their nourishment. Then they weave the cocoon that serves them as abode during the period they undergo their transformation from chrysalis to a winged insect. When reaching this stage they pierce the cocoon who in this condition has little commercial value. To avoid this cocoons are placed in baskets and put in steam ovens for a determinated time and by this process the worm is suffocated and the transformation does not take place and the thread he had laboriously regurgitated in the previous days remains intact. The cocoon at this stage is wet from the vapors it has absorbed. To avoid dampness deterioration they are spread out in straw carpets horizontally erected from floor to ceiling in well ventilated warehouses. In humid weather the drying process takes longer and it is necessary to constantly turn the merchandise upside down and remove the cocoons that have accumulated mildew. This was the case in the year 1914 and my father had to work hard and at all hours not to let large quantities of cocoons deteriorate.

The plight of the man charged to place the baskets in the oven was a hard one; he had to enter the steam oven and place the baskets handed to him in shelves erected there. The working man inside the oven had to wash his face with cold water constantly not to be overcome by the vapors. My Uncle Isaac employed for many years the services of a young man who could support the oven's heat and had the dexterity to place the cocoon baskets neatly on the shelves in the steam oven. He was a busy man at the time of the new crop repeating the operation in the oven several times a day.

starting in July the cocoons already dry were sorted as for shade of color, size and general quality by girls and expert women and put in sacks of about one hundred lbs. and ready for shipment to the Milan market. After the drying operation the weight was reduced to one-third of the original. In Milan the basic price agreed between seller and buyer was for four kilos of cocoons yielding one kilo of silk thread. The price was reduced or increased as the yield was inferior or superior of four to one. Sixteen kilos were set aside from each lot sold and four kilos were sent to four different spinning mills and the average yield served to establish the ultimate price. All these operations took place in the warehouses of the "Stagionatura Anonima" whose official task was to attend to these matters.

The buyer in the market place at the time of the new crop had to quickly estimate the yield of the cocoons on sale and pay the price according to quality. My Uncle Isaac and my father were experts in this matter. In 1914 on account of humid weather the crop was scanty and of bad quality. It was disastrous for the inexperienced buyers despite increased prices for silk and competitors had to sustain losses while we had some profits. Formal cartels did not exist but the important buyers had a tacit accord not to wage competitive price wars. Such an accord existed between the Bensussan and Saporta firms, the principal buyers in the Yevgheli Market.

During this season large outlays of money were necessary and a bookkeeping was improvised by my Uncle Samuel Saporta. He was "borrowed" every year to go to Ghevgheli from the textile house of Florentin, Saporta & Beraha, of which he was the principal bookkeeper and cashier. In 1914 they could not grant him a month leave of absence and the delicate duty to pay hundreds of villagers for their

product had to be trusted to someone else. That year the relative small quantity of cocoons bought at Ghevgheli was put in sacks and shipped daily to Salonica where it was manipulated. Ghevgheli was under serb administration and it was necessary to do considerable paper work daily for the shipping of the merchandise to Salonica. A plain commercial operation became too complicated. All these considerations reinforced the notion of my father that he should concentrate his activities in Smyrna. It was a wrong decision as the future proved. After a period of feverish efforts to avoid losses created by bad weather conditions for the crop that year, my father returned to Smyrna. My Uncle Isaac continued his cocoon exporting trade in Salonica. Even in that year of scanty merchandise offered dry after the crop's season he realized fair profits. Rich villagers acquired cocoons from producers in their region and manipulated the merchandise themselves. At the time they thought it was convenient they brought their lot to Salonica and intermediaries (corredores) offered them to exporters. My Uncle Isaac in that year of increased prices took advantage and bought large quantities of "dry" merchandise. The following year was to be for him the culmination of a long career in which he realized huge profits in the only trade he was engaged all his life.

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My father's return to Smyrna permitted his brother and partner, David, to make a trip to Dresden, Germany where he sold a lot of tobacco for the account of Turkish clients who had transferred their home and business from Macedonia to Asia Minor. Earlier he had established a business relationship with the tobacco firm of Frances in Dresden.

On the return trip, during a stay in Milan on advice of Salvator Nahmias who was the agent in charge for the sale of

cocoons there, he engaged himself in the purchase of new crop cocoons in the city of Bergamo. In this he had the facilities of "La Societa Anonima Per La Stagionatura Delle Sete Ed Affini." This company had warehouses in Milan and the lots of cocoons shipped to Milan awaiting to be sold were stored there. This buying of new crop cocoons in Italy although resulting with some profit did not have any follow up because of the impending World War One. My Uncle David hurried back to Smyrna but not before he visited with the family in Salonica. He was still an inveterated bachelor and my grandmother convinced her son to consider marriage. On her advice he got engaged to Oro Perahia, a twice removed cousin who was a beautiful girl with the understanding that marriage was to take place after a few months, his presence in Smyrna being required without delay.

* * *

I started studying German under Herr Cherny, a teacher at the German School where he occupied an apartment. I was going there twice a week for one hour. I was studying then three different languages, French, Turkish and German. My homework was considerable and in order not to be disturbed, my Aunt Grassia left me the use of her apartment upstairs. Despite the time devoted to my studies I had many leisure hours to spend with my friends. Generally if the weather was good we went to the Brasserie Olympos, a vast hall in the brewery where only beer was served. It was scarcely frequented and my friends with a newcomer were congregating there. Sam Uziel was the always smiling type, elegantly dressed up with a new story to tell every day, the "raconteur par excellence." Many times we went to an open air cafe not far from the brasserie and we played "la ranica": an open mouth metal frog mounted on a small platform. From a determined distance, we were trying to introduce metal slots in the mouth of

the frog. The one who introduced the most slots was declared the winner and did not have to pay for his soft drink. On occasion and always in this vicinity where the "Beshtcanar" Park was also located, we went to la "Huerta Del Vino" a vegetable garden where we treated ourselves with a romaine lettuce thoroughly washed.

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In this epoch of radio and television it is hard to conceive how sensational news was disseminated in the past. I knew of the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand at Sarajevo while studying my lesson in my Aunt Grassia's apartment. A newspaper vendor was running through the streets shouting the shocking news of the killing that served for an excuse of declaration of war a month later. Russia, France and England rallied to Serbia who was attacked by Austria-Hungary. The neutrality of Belgium was violated by the German army who overran this country and invaded France. The march to Paris was halted by the tactics of Marechal Joffre at the battle of the Marne. Italy as member of the Triple Alliance failed to join Germany and Austria-Hungary and was sitting on the fence. It was a difficult time for Jewry in the different countries of Europe divided in two opposite camps. Anyway they fought for their respective country and many of them died from bullets fired by their own coreligionists. Salonica Jews were in a state of perplexity. The reverses of the Russians caused them mixed feelings because of the reactionary and antisemite regime of the autocratic czar. Contrary to this, every reverse of the French and British on the western front was regarded with apprehension by the Jewish population of Salonica imbued in French culture. After the resounding defeat of the Russian army on the Mazurian Lakes, the satiric publication "El Kirbatch" wrote: "Wir encarghiren mabouliert lenieren auf der piscuessen der moskoven." The

publisher used this penguin language combining "ladino" words with German to render a more hilarious tone to the defeat of the tzar armies. The Salonica Jews saw in this reverse a divine retribution for the false accusation of the Russians a few months before of the alleged perennial ritual crime of the Jews, provocative of pogroms.

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At this stage I interrupted my French and Turkish lessons and I started to learn Greek under "Han Moshon." He was a colorful character from Janina, always erect in his tail coat and oval hard hat. He was reputed of having twelve sons. He had taught Greek to my Uncles David and Samuel Saporta. He was busy all day long teaching numerous pupils separately. After some time my sister, Mathilde, joined me in my Greek lessons.

My lessons left me plenty of time to read. All the characters of Victor Hugo, Lamartine, Balzac, etc., became familiar figures to me. During my leisure hours I went with my books to the office and warehouse of my Uncle Isaac. It was a vast building owned jointly with my father. I was supposed to be there to acquaint myself in the intricacies of the cocoon business. My Uncle Isaac would at times discuss with me the merits of the book I was reading. He was a couple years older than my father but he had more schooling and more literary knowledge. I was surprised on a particular day when I was reading "Les Rois" by Jules Lemaitre when he commented on the powers of the kings indicating that he was familiar with the ideas expressed by the author. His son, Albert, a couple years older than me, was always present. He had many friends who called on him often. His father who had a good sense of humor would remark sometimes on his son's friends calling them "Les Ministres Des Affaires Inutiles."

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Regardless of the war raging in Europe and the opposing positions of King Konstantinos and the leading politician Venizelos, the Jewish population of Salonica was undergoing a transformation. It was adapting itself from the benevolent "laissez faire" of the Turkish administration to the more rigid laws of the Greek government. In this period my adolescent years were over, emerging in the more mature demands of a young man. My time was devoted to avid lectures, sport activities and sex curiosity. At times it was more than curiosity and the craving of young blood found an outlet in the embraces of the most ancient profession in the world.

Our clubhouse was located in front of a complex of houses on the fringe of the Turkish quarter of town. One of these houses was the residence of the family of a girl to whom I felt attracted. She was in her last year at school and I watched her coming and going out of the house. My constant attention was not of the kind that could be ignored. Finally we established conversation contact and our relationship developed in the most perfect example of platonic love. We met in the deserted streets of the Turkish part of town when evening gave way to darkness of night. We would hold hands and it was evident that the supreme joy to be in each others company was reciprocal.

Some of my friends had the same relationship with girls in other parts of town. One of my friends was a virtuoso playing mandolin or banjo. Every now and then four or five of us would assemble at night and in the deep silence and darkness when folks were fast asleep we serenaded our girls with suggestive songs. Companionship, as is common today between the two sexes, was not tolerated then. While the young lady well knew the serenading was for her, the neighbors had to guess to whom the melodies were addressed.

".....che da per gli occhi una dolcezza al cuore che intender non la puo chi non la prova." These verses of Dante have very little meaning nowadays of equality of sexes. In the past there were two kinds of women: the good one of marrying type conserving her virginity for the husband, the man companion for her lifetime and the bad woman who lost her innocence casually. In today's world women are measured with a different yardstick and honesty is judged in different degrees and shades. But is it how God intended it to be?

Going ahead in time and the aftermath of my platonic love, the big fire of 1917 caused the displacement of Salonica's Jewish population and anyway some time after I left my native city. Upon returning a year later, I called on a companion of my Naples days who had also returned to our city. To my surprise my girlfriend was living in the same house. I knew after that she was happily married. I did not see her but from the top of the stairs and she told me that my friend was indeed living on the first floor but he was out at that time. Did she know my identity then? What kind of life was her's? Did she save herself from Hitler's holocaust? Is she alive today?

Important deals were made on the basis of Turkish gold pound still in circulation. According to a new law the pound was officially pegged at 23.90 drachmas when on the free market the value of the pound was considerably higher. My father had a policy with the Gresham Assurance, just matured, and it was settled at drachmas 23.900.- instead of the one thousand gold pounds stipulated in the contract. In doing so, the insurance company did not fail to maintain its obligation but simply did not want to contravene with the law of the land.

Following the peace treaty between Greece

and Turkey small denominations of Turkish currency could not be used in everyday transactions; it was replaced by the Greek drachma. The familiar Turkish silver coins were exported to Turkey. It was a profitable transaction and business men engaged in different trades took part in this traffic temporarily. My future brother-in-law bought a sizable quantity of those coins not so much for the eventual profit but because it would necessitate his trip to Turkey and he would have the opportunity to ask my father for the hand of my sister, Mathilde, in marriage. The journey by train entailed many hardships considering the many sacks of coins, mostly silver piastres the size of a dime.

Arriving at Smyrna he took lodgings at the Kasher Pension Papoushado where my father and other businessmen from Salonica were residing. The tiresome trip and a bad cold forced him to bed for a few days. My father took care of him and had an opportunity to know of his fine character. A tacit accord resulted from this encounter that a formal engagement would be announced upon my father's return to Salonica which finally took place in the fall of 1915. It was customary to delegate a relative of the two families to arrange the details and the duration of the engagement. An important point was the size of the dowry. My Uncle Liaou Benusiglio represented my father and Yoseph Recanati, an uncle of my future brother-in-law, represented him. They agreed on one thousand pounds, five hundred cash and five hundred representing the initial cost of half of our house for which the young man was to receive title. The total amount was not the correct one; it was rather double than that, considering the actual value of the house in that period. The argument did not bother in the least my father who only wanted the future happiness of "Mato" (this is how my sister was called in the family). The bridegroom also did not have any pecuniary consideration in this engagement. It was the two uncles

who had arranged things this way. After the wedding, fixed for next September, the young couple was to occupy the apartment upstairs and my Uncle Yaco and my Aunt Grassia had ample time during the eight or nine months of the engagement to look for rooms. The engagement was the cause of great festivities for the two families. I remember, as if it was a recent occurrence, the first time my brother-in-law came to our house. The whole family was awaiting his arrival at the entrance of our apartment. After the welcoming effusions and the presentation of the ring to his fiancée he singled me out with a smile that spelled our mutual satisfaction. The following weeks and months permitted his integration in our family and it seemed to us we had an older brother and my parents felt they had an older son. His high spirits buoyed the home atmosphere and his commercial activities were already fruitful.

The wedding took place on the fifteenth of the month of Elul (with a full moon, presaging of good tides) in the Club Kadimah of which I was a member. It occupied the third floor of a well kept vast building in front of our house. It had several reading rooms where the members were reading periodicals and books of Jewish interest. The Jews of Salonica had started to display some interest for Zionist ideas and the young members of the "Bibliotheque Kadimah" (this is how this club was known) were very militant on that subject. Out of deference for the two families concerned, the use of the premises the evening fixed for the wedding was granted graciously without any consideration. Chief Rabbi Jacob Meir assisted by the clergy of the two synagogues to which the two families were affiliated, pronounced the nuptial benediction. A large crowd of relatives and friends invited for the ceremony

joyously participated in the festivities until late at night. The seven prescribed days following the wedding were celebrated in the Recanati household. They were very conservative in keeping tradition. The week was culminated by the day of the fish (el dia del peshe); the bride had to take a determinated number of steps over a plate of uncooked fish. Prayers were recited that the progeny of the newlyweds should be a source of life symbolized by the fish who multiply abundantly. An episode worth mention is the fact that some twenty years before my parents were neighbors of the well known rich family Torres. A young lady, Regina, in this household promised to help Baby Mathilde dress up for her nuptials when time would come. True to her promise the wife of Doctor Josepovici (nee Regina Torres) appeared at the time the bride was donning the veil.

For the period the young couple lived in the Recanati household they were busy furnishing their apartment properly. To this effect they ordered their furniture from the best man in town and their upholstered pieces also from the best man in the branch. Until the delivery of all this the couple spent most of their time with us and it was indeed a happy period.

My brother-in-law was engaged in importing jute from Scotland mainly for enveloping tobacco leaves bundles. It necessitated import permits issued by the allied armies who created a special division for this purpose. The exports from England were controlled by the military office of the British who did not socialize with the civilian population. The French and Italian military personnel mingled easily with the Jews of Salonica who spoke their language fluently. Leon had a few friends among the French and he was entertaining them in our house. I remember that on one occasion I was going with his brother, Raphael, where some musician could be found. At this time, late in the evening,

everyone in this profession was gainfully engaged. We had to be satisfied with the music of Pessah, a friend of Raphael, who was a virtuoso of the banjo and the evening was a success with our French friends, thanks to the know-how of Davico the caterer, who on short notice improvised a buffet. Pessica, as he was called, with his banjo music kept everyone in fine spirits. He was a diminutive young man always thirsty for water and despite his drinking enormous quantities of it, his size did not increase a bit.

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Italy had entered the war on the side of France, England and Russia. Following the debacle of the British armed forces at Gallipoli, allied armies were establishing a front against the central powers in Macedonia and the headquarters were in Salonica. Greece was divided in two camps. The party of Venizelos favored the western allies; this permitted the entry of allied armies to open up a front against Austria and Germany in the Balkans. The king, who was a brother-in-law of Emperor Wilhelm, favored the central powers. This was the period the Italians put in circulation the following satirical verses in the form of a popular song: "La grecia non si slancia e da ragione perche chi la commanda e Konstantino. La moglie che e sorella di guglielmone non lascia comprometter lo sposino." War was waged at the front but the city was humming tunes and making merry for the soldiers on leave or recently disembarked. Salonica was barely fifty miles from the front with its toll of wounded and dead. New cafes and bars were mushrooming in town for those who wanted to forget in wine and song the miseries of war; it was a period of prosperity for the civilian population. The Serbs also were concentrated in Salonica ready to reenter their country at the moment of victory; they had to wait three long years

before this happened. Subsequently their headquarters were established on the island of Corfu before the liberation of their country.

A few days after the wedding of my sister, Mathilde, Julie noticed a lump on one of her breasts. She told my mother and my alarmed parents frantically consulted our family Doctor Aslanian. On Yom Kippour's eve he ordered a biopsy performed. It revealed a malignant tumor and an immediate operation was advised. This may seem routine nowadays but sixty years ago an operation of this kind was a rarity especially in our country. My distressed parents sought the advice of relatives. My Uncle Isaac advised to let nature follow its course (*biva la gallina con su pepita*). My Uncle Liaou Benusiglio was evasive and he cautioned my parents not to make a hasty decision. My dynamic brother-in-law, Leon, thought it was no time for idle talk and the situation required solid medical advice. He asked his military French friends the names of the foremost doctors in the army in Salonica. One was a general practitioner and the other a renowned surgeon. After reviewing the findings of the biopsy they were unanimous in their decision that an immediate operation was imperative. The French surgeon could not be convinced to perform an operation on a civilian and declared that his duties were at the front line where Frenchmen were requiring his services at all hours. The other doctor accepted to assist Doctor Aslanian who was to perform the operation. All hospitals were requisitioned for the exclusive use of the military and not even the most urgent cases of the civilian patients were admitted. An operation room was improvised in our house by removing all furniture and covering a table with bedsheets. While the operation was going on I accompanied my father out and we were walking through the streets around the house. For a couple

of hours he was crying and moaning over the fate of a dear daughter and the dire consequences of this operation. Before I proceed any further I want to explain how wrong he was in this matter. Destiny has strange ways sometimes for the better. About five years later my sister, Julie, got married to Salomon Saltiel. They had a perfect life together; loving each other dearly for more than a half century when he died and she still cries over the loss of her husband. They had two sons who have loved and respected their parents always. My brother-in-law, Salomon, passed away about three years ago. He was missed by all of us for his high qualities as a husband, a father and his devotion to the whole family. My sister, Julie, keeps alert considering her age and for two years now Aurelia and I had the good fortune of joining her, her son, Maurice, with his wife, Irene, during their vacation in Switzerland. My sister lives in Salonica surrounded by the affection of his son, Daniel, his wife, Ourania, with their two children, Julica and a boy. How different this is from the bleak provisions of my father in his moments of suffering. Everytime one of his children was sick, he was subject to fainting spells. I did see him faint once while my brother, Leon, was sick as a baby. Probably my emotional character is partly due to my hereditary tendency from him but my outbursts are tempered by the forbearance and patience inherited from my mother.

My Uncle and Aunt Assael thought of having found an apartment suitable for them and they moved. Their departure was a cause of regret to all of us but the idea of Leon and Mathilde moving upstairs assuaged the painful separation. The furniture started to come piece by piece while the young couple was practically living with us.

The period was indeed a very happy one. It was the time of interminable discussions

of my father with his son in-law on the merits of the philosophy of Spinoza. My father seemed fascinated by the principles enunciated by the seventeenth century unfortunate philosopher. You could notice that on this subject he was indoctrinated by Salomon Nehama who seemed to be the principal exponent of the doctrines of Spinoza in the lodge "Veritas." By a twist of coincidence Nehama was related to the Recanati family. He seemed to have a spirit of tolerance toward Christianity and I was exposed to this religious and philosophical theme to give me matter of thought. Since then, Spinoza became for me the exponent on abstract reasoning to explain God's existence. Like my father, I became fascinated by his theories and I admired his attitude in the face of adversity and his stoicism confronted as he was by his fanatic co-religionists.

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The summer of 1917 started with torrid heat. On such a hot Saturday my dear mother was informed of her brother Samuel's death. His son, Moise, (he changed his first name to Mauro afterwards) had established residence in 1910 in Berlin as an electrical articles salesman. The Turks after the revolution of 1909 required military service also from the Jews after they had been dispensed of it for more than three centuries. Like many others my cousin Benusiglio avoided service in the army by emigrating to Germany. His cousins, Jacques and Isaac (this last one was called Ihno subsequently), sons of my Uncle Liaou, were living in Berlin already. During the First World War the French military authority had created an intelligence bureau in Salonica. A member of this office appeared once at my Uncle Samuel Benusiglio's place of business while he was alone (he was associated to his brother, Liaou, and they were dealing in building materials, mostly water and gas

pipes) and let him know that he had the information that he had a son living in Berlin. Most probably he did not mean any harm but my Uncle Samuel got scared and since that day his mental faculties got impaired. He had lost a son, Edouardo, drowned while swimming. His only married daughter, Julia, had emigrated to Egypt with her husband. He and his wife were left home with three daughters; two of them of marrying age and a son, Jacques, who was a bookkeeper at the Banque De Salonique. My uncle became more and more despondent and in July 1917 he committed suicide by hurling himself from a window of his house to the hard pavement of the street below. It was a cruel blow for the family especially for my Aunt Grassia who had moved recently to be a short distance from her brother and his family. This was a familial tragedy but a few short weeks later the whole population was due to go through rude general events with the fire that destroyed the largest part of our city affecting the Jews particularly.

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My father who had transferred the bulk of his capital to Smyrna, (travel to Turkey was impossible because it was enemy territory) managed with limited resources of two or three thousand pounds to do business in Salonica. He even sold out to his brother, Isaac, his half share of the building of their warehouse for five hundred pounds. Just in a matter of weeks my Uncle Isaac rented it to a tobacco company for one year at a rental of five hundred pounds. The constant urge for a cash reserve probably prompted my father to hastily sell out this piece of property which proved to be a bonanza in succeeding years to my uncle. For me too, this propensity for a cash reserve beyond my immediate needs for business or otherwise, remained a trait of my life with the

result of a stagnant situation. Other more dynamic people with far less resources created for themselves high positions using their credit without amounts of money stacked away instead of being usefully invested. This brings to my mind the old French adage "tel pere, tel fils." Anyway, during the ensuing two years my father took advantage of the rising prices of silk and bought a couple lots of cocoons in partnership with the importing leather house of Samuel Yenni. It was a period in which everyone was on the lookout for a remunerative speculation. The Yenni firm had offices in the "sebi," which was the market place for the leather trade and for the "colonialists." A big crowd of all sorts of people were dealing there. It was an epoch of mad deals. Teachers of the Talmud Torah descended to the sebi and invested their meager savings in such disparate articles as shoe laces and caustic soda, sometimes with amazing results because prices were jumping higher daily. My father bought a shipment of sesame seeds just arrived from Lemnos. Warehouses for rent were non-existent and he stored his merchandise in the vacant apartment in the semi-basement of our house. He bought also a lot of coarse textile called "cabot" and stored it in the warehouse of Florentin, Saporta & Beraha. This was the business background of my father before the fire that devastated our city. He was reputed to be an habitual pessimist having the foreknowledge of things to come. He foretold an upheaval of some kind in which members of our immediate family could be dispersed. He told my mother to put in a small sack a change of underwear for each one of us children. He gave us a certain amount of money according to age. I was given two hundred pounds in gold that I carried at all times in a small sack concealed under my underwear. My younger brother, Leonico, (this was how we called to differentiate him from

my brother-in-law, Leon), who was just eight years old was given ten Turkish gold pounds with the exhortation to use the money discreetly in case he should find himself stranded alone and only to feed himself.

It was August seventeenth 1917 after the Saturday afternoon siesta; I was sitting in conversation with my parents on the porch that gave access to our apartment. I was to meet sometime after my friends, Peppo Menahem and Moise Molho, with their usual crowd at the Cafe Crystal. The wind was blowing relatively strong for this summer month. We heard a commotion outside and I ran to the street to find out the reason for it. I was told that some houses were on fire in the "tchinar" section and this was not too distant from our house but right on the street where the Recanati family had moved some months before. The youngest son, Raphael, was in Naples where he had established a successful business. With the elder Recanati nearly blind his son, Abraham, would have difficulty to move the family out in an emergency. I saw their house was not in immediate danger. I ran somewhat further and noticed the house next to my friend Sciaky's on fire. Some friends were there already and were helping to assemble some of their belongings to evacuate the house. I joined them and getting hold of a bicycle I loaded some effects on it and we all proceeded to my house. We frantically accumulated our loads on the patio and tired as we were we returned to the endangered house trying to save some more effects from the endangered house. It was a useless cause because the fire had spread and we could not go any further. It was time to think what steps to take if the conflagration should reach our street. My father appealed to an "arabadji" who accepted to work on a Saturday. He brought his long "araba" to our doorsteps

and with mixed feelings we loaded some effects on it with the order to proceed to my grandmother's house on the Rue parallele. I say mixed feelings because we thought that fire fighters would prevent the fire to spread to such a long distance from where it had started. My father always alert in moments of danger was especially solicitous for the youngest of his children. My mother was taking care of my sister, Mathilde, who together with Leon and the youngest of the children and Julie were the first ones to reach my grandmother's house. All of us were carrying the small sack with some clothing that our cautious father had prepared for such an emergency. My brother, Jacques, and myself remained with him outside of the house. At a certain moment we thought that the wind was blowing harder and aware that the door leading to the terrace on the third floor was open and the jerks of the wind might break its glass panels, we went in to close that door. That was wishful thinking on our part, hoping against hope that our house would be spared from the conflagration. By the time we went out the fire seemed to be approaching and we went a short distance and stood in front of the "Haralambo Bakery" when it seemed to us that the "Casa De La Djepia" was already on fire. This building next to the next of our house was known by this description because its courtyard had a small pond with red fishes. It was the house where Maurice Sullam's parents had an apartment. He was a class companion to my brother, Jacques, and his father was a "cavedji" at the ishteera. His modest establishment was the center where cocoon dealers assembled at certain hours daily and made important deals sitting in low chairs without backs while they were sipping their Turkish coffee. It was then evident that the house of "Sara La Haha" was only standing with supporting beams and was in danger of collapse; the synagogue of Yaco Comprado almost in front of our house must have been

already devoured by the flames. I mention all these names because of the memories attached to them and the colorful persons who made history for me in the street I knew best in Salonica. I still see my father as he stood watching the fire and people running in the opposite direction of it. He was calm and with a tragic smile he said that he was a lucky man to be able to relocate his family in the house of his mother in which he was a co-owner. How wrong he proved to be a couple hours later when the fire reached there. Odos Venizelos (ex Sabri Pasha Street) was covered with a very high roof in a portion of it for a distance of about a half of a mile and it was called the "tcharshee." It was lined up with elegant stores displaying rich merchandise in its windows especially jewelry and watches. From this spot on after the tcharshee on descending in the direction of the quay, the street had large clothing stores for men such as Mayer's, Stein's, Tiring's, Jacob Joseph and Cohen plus many stores displaying rich textiles of latest imports for ladies and a variety of establishments where one could shop to his heart's content all kinds of luxuries. By the time we reached our destination on the Rue Parallele that my father had declared minutes before to be our provisional residence, the fire had reached the upper section of Venizelos Street and was approaching the tcharshee. It was rumored afterwards that Sarail who was the commanding general on the Balkan front had ordered a company of soldiers to contain the fire. They placed bombs at certain corners to block the conflagration from spreading. Darkness had already descended on a city lighted only by the flames of the fire raging at different spots. We realized then it was time to evacuate my grandmother's house. My Uncle Menahem Simantov now residing in Salonica had an Italian military truck loaded up with his effects moved out from the same house. The tcharshee was on fire and it seemed to us that soon it would be the turn of my

grandmother's house in which we had hoped to reside. In desperation we proceeded to the house of my Uncle Peppo in the "Quartier Des Campagnes." We found there a big crowd of relatives; refugees like us from the conflagration. We were exhausted and I was appointed to sleep on the floor of the garret of the house with some relatives' young folks. We had a perfect view of the city on fire but managed to catch a couple hours sleep on the hard floor. In the morning, my father and I ventured to a short distance from the "tour blanche" where the fire seemed to have stopped. All buildings on the quay were destroyed by the flames of the conflagration during the night and the Cinema Palace, almost in front of the white tower, remained untouched. Salonica is built on a hill and the upper part was inhabited by Turks whose houses were spared; the same thing happened to the sections of the south where the Greeks resided within the fortified walls. Outside of the walls south and north of the city buildings were not affected. North of the city a mixed population of Jews and Greeks resided in the section called "Afuera La Puerta" and in the south called "Quartier Des Campagnes" was generally the habitat of rich Jews. Jews residing in the central part of the city were mostly affected. Some buildings remained miraculously standing among others the Banque De Salonique and the adjacent store of Florentin, Saporta & Beraha. That morning the prophecy of my father was fulfilled when he asked a business friend who was standing next to us if he had any bread in the house. We knew he had a rich house in the spared part of the city. He replied he did not have any and that he was in the same predicament and that he too was looking for food for his family. My father was thinking of his younger children. My Uncle Peppo was sick and his wife absent in Switzerland; my grandmother was taking care of him. Upon returning from our hunting for food she

regaled the whole crowd with a cup of Turkish coffee. It was time then to resume our search for food. This time I also accompanied my father to the football grounds of the Villa Ida. We knew that not far from there an encampment of Serb soldiers was located. In fact, a soldier was convinced by us to part with a large bread. I do not know how some cheese appeared upon reaching home and this is how our family was fed on the first day as refugees. My brother-in-law, Leon, started to inquire about his parents, sister and brother. He found out that they had left their house on fire and found their way to the quay. At night when the fire was approaching, they hailed a small boat in which they made the trip to the brewery. The elder Recanati had been a trusted employee of Gino Fernandez as cashier in his different enterprises including the brewery. Mr. Samuel Recanati tired and sick with prostate trouble was recovered with his family in the small house that served for lodging to the custodian of the brewery. They remained there until they found an apartment in a section not affected by the fire.

The amazing thing immediately following the tragedies caused by the fire was the resiliency of the population who adapted itself to the new situation with speed. Everyone returned to his habitual occupation. Many shopkeepers had saved cash from the fire in pillow cases. Every available space in the not affected part of the city was rented swiftly at prices unheard of until then.

It was no problem to feed ourselves from the second day on; it was a matter of paying the high prices in the restaurant nearer to us. The big problem was to find space to lodge the family properly. My father reminded himself of a name, Poti Tsitsi, and that served to resolve our apartment problem.

Foti Tsitsi was an old merchant originally from the town of Klisoora; he was Greek Orthodox of Vallach extraction. He was a client and a good friend of my Uncle Peppo. He liked to address his Jewish friends in our Spanish jargon. Some years before he made a business trip to America giving power of attorney to my Uncle Peppo, indicating how much he trusted his Jewish friend. I accompanied my father when he went to see him in his house one block from the Boulevard Hamidieh. After the usual greetings, my father explained the predicament we were in, making clear that he was ready to pay for any favor to us. The house had two floors, and the family of our friend consisted only of his wife and an adult daughter. Why not rent us the first floor? The second floor was enough to house his small family with space to spare. Tio Foti, as he was called by us, immediately took over and it was agreed that we could move in at a yearly rental of two hundred Turkish gold pounds. My father who was prepared for this outcome put on the table a small sack containing the exact amount required by Tio Foti. He explained to us that in a few days he was leaving with his wife and daughter for Klisoora and one or two of us could go to sleep upstairs during their absence. We moved in the same day and after four days as refugees we were happy to sleep in a real bed. We were ten of us, including Leon and Mathilde, to occupy the apartment and a "modus vivendi" was quickly established. We tried the best we could to resume a normal life.

The morning after was devoted to measure the extent of our losses. Our house was burned to the ground including the shipment of sesame acquired recently. The merchandise saved from the fire was the "cabot" stored at the warehouse of Florentin, Saporta & Beraha in the Ishteera. The main store of the firm also was miraculously saved. All around it was a big devastation. Yildiz Han right across

the street was destroyed by the fire. The soldiers fighting the conflagration must have worked very hard that night to save a few buildings in the section still called "Franco Mahala." They were the Catholic church in the Rue Franque, and somewhat distant the imposing building of the Banque De Salonique. The efforts deployed to save the bank building served also to spare the adjacent store of Florentin, Saporta & Beraha, practically attached to it. In a matter of days this establishment was empty of merchandise sold at very good prices. It could not be otherwise because the public needed textiles to make clothing, many having abandoned their house with just the clothing they were wearing. My father also sold his "cabot" at good profit.

A first investigation revealed that a woman Greek refugee from Asia Minor had started the fire by frying eggplants on a street corner. Greek refugees were living in the tchinar section of the city in makeshift houses and the street served them as kitchen. That windy Saturday afternoon proved to be fatal especially for Salonica's Jewry.

My father from then on did not participate in any commercial venture in a period of feverish activity. His only aim was to see the end of the war to transfer the family to Smyrna. His couple lots of cocoons were sold in Milan and part of the proceeds were deposited at the Comptoir National D'Escompte in Paris.

It was hard for me to keep idle when all my friends were busy and earning money. My father tried to refrain me from participating in the general activity and to try at least to earn my upkeep instead of depending on him.

My brother-in-law, Leon, had been exempted from military service with the Greeks because he took a job at the Olympos Brewery as delivery master to the British army. His

employment did not last very much because his absence at his office was felt considerably. I took his job at the brewery instead of him although he figured in the payroll while I had the benefit of his whole salary. After three or four months of this employment I quit because Leon did not have to serve in the Greek army in the first place having passed the age required to be in the army. Very few merchants confined themselves in their regular line. To illustrate this point I will cite an example. A concern of three partners who were the leading tobacconists in the city bought the entire stock of men's wear of Stein's and did a brisk business. After my employment at the brewery I could not keep idle and I bought a shipment of straw hats recently arrived from Italy to be sold at retail. My friends, Isaac Hassid and Sabetay Levy, graciously offered to me a space in their warehouse of wholesale olive oil and soap for the storage and sale of those hats. In those days nothing was regular and in a matter of a few days along with the sale of olive oil by my friends I sold the entire lot of my hats with profit. Encouraged by this first deal I bought fifty sacks of laundry soap but I did not figure out that straw hats are subject to an import permit and arbitrary prices could be charged for them; differently for soap of local manufacture where the prices are controlled by the producers. Anyway I was glad after a few weeks to get rid of the lot without a loss for my second speculation.

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The insurance companies settled claims for 60% to 80% of the policy. Our house was insured at the original cost of the property of one thousand pounds and never increased to the actual value. From the proceeds of this insurance my father and Leon got four hundred pounds each plus the empty lot sold eventually afterwards. The British companies gave the signal for the payment of claims in

a spirit of fairness. For a moment a few people thought they would invoke the clause of war risks for which very few were insured. Such was the case of my Uncle Yaco Assael who prior to the big fire had bought in association with his friend, Israel Salen, 125 sacks of coffee and deposited them in the warehouses of the Banque De Salonique. In the first of the two attacks with bombs over the city by a German zeppelin these warehouses were partially destroyed and my uncle with his friend had to sustain the total loss of their investment because their insurance did not cover war risks. In this first attack from the air two young brothers named Saporta (no relation of ours) were killed by a bomb while strolling near their home on the Djadeh De Vente. This street was designated by this name because it was very wide and measured twenty meters. Our house was located in a different section but my brother, Jacques, and I were congratulated by some folks who had thought that it was the two of us who had perished in this wanton attack. In the second flight of the zeppelin over Salonica, units of the allied fleet anchored in the gulf brought it down with a few accurate salvos fired by their guns. After some days the skeleton of the dirigible reassembled by the French army was exposed for public view, evidently for propaganda purposes, on the Plaza of the White Tower, the famous landmark of our city.

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The rubble left from the buildings after the fire was removed without hurry while the newspapers were announcing grandiose projects of a rebuilt city. What was on hand at that time was the mud of the unpaved streets and everyone busy to recuperate the losses caused by the fire. The big synagogues were burned to the ground but one, the "Kehilah De Signora Fakima," located in the Quartier Des Campagnes. For Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur 1917 it was a scramble to reserve seats in make-shift halls; the most imposing of them was

the Cinema Palace. Some pious Jews had saved Sepharim before saving their own belongings from the fire. It was rather the lack of adequate space and not the lack of Sepharim that prevented regular services. More than ever people kept on repeating that the Almighty would answer any supplication addressed to Him with a pure heart, no matter from where. My father went to the Cinema Palace for the Yom Kippur services and I failed to accompany him on the most solemn day in the Hebrew calendar. A familiar song of that time still echoes in my ears: "Se Arravio el patron del moundo I mos mando a dodoular" (the creator angry for our transgressions send us to dodoular). The place was the spot where poor people were living under hardship conditions in tents after the fire. It seemed to me an injustice to make poor people suffer while the rich would live in comfort fire or no fire.

Everyone of our relatives had vacated my Uncle Peppo's apartment and living more or less comfortably in rented houses in parts of town not affected by the fire. The sole exception was my Uncle Yoseph Dassa who with my Aunt Dodoun (a sister of my father) with their children remained with my grandmother to take care of my Uncle Peppo always sick. My Uncle Dassa was employed for many years as a bookkeeper in my father's office. Since 1913 he had to find a different occupation since my father and my Uncle David had transferred their business to Smyrna. The Dassa family was helped a great deal by the eldest son, Isakino; a very sensible and capable young man who had found good employment in the leading importing firm of threads in the city. My Uncle Peppo was directing his business from a sick bed and he was amassing a considerable fortune for himself and his two partners. It was tabu to mention the disease from which he died despite the cares of his mother. His wife, Esther, and his daughter,

Frieda, were in Europe. He had surnamed his daughter "La Duchessa," when she would be of age she would be fit to marry a duke. He was accumulating riches to endow her with plenty of money when an inexorable fate shattered his beautiful dream. When he died his son, Moise, already in his early twenties, took his succession in the firm Florentin, Saporta & Beraha.

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My Uncle Samuel Saporta was for many years the principal bookkeeper and treasurer of Florentin, Saporta & Beraha. Some time preceding the fire he had married an attractive girl, Gentille Perez, whose parents were tenants on the second floor of my grandmother's house. The girl was the unique daughter of the couple originally from the town of Monastir. They had relatives in Egypt and one of them was a partner in the Societe D'Avances Commerciales and in 1916 they were shipping rice to Salonica. Tio Raphael Perez, as he was called by us, after he saw his daughter happily married, on a Friday night expired suddenly while he was in the best of spirits. His inconsolable wife died after a certain time in an accident involving a car or a tramway while she was a pedestrian. Leon Pais was now in Salonica while his wife was recovering in a sanatorium in Europe; she was also a Perez. My Uncle Samuel Saporta started business taking the succession of his father-in-law in importing rice from Egypt and a variety of other products from Europe. Leon Pais participated in numerous deals with him. My father and I were daily visitors in their warehouse and office located in Odos Cominos near the sebi, center for wholesale colonial products. It was convenient for me because I kept in touch with my friends, all busy in transactions in the marketplace in that section. In the evening we assembled in a cafe nearby to treat ourselves to libations of beer and "koukouretch." The

last one is the intestines of lamb thoroughly washed and barbecued. I had the fixed idea to find out about things on the other side of Mount Olympos. The peace that was to permit my father to deploy commercial activity in Smyrna seemed never approaching. I thought of the idea of joining Raphael Recanati in Naples where he was conducting a successful exporting business. It was a nebulous notion in my mind but I persisted in my desire to travel. It was the period of submarine warfare in the Mediterranean. In fact, a ship in which a Matarasso mother and daughter were traveling was torpedoed. They were the wife and daughter of the well known banker by that name who had been next door neighbors of my Grandfather Benusiglio. David Recanati, a cousin of Leon, also perished of the consequences of a torpedoed ship; he was rescued but died in a hospital in the Island of Malta. He had been a partner to his cousin, Leon; their partnership was dissolved and he was on his way to Marseilles when his life was cut short. This was the sad atmosphere when my dreams of travel took shape. My brother-in-law, Leon, tried to dissuade me in my projects. He even used the good offices of his friend, Elie Allalouf, a manager at the Bank Saul Amar. We had a meeting at the Tour Blanche Cafe in which they tried to convince me of the absurdity of my intentions. I was adamant and my father who could have cut short my projects by refusing to finance my trip declared to whomever remonstrated: He has wings, let him fly out of the coop. In the beginning of October 1918 I quit the paternal home and started on what proved to be an adventurous life.

The first leg of my journey took me to Athens by railroad. It was an uneventful trip during the night and in Athens I was residing in a hotel where many acquaintances from Salonica were staying. Finally after a week of waiting I got a notice from the steamship agent to proceed to Patras. In

there I was to board the vessel in which I was to make the trip to Italy without any mention of the port I was to ashore. After four days in Patras I finally went aboard an Italian ship that took us overnight to the Greek Island of Corfou. It was the period that the Serb army headquarters were located there. A feverish activity was evident because the allied armies were on the offensive and everyone felt that victory could not be too far off. I took advantage of my four days waiting in Corfou to visit the beautiful sites of this Adriatic island; among others the "Achileon," the retreat of Kaiser Wilhelm in a breathtaking panorama. Finally on the fourth day at dusk our ship sailed and still the passengers did not know their destination. It was assumed generally that we were to disembark the following morning at Brindisi. As darkness quickly descended on a calm sea it was prohibited to have any lights on board even to strike up a match to light a cigarette. A couple dozen passengers were offered seats around a table and enjoined to catch some sleep leaning our heads on it. In these circumstances it was easy to get acquainted with the passengers; one of them, known to me by reputation but without any personal relationship, was going to Naples to join his wife and children, all adults. He was a small banker (sarraf) and his name was Moshon Benusiglio. Our acquaintance proved to be invaluable to me. In the morning we docked at Gallipoli and all the passengers hurried to the railroad station eager to reach a final destination. The train was to leave in late afternoon and the small crowd of the passengers was to meet again in the restaurant reputed to be the best in town. In there I had the first example of solidarity among Jews. An individual who said he was formerly from Patras was sitting alone at a table and looking avidly at our ordering the best of the menu. He recognized two Patras merchants among us and being a coreligionist he was invited by

them to our table and he gorged himself with food. After that the two merchants made sure that the man was not to be hungry for a long time in which he would have an opportunity to work and make a better life for himself. The trip by train was interrupted at Foggia for a change of trains and the morning after we reached Naples. I was invited by my traveling companion Benusiglio to ride with him in his carriage and after taking a rest in his house his son, Peppo, would surely know the address of Raphael Recanati. He did not know what tragic surprise was awaiting me.

After a few minutes of rest in his house, and after the effusions with that pleasant family were over, my companion explained to his wife and children who I was and whom I was looking for. Upon mentioning Raphael Recanati every person present assumed a painful appearance. The first one to regain her composure was Mrs. Benusiglio who said I had time to look for my friend and meanwhile I should join the family in their breakfast coffee. After delaying the sad news for a certain time I was told that my friend was dead since the week before; a victim of the Spanish influenza. I was advised to look for Mr. Samuel Abravanel who was taking care of the business of the deceased. I noticed that he was held in high esteem and that he had many friends considering the short time he had resided in Naples. He was eulogized by the rabbi in ceremonies reserved for very important persons. I did not follow my new friend's advice and I went directly to my Uncle Peppo's employee buyer, Mr. Sabetay Serrero. He seized my situation immediately and he arranged for me to stay in a pensione where his brother, Gabriel, also an employee of Florentin, Saporta & Beraha, was a guest. Sabetay was residing with his family in the same building at number eleven Via Caraciolo; an imposing "palazzo" with a superb view of the Bay of Naples and Mount Vesuvius with its smoke trail at the

very top. The owner of the pensione was a thin distinguished lady always at the head of her table at lunch or dinner with ten or twelve of her guests. These included at that time two French couples, senior officers of a French destroyer being repaired at Naples navy yards. Each had invited their respective wives to join them in Naples. My first approach to Italian Jewish life was through a Jewish couple who came to reside at the pensione. He was transferred from Livorno, his native city, to the Main branch of his bank in Naples. Husband and wife were pleasant; the typical Italian Jew assimilated to liberal ideas in matters of religion with a touch of nostalgia for Jewish tradition. The younger Serrero, always elegantly attired, was present at the table for lunch and dinner. So was Moshon Venezia who came at the pensione upon my recommendation; he was the husband of my cousin, Donna, the eldest daughter of my Uncle Liaou Benusiglio. He came to dissuade a younger brother to fall in the claws of a woman; this is the expression he used everytime he was talking about his brother. The novelty of this new atmosphere assuaged somewhat the shock of the news of the tragic end of a friend and relative. If I would have waited a few more days, probably I would not have made the trip at all. My reason for coming to Naples was the presence there of my brother-in-law's younger brother.

I joined the group of the cronies of Peppo Benusiglio consisting of Gabriel Yahaskel and Lazare Carasso. The last mentioned had lost a leg during the first bombing of Salonica by the zeppelin. His brothers were the owners of the cafe "El Neuvo Moundo" on Egnatia Street; mostly frequented by soldiers on leave from the front. After the fire the vacant lot was rented and the place was full of barrels in which raisins were brewing for the manufacture of raki. The making of this beverage was exclusively known to very few individuals, among them the "Nahmias" brand justly famous. During

the war the consumption of this liquor jumped tremendously and everyone with a little capital and nothing else to do started in the manufacture of raki boosting the importation of anethol from Marseilles; an important ingredient in making this liquor. After the fire in Salonica a Greek theater near our house in which every seat was sold was host to a company of excellent actors from Athens. I did go to see, my parents as well, every new show. I was there for operettas like "Leblebidji Horhor Agha" and "The Merry Widow." I never had assisted to a grand opera show. The first opera in which I was a spectator was "Aida" with Mascagni directing the orchestra at the "San Carlo" of Naples. I enjoyed the evening immensely because the language did not offer any obstacle to me. In 1916 I had interrupted all my lessons but one. I started to learn Italian under Signor Calamaro. He was a Salonica young man and a very capable teacher; his few lessons proved to be invaluable to me. After a few days in Naples, I was able to speak Italian without hesitation.

The allied armies were on the offensive on all fronts and with the Kaiser seeking asylum in Holland the Armistice was signed on November 11, 1918 with the surrender of Germany. The lights were on again at night in Naples darkened since the raids of Austrian airplanes that destroyed the glass roof of the galleria.

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It was a cold day of December 1918 when I was on a train to Rome to visit my friend, Dario Modiano. He was there as an "allievo ufficiale" in a flying air corps division of the Italian army. My cronies from Naples were my traveling companions and the four hour trip to the eternal city was gay. We visited most of its remarkable sites and the synagogues. We spent many hours at St. Peter's Church and compared its rich art treasures with the drabness of

our richest synagogues. I stood silent in front of every altar where a crucifix was hanging and reflected on the meaning of it. I observed groups of devout and single individuals praying on their knees. I wondered if they were conscious of the message of love of the Prince of Peace. Did not the sight of the crucifix inspire them with a sentiment of hatred for the Jews who allegedly had caused the death of their savior with agony on the cross? Simple folks through the centuries had heard the stories of the "Jews, killers of Christ" without much further thought in this matter. Interested clerics and popes who should have known better were interested in perpetuating the legend. It is easier to rally people to a cause through hatred than through love. Who is to explain to the Jew hating Christian that nailing to the cross was a Roman way to put to death the condemned? That the Jews were under the Roman yoke and ruled by an alien king who was ever suspicious of new leaders? That the Jewish multitudes were rallied to the message of hope of Jesus? That the Christ was a Jew preaching to the Jews? Admitting that he has filled all the deeds attributed to him and that he was unjustly condemned to die, was he the first or the last innocent man to meet this cruel end? Without his calvary and death on the cross Christianity would have no meaning. Its whole concept rest on the assumption that Jesus died to redeem the sins of men. What would have happened without his end on the cross? He probably would have been relegated among the lesser prophets. The true believers have faith in his miraculous birth. I, as adept in Spinoza's theories, do not believe in miracles. We know now that space is filled with innumerable stars larger than our sun and covering distances in the sky not measurable for the human mind to conceive. How could the creator of this grandiose preordinated scheme perform miracles to prove his existence to man one of his creations? When Jesus was preaching his

message of love to Jewish crowds, a moral code of laws had existed for them for a millenium and he declared he did not want to change an iota to these laws. It was rather other nations like the Romans who by force of arms had subjugated other peoples, who needed to be reformed in their savage ways without regard for human life. Despite having attained a high degree of material civilization they had remained pagans in their savage instincts. The Jews through their apostles thought they could reform the ways of the nation that had reduced them to slavery. In this they succeeded by one of their own spreading the good word all over where his voice or his epistles could reach. Saint Paul was instrumental in expanding the message of love and peace of Christ to other nations. This proved to be a boomerang to the Jews and since then they have been persecuted. Persecuted for what? Every thinking person ought to be grateful to the Jews for their ancestor Abraham who was the first man who had the concept of a unique universal God; for Moses who promulgated the Decalogue; for Jesus; for the apostles and last but not least for Saint Paul who brought the message of Jesus to the pagan world. These were my thoughts as I emerged from the foremost church of Christianity. Frustration had pervaded me during the couple hours of contemplation at the shrines because I felt the Jewish race deserved gratitude instead of hate from people who had remained barbaric until the arrival of Christ the Jew. I felt relieved and vindicated in front of Moses' statue who had brought the message of God teaching men how to live with laws unsurpassed to this day.

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I went in company of my friend Modiano to the opera and a few other shows before returning to Naples. It had been a memorable visit to the Italian capital and in throwing a coin at the Trevi Fountain I felt I was

due to come back soon.

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President Wilson was on the verge of coming to Europe and he was very popular with his fourteen points as a basis for peace with Germany. I was thinking already of going to Smyrna eager to deploy commercial activity, but travel to Turkey was still impossible. I was informed that a few Salonica Jewish young men had gone to Constantinople but they were civilian employees of the French army and as such had accompanied the military for the occupation of the Turkish capital. My life in Naples was pleasant and I tried not to be too impatient to go to Smyrna. On January the 8th 1919 I received a telegram announcing the birth of a son, that they named Laharia, to my sister, Mathilde, and to my brother-in-law, Leon. I celebrated the event with my friends and the other guests at the pensione. In February I went on a second trip to Rome and it was right after the visit of President Wilson that I missed to see. One of the guests at the pensione who had a managerial post of the Banca Commerciale gave me a letter of introduction to a colleague in Rome to guide me in applying for a permit to enter Turkey. He was a Jewish pleasant young man and with his help I tried at first to obtain the desired permission from the British. I was told that they did not have any authority to grant a visa to Turkey and it was rather the Italians who could help me out in this matter. In fact, according to rumors prevalent in those days, Smyrna was to be occupied by Italy until a peace treaty with Turkey was signed. At the questura I was told that all they could do was to grant me an "Nulla Osta" for my leaving Italy. This, I did. At least I could freely leave Italian territory but as for entering Turkey nobody seemed to be in charge of issuing a visa or a passport. With the unconcern of young age, I

figured that the Nulla Osta was enough to book passage on the first ship sailing to Smyrna and upon arriving there somehow I was going to be able to disembark. Meanwhile, I went to see some of the shows. On my last evening in Rome there were two interesting shows; one was a play by Jean Richepin, the other by Henri Bernstein and I opted for the second one. I had read the book by this author and this is succinctly its subject: An aristocratic young woman married to a dissipated nobleman falls in love with a Jewish baron and out of their extra-marital relationship a son is born without the least suspicion from the husband that the baby is not his son. The baron in the course of the years has the same solicitude for the mother and son alike. The boy grows up to manhood and he never knew the secret of his birth. He joins a club where the baron is a respected member. Following his antisemitic sentiments he provokes an incident by touching the high hat of the baron with his cane and sending it to the floor. The old man is in a dilemma confronted with this affront. At the end he reveals himself not to be a coward and prepares himself for a duel with the young man. The mother has no alternative and reveals to her son the secret of his birth out of wedlock. He kills himself rather than be a particide. Thus ends this drama of "Les Juifs" with the baron telling the distressed mother of the suicide he had loved with all his heart: "It is your God that accomplished this." I did not know that my applause at the salient points of the play was observed by a spectator sitting not far from me in the audience. I was to know him a few days later.

The four months of my stay in Italy permitted me to enlarge my horizon, to make new friends and to satisfy my curiosity to know what was behind Mount Olympos. Upon my return to Naples I booked passage on the "Albania" to Smyrna. The last port of call for this voyage was Odessa. In

going aboard ship I found congenial company; among others Sabetay Serrero who was to disembark at Pireus and then proceed by train to our native city. Before reaching its first foreign destination the "Albania" docked four days at Messina and four days at Catania to take a cargo of sulphur. In this last city I went with my traveling companions to hear the opera "La Sonambula" by Bellini in the theater named after him in his native city. They were very few passengers aboard our ship among those a noisy young man proud of the fact that he was neither a Greek or a Jew but a "Levantine." During lunch time one day he displayed a facsimile in wood of a huge circumcized penis. The joke was in bad taste but he added insult to injury by declaring the masculinity of the Jews did not match their courage. The hilarity of the guests at the table was general but for the Jewish audience who remained in embarrassed silence and a lone distinguished gentleman who also was a Levantine Catholic. After lunch I approached the insulting young man and in a voice that did not conceal my anger I defied him, if he felt so courageous to choose one of two glasses; one containing poison (easily obtainable because it served to disinfect the latrines on board) and the other filled with water. I would take the other one. A kind of Russian Roulette. It may seem to the reader of this memoir tinged with a bit of skepticism that my challenge was not real. It was real indeed; so much so that my insulting opponent confronted by my ire conserved a contrite attitude for the rest of the trip. The gentleman who, besides us Jews, conserved his decorum in this incident told me in an "a parte" afterwards that he understood very well my outburst. He was the one who had observed me applaud with "gusto" at the Teatro Nazionale a few days before. It was indeed a small world.

Upon reaching Pireus my traveling companions, comprising Sabetay Serrero, Lazare Benforado; a dentist, Salem and a gentleman named Salmona,

went ashore. During the next couple days of discharging merchandise and taking new cargo the ship resumed its course to Smyrna and fourteen hours was generally sufficient to cover the distance between these two ports. Instead it took us four days to make this trip. A March storm was raging after a few hours sailing and the captain judged prudent to take refuge on an island where we remained at anchor until the storm spent itself out. After Pireus I thought I was the only passenger of my faith on board and was surprised to find out that another Jewish passenger was on board directed to Smyrna. When I approached him he told me that while in Rome he had secured a visa for Turkey. Upon reaching Smyrna the British military authorities came aboard ship and for a few hours I thought I was going to be detained on the "Albania" for the duration of its voyage and returned to Italy because the military would not let me disembark for lack of a visa. I managed to send a note to my Uncle David explaining my predicament. Immediately he went to the Spanish Consulate who intervened with the explanation that I was a nephew of a person well known in town and a son of Daniel Saporta whose trading firm was operating under the direction of my Uncle David as a partner. Late in the afternoon I was permitted to land and my uncle was happy to welcome me to Smyrna and to show me all he had accomplished during the war years in which he was the only one to direct the business. He had reason to be proud. He kept the same warehouse and office in Kutchuk Vezir Han that my father had originally rented and operated under the name Daniel AB. Saporta. Our friend said Effendi, who was known in Smyrna under the name Said Bey, was operating a business from a warehouse and office located in Yerit Han with capital from the firm Daniel AB. Saporta and known under the name Zihnali Said and David A. Saporta. Said Bey was supposed to be in charge and effectively he was present at all working hours but the one to impart movement to this business was my Uncle David. At the

time of my arrival he had a basement full of opium at Kutchuk Vezir Han. (Opium dealers and exporters were still legitimate merchants and this product was not yet a government monopoly or otherwise regulated by the state.) He was also dealing in other commodities operating at the cereal market and the agent there was his friend, Salvator Rousso. The activities of both firms included the products in which my father was active all his commercial life like cotton, sheep wool and a diversity of other products grown abundantly in Asia Minor. I was impressed and imagined myself involved in all those activities in the future.

My Uncle David asked me questions about every member of our family and how they fared during the war years. I did not have the necessary courage to tell him of the death of his brother, Peppo, and it was Said Bey who broke the sad news gently to him. Anyway a few days later my father arrived and the two brothers had ample time to exchange views about family and business matters. I was puzzled and surprised when my father proposed to his brother and partner to change the firm's name from Daniel AB. Saporta to David A. Saporta and the ratio of 62% for himself and 38% for my Uncle David, to fifty-fifty for profits and losses for each one of them. With my little experience in life and business I realized that was a wrong move on the part of my father. I understood that my Uncle David was about to get married and his ratio in the partnership should be increased somewhat. How about 45% for each one of them and 10% for myself to encourage me to dedicate myself to the firm and help me to build up capital? As for the change of names why not Daniel and David Saporta? Why my father, without being asked, was so eager to give up his name in the business he had labored to build up during long years of efforts? Even at the time I write these lines I am puzzled but do not doubt the

wisdom of my father for not wanting his name figure in the business he had founded and still had the larger capital.

After a few weeks I had the task to go to Salonica and make the necessary arrangements to bring over the family to Smyrna. By family they intended my grandmother, my dear mother, my brothers and sisters, and last but not least the fiancée of my Uncle David, Oro Perahia, who had patiently waited four long years of war and separation of the man who was to marry her. I was glad to return to my native city after a few months of absence and I was considered grown up in prestige by family and friends by the experience of my travels. It was relatively easy to assemble the few effects acquired after the fire considering that Tio Foti's apartment was rented furnished to us. My brother-in-law, Leon, my sister, Mathilde, and their cute little baby, Harry, moved to an apartment shared with a Bourla family in the Quartier des Campagnes and the pain to leave was aggravated by the fact of leaving them behind. Leon was prosperous in his business and the promise of trips to Smyrna assuaged the painful separation with them somewhat. Leon had suffered the loss of his younger brother, Raphael, and the loss of his father considered a venerable religious figure in our family.

It was a pleasant trip on the ship "Esperia" and upon arrival we found out that my father had rented a comfortable house and had purchased its rich furniture from the previous tenant. My Uncle David had also rented an apartment but he remained at the Pension Papouchado until the day of his wedding when he moved in with his bride and his mother. The marriage was celebrated in our house with a large crowd of well wishing friends participating with the family to this war delayed happy event. It was a beautiful wedding with the chief rabbi performing the ceremony. The bride was radiant despite the fact that her folks from Salonica could not attend. She felt she was not alone;

after all, the bridegroom was her second cousin and my grandmother was her grandaunt.

It was a happy period for all of us. After the war years and Salonica's fire the family was firmly and comfortably established in its new surroundings and my father was reunited with his brother and partner deploying activity for promoting new business. I was not the only one to learn the ways for managing a commercial enterprise such as ours but my brother, Jacques, as well. His character was completely different than mine. I was striving for new initiatives not in accord with the slow pace of my father and my uncle and the Near East in general. My brother, Jacques, was rather docile and allowed others more competent to direct him. From the first day they put him in charge of bookkeeping and my Uncle David surrendered to him the keys to the safe and his functions as cashier. I had indefinite functions, probably too much was expected of me and I did not have the stuff for the creative role assigned to me. Besides us two, the other steady employee was Mehmed. He was the son of a business friend of my father in the town of Seres. Orphaned in the wars of 1912/1913 he had emigrated to Smyrna recently and was looking for employment. He was judged trustworthy and put in charge of the warehouse.

I was quick in finding new friends. Among others I got acquainted with two brothers named Molho and a class companion by name Magriso. To these Angel Carasso, a recent arrival in Smyrna, completed the list of my cronies. This last one, after Salonica's fire of 1917, recently married and had rented a house near to us at Tio Foti's. His wife died after giving birth to a baby girl named Miriam. About eighteen years later she was to become my sister-in-law by marrying my brother, Leon. My Carasso friend was doing big business by importing colonial products. In the evening we were meeting at the Cafe Kramer or at the Cafe Paris. This was the congregating place of

Salonica colonial merchants now doing business in Smyrna. These old timers in a joking mood would ask with sarcasm to my friend: "How many cases of sardines did you sell today?" To which he would reply with no less irony: "Two hundred," which was the exact truth. His brother, Moise, in Pireus had found good sources for colonial products and was buying large quantities at lower prices to defy all competition. It was the period that every merchant in town was speculating in depressed currencies like German marks, Austrian kronens, etc.; very few individuals visualized that these currencies might become worthless. My father and my Uncle David more so were speculating in a moderate way but they kept also their cash assets in American dollars and British pounds. My Uncle David had bought during the war years promissory notes issued by Ambassador Morgenthau on behalf of the U.S.A. A better price for them could be obtained in Salonica for cashing them. I was the one to make the trip to attend to this matter. During my stay there I was sharing a room with my brother, Sem, who had remained in Salonica with Leon and Mathilde to complete his term at the Scuola Commerciale Italiana. This was my last trip to my native city as a bachelor. I was to return about five years later with my wife, Aurelia. During this trip I had the opportunity to display some initiative by buying some anethol and the sale of it in Smyrna resulted in some profit to the great satisfaction of my father.

The return trip to Smyrna offered some difficulties. I booked passage on the Greek ship "Adriatiki" via Constantinople. When we arrived there the agent came aboard and advised the very few passengers that the ship was to take some cargo which was not ready and that it would be better for us to go ashore during the four or five days that the ship would be detained. I was not sorry for the delay; it was rather an opportunity for me to visit the capital of Turkey (Ankara was not yet the capital).

I had the address of my friends from Smyrna, the Molho brothers, now doing business in Constantinople. On the first day they took me around to visit Pera and Galata. In the evening we went to "Petits Champs," a theater in the open air where Stavil was singing the latest pieces of his repertoire. He was a monmartre "chansonnier" who had a big success previously in Salonica where he returned many times. Instead of dining at Tokatlian and staying at the Pera Palace Hotel, they took me to a Turkish private home where they washed my underwear having left my suitcase on board ship. Finally the agent notified me that the ship was ready to sail and the trip was completed in eight days for a voyage that took usually fourteen hours the direct way.

Late in the summer Leon and Mathilde with baby Harry came to Smyrna to stay with us for the holidays. It was a happy time to be reunited again. My brother-in-law, as representative for "Jute Industries" from Dundee, had among his principal clients a dealer named Jacob Beressi. On occasion they would buy some merchandise in partnership. Just before Leon's trip to Smyrna they had acquired a lot of small sacks imported from Italy used in war time by the Italian army to be filled up with sand to be put in front of the trenches. They were made up of cotton monk cloth.

They could not dispose of this merchandise in Salonica and they shipped the entire lot to Smyrna with the idea they could be filled up with dates, figs or dry raisins for export. Each of these products had a standard sack or wood container in which they were exported overseas. The exporters of these products could not be convinced of changing the mode of packing of their merchandise. Leon left Smyrna with the opinion that at best they had to sustain a loss if the lot was ever to be sold. It was the time that my Uncle David was preparing for a trip to Dresden where he was to sell a large shipment of tobacco. This was acquired in partnership

with some Turk friends from Macedonia and immigrants like us to Anatolia. A great deal of cash was invested in the deal and a large profit was expected. Anyway, the idea of the loss of the "sacchetti" to Daniel's son-in-law was ever present in my Uncle David's mind. His ingenuity turned an eventual loss into a profit. An enterprising Greek gentleman was among his acquaintances. He furnished the "sacchetti" to every Greek woman with dressmaking ability and a sewing machine in her house. In a matter of a few days the small sacks were converted into children's dresses that our Greek friend disposed off easily with profit to himself, to Leon and to his partner, Jacob Beressi.

Our family became well integrated in Smyrna's Jewish life. Contrary of what was going on in Salonica at the time of the Turkish administration, the commercial life in Smyrna was dominated by the Greeks. Consequently Turks and Jews suspended part of their commercial operations on Sunday. In 1919, after many rivalries among the western allies, the Greeks with Venizelos in power disembarked armed forces in Smyrna and for all purposes Smyrna was considered under permanent Greek rule. Prior to this it was the general belief that the Italians were to occupy the city. To this effect, the "Duilio" one of the best units in their navy was anchored in the harbor. At the last moment the occupation by Greece was decided by the western allies. A flotilla of Greek vessels appeared in Smyrna waters to the jubilation of the local Greek population. Some courageous souls jumped into the sea to kiss the sides of the ships of the mother country. This joy did not last long. Before five years were over, Mustafa Kemal by force of arms reconquered Smyrna for Turkey and the subsequent treaty of peace stipulated the exchange of nationals; Greeks from Turkey were transferred to Greece and the remainder of the Turks from Greece were transferred to Turkey.

with my kind of temperament it was unavoidable that I should become involved in amorous relations with a Greek girl. Relations between the two sexes were supposed to remain secret. I thought this was hypocritical and blatant prosmiscuity between boys and girls was severely judged by the public at large. How different it is nowadays when the two sexes freely mingle and even parents encourage their daughters to go on a date. In this respect I was ahead of my times and acting as an "enfant du siecle." I did not parade with the girl in question but I was surprised in a movie theater by my dear mother and my sister, Julie, who was in tears when I came home that evening. My mother advised me to use more discretion in my relations with the opposite sex. How different it is nowadays when all reserve has disappeared.

My brother, Jacques, was my opposite in character. He was an introvert of irreproachable conduct; so much so that my father and my Uncle David coaxed him to take some leisure time. On their advice he took a trip to Salonica but after a few short days he came back. Urged by all of us why he had cut short his vacation instead of offering a reply he started to cry and we never knew what had prompted him to return so soon. A love dillusion? I have reason to suspect that was the case. Some four years later, when consumed by the disease that caused his death, the mother of my brother-in-law, Leon, advised my parents to sustain him with the promise of a girl she knew, who agreed to an engagement with him. In all probability it was the same girl who had caused his hasty return home.

My Uncle David had a way favorable with his Turkish friends and he was rewarded by their faith in him. He had made a deal with some of them to buy a lot of tobacco in their respective town or village direct from the growers. This merchandise was assembled in our warehouse in Smyrna and was shipped to the Frances firm in Dresden and my Uncle David traveled to Germany to

dispose of the lot. It was sold at a substantial profit but the price was established in German marks registering new lows daily. It was necessary in order to keep the profits to convert the marks in hard currencies and this they failed to do. The profits were cancelled as a result. I ignore the end of the story because eventually I left Smyrna without ever coming back.

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On the return trip my Uncle David stopped in Milan and there on the advice of Salvator Nahmias he made a deal with Assayas & Co., bankers in Milan. The principal partner, Assayas, was a son-in-law of Salvator Nahmias. My father was to leave for Tripoli (then part of Syria) in May to buy cocoons of the new crop. profits and losses were to be equally divided but the capital necessary for the purchases were to be furnished in units of lire 250,000 by Assayas & Co. and 100,000 lire by David A. Saporta. My Uncle David was staying at the Hotel Du Parc and he had the opportunity to help in a deal between a native Italian Jew named Balducci, a leather merchant, and an antique dealer from Smyrna named Eskenazy. They exchanged a lot of oriental carpets for a lot of sole leather that we received in Smyrna to be sold on commission for the account of Eskenazy. The intermediary was another Italian Jew named Leonardo Tesoro. He was to become my father-in-law a couple years later. My Uncle David got acquainted with the Tesoro family particularly with the two younger sisters, Antonietta and Aurelia; this last one becoming eventually my wife. The name Tesoro offered to my brother, Jacques, and myself a laughing matter because it seemed to us that it was rather appropriate to two soubrette figures in an operetta. My Uncle David observing our ironic smiles explained that the two young ladies belonged to a decent Jewish family and they simply helped him in buying a trousseau for the baby to be born in a few months; his wife in effect was expecting. The name Tesoro

was common in Jewish families and the equivalent in Ashkenasic families is "Shatz."

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In May I accompanied my father in his buying trip to Syria. I was to keep the correspondence, the accounts, etc... The trip to Tripoli took five days and our ship called at Mersine, Rhodes and Alexandretta before reaching our destination. At our arrival Mr. Moussa Nahas of the firm Moussa and Nedjib Nahas of Tripoli offered us a welcome with the usual Near East courtesy. He was with his brother, Nedjib, to help us on a commission basis in our transactions. They were warmly recommended to us by Salvator Nahmias who was their representative in Milan. They spoke fluent French besides Arabic; so did Abou Habib who was the father-in-law of Mr. Moise Nahas. Tehir religion was Greek Orthodox. They were well known in Tripoli and beyond, acting as representatives of petrol companies and other products besides doing some banking operations. They were very conservative in their dealings and very careful in conserving their wealth rather than increasing it. The senior partner was a Mason and as such a certain congeniality developed between my father and himself since the beginning.

Like all new business ventures we encountered many difficulties from the start. The competition of local interests was very keen. The main competitor was Veuve Guerin of Beyrouth. This concern was well entrenched for long years in sources of supply. The higher prices paid by us was the main reason for abolishing this competition in certain cases but to other people this consideration was not enough; they were thinking of the future. Why should they sell to a stranger paying higher prices without a guaranty of any follow up for future years? The new buyer was a Jew into the bargain and in this matter we had difficulties especially in the village of Zgharta a stronghold of the main competitor from Beyrouth. Anyway the know how of the Nahas brothers was the reason

for some of the reluctant villagers to sell their "shraney" (cocoons) to us. Some of them did not want to depend on the discretion of the vested interests of very few buyers who were taking advantage of them for long years past. At the end of the season in July we had accumulated 150 bales of "dry" cocoons but our expectations upon our arrival in Tripoli were for one thousand bales. This small quantity nevertheless required manipulation and my father had to stay for the duration of this operation in a small village having the facilities required. Conditions prevailing in this region differed from ours in Macedonia and elsewhere in northern countries where summer rains are common. After the worm inside the cocoon is suffocated after the vapor bath, it is extended to dry up in well ventilated warehouses for a period of three weeks during which the weight is reduced to one-third of the original at time of the purchase. In Syria where it does not rain during the summer months the cocoons are put to dry in the open air. We were not familiar with these conditions and my father was scanning the sky everytime he observed an accumulation of clouds. It happened once while I was there on an errand; the weather was really threatening. It happens every once in a great while and a downpour would have spelled disaster for our merchandise. Fortunately it did not rain but it was quite a fright. The man who rented the facilities required for this operation was Sheh Shahin Latouf El Koury. My father was also guest in his house because no hotel existed in this small village. The man and his family acted with exquisite courtesy toward their guest and on that day he offered me his horse for the return trip to Tripoli. The owner did not tell me he was a moody animal and what road I should take. At a certain point almost in the outskirts of Tripoli the horse with a jerky move of his posterior legs threw me down. By the time I lifted myself up the horse had disappeared at a speedy pace in the mountains. I proceeded on foot to town and while the Nahas brothers were solicitous for my safety I was worried about the loss of the horse.

The animal did not like a certain spot in my route and after he had me thrown down he simply returned to his master who was laughing heartily when he knew that I was well.

The hotel where I was staying with my father, or alone during his absence, was owned by two brothers. The two of them were taciturn individuals, very correct and caring for the well being of their guests. In their moments of leisure they were smoking the narghileh and I suspect some hashish was added to their tumbeki (tobacco for the narghileh). This suspicion was the result of an observation of my father. I smoked the narghileh occasionally. On one particular day I ordered the servant woman of the hotel to prepare one for me. My father was alerted by the strong smell emanating from it. He asked the woman named Rahelo (she was a Jewess) what kind of tobacco she used. She confessed that she added a bit of hashish to the tumbeki hadjem (Persian tobacco). Of course, I did not smoke the concoction. The woman thought of performing a friendly act by helping me in dreaming pleasantly as a result of smoking a bit of hashish. As taken in the near or Mid-East this hashish induces a pleasant state of torpor that is very much different from the havoc created by injecting drugs the way it is done by present day addicts in the west. A regular guest at the hotel was a sheik having as steady companion a colonel in the French army. It was the period that French propaganda for influence in Syria needed a boost. The officer acted as liaison between the French government and the chief of what must have been an important tribe. Another guest at our hotel was an actress named Tafida. Tripoli had no theater and the vast main room of the hotel served as stage and for sitting the public. I have assisted to a play by some actors and actresses depicting King Louis the Eleventh of France, his barber and adviser Merlin, the Duke of Normandie, etc., all of them in original costumes. Of course I could not understand the Arabic dialogue;

nevertheless, I enjoyed the play knowing all its historic characters. In a garden square near the municipal building and almost opposite to the hotel a cafe was located. My father and I were daily visitors. We got acquainted there with a Moslem gentleman employed at the municipality who was a popular figure in town. He did not speak French but besides Arabic he was fluent in the Turkish language. This is why my father had long conversations with him while sitting at the cafe. He introduced to us well known people in town among others the young sheh of the main mosque in town. During an absence of my father he invited me for dinner in his house. The list of the guests included the sheik and his French colonel companion and our municipal employee. We were assembled around a very low table all of us sitting on pillows on the floor and arak was served profusely by a black man servant who sang while playing the lute. The women of the house were not in evidence and as is customary they were secluded in another part of the house while the master was entertaining his men friends. It was for me a memorable evening in which I noticed the details of the exquisite Arabic hospitality.

I acted with reserve in my relations with the opposite sex but it was impossible to conceal them entirely. These facts were reported to my father who retorted to the indiscretion with a Turkish proverb: "Like father, like son." The cocoons were completely dry and it was time to make the merchandise ready for shipment to Italy. At the moment my father was giving directions to put the cocoons in sacks, a man that we knew was one of the few fellow Jews in Tripoli arrived at the place of Sheh Shahin Latouf. Noticing that my father was busy he remonstrated with him explaining that it was the ninth of the month of AB, a day of mourning for the Jewish people. My father was not aware of the occurrence, otherwise he would not have started what he was doing. For a moment he was upset but he regained his composure and taking

out his watch he told the remonstrating individual that it was almost noon and it was already "Nahamu" a time for consolation for the destruction of Jerusalem's temple and the slaughter of the Jewish legions at the hand of the Babylonians and five hundred years later on the same day the rebuilt temple was destroyed by the Romans.

Waiting for the ship that was taking us back to Smyrna we bought a lot of apricot paste (amardin) for the account of Fils de Abraham Saltiel of Salonica. Finally we booked passage on the "Ispahan" of the Messageries Maritimes. The trip took five days and we made stops at Alexandretta, Latakia and Rhodes. In this last port I noticed the sites very much apart one from the other where the feet of the colossus of the antiquity were poised to allow the vessels of old to sail under it.

Our commercial venture had been a partial success considering the breakthrough in a new territory but it was a far cry from the one thousand bales that it was our aim to buy. It was the period of a rising market and a fair profit could be expected from the one hundred and fifty bales we were able to acquire.

The American Congress had voted the Volstead Act and it was a race to export alcohol from America before it became illegal to possess it. Every port in the Near East was crowded with metal drums containing the spiritous liquid.

The enthusiasm for the fourteen points enunciated by President Wilson for a world safe for democracy as a basis for peace with Germany had vanished. Rivalries between the victors were the order of the day. The big four of President Wilson, Lloyd George, Clemenceau and Orlando dictated peace to Germany at Versailles. The political map of the world was changed; new states were created and some proud nations were dismembered. Chaotic conditions prevailed in Russia agitated by

the bolshevik Revolution. In France Millerand had the upper hand and was elected president. It was clearly stated in the newspapers, when great men oppose each other they compromise by having a third lesser figure elected. The same process took place in America where the voters chose Harding to be their next president.

* * *

My brother, Fratelli, after his graduation at the Scuola Commerciale in Salonica, came to Smyrna and my parents decided he should continue his education in Italy. I was charged with the task to place him in a liceo in Milan and to lodge him properly. My Uncle David said I should enlist the collaboration of the Signorina Tesoro in arranging the residence of my younger brother in Milan. I had chosen beforehand the Hotel Diana where I was to stay during the few days of my sojourn in Milan. My Uncle David again insisted that I should go to the Hotel Commercio where the Signorina Tesoro came in the afternoon to the office to do the bookkeeping and to pay the suppliers' bills.

We left Smyrna on a humid day in a five hundred ton ship, the "Epirohee," surnamed by us brothers the "Barba Treha" because it did not fail to appear in Smyrna waters every few days. Before reaching Pireus I think we called at Chios (I have been there once, and I believe this was the time). After Pireus the ship made a call at Patras through the Corinth Canal; it was an easy passage for such a small ship. After four days of our departure from Smyrna we reached Brindisi on a Saturday morning early. We proceeded by train to Bologna where we stopped briefly for a change of trains, arriving in Milan late at night.

On the ship I got acquainted with a Jewish young man originally from Smyrna but residing in Montevideo. He had come to Smyrna to get married. He had left his bride of a few days behind and he was on his way to

south America to prepare a home for his wife and returning to his shopkeeping business. We arrived with him at the Hotel Commercio and we were told that the Signorina Tesoro was due at the office on Monday afternoon. The three of us tried to discover the artistic beauties of Milan and the following day, Sunday, we visited the Castello Sforzesco. Milano was a new place for me and I did not know where to start with the task of settling my younger brother in the right school and I was anticipating the return of the Signorina Tesoro the next day; surely she would know how to guide me in these matters. On Monday afternoon she was at her book-keeping job at the office of the hotel. She was openly disappointed to see the wrong Saporta; she expected to see my Uncle David. Anyway I gave her the packages of Smyrna figs and halvah with the compliments of my uncle. She proceeded immediately by phoning her sister, Antonietta, that it was the wrong Saporta who had arrived. It was my turn to remark to my companion from Montevideo that the girl was going to be a source of trouble for me.

In the evening we met with the two sisters and after ascertaining the knowledge of the Italian language of my brother, it was decided to place him at the Scuola of Fate Bene Fratelli. For the lodging they invited us to visit the apartment of their parents and if we found it convenient they would have the boy live with them, family style. There were six sisters; three of them married and living elsewhere with their respective families, the three single girls living with their parents. I thought it would create a burden in this household by introducing among them a boy who needed care. They retorted that their mother would be delighted to take care of him; she would think of caring for a son. She had in fact two sons living in far away America where they got married and had children to raise up. Besides, the six hundred lire of the pensione would come in handy to their mother as an extra income. I did like this homely atmosphere and particularly

I did like the huge mezuzah at the entrance of their apartment. Where else could I find a Jewish home for my brother in Milan for the next few years? The question of a home was successfully resolved. The task at hand was to enroll him in a school.

The term for the scholastic year had already begun but my brother was nevertheless accepted at the Scuola of Fate Bene Fratelli. When asked his name he replied, Fratelli Saporta. Everytime I think of it now, it seems to me that I am assisting at a scene of a movies between Laurel and Hardy. Finally the confusion was dispelled and my brother was registered under the name of Sem Saporta, which is a diminutive of Shemtov. In that period the same Sem was well known in Italy because it was the name of a well known writer, Sem Benelli. From then on, my brother was called by his real name and not Fratelli anymore.

Our Montevideo companion left to board a ship to South America. As for myself, I was to leave for Marseilles after imparting some instructions to our representative in Milan, Salvator Nahmias, concerning the sale of a lot of wool we had on deposit at the Stagionatura Anonima. But all this was before my infatuation with the Signorina Aurelia. She had started to intrigue me but in a matter of days I discovered that the young lady was holding me under a spell that could be defined as love. I went to it with all the passion of my young age and my first thought was to find a valuable excuse for prolonging my stay in Milan. Why should I go to Marseilles where we had no business pending? In Milan we had the lot of raw wool and the cocoons from Syria for sale. I did not realize it at the time but after several years I have considered myself as an "enfant du siecle" rebelling at the rules of conventions. I was expected by my family and friends that in due time I was to choose a bride from the many girls who families' conditions matched our own. Besides that, I was not supposed to fall in love before my sister, Julie, got married because she was a

couple of years older than me. At least on this point I made my intentions clear to the girl I intended to marry. Destiny decreed that Julie got engaged around those days and I knew it quite casually. Aurelia Tesoro was my constant companion and on a certain day we were invited for coffee to a friend's apartment. Among the guests, a couple who were staying at the same Pensione Cantu where I was staying were also invited. They were Mr. and Mrs. Molho and she was nee Tazartes; she had been a class companion to my sister, Julie, and knew her well. The man Molho had a brother in Zurich from whom he was expecting a phone call. Mr. Carlo Molho in Zurich was married to a lady nee Saltiel. This is the gist of telephone conversation between the two sisters-in-law in Milan and Zurich:

Milan: "What news from Salonica?"

Zurich: "A big party is going on in there tonight to celebrate the engagement of my brother, Salomon."

Milan: "Congratulations, so Salomon is engaged..... who is the lucky girl?"

Zurich: "Salomon got himself to be engaged to marry Julie Saporta."

At this point everyone in the room turned a look of surprise toward me; without doubt it was my sister because there was not another Julie Saporta in Salonica.

In the next few days I received directly details of this engagement. The whole thing was instigated and arranged by Leon Recanati and his good friend, Haim Saltiel, the elder brother of Salomon. Above all it was arranged by destiny; the young couple feeling attracted to each other. The wedding was to take place about three months later on March 7, 1921. My qualms about my matrimonial intentions had no reason to exist anymore but I was not in a financial position to accept the responsibilities for married life. I decided then to emigrate to Argentina where my Uncle Leon Saporta would surely be able to help me find employment. After that,

Aurelia could come to join me there.

I booked passage on the "Principe di Savoia" of the Lloyd Sabaudo and on February 25, 1921, for better or for worst, I was on my way to Buenos Aires. The first port of call was Dakar, Senegal. During four days we had ample time to visit, with other passengers, the city typical of a French colony and their principal export was peanuts. I was surprised when the native black chauffeur of the car we hired foretold the independence of colonial Africa. I thought then, if such a day would ever come, it would not be in my lifetime. Now I realize how wrong I was in my way of thinking. The ship burned coal and everything was black with coal dust while men were carrying a supply of coal in straw containers on their shoulders; it took two days to finish the job. How different and fast it is nowadays to load up a ship far bigger with mechanized equipment; the days of cheap labor are forever gone. After Dakar it took eight days to cross the South Atlantic to Rio de Janeiro. In this city, with the same traveling companions, we went by funiculaire train to the summit of the Corcovado. After Rio our ship called at Santos where the coffee export was much in evidence by cargo ships taking loads and loads of this product. The thing to admire in this city is the huge statue of Christ dominating the panorama from an elevated point. We did not make a stop at Montevideo and overnight we sailed on the Rio de la Plata to Buenos Aires where on the following morning we docked at the Darsena Norte.

I proceeded immediately to the office of Lindman Olditch where I was told that my Uncle Leon Saporta was vacationing in Chile but would be back the following day. At least I was fortunate enough not to wait too long for the only relative I had in this faraway city. I tried to familiarize myself with my new surroundings by taking a walk on the Avenida de Mayo and I was surprised to find myself in front of the

statue of Le Penseur of Rodin.

The next day I inquired about my uncle again and he emerged from his office with a look of surprise upon hearing that an Albert Daniel Saporta wished to see him. I assured him that everything was all right with all our folks and that my presence in Buenos Aires was caused by my desire to create an independent situation for myself and that I was looking for employment. After he knew of my intentions he commented that I was a typical Saporta, adding, "like father, like son." My father had left the paternal home to go to his uncle in Seres; I came to my uncle in Buenos Aires. The difference was that Seres was a few miles from Salonica but Argentina was in a far away continent from my birth place. I did not tell him that I was in love with a girl in Milan and that my ultimate intention was for her to come to join me.

He proceeded by having me write a letter to Dreyfus & Co. because of my short experience in my father's similar business. This firm was mainly engaged in the export of grain. If this first attempt was to prove unsuccessful I should try with other similar firms in order to perpetuate a family tradition to export raw products. He advised me furthermore to leave my hotel and to take lodging in a pensione where he was staying in his bachelor days and where he was having his meals during the vacation of his wife in Chile. This pensione was frequented by a few Italian guests and I liked the congenial familial atmosphere and cuisine. The owner hailed from Piedmonte; she was a middle aged woman always sitting at the head of the table, attentive for the comfort of her guests. During the few days I was there the topic of conversation between my uncle and his table companions, mostly in the engineering profession, was the merits of the Einstein theory. The joke in those days was to the effect that if the theory was going to prove true after a certain number of years, the Germans were going to claim Einstein as one of

their own otherwise he would be a Jew without merit. I could not follow up the abstract reasoning going on between the guests but I did appreciate the joke about the scientist.

My uncle's wife came back after a few days and it did not take too much observation to notice they were very much in love. She had the behavior of an aristocratic lady. She was born in Chile and in her teens she was educated in a school for girls in Milan. My uncle graduated from the Scuola Commerciale Italiana in Salonica. The principal told my grandfather Saporta that it would be a pity to make a businessman out of such a talented young fellow. Five of his brothers were in business careers and he went to continue his studies first at Udine then at a university in Turin. He graduated with honors and came back to Salonica in the year 1911. My father had bought a flour mill activated by the waters of a small river somewhere in Macedonia. For a time the idea of improving it by some engineering feat of his younger brother was contemplated. The project was not practical and my Uncle Leon accepted a proposition to go to Argentina to work as a technical director for the Compania Anglo-Argentina de Electricidad. After working there for a couple of years he came back to Europe and it was rumored at the time in the family circle that with the breaking of hostilities between Italy and the central powers he wanted to offer his services to the Italian army. During his many years of residence in Italy he absorbed Italian culture and he became an Italian patriot. Italy did not have a foreign legion and his offer was not accepted. Before returning to Argentina he made a trip to his native Salonica to see his mother and family. It was his last visit there. My grandmother advised him to get married but he preferred to remain a bachelor. He visited us a couple of times in our house and my father being absent he played Santa Claus by giving me a shiny napoleon.

His destiny was awaiting for him somewhere else and he booked passage from Genova to return to Buenos Aires. My Uncle Leon fell in love with a beautiful girl during this long trip. She was returning to her native Chile after having been educated in an aristocratic famous school in Milan. The sentiment was reciprocal but Paola Rodriguez was Catholic and the difference of religion was a hindrance to their union. The young couple separated; he remained in Buenos Aires and she proceeded to her home in Chile. Love was triumphant and my uncle accepted to have the children born of their marriage raised up as Catholics. He wrote to his mother not apologizing but simply asking for her blessing. This my grandmother did with a remarkable spirit of tolerance; all the family did likewise. My grandmother used to visit the house of her sons and daughters quite often and after dispensing some candies even to her adult grandchildren, she would take out the last letter of her son to be read once more to her. This is how I knew of my uncle's marriage. History was repeating itself when the five brothers Saporta about four centuries before became Catholics in order to avoid persecution as Jews. I do like better the actual behavior of Jews who seem to say: "I am a Jew, what of it?"

Upon my arrival in Argentina my uncle was managing the office of a telephone company and after a couple weeks of residing in Buenos Aires I had not found yet suitable employment. An opportunity was present when my uncle was informed of a position for an accountant (contador balanceador) was vacant at the electric plant of the Compania Anglo-Argentina de Electricidad in Mercedes de San Luis. I was asked if I would accept employment for such a position and I accepted eagerly because I wanted to live quietly away from the noise and temptations of the big city. After I was judged capable of attending to the duties of accountant I was on my way to Mercedes. During my ride of twenty-four hours by train, I had an

opportunity to look at the pampa extending uniformly for miles and miles in rich fertile soil without an elevation.

I was welcomed in Mercedes by the manager of the plant, Signor Venturini, a gentleman in his sixties. He had retired from his functions of inspector of the tramways of Genova, Italy and after being presented with the usual gold watch, he had emigrated to South America where from the first moment he was occupying his present position. I was overtired from the long train ride and I went to sleep that first night in a hotel whose rooms had doors opening directly into a rectangular court. I was awakened in the middle of the night by a faint noise going on in the room. I saw a man going through the pockets of my pants laying on a chair and I started to scream in surprise, or shall I say fear. The burglar ran away empty-handed being scared off by my screams. The next morning I referred the incident to Signor Venturini who placed me in a family pensione.

I started in my functions of accountant immediately and this was not too complicated. The fuel burned at this plant was wood logs and almost an inexhaustible supply existed in the forests not far away from town. I was especially instructed at the company offices in Buenos Aires to watch personally the deliveries of the logs. They were carried to the plant by carts pulled by strong mules. The whole cartload stopped on a huge scale in the yard of the plant. The very first time I assisted in checking the weight of the logs I noticed that the carter; a very rough individual, used the whip too often on the animals to adjust properly the cart on the scale. I did not spare my remonstrations for the wild beating inflicted on the mules. He was about to use the whip on me when the first engineer interfered and saved me from the savagery of the man gone crazy because of my remarks. This is how I got acquainted with the chief technician who had the appearance of a kind person. He hailed from Catalonia and generally the

Catalans are reputed to be fair in their ways but quick in their anger; some time after I was going to find out the truth about this allegation. For the moment I noticed a certain antagonism between Signor Venturini and the chief technician. I was known as Joven Saporta at the plant and at the cafe where I was a daily visitor. The owner was a Frenchman and the same crowd was there everyday among others another French gentleman who was the owner of the telephone company of Mercedes. In this capacity he had done business with my uncle whose Swedish company was selling telephone material. I got acquainted there with some co-religionist owners of the "Tienda de los Pobres" and the Tienda "La Capital." I became good friends with Amram Benaim, owner of the last one.

I did find out soon enough the reason for the antagonism between the manager and the chief technician. Venturini had a brother who was a recent arrival from Italy and he was a qualified mechanic. He coveted the position held by the Catalan for his brother. He was always criticizing the way he was doing his job as chief mechanic. Finally he got the order from the company to fire him and hire his brother. I was charged with the painful task to summon our Catalan friend to the office of the manager. He must have been summarily dismissed judging for the short time he stayed in the office of Venturini where his brother was also sitting. As he emerged in the hall in a brusque move he turned around going into the manager's office again. I heard three or four shots. I jumped from my chair and swiftly in a few short steps I ran to the hall where a wall telephone was located; I had in mind to call the police. As I was about to grab the receiver I heard a shot fired in my direction. Later on I noticed that the bullet had penetrated the plaster of the wall near the telephone. The Catalan did not want to aim at me but he fired a warning shot to scare me out of the telephone.

I got the message immediately and ran to the street and kept on going as fast as my legs would carry me in search of a policeman. Finally I spotted one on horseback and I tried to explain to him the happenings of the last few minutes when the Catalan appeared on the same street; he was quietly going home. He had time to change clothes and I pointed a finger at him explaining to the policeman that was the man who did the shooting but he did not make a move to stop him. To this day it is a puzzle to me why he did not make an arrest. Was he scared? Anyway we proceeded to the plant; the policeman on horseback and I running after him. A doctor was there already called by the brother of the manager laying on the floor of his office critically wounded in the neck. The quick thinking of this country doctor probably saved the life of Signor Venturini. He was suffering of an internal hemorrhage, a bullet having penetrated to his throat without touching his jugular vein. He asked from those present some kind of a pointed knife and someone offered him a penknife. He disinfected the blade by holding the flame of a few matches over it. He proceeded then to extract the bullet that luckily had not penetrated deeply in the throat. In a matter of seconds he succeeded and Signor Venturini started to bleed profusely but his life was saved because his internal hemorrhage was stopped and thus avoided choking on it. He was transported to the hospital where he remained a few days. His assailant did not resist arrest and went to jail pending his trial; it was rumored that he went home at night. A local newspaper distorted the facts by heralding as headline: "Assustado Joven Saporta Corre por las Calles de Mercedes." Prior to the trial the public prosecutor in the presence of the Catalan submitted me as sole witness to questioning and a reproduction of the facts as they occurred on that day; the whole thing taking place at the plant where police and judicial authorities were present.

I related in detail all the happenings on that fatidic day; most of my statements agreeing with the deposition of the accused. The only difference was the declaration by him that after leaving the office of the manager he heard insults directed to him. This I did not hear; my office was somewhat distant from the spot where he heard the alleged conversation between the two brothers. He pretended that angered by the insults he returned to the manager's office to wash in blood the insults. Confronted with the bullet on the wall, he replied that he only wanted to scare me and that he did not aim directly at me. In this, I believed him. But how did it happen that he was carrying a revolver concealed under his overalls worn only for work if premeditation was to be eliminated? He retorted that only at work he carried a gun giving as an excuse that his interference saved me from the assault of the angered carter. At the end he was condemned to a number of years in the penitentiary but he appealed and, if I remember well, he had a commuted sentence.

During this period I knew an old Jew; like Benaim and the other shopkeepers he hailed from Tetuan in Morocco. During the Jewish holidays he tried to invite me to his house but he had told me stories that he was responsible for the marriage of a young man to the daughter of the richest Jew in town. I surmised that he had something like that in mind for myself and I refused his kind invitation. He was gossiping everywhere and hearing what others had to say; among his many occupations he was the reporter of the only periodical in town.

After the big incident at the plant I was fed up with my functions of accountant paying me 150 pesos monthly. I accepted eagerly a proposition of Benaim to work at his store for a salary plus commission on my sales. I even left my pensione and slept in a bedroom in the rear of the store. Benaim and his younger brother being bachelors were doing likewise. In those

first few days I was afflicted with an attack of dysentery and my new bosses took care of me the best way they were capable. Benaim had counted on me to attract customers and I was afraid that he might be disappointed. Anyway, after a few weeks we moved to a better store on the main square in town. I kept assuring my lady customers that their purchases represented the latest fashion in Buenos Aires and trying hard to fit my men customers into a new pair of shoes. I kept thinking of the day when my girlfriend from Milan was going to join me in Argentina to get married. For a certain time I did not hear from her although she had been regular in her letters to me previously. Her silence had a reason: she was on her way to Buenos Aires as I was to find out.

* * *

It was a blustery morning of November 1921; it had rained all night and the streets of Mercedes, unpaved so far, were covered with mud, becoming almost impassable. I was shaving in my room behind La Tienda "La Capital" when the younger of the brothers Benaim told me that a young lady was inquiring of my address. I did not have time to be surprised because my girlfriend, Aurelia from Milan, erupted into the room leaving me astonished and for a second I thought I was dreaming. It was really her. The happiness to feel her presence did not prolong my surprise any longer and we decided after a few minutes to go to Buenos Aires to get married. The Benaim brothers were sorry for our decision to leave immediately but they settled my account with them on the spot paying my salary to date and arranging for a carriage to take us to the railroad station that same night. We spent a few hectic hours that day making plans for the future, including the blessing for our union from my parents. I thought I was dreaming during the trip to Buenos Aires by train.

We took lodgings at the Hotel La Ghiralda and we did not waste any time to inform my

Uncle Leon of our intention to get married. It was evident that his impression of Aurelia was favorable but he cautioned us to proceed without haste adding that he would inform my father of our intentions.

I could not afford to stay idle meanwhile and I took the first job offered in the newspaper La Prensa. It was a position of salesman earning high commissions selling cards to clubs and specialty stores. I did not have what it takes to be successful for this kind of work and my experience at the plant in Mercedes served me well when I applied for a position at the Compania Hispano-Argentina de Electrecidad. I was accepted and was happy having a steady job. Meanwhile we had moved to a pensione in the Calle Bartolome Mitre awaiting the decision of my parents about my marriage. Aurelia could not stay idle and she applied for a job at the office of the Plaza Hotel; the largest in Buenos Aires. To the great surprise of my Uncle Leon who was sceptical of her chances of success, she was accepted as cashier during day hours in the main restaurant. She had her noon meal at the hotel and I had mine at the restaurant of my company for a nominal fee. Aurelia's culinary knowledge was zero and she had to write to her mother for recipes. At that time it took eight weeks to receive a reply and on our days off, by trial and error, we managed to cook our meals. For me it was a real sense of happiness to feel independent and to be able to earn my living and to save money to face eventual future ordeals.

One such contingency was present when Aurelia was sick and I did not know what to do. My Uncle Leon and his wife, Paola, came to my rescue by taking her to their house for about one week. When she was well on her feet, they wanted to keep her until my parents approved our marriage. We could not wait any longer and on March 6, 1922 we celebrated our union; Aurelia Tesoro becoming Mrs. Aurelia Saporta.

My wife kept her family in Italy and her

brothers in North America informed of all the vicissitudes of our daily life and her brother, Renato, in New York urged us to come to North America by sending us an affidavit of support and two hundred dollars as a wedding present. We did not hesitate very much eager as we were to find family life; we started preparations for our trip to New York. Subsequently we had reasons to doubt the wisdom of our decision. In Buenos Aires we were secure in our jobs and trying to improve our financial condition by endeavoring to obtain the concession of selling costume jewelry exposed at the Plaza Hotel. Anyway, on June 21, 1922 we sailed on the S/S Vauban of the Lamport and Holt Line for New York. It was a pleasant trip and our ship made the first stop at Montevideo where Aurelia and I went to visit the store of our traveling companion from Smyrna to Milan. I had remarked to him then upon meeting Signorina Aurelia Tesoro that, "this girl is going to be a source of trouble to me." The trouble ceased when I married her and now we were on our way to New York. We had to decline an invitation to his house to meet his wife because our ship was sailing to the next port of call, Santos. Having been there already this city was of little interest to us. It was a different matter to us in Rio de Janeiro where we revisited the Corcovado climbing to its summit in the funiculaire. We could not visit the Pan de Asucar because on that day an official ceremony was taking place there for two Portuguese aviators who had performed some kind of a feat in those days of early aviation. We made a few stops in cafes in Avenida Rio Branco and this was the extent of our visit to this most interesting city. Our next stops were in the Islands of Trinidad and Barbados. In this last place we visited the synagogue kept more as a museum than a place of worship because of the absence of Jews from the island. The adjacent Jewish cemetery revealed to us tombstones dating back to the seventeenth century showing the adventurous life of our Sephardic

ancestors in search of religious freedom. On July thirteenth we reached New York, which was to be our home for many years to come.

My brother-in-law, Renato, with his wife, Leda, were waiting for us at the pier in Hoboken and we were happy to catch a glance at them before going to Ellis Island for the formalities before being admitted as immigrants to the United States. Certain immigrants, we were told, were detained for a few days at this reception center but this was not our case; after the medical visit and a restoring cup of coffee we were free to go and make our home in this great country where everyone was free, "even to criticize the president." This was the definition I have heard then of democracy. A ferry boat took us to Battery Place, on the tip of Manhattan, where Renato and Leda were waiting for us. On this Monday of July the temperature was high and my young wife was dressed up in a skirt and blouse with a jacket because when we left Buenos Aires it was the start of the cold season. After the first effusions and introductions, my brother-in-law, thinking that the "tailleur" that his sister was wearing was the only good clothing in her wardrobe, took us over the Brooklyn Bridge in his car to the department store of Abraham & Straus and bought Aurelia a nice dress. After that it was a short ride to their house in Bay Ridge. My wife's brother was a man thirty-five years old, rather short but well built. He had a reputation of being tough but he concealed under this aspect very sensible feelings. He was very affectionate to his family and he had a spirit of fairness in his dealings no matter with whom; he would go out of his way to help a friend in need. Despite the fact that he had three small children, all girls, to raise up, he and his wife made us the offer to keep us in their house for one year during which I should have ample time to test my ground, learn the language and go into whatever business I would choose. He insisted especially

I should not be tempted to accept a job in a factory where I was going to vegetate for the rest of my life obliterating whatever initiative I possessed. He had a restaurant in partnership with his father-in-law, Giulio Levi, both of them hailing from Ancona. This last one had a large family and at the time of our arrival they were very prosperous. We did not fail to respond to the manifestations of friendship of the two families toward us. Giving in at the urging of Giulio Levi, I bought two hundred dozen of ladies rayon stockings. At the end of the first week of residence in New York I had sold the lot, realizing thirty-five dollars profit. This was not bad considering that the wages I would get working in a factory would not be higher than thirty dollars a week. Encouraged by my first attempt my brother-in-law advised me to get in touch with my fellow countrymen who, he knew, were assembling in a cafe at the corner of 116th Street and Park Avenue. I went but I was disappointed at the crowd I met there; a few older men out of work. Even the proprietor, a younger man, was busy somewhere else leaving the task of making Turkish coffee for the crowd to the father of Maurice Sullam who was a "cavedji" in the Ishtira section in Salonica. He was surprised to see me among his patrons and he inquired about the condition of my father. I assured him that he was well and in good financial circumstances. As I was leaving, I almost came face to face with my cousin, Jacques Benusiglio. This encounter left us astonished and after the first moment of surprise the two of us were asking questions. I thought he was in Berlin where he had gone to join his brother, Moise, who had changed his first name to Mauro. In fact, he resided in Berlin for awhile but his girlfriend and neighbor from Salonica who had emigrated with her parents to America had gone to Berlin to get married to him. They emigrated to the U.S. afterwards and he was living with his wife and in-laws in

an apartment building a few short steps from the cafe I was emerging from. He took me by the arm to his apartment where his folks could not get over their surprise to know that I was in New York. They were amazed when I told them that I was a married man and that I resided in Brooklyn with my wife in the house of her brother and family. It was Friday evening and I was forced to accept to partake with them the traditional "Pastel." I invited them to come soon to Brooklyn to meet Aurelia. My visit to Manhattan on that day did not have the expected results but I had the opportunity to meet by chance a blood relative residing in New York. Aurelia and her folks were delighted at the idea of exchanging visits with my cousins and the following Sunday they came to us for an Italian dinner. In the next few days we got acquainted with Lucica and her husband, Victor Cassuto. She was a sister to Ida, the wife of cousin Jacques. Lucica knew the routine of our home life before the fire because she was a dressmaker and she sewed many a dress for my mother and for "El Pretico," meaning my brother, Sem, to whom she fitted pants when he was a young boy.

After three weeks of sharing a home with Aurelia's relatives the two of us craved for privacy. Our hosts were very gracious and when we expressed to them our desire to live separately they could not understand the reason for it. Anyway, they were busy with their three children and another expected in a few short months. They had to let us go when we rented an apartment in the same section of Bay Ridge. We were on our own resources when Aurelia and I took a job at the American Can Company for piece work for a salary of about sixty dollars a week for the two of us; half of this amount was then sufficient to cover our expenses. It was only a matter of days until I found another source of income selling dresses to the five hundred girls and women employed at the plant of the American Can Company. Victor Cassuto introduced me to manufacturers of dresses

and sportswear, mostly his countrymen from Castoria in Macedonia. The profits from these sales permitted us to accumulate savings and to go every Saturday on a spending spree for ourselves or for our home. After a few months we moved to a better apartment on 40th Street near Fourth Avenue but uppermost in my mind was the idea of getting my parent's blessing to my union to the girl I had chosen for a wife. This was to come a couple of years later but not before a tragedy had occurred in our family.

My emigration to America did not deter my father from going to Tripoli to buy cocoons of the new crop. My brother, Jacques, accompanied him and he had the same functions as myself in 1920. In the year 1923, after the buying season was over and upon arriving in Smyrna, they found out that the Greek armed forces were evacuating Asia Minor and after the big fire of Smyrna, Mustapha Kemal had restored Turkish sovereignty to the region. Our two travelers proceeded to Salonica where my mother with Allegra and Leonico had previously gone (this was how my younger brother was designated to differentiate him from my brother-in-law, Leon Recanati). They rented an apartment in the Quartier des Campagnes and my brother, Jacques, started to be sick. At the beginning it was thought that it was simply a cold but our Doctor Aslanian diagnosed it as a bad case of pneumonia. He was coughing since they went tourist style to Balbeck in Syria. He was climbing among the ruins of the site and this effort added up to a tiresome trip back home was the prelude that proved fatal to him. When the crisis of the pneumonia was superated he continued to cough and on March 9th, 1924 his young life came to an end after the agony of speedy tuberculosis. Doctor Aslanian, who for long years treated all Saporta families, could not get over how one of us could be a victim of a disease generally affecting mostly people living under adverse conditions. Probably he would be alive today if he had

limited himself to the routine of a quiet life. Unlike me, he did not know how to mix the amenities of life with the routine of his daily tasks. He was an introvert keeping his feelings to himself and no one knew of his secret love for a girl who evidently did not know the depth of his infatuation. This was revealed when the mother of my brother-in-law, Leon, brought the message of the girl that upon my brother's recovery they would announce their engagement. He did not live to see his love dream realized.

My father had started to write to me and in March 1924 I received a notice from a bank that upon my identification I had at my disposal five hundred dollars from Daniel Saporta of Salonica. I did not cash this amount and gave instructions to the bank to send back to the sender this remittance. I surmised that grave happenings were occurring in our family. On April 16th we sailed on the old Cristoforo Colombo for Genova. I wanted to show my folks in Salonica that we could pay our fare many times over. Upon our arrival in Milan my misgivings were confirmed; my brother, Jacques, had died and Sem was recalled from Milan. I took a train to Salonica leaving my wife in Milan; she was to follow me in a few days.

Aurelia and I had welcomed to New York the preceding year her brother, Nino, from Texas with his wife and two children. They came to greet us in our new married life. He had left Italy at the age of seventeen and he hardly recognized the youngest of his sisters. After two weeks of festivities with us and his brother, Renato, and family, they returned to Houston where he was prosperous in the garage business. After a few weeks of his much appreciated visit we received from Italy the tragic news of the death of Aurelia's mother. Since our arrival in Milan with five married sisters they had much to talk about. The blow caused by the death of their mother was assuaged by the birth of a baby boy to each of Aurelia's sisters.

My arrival in Salonica was marked by the crying over the loss of a beloved son to my parents and a dear brother to the remaining six of us brothers and sisters. My father shed many bitter tears over the grave of his son when we went to visit it and it seemed to me that he was singing a lullaby when he intoned some verses of the psalms. His mood was for not contradicting every whim of his children and he certainly was ready with my mother to welcome my wife to form an integral part of our family. My sister, Mathilde, had given birth to her second son, Daniel, and a few weeks before the loss of our brother, Jacques, to a third son named Raphael. My sister, Julie, had given birth to a son named Maurice.

Accompanied by my brothers, Sem and Leonico, we left for Gumendja, the first stop of the Orient Express in Greece in which my wife was traveling to come to Salonica and to offer her the welcome of the family. Her arrival in our midst was marked by her buoyancy that endeared her to my parents and to all in the family. My parents then started to look for an apartment eager to leave the present one full of sad memories.

They rented a house in the "depot" section not very far away from where we were living and my father bought for us nice bedroom furniture. Then it was time for me to look for work but, unlike America, I was not supposed to accept any remunerative job. My father told me that I had one thousand pounds capital with which I was to start in business preferably with an experienced partner. My brother-in-law, Leon, who was the manager of the tobacco company "Fumaro," proposed to me a partnership with him and Haim Azaria who was already his partner in Cavalla in a jute business. I was supposed to leave for Cavalla with my wife to give my best efforts to promote business and introduce myself to the important tobacco companies for their supply of jute. I did not accept the proposition without giving any reason

for it; my parents attributed this to my reluctance to leave them. My father then wanted me to go in partnership with the brother of a friend of his who already was in the textile business but in need of additional capital. My folks could not understand my reluctance to start to be active in any business whatsoever. Everything became clear when I expressed my desire to return to America. My lack of enthusiasm to stay in my native city was dictated by the strange attitude of my friends and relatives living out of our immediate house. It seemed to me that I was regarded as a person who did not "belong;" I felt I was encroaching among the group of my ex-friends. Twenty years later the same group, those surviving Hitler's holocaust as a matter of fact, tolerated the most disparated marriages including unions of couples of different religions. At least my wife and I belonged to the same faith. Evidently, I was an early version of an "enfant du siecle." My dear mother was desolate because my brother, Sem, also did not want to continue anymore his studies in Italy but wanted to be a halutz in Palestine. My father encouraged by his son-in-law, Leon, refused to finance these two adventures; this was the term used by them to designate mine and my brother's preference. Aurelia was pleased with Salonica life and she and my dear mother plotted to make me believe that my wife was sick and unable to sustain the hardships of life in America. It did not take a long time to discover the subterfuge. My brother, Sem, meanwhile went to work as an apprentice for a carpenter making furniture. This is the best way he could devise for an independent life in Palestine by learning a manual craft. Finally, my father giving in to our wishes gave us the money necessary for our trip plus one hundred pounds for our necessities before I found adequate work in New York. A couple months later my brother, Sem, went to Palestine where he has lived ever since. This is the best decision taken by my father who had the premonition of

things to come. In fact, a few years later, he made his home in Tel Aviv. It could very well be that by remaining in Salonica he, my mother and my brother, Leonico, could have shared the unfortunate fate of my sister, Allegra, by being deported in Hitler's concentration camps out of which very few came back. The departure of my brother, Sem, to Palestine in 1924 paved the way for our family to go to Palestine including my brother-in-law, Leon, and family. This long parenthesis is meant to demonstrate how an act judged a nonsense at the time it was accomplished may have beneficial effects later on. The important thing when taking a decision is to be well inspired. I could invoke for myself the same argument when I decided to come back to America. In August 1924 Aurelia and I sailed for New York on the ship "Madonna" of the Fabre Line. As a souvenir from our stay in Greece, my parents gave us a large carpet; part of those bought with the furniture in Smyrna. After fourteen days voyage we went ashore in Providence, Rhode Island and we proceeded by train to New York. The following day the "Madonna" docked in New York but not before colliding with another ship at the entrance of the harbor. Damage was minor but we had saved ourselves a scare by disembarking at Providence. I will have to mention that the ship made stops first at Palermo, then Algiers where we ascended to the Kasbah and I acquired a few tapestries and "moquette" rugs brought on board ship by peddlers with whom I had to bargain, but the price was not much higher than in Roubaix, France where they were loomed. Another stop of the ship was at the Azores.

A few days before our departure for Salonica in April, we were staying in a furnished room rented to us by a Jewish family on 40th Street in the same block of the apartment we were leaving. We sold the furniture that we had bought just a few months before. Upon arriving in New York, we returned to occupy the same room again

with the Clark family who had become our good friends. We were surprised when they insisted we should be careful with the gas light device; no wonder, a woman who rented the same room before us had died on the first night she went to sleep in the room. She thought she had turned the gas off when the light was off. Accidents like these did not occur anymore because it was the period that electric lights were installed in homes replacing the antiquated gas devices. In this, Salonica was well ahead of New York going through this process some twenty years earlier. Mr. Simon Clark, our landlord, had a cutlery store on Third Avenue, Brooklyn, not far from his house and he supplemented his income by peddling razors, shears and other supplies to barbers.

The apartment we had occupied previously on 40th Street was rented but we found another one in the vicinity. It was the kind that was designated as a railroad flat with rooms following each other with only one room having windows overlooking the street. This apartment had a huge kitchen located in the rear with a window in a courtyard. Ours was on a second floor. The carpet that my parents had given me was larger than even our kitchen and our friend, Simon Clark, was skeptical of our chances of ever selling it. To the great surprise of my friend, the Armenian dealer called by me offered two hundred dollars for the carpet. I called on several dealers but nobody seemed interested. They probably figured that in that section of Brooklyn people did not use expensive Oriental carpets. I was eager then to accept the first offer and I got rid of the carpet cashing two hundred dollars for it. To finish up this story, some weeks later I had the curiosity to inquire of the real value of the rug and under the pretext that I had a client for it I went to the dealer on 48th Street, Manhattan, who had purchased the rug from me. I saw it cleaned and displayed with a price tag of fifteen hundred dollars on it. I was

following the offering of jobs in the newspapers. Among others the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company had an opening for an agent in the Bay Ridge district near our home. I applied for the position and an assistant manager visited our apartment the following day. He must have been favorably impressed because I was hired as an agent of the company a couple days later. The emoluments consisted of 15% commission on about three hundred dollars of weekly industrial collection plus commission on the regular policies I would write. Furthermore, for every dollar of weekly premium of industrial insurance I would write I was to receive twenty-four dollars (subsequently raised to twenty-eight) divided in thirteen weeks to be added to my commission salary in the following three months. What was on hand for me for the current quarter was forty-five dollars weekly assured. My wife and I were very happy to find out that my pay was regularly increased since the first week by the commission on old regular policies written by an ex-agent preceding me who was not any longer with the company. Meanwhile I was writing some industrial insurance every week and thus building up my salary for the next three months. I collected a weekly pay upward of one hundred dollars. It was dignified work and I was well regarded by my superiors and colleagues; not so much for writing up too many policies but for my honesty in industrial insurance. Unscrupulous agents who wanted a fat salary in the next quarter wrote up too many weekly policies to accommodating friends that lapsed in the following quarter. Eventually the Bay Ridge district was split in two and I followed Mr. Norris who was an assistant manager but promoted to manager in the new district. He needed more dynamic agents able to write up large amount policies. I did not have the connections and the audacity to approach people totally unknown to me who could use this kind of insurance. He kicked me upstairs by promoting me to the district office of Brooklyn where no industrial

insurance was written and consequently no collections for this kind of weekly insurance. My functions consisted mainly of investigating death claims in the Bedford Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn. I had to cover a large territory and I thought a car was necessary. I bought a second-hand Willis overland car to begin with and got a learner's permit. Aurelia wanted to accompany me everytime I wanted to go out for a drive. After failing the first time for a driver's test, my wife made me so nervous with her remarks everytime I was at the wheel that I gave up the car and promised myself that I would buy a car when I could afford to hire a chauffeur to drive me around.

* * *

The year 1925 was marked by the death of Jacques Benusiglio, the son of my Uncle Liaou and Jacques Benusiglio, the son of my Uncle Samuel, this last one in New York, leaving two small children, Carmen and Samuel. In a one year period the three "Jacques" named after my maternal grandfather were dead. This matter occupied my mind a long time. What is in a name? Coincidence? Probably so, but the fact remained of the tragic untimely death of three fine young men.

It was the time that absorbed in my work I did not pay too much attention to the political scene. Trotsky was one of the rulers of the Soviets and he was building up the Red Army while another leader was preparing himself to be the sole ruler of Russia after he was to eliminate all Bolshevik leaders. Hitler in Germany had already written "Mein Kampf" revealing himself to be the most ferocious anti-semite that ever existed. Mussolini ruled in Italy with theatrical gestures and his fascist cohorts were forcing castor oil in the throat of their adversaries. In Greece the exchange of populations was taking place; Turks living in Greece were transferred to Turkey and Greeks living in

Turkey were moved to Greece. In America under the presidency of Harding the scandal of Teapot Dome was revealed. The taciturn president Coolidge, after the death of president Harding, saw the mad speculation in Wall Street in a period of general prosperity, but he saw also that it was not lasting. Urged by his friends of the Republican Party to run for another term, he replied with his famous statement: "I do not choose to run." I had forgotten the war years and I could not understand my brother, Sem, who was living the life of a halutz in a Palestine kibutz. My ex-landlord on 40th Street in Brooklyn, Mr. Hyman, came to us with the news that the apartment we had occupied previously was vacant. We were glad to move in it again but this time with a guest boarder. My cousin, Mathilde Benusiglio, while her brother was still alive came to live in her brother's house in New York. She got herself engaged to Albert Modiano, the brother of her sister-in-law, Ida. It was an ill-conceived engagement of two opposite characters. He was sedate; she was exuberant. When the engagement was broken the families concerned asked us if we would take her as a boarder. She came to live with us and after a short time she got engaged and married Isidore Alvo. They rented an apartment in 116th Street, Manhattan, where most Sephardic families were concentrated. After a few months, wishing to live near countrymen, we also moved to an apartment nearby. We became friends with Isidore's two brothers, Henry and Jack. The three brothers were partners in a printing business. My wife and I were prompted to move to Manhattan because the Clark family, who were our next door neighbors in Brooklyn, moved to Astoria where they had bought a six-family house. I had acted as an intermediary in selling their two-family house in Brooklyn to an old Italian woman; the transaction leaving me 250 dollars profit. It was October 1926 and Aurelia's brother, Renato, had moved with his family to a house in Coney

Island in the vicinity of the beach. They had six children now; four girls and two boys and I was the godfather (sandak) of the two of them named Daniel and Leon.

It was a Sunday in October, Aurelia and I were visiting in the house of her brother and I felt moody. It had been a busy week. I felt I was following the undertaker and the last death claim I was investigating was of a black man. I did not like to assist to gloomy scenes of people mourning a dear person just deceased. On the spur of the moment I decided that afternoon to leave for Europe without much delay. Even my wife was surprised at my decision and my brother-in-law advised me to reconsider. He told me that I was missing a wonderful opportunity by abandoning a career in the insurance business that could prove a bonanza to me. The future showed how right he was. My mind was made up and the following day I tendered my resignation to the manager of my district who was amazed by my impetuous act.

The following Saturday we left for Cherbourg and Paris on the largest ship afloat, the "Leviathan," ex-Faterland, given by Germany to the U.S.A. as part of war reparations. We encountered heavy seas from the first day and at times the wind was blowing so hard that most of the passengers were sick and they did not show up in the dining room. Among the hardy souls that were always present was a young man who observed me during the whole crossing. On the train to Paris we were at the same table in the Wagon Restaurant and he asked us our nationality. He was simply confused by the many languages we were speaking. He was a Jew going to Prague for a visit to his parents and returning to America the following spring. We dined together with other passengers of the ship in a restaurant on the Rue de Rivoli and I did not give a second thought to this encounter and considered that this young man was a casual acquaintance. The future was to

prove otherwise.

We arrived in Milan in the first days of November 1926 and part of Aurelia's family was alerted to our arrival. She had written to her sister, Martha, and to her husband, Gino Terni, to look for adequate lodgings for us. They came to fetch us at the railroad station and they explained they had an extra bedroom and that they would be very glad if we would stay with them. We accepted gladly and our life in Milan started in what we saw as a good omen when we received a telegram announcing my father's arrival with instructions to reserve a room for him at the Hotel Marino. Again the Terni's told us why keep going back and forth to the hotel to keep in touch with my father when he could stay with us in their home. Upon his arrival, impressed with the courtesy of the Terni family, he accepted to stay with us during his sojourn in Milan and he was glad to have done so when he discovered that his host was a fellow Mason.

For three or four weeks we were assembled around the dining table enhanced by the presence of the two delightful little girls of the Terni's, Mimma and Pina. During the day my father was busy with the selling of his cocoons through his intermediaries; part of it through Salvator Nahmias and part of it through Cesare Somaruga. For the first time we assisted when in the warehouses of the Stagionatura Anonima in Via Moscova, when sixteen kg. of cocoons were put aside for each lot and it was divided in four equal parts to be sent to four different spinning mills and the average result, or the spinning of these cocoons into thread, determined the final price after a basic price of four kg. of cocoons to one kg. of silk thread had been agreed between seller and buyer.

In the evening we had an active social life visiting in the home of Aurelia's oldest sister, Ida, and Carlo Balconi and in the home of her other sister, Antonietta,

and Piero Maranzana. In the evenings we were not so engaged we went to a theater through the courtesy of Gino Terni who at that time was the managing director of the Teatro Olympia. Most theaters in Milan were operated by the Compagnia Suvini Zerboni and we had access to practically all of them for free admission. We were residing with the Terni family at Via Degli Angioli in the rear of the Cinema Fossati in which we assisted at every changing of the program. The duties of our brother-in-law, Terni, necessitated his staying late at night in the theater and we were waiting for him most of the time. At this late hour we had a drink and exchanged reminiscences of times past and jokes of which our host had a large repertoire.

My father was elated by my financial situation. I imagine he must have been surprised when I reimbursed him with the fifty pounds sterling that he had, so called, borrowed from his brother, Isaac, to complete the one hundred pounds he had given me at our departure from Salonica. When he left Milan we agreed that before returning to America we were to go to Salonica to see my dear mother and the family. In fact, a month later in January 1927 Aurelia and I were on the Orient Express on our way to my native city. I was happy to notice that I had ceased to be a source of worry to my parents. They knew that I had found a wife; an adequate companion for life. It was my sister, Allegra, that occupied their thoughts until she was to find a suitable husband. They were worried over the situation of my brother, Sem, who had chosen the hard life of a halutz in Palestine. They wished for him to find a girl who would care and love him. A month passed quickly with visits to relatives and friends who had seen already my destiny tied up in America. I began then to think how to take advantage of my trip to Salonica for some remunerative business. The exchange of populations

between Greece and Turkey had already taken place; part of the Greeks from Anatolia established in Salonica had imported to Greece the ancient art of carpet weaving. As a result, an industry was flourishing in the region and I invested my money to acquire some of these hand woven rugs with instructions to ship them to Genova to take along with me when I was ready to leave for the U.S.A. in the spring.

Returning to Milan I was advised by my wife's relatives to pay the duties of the carpets and sell them very easily in Milan. In fact, friends of my two brothers-in-law, Attilio Vailletti and Piero Maranzana, acquired the rugs at a good profit to me; if I had more, I could have sold more. I was encouraged by these sales and thought I would have the same success in America. I kept my father informed of my activities and he got busy preparing a larger shipment of rugs to New York. Meanwhile, I bought in partnership with my brother-in-law, Gino Terni, some reproductions of paintings by the great masters with the understanding to divide the profits in equal shares and if the sale in New York resulted in a loss I was to pay him 9% yearly interest. I had exhausted my own funds to finance the shipment of carpets and I needed additional capital to acquire the reproductions of paintings and a shipment of damask bed covers. I needed new funds because I had in mind to buy some merchandise in Paris. It was still winter and we did not wish to return to America before April. An idea took shape in my mind: Spanish shawls were very much in style. Why then not use this time to have some shawls embroidered in Milan? In the U.S.A.? Woman labor was too expensive for this type of work. On the advice of my wife's sister, Martha, I had one girl who was her best friend in Ancona come to Milan. In five or six weeks she embroidered seven shawls for me and they were seven master pieces.

I thought that this kind of work would be appreciated in America and to continue in this business at a good profit to myself and create work for Gina Ragaioli; the girlfriend of my sister-in-law, Martha, in Ancona where the art of embroidery was commonplace.

Just before our departure for Paris (since the sale of the carpets in Milan we decided to leave via Cherbourg) we received a telegram from my brother-in-law, Recanati, announcing that my sister, Mathilde, had given birth to a baby boy to be named Jacques, which made them the proud parents of four sons. We rejoiced for the event and the day of the circumcision in Salonica was marked by us in Milan by drinking a toast to the new baby, the Recanati and Saporta families.

Finally we left for Paris where we stayed at the Hotel Williams on the Square Montholon. For the next few days, with the aid of a brother of my school companion, Michel Asseo, acting as intermediary, I bought some machine embroidered shawls and some hand decorated velvet tops for sofa pillows. While in Paris I wrote to Gino Terni to include in the shipment of the merchandise acquired in Italy a few velvet table covers very much in vogue when the table was not set up.

In that period my cousin, Ihno Benusiglio, was in Paris with his wife, Lina, and we had many foursome parties at the Moulin Rouge, the Follies Bergere and many "boites" in Montmartre. It was for us a gay period. For the return trip we booked passage on the "Leviathan" that we boarded at Cherbourg. Upon landing in New York we rented an apartment at 93 East 16th Street. We resumed our American life after an absence of six months. The first merchandise that I received were the Oriental carpets shipped by my father. Ida, the widow of my cousin, Jacques Benosiglio, had gone to work as a secretary at the

Navigazione Generale Italiana and through her I sold them two large rugs that served to cover the huge floor of their main public room at their office at One State Street.

I went to visit my insurance manager, Mr. Norris, who thought I came to apply for a job. He told me that in fact he had an opening in a very interesting "debit." I retorted that after having the position of an assistant manager I could not carry "the big book" as it was called, going from house to house for industrial collections. Probably on that day I missed the chance of a lifetime by not accepting the proposition to resume my insurance career. I tried to explain to him that I wanted to become an importing merchant and at the moment I had Oriental rugs for sale. He told me then that he had a house constructed for his family on Dongan Hills, Staten Island, and that he was in the process of furnishing it. If I would care to send some carpets for the approval of his wife, he would gladly select some. He explained to me that he did not know a thing about this kind of carpet and that he was relying on my honesty to sell him the genuine article. I proceeded by sending him a large rug and several small carpets. I sent him also a book on Oriental carpets by Kimberly Mumford where he could follow up the details in the intricacies of weaving by hand the different designs of the carpets I had sent him. I was very much surprised when a couple days later he informed me that he wanted to buy the entire collection of the carpets already in his house. When I went to his office to pick up his check in payment for it, his assistant manager expressed to me his wish to acquire a good Oriental carpet and I was extra careful to give him his money's worth.

The sale of Oriental rugs like the sale of jewelry and art objects requires patience for the dealer at retail. A

trade is built up patiently and some time has to elapse to gain the confidence of the clients. When a reputation for honest value is acquired the results could be important indeed. I did not have the patience necessary to wait and develop such an opportunity, thinking instead that I could compete with importers long established. Every other Friday a trade auction for Oriental rugs took place at 680 Broadway; I sent the remaining lot of my carpets to be auctioned off with other larger lots of other merchants. They ganged up on me wishing to eliminate the competitive intrusion of a financially weak newcomer. The auctioneer's commission was to be 9% and 6% on the carpets I was to buy back on account of the low bidding by others. This last commission was justified for the publication in the catalog of the goods concerned and for the handling of same. Confronted with the lazy bidding of this reluctant crowd, I felt compelled to buy back most of my merchandise. Eventually I sold at retail the unsold carpets, realizing a profit. The experience served me well when ten or twelve years later I started in the jewelry business in which I remained for twenty years. I had learned my lesson and did not have sudden outbursts anymore of my young age; I had learned how to be patient.

The merchandise from Italy had arrived and it did not take me a long time to realize that I had extended myself in too many articles: "Qui trop embrasse, mal etreint." I found out that most of it was not what the average American requires and that to sell this at retail would necessitate a long time. Therefore, I needed to be busy in something that would permit me to earn a living. I could not think of anything else but to do the peddling of razors, shears and other barber's supplies. Of all the opportunities that this great country had to offer I choose the less adapted to my previous experience. I went to it because I thought that my friend, Simon Clarke, was fairly successful

in it. In fact, probably figuring that one more salesman on the road would not affect his business, he introduced me to his suppliers and I started visiting every barbershop in New York. I had divided the city in sections and every morning I started early to make my calls but this system was of short duration because every barber in the city had his favorite salesman and it was hard to beat the competition.

Al Fried was the name of our traveling companion on the "Leviathan" and in Paris when we were there in November 1926. On one evening while I was preparing my merchandise for next day calls, he came to our house accompanied by a young man and a lady. He was Sam Hollander with his sister, Rose Lampel. After we got over our surprise to see him and his companions, who drove from Bethlehem, Pa. for the purpose of seeing us, they invited us to join them in partnership to sell to Italian prospective customers lots in a new development in Allentown. I tried to explain to them that I was liquidating the merchandise imported from Europe and that I was supplementing my income by selling barber supplies. They advised me that I had a better market for both my activities in Allentown, Bethlehem and Easton and I could do my selling of real estate on weekends to Italian customers they would round up during the week. I figured that after the liquidation of the merchandise I imported from Europe, the experience of selling real estate would serve me in the future and establish myself in a dignified real estate business. By trial and error I should find a permanent career. Jacob and Rose Lampel had three sons of school age and he was working very hard peddling dry goods to Hungarian and Slavish customers to keep his family comfortable. Rose Lampel, besides her brother, Sam, had two boarders, Al Fried and Bernard Shonfeld. She kept busy since early morning until late night

washing underwear, cooking and cleaning her apartment in Bethlehem, Pa. She had another brother who was a cantor in Bayonne, N.J. A younger brother kept a grocery store in Camden, N.J. I noticed that a spirit of optimism pervaded the atmosphere of the Lampel household. To test my ground I left New York and I accompanied them to Bethlehem leaving my wife in New York; if I had even a partial success I was to call her to join me in Pennsylvania. I succeeded in selling some of my merchandise; a bit here and a bit there to customers who were less biased than New Yorkers. In real estate, my big sale was a contract for a house to an Italian who did not want to work in a cement factory in Egypt, Pa. where he was absorbing cement dust. He thought of working any kind of a job in Allentown and for this his first concern was to secure a house for his family in that city. The price was six thousand dollars and his equity in the property was one thousand dollars. This amount represented his savings and I had misgivings for him to consummate the transaction with such a small down payment. My partners convinced me to go ahead with the sale that somehow the man would be able to pay the two mortgages on the house. America was built up on operations of this sort and daring is the main ingredient for success. Three or four years later, the man could not keep up the payments on the mortgages and the property was foreclosed. That season I sold a couple lots, also reluctantly, because of the inflated prices due to the high commission paid to us salesmen. Contrary to the lone house that I sold that year, the lot buyers made profit because Mack Truck bought the development and the holders of the lots made a profit selling them to the truck company.

I was working in partnership with Sam Hollander and Al Fried on my Italian customers and the commissions were split 50% for me and 50% for them. When they

were driving to work on prospects other than Italians I joined them in their ride to their destination and I had the opportunity to admire the beautiful Pennsylvania countryside. I took advantage to sell my barber supplies in remote places; in villages which had a single barber shop. I had then fairly good profits to offset the losses on my imported goods. Aurelia came to join me and we remained a steady fixture in the Lampel household. When the summer was over, we returned to our New York apartment to resume our life on 116th Street surrounded by Salonica people. The experience in Pennsylvania had served us to discover America beyond New York; our horizon enlarged and we made new friends.

During the fall and winter I was working very hard carrying a heavy valise containing razors, shears, etc., always working on side streets of what I thought was not the beaten path of other salesmen. Experience proved to me that such a thing did not exist and that other smart alecs had preceded me to every barbershop in this vast territory. Nevertheless, I made another discovery that salesmanship consists in acquiring the benevolence of a prospective customer and no matter of the high quality of the merchandise offered if you don't have "hutzpa," sales are difficult. Patiently I had the ingredient to become "persona grata" to most clients who, although they did not buy anything, detained me for a bit of conversation. I figured there is always a next time.

Aurelia could not keep idle and she took up writing envelopes. It was an easy job that kept her busy in the house when she had finished her daily domestic chores.

Our social life was an active one and we had among our friends the Alvors, the Cassutos and the Clarks. The last ones were big poker players for small stakes

and we owe them our passion for this sort of kill time play. We were integrated in a Jewish milieu that included Sephardim and Ashkenazim alike but my religious manifestations were nil. The only religious functions I have assisted were the ceremonies of circumcision of the two boys born to the Tesoro's of Brooklyn at about two years interval in which I acted as godfather, (sandak).

President Coolidge had declared "I do not choose to run" and a Republican administration was elected once more when Hoover became president. Stock speculation proceeded unabated and many individuals took the Wall Street plunge, investing hard earned savings in shares that were most of the time of second or third rate companies. I did not participate in playing the market because I was eager to repay the money that my brother-in-law, Terni of Milan, had advanced to me. When it became evident that the merchandise imported from Europe could not be liquidated without a loss, I wrote to him that I would settle my debt at 10% instead of the 9% that we had agreed upon previously. The increase was unsolicited by him. In fact, after a little more than a year I had reimbursed him capital and interest. In this episode I had played the part of a sucker for not allowing others to take the same risks as myself. I did not have then the business experience to act with more caution. With all the knowledge acquired in so many years, I do not think that I could do better today. "Il n'a pas la bosse des affaires" is hard to translate and could be applied to me, even now.

With the coming of the spring I had resumed my travels and it took me an entire week to reach my friends in Pennsylvania. I had stopped to sell barber supplies in Staten Island, Elizabeth, N.J., Newark, N.J., Phillipsburg, N.J., Easton, Pa., and

finally Bethlehem, Pa., where my wife had come by train while I had traveled by ferry boat, trolley car and bus to reach my destination. We expected in that season that our profits from the real estate business were going to surpass those of the year before.

From Bethlehem our friends, the Lampels and their boarders, had moved to Susquehanna Street in the outskirts of Allentown. It was part of a complex of houses erected by the principals of our friends and forming the nucleus of one family buildings as part of the land they were developing. Even with today's standards they were comfortable houses two stories high, attached by a pair with ample space in between the buildings of the attached two houses. Each of them had a semi-elevated concrete basement that could be finished up and fitted as a playroom. The upper floor included three bedrooms with a bathroom and the first floor had a living room, a dining room and a kitchen. It was ideal for mother and daughter who wished to be neighbors and for six thousand dollars for each single house it was a bargain. Each double house had a backyard which was generally planted with vegetables. A few yards back of the houses the trolley car, making the run of Allentown, Bethlehem and Easton, was passing by every hour. My wife was surprised everytime the operator helped her with the packages upon going down to the stop near the house; the large city dwellers are not used to such courtesies.

After a few times I had called at every barbershop in this territory, I thought I needed new fields for my activities. This is when I started to accompany my friends, Hollander and Fried, in their errands to round up customers for lots for the next Sunday. During that summer we took long rides and Sam Hollander, who was the only one to drive the car, kept

singing so as not to fall asleep at the wheel. He had a powerful tenor's voice and I was deeply moved when he sang "Eli, Eli." I was convinced he could have had a more successful career as a cantor than a real estate salesman. In reaching a town or a remote village we would stop in a saloon where I would inquire how many barbershops were in town while my friends inquired about prospects for their lots in Allentown. At times we were out the whole week, starting early Monday morning and drive in the direction of Wilkes-Barre, Pa., where we established our headquarters. We were staying in a hotel whose proprietor was an Hungarian Jew. He was also the owner of a kosher restaurant not far from the hotel. He was a pleasant, energetic and religious man and his restaurant was the meeting place of the Jewish shopkeepers in town. The same crowd were congregating on Saturday nights at his hotel where one or two poker tables were set. They started early in the evening and they ceased to play early on Sunday morning when the losers were lamenting the two hundred or the three hundred dollars lost, while the winners were gloating about the amounts they had won. Sunday morning was the culmination of the week's work for us when the prospective buyers were boarding the bus we had chartered to take them for free to view the lots in Allentown, where they expected to live and work in an indefinite day in the future. For some of them the prospect of remaining miners of coal all their life was sad. Every once in awhile I convinced some Italian speaking customer to come along for the ride on Sunday morning and my satisfaction was doubled when I succeeded in making a sale. Some had come for a free ride while others were sincerely interested but still hesitant and needed more intense salesmanship. Every now and then Rose Lampel came to New York for a visit to her relatives. She had a married sister

living on the east side downtown New York and it seemed to us that we had found congenial friends, although we did not share the same religious interpretations. My Jewishness was inspired by our ancestor, Abraham, who revolted against the barbaric superstitions of his time and conceived the idea of a unique universal God. I thought then, as I think now, that mankind should pursue the task initiated by him to discover the destiny of man on this planet in the universal scheme and the essence of God the Creator. My friends religion consisted of a maze of details illustrated by the following trivial incident: Aurelia inadvertently used a "flaissig" fork for "melahik" food. The whole thing assumed dramatic importance because the fork belonged to a set that would be broken if a piece would be eliminated. The whole story ended when the fork was buried for three days in the garden and by this process Kasheruth was restored in the Lampel household. It seemed to me that they were losing sight of more lofty aims. Numerous Jews keep strictly kosher homes while on the outside they are non-observants. Some of them take the excuse that otherwise their homes would be closed to dear persons of the family or friends with religious qualms. I easily understand that certain persons prefer not to eat pork for health or diet reasons, but what has a fork to do in this matter? Three thousand years ago they were burying in the soil household articles to decontaminate them. In this century to do so is superstitious devotion. Instead of cleansing forks with antiquated methods, why not teach man to cleanse his soul in preparation of universal peace? (Ve yiye adonay ahad ou shemoh ahad.)

I could not vote in the election of 1928 because I was not yet an American citizen. I was aware that a Republican administration was elected with Hoover as president. He had promised "a chicken in every pot and a car in every garage." A denial to these

promises was soon to occur.

As we returned home, Aurelia and I got busy after working hours in getting instruction of how the American system of government functions in preparation for our test for citizenship. On the day of our examination our sponsoring witnesses were my brother-in-law, Renato, and our friend, Simon Clarke. It was easy to reply to the questions of our benevolent judges conducting the examination. The swearing in of allegiance and the delivery of our certificate of citizenship to our great adoptive country was to take place on January 20, 1930.

The collapse of the stock market in October 1929 had ruined many families and even those not directly involved were suffering the consequences. On every city corner one would notice a gentleman nicely attired offering apples at a nickel a piece to passers-by; they were those that had sunk their last cent in the stock market on margin. A few individuals confronted with poverty committed suicide while the majority of more hardy souls accepted their fate with resignation and they crowded the soup line on the Bowery. I discovered that hard times begin at barbershops where patrons usually generous with gratuities in good times become stingy when the chips are down. It became hard work selling razors and shears to reluctant barbers. I took advantage of the ingenuity of my friends in Pennsylvania by trying a new business by selling picture enlargements. They were old hands at it; in winter when the real estate becomes necessarily slow they were selling picture enlargements in places more apt to buy them. In that period "canvassing" was the order of the day and considering that it was times of economic crisis, we did not do too bad. I had established connection with a frame house in Chicago and artists in New York who were re-touching the enlargements. The general public, even those gainfully employed,

were spending their money for shelter, food and clothing instead of wasting their money for foolish things like photo enlargements costing fifteen to thirty-five dollars. Occasionally I came across an individual who had lost recently a dear member of his family who had a faded photo of the departed one, wished same restored and enlarged with an elaborate frame. Another opportunity for pushing a sale was the fact that it was in style at that time to have the enlarged picture of the girl in her bridal attire exposed in the living room of the house. Our best sale was for the woman, who having eloped, forcibly did not possess this type of photo for her children to see. The situation was easily remedied by including the face features copied from a photo of the interested party in a standard bridal finery, veil and all. The everyday sellers were the small stand photos under cellophane manufactured by a Mr. Licker, who had a factory in the Bowery. The selling price was five dollars. An elaborate catalogue and a few samples were our tools of the trade.

In that period, Ida Modiano, the widow of my cousin, Jacques Benusiglio, was married to Albert Menache, whose family was very well known to me from Salonica, who had established a successful business in Mexico. Ida had left her two children by her first husband, Carmen and Sam, in charge of her sister, Lucia, and her husband, Victor Cassuto. We had our part caring for the two little ones before they went to Mexico where Albert Menache adopted and cared for them as if they were his own.

The Wall Street crash had worldwide repercussions and it caused a disastrous fall in the price of silk. Some cocoon merchants who had over extended themselves by acquiring merchandise with borrowed funds were ruined. My father, who had

bought some cocoons in Broussa, Turkey, while the market in Milan was at 140 lire per kg., refused to sell at 130 lire. Following the motto of my Grandfather Saporta that the mouth who had uttered "no" shall quickly say "yes" when the chips are down, sold his merchandise at 80 lire per kg., sustaining a big loss but it was his own money. Some of his competitors eventually sold at 30 lire per kg., seeing their capital disappear and remaining in debt.

We had received news of the birth of Daniel, the second son of my sister, Julie, and Salomon. My sister, Allegra, had married Elico Haim; their marriage arranged by a broker (shadheen) was a very happy one. They were of compatible characters and they loved each other dearly.

My brother, Sem, working in a kibutz near Petach Tikvah in Palestine, had married a girl, Esther Mondry, working in the same kibutz. My father in that period had gone to Palestine to see how his son there was faring. My brother had adopted the hard life of a pioneer (halutz) and my father immediately advanced to him the five hundred pounds necessary to acquire an orange grove when Sem expressed the desire to buy five dounams of land that he and his wife could cultivate. After a certain time of waiting he got impatient for not getting title to the property and he returned the five hundred pounds to our father. It would have been a satisfactory deal if the land would have been acquired; the parcel was located in Ramat Gan and is worth today a big chunk of money.

* * *

The manufacturer in Salonica who had sold to my father two lots of rugs, thought that anyone in America could handle the sale of Oriental carpets. He shipped some rugs to a friend who had a restaurant in Youngstown, Ohio. The man, busy in his restaurant, could not sell this type of merchandise and on instructions from

his friend he shipped the lot to me in New York. The cost of the carpets was burdened by the shipping expenses to Youngstown back and forth. A couple years before I had sold the last of my carpets at a loss and I did not want to be burdened with extra work by selling them at retail and I simply put the lot at the semi-monthly trade auction. The results were not satisfactory at all to the exporter.

* * *

My father after giving three thousand sterling pounds for a dowry to my sister, Allegra, withdrew five thousand more from his partnership with his brother, David, in Smyrna, to work independently in Istanbul but without signing any instrument showing that the partnership was dissolved. Many years before they did not sign any papers showing they had become partners; it was general routine not to sign any document between brothers.

* * *

My mother joined my father in Istanbul where he did some commercial operations in partnership with Omer Lutfi. The severe policies of Izzet Pasha were in vigor in that period and it was better for a Jew to be associated with a Turk, although he exported cocoons from Broussa independently. My Uncle David in Izmir (Smyrna was called Izmir in that period) followed up his trade and was associated in some deals with the sons of Said Bey who had died.

* * *

Since the Wall Street crash the real estate sales had become more and more difficult. Nevertheless, with the coming of spring, Aurelia and I left New York for Allentown and it was occasional for me to get a call from my friends, Fried and Hollander,

because they spotted an Italian prospect requiring my attention. They were covering a territory extending from Allentown to Scranton and I was traveling with them in their car. They would stop in a town and while they were canvassing for prospects for lots, I was working selling barber supplies. Hard times were prevailing but I managed to cover my expenses and I was eagerly waiting for the week-end to join my wife in Allentown. Sometimes we were successful in rounding up a busload of customers who asked to view the lots they were buying, but since the stock market crash the sales became more and more difficult.

* * *

I was a heavy smoker of Italian cigars that were sold in very few stores; one of them was located near our hotel in Wilkes Barre. One evening I went in there for my weekly supply of cigars and I was accompanied by Al Fried. I noticed some noises coming from the rear of the store and my friend explained to me that the retail tobacco business was a front for a gambling joint. Out of curiosity we stepped into the adjacent large room. I never had seen so many people assembled and intent to deprive each other of their money; they were shooting dice on a deep pool table. I inquired from my friend how the game was played and he replied that the best way to find out was by risking a dollar in it. The gambling bug exists almost in every person; at the wink of an eye I had lost my dollar. I should have stopped but in order to recuperate my loss I continued to play. My sales that day were exceptionally good, amounting to seventy dollars, but lady luck could not turn the dice in my favor and when I had exhausted my day's receipts I stopped playing. Now I thank God for having lost that day; I never shot dice after that first time.

A few weeks later it was the turn of Jacob Lampel to try his luck at the poker table at our hotel on a Saturday

night. He kept on digging in his billfold for new money and when he lost his last dollar he had on him, he gave up. Then it was the turn of Sam Hollander, who thought he could easily recuperate the losses of his brother-in-law. Within the hour he had exhausted his available cash. Al Fried was reputed to be a shrewd poker player and he took a hand at it. By the first light of the morning he had lost his available cash also; lady luck was not favorable to them in this fateful night. In a stupid way they had gambled all their available cash and they did not feel anymore to assemble the prospective customers to fill up the bus that was to take all of us to Allentown. Instead, Hollander, silently driving his car, took us home. The ladies who were expecting a busload of thirty or forty prospective customers were surprised to see the gloomy faces of the four of us. I explained in secret to Aurelia the happenings of the previous night and by the afternoon Rose Lampel knew the cause of the ruined Sunday.

* * *

The economic crisis had accentuated that summer and the coal region of Pennsylvania was badly affected by it. The general stores in villages were selling on credit bare necessities to trusted customers. Those gainfully employed were careful not to waste any money; even to save on food was the order of the day. The oldest of the Lampel children was canvassing families taking orders for a concern in Zamesville, Ohio, selling direct food to consumers. This food could be bought at the corner grocery store but the people figured out that a penny saved was a penny earned.

* * *

Al Fried had an older brother who was living with his family in Detroit, Mich.

In the fall came a proposition to join them in taking orders for picture enlargements. They were to drive to Detroit where they expected to take orders before Christmas. I was to go canvassing with them and Rose was supposed to form a separate team with Aurelia. The proposition called for a division of profits 50% for them and 50% for me. I was assuming that the elder Fried was a wealthy man and he was to have a share in their part of the business. I preferred then to work on a straight salary basis and my friends agreed. They fixed my salary at fifty dollars per week and Aurelia's at thirty-five; I was to receive a gold coin of five dollars in those weeks I would reach a certain quota. We started the drive toward Detroit in rainy fall weather. We stopped the first night to visit a cousin of Al Fried in Donora, Pa. He was a prosperous wholesale butcher and he and his family offered us lavish hospitality. We intended to stay only overnight; we were there instead for four days singing and dancing the chardaz culminating in the engagement of Sam Hollander with Sarah, the eldest daughter of our host. She was a nice intelligent girl and all of us were gratified of this outcome of our visit when we resumed our trip toward Detroit. The wedding was planned for after our return trip. We were eleven weeks in Detroit during which I had an opportunity to observe the behavior of the people who were buying our picture enlargements. I found out individuals animated with noble sentiments and others with sordid feelings. I did like the poor Mexican who having lost his father recently expressed the desire to have his traits retouched out of a faded small picture. I was rewarded in my efforts to please him when I delivered the enlargement to see his radiant face. This was filial love at its best. I did not like the woman who, having eloped, wanted to have her picture in the most fashionable bridal attire. This was easily done and represented to me a gross deception.

When we returned home we were five hundred dollars richer but it would have been better had we accepted to work in partnership with our friends. The return trip was marked by cold weather and it was two days before Christmas and through the windows of the bus we could see the countryside fantastically illuminated in the vicinity of towns and villages.

During the rest of the winter it was a struggle to sell barber supplies to impoverished reluctant barbers. The city had numerous salesmen who were offering the same articles at cutthroat prices. I figured that competition out of town would not be so keen. I left New York on Monday morning and returning generally on Friday evening after covering a territory up to Albany. My expenses for hotels and restaurants did not permit me to come home with a decent weekly salary. One could live very cheaply in those days when eggs were a penny a piece and fish was three lbs. for a dime. Everytime I paid the rent to my landlord, he lowered it by one dollar in his desire to keep reliable tenants. At the time we moved in the apartment I was paying thirty-eight dollars rent; by the time we were moving out, rental was reduced to twenty-three. We did not fare too bad but the whole country's atmosphere spelled depression. With the coming of spring I decided to cover more territory and Sam Hollander, who had married already, took his bride to live with his sister's family in Allentown. Our real estate business was in shambles and one had to use ingenuity to make a living. We tried another kind of partnership with Sam Hollander. He was driving the car with a full line of barbers' supplies to which we added cutlery for butchers; cleavers, knives, etc. My best seller was a razor, my own import from Solingen, Germany, branded "square deal" following my name. All these gimmicks served little

because everyone was reluctant to part with his money. On a certain Friday morning we decided with Hollander that on this week-end we would not return home to Allentown. We intended to visit Niagara Falls on Saturday and Sunday and to resume our work Monday morning in Buffalo, N.Y. On that Friday sales were difficult in Rochester, N.Y. and by evening we had changed our plans; my friend was anxious to join his bride of a few weeks and I was no less anxious to join my wife of a few years. To everyone's surprise we were home Friday night late after a fast drive of three hundred miles. We kept on working for a couple more weeks during which I kept on observing the religious behavior of my partner every morning. In our hotel room he would attach his phylacteries to his arm and the little square box on his forefront reciting his prayers. I was pondering that an individual so assiduous communing with his God must be basically a good man. I was assailed by numerous thoughts on the subject of religion, mainly that manifestations like daily prayers was a constant reminder of our ancient faith. What would have occurred if every Jew was devoid of any exterior sign that distinguish us from other religions? Surely in the course of centuries we would have been engulfed by more militant faiths. It is by keeping the tradition, like Sam Hollander, that Judaism still exists today. It was the period that I had doubts as to the wisdom of my father for not having his children raised up with a traditional Jewish education. Once we took a ride with Rose Lampel to Atlantic City to visit her brother cantor who was vacationing there with his wife. We found him with his "taleth" covering his head and part of his body and reciting his morning prayers. It was not an expected visit and I had no doubts of his deep seated religious feelings and not a professional requirement. They had a

younger brother who had a grocery store in Camden, N.J. He was busy serving customers on Saturday. Was he a less worthy man for this? I would say an emphatic no to this because I knew him as a real honest person. The Jewish zealots were trying to enforce the law of the resting on Saturday; a law that was good to an agricultural society for people living in the same country, but not for today's Jews who are scattered all over the globe.

Hollander recalled by his father-in-law to Donora left with his wife for a more settled life. We supposed then to help his father-in-law in his wholesale meat business. With his departure nobody was left to drive the car but Bernard Shonfeld, who preferred to work alone. A period of stagnation developed and by bus, train and ferryboat I kept on going in parts of Pennsylvania, New Jersey and New York State, working hard to sell barber supplies. This is how I became acquainted in many regions of the East Coast of America, including Washington, D.C. but to no avail; I hardly covered my traveling expenses. In the course of my travels I overheard a conversation in the kosher restaurant in Wilkes Barre of the probable suspension of payments to depositors of the Bank of the United States in New York. As a matter of convenience I was keeping some savings there in a joint account with Aurelia. A branch of this bank was located at 116th Street, corner of Madison Avenue almost opposite to our house. This was the residential center of the Sephardic population of New York and many of my compatriots kept their savings at this bank. I wrote to Aurelia to discreetly withdraw our savings and deposit the same amount at the Bowery Savings Bank. My wife thought of referring the matter to our friend, Alvo, who advised her that I was a pessimist and such a bank would never betray its depositors. Upon

arriving in New York I was put to ridicule by my friends who claimed that my fears were without foundation and that I wanted to save my meager savings while they were without fears for their money amounting to thousands of dollars deposited in the same bank. Just following my instinct I withdrew my savings but Aurelia insisted I should leave two hundred dollars in this account. On one morning not late after that as I was opening the shades of our living room I saw a line of people standing on the opposite sidewalk. They had stood there all night in order to withdraw their money at this bank. Just as had predicted you could see the anxious faces of the people forming the queue of the depositors. I refrained telling Aurelia "I told you so" but my laughing expressed my feelings. Eventually the bank paid up, in six years, almost the total amount of its deposits. It was rumored at that time that some important bankers did not like a bank founded by a Jew and managed by Jews to bear the name of Bank of the United States. How much truth there is in this allegation, nobody will ever know. The fact that the depositors were paid almost the total of their credit at a time of a general crisis is proof enough that the bank was solvent and well managed.

* * *

I heard many times the old saying that for your house, your mount and your wife, you do not need a partner. My father was careful always when of necessity he made deals in association with someone else how to terminate the partnership. At the end of his career he forgot what he had preached to us. He bought a house and he built another one in partnership with Jacob Beressi. He was a jute merchant of Salonica who in the last few years was involved with my brother-in-law, Leon Recanati, in a few deals. This was recommendation enough as to his reliability.

He was fundamentally an honest person but other factors come into play in a partnership. After past many years the association still exist between the children and grandchildren. It seems impossible to untie the gordian knot. How simple it would have been, if initially, each one would have bought separately his own house in 1931 instead of buying two buildings in partnership. This was the period that I wrote to my father of my desire to join the family there. I did this after spending futile efforts to top the general depression in this country. I had to hurry before spending my last thousand dollars.

The last two years of our stay in this country my wife and I lived intermittently in New York and Allentown in futile efforts to make real estate deals. The general public did not seem inclined to invest money. Those who had liquid assets were not the kind to buy lots from us; they had more direct ways how to take advantage of the low prevailing prices that proved to be a bonanza after a few years.

* * *

In May 1932 we were preparing already to join my parents and brothers in Tel Aviv when by early morning in a nice day of spring we received a telegram enjoining us to go to Brooklyn to the house of Aurelia's brother, Renato. In those days very few people had the convenience of the telephone at home and this terse telegram spelled bad news for us. We took the subway and arriving in Brooklyn we met Mary, the youngest sister of Leda, my sister-in-law. She was crying and all she could utter was: "E morto Tesoro" (Tesoro is dead). Aurelia, upon hearing this news, uttered such a scream that the motorman fearing an accident stopped the train. Arriving at the house we found Leda and the children crying and

between one sob and the other she explained to us what a wonderful time they had the night before. They were members of an Italian social club and from their table they were quietly watching the younger people dance. He was a teetotaler and usually when others drank wine with their meals he took a sip of water. He was a robust man and occasionally when in company he was showing his strength by splitting a walnut using his index finger as a hammer. They retired before midnight and by four o'clock she heard a sound coming from his direction; she thought nothing of it but with that sound he was dead of angina pectoris. By six o'clock, their usual wake up time, Leda tried to wake him up but he was beyond any call, sleeping to eternity. He had died in his sleep leaving his wife and six children who could not find comfort. At this moment, after forty-six years from his death, his widow and his children cherish his memory to the point of veneration. In this age of skepticism they like to remember their father and his good deeds although his oldest daughter was fourteen and his youngest son was five years old when he died. I knew him as a rugged man but under this appearance he concealed a tender heart and a generous character. He had his reward after his death of having a loving wife, children, grandchildren and great grandchildren who pronounce his name with reverence.

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After ten years of residence in the U.S.A., our aim was to join our family in Palestine. Deceived in our ambition to be financially independent, we relied now in family cohesion for more chances of attaining success. I gave up our apartment at 116th Street; at the time I had rented it in 1927 I was paying thirty-eight dollars

rent a month, while in June 1932 I paid only twenty-three, and if I would stay the landlord was willing to reduce the rental still further. During the five years we were living there the building had been improved with central steam heat. If this is not proof enough of hard times, I will mention the fact that a Singer sewing machine I had acquired at ninety dollars, I was not able to sell for more than three dollars. A radio that I had bought a couple years before at two hundred dollars, I could not sell at all and I gave it as a present to my friends and neighbors, the Cassutos. Finally my father gave me the signal that I should join my two younger brothers in Tel Aviv where they were trying to succeed in attaining a position in business.

In this background of economic crisis in July 1932 we left New York on the "Europa" which was the newest passenger ship afloat. We had a traveling companion, Albert Ezratty, a neighbor of ours who was going to Paris to visit two younger brothers. The passage New York-Jaffa cost ninety dollars including the trip Trieste-Jaffa on a ship of the Lloyd Triestino. We took advantage of this late July period when most of Aurelia's sisters with their respective families were at Cavi di Lavagna to join them there and spend a week with them at the seashore. In 1932 the beach was not crowded and the village lacked the amenities of today. During the week of our stay at Cavi we slept now at the house of one of the sisters and then in the house of another sister. Gino and Martha Terni were the only ones not to be there and, if I remember well, they were vacationing at the beaches near Ancona. In those days we put aside our worries of what the future was reserving for us and in this we were influenced by the gay spirit of our brothers-in-law who were not affected by the depression. It was the heydays of Mussolini who was lulling the majority of

the Italians with dreams of "impero" that led him to conquer Ethiopia and eventually, at the end of World War Two, surrendering it with Tripolitania where Italians had been masters since 1912.

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We took passage at Trieste on a ship of the Lloyd Triestino and after stops at Pireus, Rhodes and Larnaca we completed our voyage in five days reaching Jaffa on August 8, 1932 and the whole family came to offer us an affectionate welcome. It was our first opportunity to know our sister-in-law, Esther, the wife of my brother, Sem, and their first baby girl, Rahel, born to them on June 22nd, 1932.

My brother was occupying an apartment in the house that my father had built with Jacob Beressi at a rental of seven Palestinian pounds a month; it consisted of three rooms, kitchen and bathroom. My parents and my bachelor younger brother, Leonico, were occupying a similar apartment in the same house but through a different entrance and flight of stairs. We were to live with my parents and we occupied the larger bedroom with the furniture that my father had bought for us in Salonica in 1924 when he thought we were staying permanently there. The house had a frontage of about 120 feet with two entrances; each one giving access to two apartments on the first floor and two on the second. The front of the house presented a nice aspect with blooming flower beds. The rear had a large yard; it was a restricted zone and no more than 40% of buildings was permitted for each parcel of land with plenty of vacant space for luxurious vegetation. It was a residential section a couple blocks away from the main artery of Allembey Street. From the balcony of the dining room where Leonico had to sleep, we had an

unrestricted view of Rothchild Boulevard because no buildings were yet erected in the empty lots in front of our house and they could be acquired cheaply in a fast developing city. Some lucky individuals who had bought land to plant citrus trees were uprooting them because they were located in the center of a thriving city. Men with vision and faith reaped fortunes developing this kind of land.

On the first Saturday I was in Tel Aviv, we were sitting with my father and some friends in a cafe near the Cinema Mogravi. We were approached by a gentleman who, having heard that I had come from America, asked to be introduced to me. He was Salomon Florentin, who having bought some land for "bayara" purposes, wanted to sell me a lot or two at eleven piastres a "pic." I did not have enough money to buy what would have been the most advantageous speculation of my life. My father had declared to me that he was retired and with the 50% income, his share in the two houses, he could live comfortably and he did not want to be involved any further in real estate deals. According to him and Jacob Beressi it was not such a bargain at this price because any location further than half a mile from Allenby Street was only fit for "bayara" and should be sold by "dounam" and not by the "pic." The location of Mr. Florentin's land was at the extreme end of Herzl Street and how wrong this opinion was going to prove a few months later when price of land in the periphery of Tel Aviv skyrocketed.

"Kismetin ziyade olmaz" is a Turkish proverb that comes to my mind everytime I remember my first encounter with Salomon Florentin. The approximate translation of this Turkish adage means that it is impossible to overcome the decrees of fate. In some way I could have been associated with the activities of Mr. Florentin, even

as a salesman, if I had not been dangerously sick in that period.

Aurelia and I did not think at the time of our arrival in Palestine of being inoculated against typhoid. It was the week before Rosh Hashana and I was undergoing a period of renovated religious faith. So much so, that I asked my father to buy for me a taleth and mahsorim for Rosh Hashana and Kippur in expectation of accompanying him to the synagogue on these holidays. I kept working all the time and planting some vegetables in the soil of our backyard. On a certain afternoon when I was tired by this work, I sat on the balcony and I must have caught cold. On the eve of Rosh Hashana I had to go to bed with high fever. Doctor Krieger, who was reputed to be the best doctor in town and having taken care of my brother Sem's small family before, was summoned. After the test of my blood, he diagnosed my ailment as paratyphoid B, complicated by pneumonia. My father went alone to the temple and upon his return I was delirious. It was decided then, upon the advice of the doctor, that I had to be transported by ambulance to the clinic of Dr. Stein. Aurelia had to stay there with me because my illness being highly contagious we had to remain in semi-isolation. In 1932 the miracle drugs were not existent yet and according to Dr. Krieger good nursing care would have spelled recovery from the dangerous disease. My wife faithfully attended to me during the fifty-six days that I had to stay at the clinic. My dear mother tried for one night to give a turn for Aurelia but had to return home exhausted with fatigue. Then it was the turn of my father and during my many sleepless nights I saw him falling asleep for a few minutes but immediately awaken at my least motion. He was at my bedside at every critical moment of my illness. I had to undergo many a crisis on account

of complications and at one point Dr. Krieger tried an old remedy by having leeches on my upper legs. The results were not satisfactory to him and then he used the more drastic method of extracting one pint of blood from my arm. My father kept repeating incessantly to encourage me that the Saportas have a strong heart capable of overcoming diseases like these. He was right. After the blood letting I felt better and I continued to improve. My return home was marked by the general rejoicing of the family and numerous friends who had been alerted of the seriousness of my disease. My father declared that I was born to him again. In the most critical period of my illness, my dear mother made me swear to God (Neder) that I would make some sacrifice in my habits. On the spur of the moment I took a solemn vow not to smoke on a Saturday. I was a heavy smoker and this represented the greatest sacrifice I could make. I kept my promise and after that I never smoked on a Saturday. What had saved my life? The science of Dr. Krieger or my "Neder?" I think that both things helped as I am convinced that faith influences the physical aspects of life. I wanted so much to live that for the rest of my life I am grateful to God for having decreed that I should live. To which God was I grateful and blessing His name continuously? To the unique God I knew; the God of Abraham that my father, my grandfather and my ancestors were invoking in their prayers. Man's soul is cleansed by prayers and I prayed at every occasion; at home, in the synagogue and in the street. Although mine was the God of the Jews, I did not address to Him the regular prayers that I hardly knew to read but rather a personal prayer to my God, a sort of hymn of thanksgiving for my recovery. I enjoyed every word of the psalms when on every Friday evening I attended services for the coming

Sabbath, feeling in harmony with the congregation of my fellow Jews.

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Since the death of my brother, Jacques, my father was afflicted with diabetes; at times he was moody and depressed. On one occasion he assailed my wife and myself with words that were not in accord with the devoted cares he lavished on me when I was sick. For a moment I wished I was in America in my own home, but his outburst was of short duration. He explained after that he was not himself at the time of his emotional crisis and if there was other recurrences not to pay any attention to them.

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Leonico had an office in Jaffa Road, corner Hertzels Street. He was trying hard to work as a manufacturer's representative and he was partially successful considering that numerous competitors were aiming at the same goal with very few restricted clients. My brother, Sem, was already well entrenched as assistant to Jonas Kubler. He was, as representative of the Svenska, an important Swedish navigation company, the leading shipping man in Jaffa. I remained the only source of worry for my father and I was seeing a hazy future for myself in Palestine. The British were the capable administrators but not inclined to dissuade the Arabs bent in curbing Jewish hegemony in the country.

There were two kinds of Jewish immigration in Palestine; the moneyed Jew who could come in unrestricted numbers on condition of possessing one thousand pounds and upwards and they were called capitalists; another kind of immigrants were those who had some kind of a trade with a certificate delivered by the Jewish agency for Palestine

but controlled by the administration of the mandate country. The British were putting all kinds of obstacles in the distribution of such immigration certificates which were on a family basis and the Jewish Agency, of course, favored large families. It also existed some kind of clandestine immigration of those who had arrived in Palestine as tourists and had remained in the country illegally. The British control on board ship spotted every now and then tourists of this kind and they were mercilessly sent back to the last port where the ship's ticket was issued.

Among the capitalist arrivals in 1932 were the families of the three Saltiel brothers from Salonica. One of them, Yoseph, was a pleasant gentleman who, besides his business, was instrumental in promoting the Club Kadimah of which he was a co-founder. In the course of the construction of an apartment house that he and his brothers were the landlords, he came to know four young men who were the electrical contractors of the building they were erecting in a corner of Sideroth Rothchild. He proposed to me that I should finance this group by opening a store of electric supplies. I should be able to secure enough work for them and the profits combined with the profits of the store should be divided in five equal parts. My father liked the proposition and put up five hundred pounds capital for me. I rented a store in Levinsky Street and I stocked it with all the necessary supplies for the completion of our work as electrical contractors. Furthermore, I obtained the exclusive rights to sell the Zenith radio from Chicago in Tel Aviv and as we started in operation a complication came along. Aurelia and I had entered Palestine as tourists and we were compelled to leave the country relying on my four partners to manage our embryonic

business.

We left for our native city where we expected with the aid of our brother-in-law, Leon, who was the president of the Jewish community, to obtain a certificate of immigration to Palestine. We were lucky because in those days a number of certificates were made available. After nine days of visiting with my three sisters in Salonica, we were ready for our return trip. Late at night we left the house of Leon and Mathilde for the railroad station where we expected to board the Orient Express for Athens. We were to leave the next day from Pireus to Haifa with a Roumanian ship. When we arrived at the railroad station at 11 P.M. we were informed that the train was not going to leave because of a strike of the railroad personnel. We came back to Leon's house worried for the delay and for the ship's passage already paid. After a sleepless night for Aurelia and I, my brother-in-law, Leon, suggested that we could leave by airplane to Athens arriving there in the afternoon just in time to go aboard ship at Pireus. Although the proposition scared us somewhat we accepted; otherwise, it would have been long days of waiting before another ship sailed to Palestine. We were also wondering whether the Roumanian Navigation Company would refund our return passage money. In the first period of passenger flying it took hardy souls to try the experience. Anyway, I had urgent need to return to Tel Aviv to attend business with my four partners. Early in the afternoon we left in company with my sisters, Mathilde and Julie, for the airport which seemed more like an experimental aviation camp. Aurelia and I climbed on board with fourteen other passengers and a crew of three. By the scary looks of my sisters we should have been more scared ourselves but when we were high in the air our fears were gone and like the other passengers we were

admiring the green pastures and the waters of the Aegean Sea below. The flight to Athens took about fifty minutes instead of thirteen hours by train. We proceeded immediately to call up Salonica on the phone to notify the family of our safe arrival. My sisters were elated for the speed of this news; they had gone from the airport to the "Synagogue of Signora Fakima" to pour some oil in the permanent light in front of the altar for the safety of our first trip by air. We boarded the ship at Pireus and towards evening we were on our way to our permanent residence in Palestine; at least, this is how we were thinking then. In this trip, Aurelia and I had an opportunity to know the husband of my sister, Allegra, and we were very happy to notice that they loved each other very dearly. This was the first and last encounter with Elico Haim.

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For a few months business proceeded for the "Kevutza" at a brisk pace. We almost did not have any competition and every builder from Salonica by reason of knowing us and on account of our moderate prices preferred us. The Askenzai Electrical Contractors were affiliated to the "Itzaderuth" and consequently had more rigid prices. The radio import business could have developed nicely were it not for a kill-joy individual who had appeared in our midst; he was a recent arrival from Salonica with his family. He was a capable experienced electrician who appealed to my co-workers to take him as a partner in the Kevutza. A certain "esprit de corps" existed between my partners as I had observed some time before. One of my four partners was operated for the removal of one kidney. During the time he was at the hospital and the time he was partially disabled his remaining co-workers were by overtime replacing him and faithfully paying him his

share. No wonder they accepted the newcomer when he pleaded with them to include him in the group as a partner. From the first moment of his admission I detected a certain antagonism of the group towards me. Finally they came out with the statement that they could work without the benefit of a store and could obtain material on credit. My reaction to this argument was swift and immediately on a Friday afternoon the six of us were present at the lawyer's office to draw the papers separating me from the group. I paid each one of them the profit they had accumulated in previous months besides their weekly drawing. The newcomer whom I had suspected for our separation had a last minute change of heart and proposed not to sign the papers and to continue with our association. I was anxious then to terminate the partnership and act on my own advice although I did not know how I was going to cope without personnel for my contracting business. I was determined to accept all contracts that were coming my way because I had acquired experience in the last few months.

My brother-in-law, Leon, had an office boy in Salonica named Peppo Romano and known in the family as Pepico. He emigrated to Palestine and Leon asked me to help him out to secure employment and I asked him if he wanted to learn the trade to be an electrician. He seemed eager to do so and he was the first person I engaged to work for me; I had then an apprentice without having a skilled electrician. The rumor of my separation with the Kevutza was well known among the Sephardim of Tel Aviv and I had the choice in picking up the person capable of filling up the position as my chief technician. My choice was for a diminutive young man who originated from Bulgaria. I hired him not so much for his skill but because he seemed to be reliable; he proved to be both skilled and reliable in the course

of his employment with me. My store was located near the "Shuk" and in front of the "Kehillah of Ellihaou Hanavi." It was a center for the Sepharadim in town to come shopping or to attend services in the synagogue. Some friends and acquaintances were coming to the store just to say hello. The most assiduous among these "kibitzers" was Itzhak Florentin, who always had an anecdote to relate. One day he told me how my Uncle Peppo was instrumental for him to be in business that permitted him to emigrate to Palestine eventually and live the life of a retired person. He was a bill collector (taksidar) until 1914 travelling on horseback from town to town for the account of textile firms from Salonica. After the wars of 1912/13 this mode of bill collecting was outmoded because the greatest part of Turkey in Europe was divided between Greece, Bulgaria and Serbia. Albania became an independent country. Then my Uncle Peppo advised him to become a textile intermediary (corredor) giving him his first chance as such. He firmly believed that intermediaries were necessary for the smooth operation of business. His favorite topic of conversation was that the eternal had engaged Moshe Rabeno as intermediary instead of acting directly. Why not act in partnership as real estate agents that did not require any capital? All those in this business were doing very well; my relations combined with past experience should be enough to secure a slice of business in real estate of the Sepharadim newcomers to Palestine. He had built a house in which he with his wife and son occupied one apartment and he lived the life of a small "rentier" with the income of two other apartments. I thought about his proposition and depending on my business for my livelihood I thought I was not risking anything by having real estate as a sideline. Within the next few days, as required by law, our contract of association was published

in the official journal of the government in Jerusalem announcing that we were to be known as Florentin & Saporta, real estate agents.

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Some years before some wealthy businessmen from Salonica had emigrated to France. Some were successful in establishing themselves there; others were not. When the current of emigration of the moneyed part of Salonica Jews was started about 1930, some merchants opted for Palestine where they could invest funds with high interest or in constructing buildings with a good yield. Among these capitalists immigrants was Henri Bourla who was married to my cousin, Carmen, daughter of my Uncle Isaac Saporta. They had two children of school age; one boy and a girl. Henri had been a banker in Salonica where his father was associated in the money exchange business of the firm Bayona & Bourla. When Henri returned to Salonica after learning the banking business as an employee of the Credit Lyonnais in Paris, he went to work with his father who had separated from Abram Bayona. After the elder Bourla had passed away he came to make his home in Tel Aviv. By reason of our parentage and knowing well Itzhak Florentin, he preferred to work through us for investing his funds that he loaned on mortgages.

We also approached Moise Carasso who was developing a parcel of land in north Tel Aviv. Our first customer was a new arrival from New York named Sam Shamy who bought a lot for the erection of an apartment house. For a few months we were doing profitable business in real estate and I was quite happy with the sales in the store also. Competition was keen in every branch of business and to beat it we had to be satisfied with little profits. In real estate the motto of my partner was to be content with 1% commission instead of 2%

charged by our competitors. News from salonica to the effect that my Uncle Isaac had died was a sad note to an otherwise happy home life.

My three sisters came one by one to visit us. First it was the turn of my sister, Julie, who came with her two children, Maurice and Daniel, and everyone of us had a chance to observe how devoted she was to her children to the point of exaggeration. Then it was the turn of my sister, Allegra, who having been married for seven or eight years, still did not have any children. Aurelia took her to Doctor Stein who was reputed to be a very capable obstetrician surgeon. My parents had a predilection for the last born of their daughters. Eventually she had two beautiful baby girls; the last one born a few months before they were deported to Hitler's camps of death. Finally, my eldest sister, Mathilde, came with her son, Harry, and on one occasion Aurelia and Leonico accompanied them on an excursion to Jerusalem. We were very crowded in our apartment but the pleasure of having them with us as guests compensated for the lack of space. The same thing happened the following year when Leon came to prepare for the eventual transfer of his family to Tel Aviv. He had reserved rooms at the Palatin Hotel but upon our urging he came to stay with us leaving the rooms at the hotel to meet interviewers there. It was agreed between Jacob Beressi and my father that they would take turns in exchanging one of the upper apartments at 19 Rehov Mikve-Israel, which was larger and more comfortable than ours at 26 Rehov Levontin, just across the street. Taking advantage that the tenant neighbor of the Beressis had moved, we moved into the vacant apartment; the two partners staying permanent neighbors and thus avoiding moving every two years.

As stated before in this memoir, my brother-in-law, Leon, was a Zionist from the first hour and despite the fact that his wealth permitted him to make his residence no matter where, he preferred to make his home in Tel Aviv where he had in mind to become a banker. He had been in the tobacco business in Salonica for many years but this product was not intensely cultivated in Palestine and therefore he had to be active in some other endeavor. He associated himself to Joseph Alvo of Alvo Brothers Hardware Wholesalers from Salonica; the two of them putting up enough capital to open up a bank in Tel Aviv.

As required by regulatory laws promulgated by the British administration the charter of the bank had to be sponsored by five reputable persons. The choice of the two partners were: Daniel Saporta (my father), Jacob Beressi, Isaac Aroesti, Henri Bourla, but the fifth one deserving this honor offered a problem to the two partners. There were enough personalities among the friends of the two principals who could have qualified to be the fifth choice but Leon, for reasons of his own, preferred to offer me to become the fifth charter member of the bank that was to be a financial institution of worldwide renown. On the appointed date, when principals and sponsors were assembled in the lawyer's office to sign the papers of the charter of the newly founded bank, I was pleasantly surprised to notice that the name selected for it was Palestine Discount Bank Ltd.; the name of my choice which I had suggested to my brother-in-law. As I was to sign the papers he looked at me with the same smile he had on his face when about twenty years before he came to our house to get engaged to my sister, Mathilde. For all present it was congratulations and wishes for a rosy future. For Leon and I it was the certitude of the success of the new financial institution. Eventually it

participated in a large measure in the development of the country. Since first arriving in America, I had signed documents without a middle initial; on the day the bank was founded my father urged me to sign the documents Albert D. Saporta. He too had great expectations for the bank and he wanted to show for posterity that one of his sons had deserved the honor to be one of its co-founders.

One or two months later Moise Carasso had expressed the desire to participate with capital in the bank. The two partners who wanted to keep its exclusive control accepted him with half the amount that each one of them had invested. My brother-in-law commented on this occasion that Moise Carasso in his shrewd way had smelled success and he wanted a slice of it.

Henri Bourla who, as a banker in Salonica, was familiar in manipulating funds for profit was engaged as co-manager, a position he held until his retirement a few short years ago.

I cannot be proud because I did not play any part in the development of this first class financial institution; fruitful source of so many creative jobs in the present day state of Israel. I want to pay tribute to a dear brother-in-law, whose vision and conception of things to come has permitted his taking place under the management of his very capable sons. The bank has grown too big for my britches and by staying aside I think I would please my brother-in-law more were he alive today.

With the opening of the bank a source of income was terminated for us as real estate agents. We did not have anymore the benefit of funds of Henri Bourla and his friends to lend on mortgages. He was bound by his honesty to bring his business to the bank. My partner recriminated

sometimes especially when some business that should have come our way was diverted to other real estate agents because they were heavy depositors in the bank.

As for the electrical contracting business, I undertook my first job in a four-apartment house that Moise Carasso was building on Nahmani Street but not before I had agreed to hire his nephew, Albert Montekio, as an apprentice electrician. I was glad to do so because Pepico had gone to work for the bank. He had worked in my store a year and a half and during that period his parents had obtained a certificate of immigration to Palestine for themselves and their children. Arriving in Haifa, the British immigration authorities having noted some discrepancies in their passport returned the whole family to Salonica. Eventually this story resulted in a real tragedy when Pepico's entire family perished in Hitler's camps of death but one brother who now lives in Israel. I did not make much profit working in the Carasso contract but I kept my two employees busy and I had the satisfaction of having completed a perfect job that gave me courage to undertake similar work that would come my way in the future.

The Zenith Radio Company of Chicago wrote to me proposing their entire representation for the whole of Palestine if I could sell four hundred sets the first year. I could not see my way clear to do so and I had to decline. The company named their agent in Jerusalem and I continued to receive radio sets shipped to me under the name "Inter-ocean" that had no franchise in Palestine.

On the political scene the ascendancy of Hitler was marked by his demands of the revision of the Treaty of Versailles. Since the death of Hindenburg he did not hesitate to have his collaborators from the first hour executed and his vociferous speeches held the German people spellbound.

The gist of his harangues contained for the most part a reference to the Jews. They were, according to him, responsible for all the catastrophes befalling Germany. They created in the German mind the necessity to enact the infamous antisemite Nuremberg laws, conducive to more severe measures against the Jewish people who were his scapegoat. He started with his march on the Rhineland culminating with the annexation of Austria to the German Reich, after the assassination of Austrian Chancellor Dolfuss. These were the first steps of the maniacal fuhrer prior to defying every decent person in the world. In the ensuing plot that he had created for the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia, by raising the problem of the Sudetenland, he had inflicted a blow to the pride of France and England whose prime minister came to Bertergarten to "achieve peace in our time." These were the clouds on the political horizon of Europe while China had to contend with the aggressiveness of Japan. For the Jews in Palestine it was the behavior of Arabs of the country bent on halting Jewish immigration. The propaganda preached by the Mufty of Jerusalem succeeded to such degree in inflaming the Arabs that one day in 1936 nineteen Jews were killed by them as they were entering the building of the Anglo-Palestine Bank in Jaffa. The behavior of the British authorities I will define as inept; the high commissioner in an address over the radio that evening exhorted those influential Arabs to counsel the populace to desist violence. Many times after that, when Jews were falling victims to Arab assassins, the high commissioner would recite over the radio how sorry he was over the death of so and so, but doing next to nothing about the apprehension and punishment of the culprits of the killings.

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Home life was never better for my wife and myself; for my parents also it was a happy period. Everytime I expressed the desire to move away my dear mother and Aurelia plotted to dissuade me from doing so. The traditional antagonism between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law was **non-existent** between my mother and my wife and real affection developed between them and they could not think of living separately. I had selected an apartment in a large building that Leon and Joseph Alvo had constructed in Rehov Nahmani and Dereh Petah Tikva. The reluctance of the two women to live apart won over my arguments of abandoning the house of my parents. Despite the different ages, my mother was always included in the card game that Aurelia was having regularly with her lady friends. My father also insinuated himself among them sometimes. We had established friendly relations with a couple, Mr. and Mrs. Sam Uziel, so much so, when on a certain day they failed to call at our house my parents exclaimed "de bien que sea, Marietta did not show up today." Mr. and Mrs. Levi Esformes were our cronies in that period. They were same floor neighbors at 26 Levontin Street but their son, Gino, having come to boyhood, they were compelled to move to a larger apartment nearby. This is the time when he was sick with typhoid and after a few days of intensive care in the new hospital "Asuta" he died. Had he lived he would have been a very successful businessman in building materials, who was known in the trade as a pleasant and an honest individual. He was missed very much by his family and friends and certainly by me, who deplored his loss bitterly.

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With the rise of the disturbances between Jews and Arabs, "mehorahot" they were called,

the erection of buildings in Tel Aviv subsided to a great extent. The price of land in Shehonat Florentin had jumped from eleven piasters a pic asked me directly by Mr. Salomon Florentin in 1932 to four pounds a pic. I thought in those circumstances that my partnership with Itzhak Florentin had outlived its usefulness and each one could do better separately; I caused our association to be dissolved although we remained good friends.

The floor below our apartment at 26 Rehov Levontin where we had lived before became vacant. One of the rear rooms was rented as an office to a newly formed company of fountain pens, "Katab." Upon the urging of Leon I imported from Hungary a lot of sanitary articles such as tiles, wash basins, etc.; the shipper Szolnay having been represented by him in Salonica. The prices were not competitive and I lost money in liquidating the lot. I felt I did not need a store for my radio trade and I vacated the store in Levinsky Street and rented the front room at 26 Levontin Street and used the kitchen as storage room for my radios, becoming a neighbor of Katab. It was then a period of attrition during which I took a short vacation in Bandoun, Lebanon, with an old gentleman friend, Salomon Galmidi. I was occasionally a visitor in his house located also in Levontin Street. The American consul in Jerusalem, having refused to issue a new passport for me and Aurelia, we could not go to Italy for a vacation. I decided then to follow Mr. Galmidi to Lebanon for which no passport was required. Aurelia remained in Tel Aviv because she had no desire whatsoever to visit Lebanon. I had an opportunity while vacationing at Bandoun to take a side trip to visit Nedjib Nahas in Tripoli. His brother, Moise, had passed away and the chair behind his desk was covered with a black cloth until his son became old

enough to take the place of his father. Despite his biblical name of Moise, the Nahas family of Tripoli was Greek Orthodox. The Arabs have a tendency to exaggerate things. Mr. Nedjib told me if the situation in Palestine would deteriorate any further we could count on his aid and come to live in Tripoli. I explained to him that he was misinformed and that the situation of the Jews in Palestine was not precarious at all and the eventuality of being thrown into the sea was a gross exaggeration and the best proof of it was my presence in Lebanon for a vacation.

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Upon my return Angel Carasso thought it was time for his daughter, Miriam, to get married. Between himself, his brother, Moise, and Leon they provoked an encounter between Leonico and the Carasso girl. After reciting the "Avdala" in the Recanati home the young couple were urged to go out for a walk. After they returned they seemed pleased with each other and without much fanfare they were declared officially engaged. That same night I went to the Cafe Astoria where I announced to my friends the engagement of my brother. It created a sensation when they knew of the girl's identity. What was unusual that evening was the fact that no pecuniary conditions were discussed to this arranged engagement; an habitual procedure under the circumstances. My dear mother divested herself of a diamond ring that she had reserved for the youngest of her sons. It was presented to the bride-to-be on a Saturday morning during a reception held at the Carasso home in Nahalat Benyamin decorated with a profusion of flowers; every florist shop in town having been stripped by the two families and many well wishing friends for this joyful occasion. The following days was an opportunity for the Carasso and Saporta families to get acquainted during the lavish well attended

dinners. Two weeks before the wedding it was the privilege of the groom's family to talk about a dowry but the contrary happened. Angel Carasso sent word to Leon notifying him that he was transferring title to a building comprised of nine apartments to his daughter, Miriam. Prior to this my father was consulted and he told Angel Carasso to give his daughter according to his means and to his sacred honor. No word as to make secure the future of his son in some kind of business that it would have been easy for the Carasso family to arrange for my brother. My father was too proud for that and in this respect he acted like a rich man; alas, he was not anymore a man of wealth. The wedding was celebrated in Sephardic style; the groom assuming all expenses. It was one of the richest weddings so far in Tel Aviv. The young couple went on a honeymoon trip to Egypt and upon their return they made their home in an apartment they had previously rented in Dereh Petah Tikva, not so far from our house.

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On a hot day in September 1936 my sister-in-law, Esther, in her quiet usual way, asked Aurelia to take her to the hospital where she had made arrangements to give birth. Half an hour later she made my brother, Sem, the proud father of a baby boy and he was named Daniel after his grandfather. After a Daniel Recanati and a Daniel Saltiel, the birth of a Daniel Saporta was cause of great rejoicing for my parents and the whole family. Rahel, my brother's first child, was four years old and was the darling of us all. When she was barely two, her parents took her on a cruise on a ship of the Svenska that took them as far as the Black Sea. My brother and his small family had the honor to sit at the same dining table of the Kronprinz of Sweden cruising on the same vessel. It was a

cargo ship of the Svenska for which Jona Kubler was the agent in Jaffa.

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Hitler was creating a crisis very often and this time it was the turn of Czechoslovakia and the German Sudeten. He claimed them as citizens of Germany. At the same time he was claiming the territory they were living and thus causing the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia. The disturbances in Palestine and the political clouds accumulating in Europe were worrying the Jews everywhere and particularly the Jews of Palestine. As for myself, I was in a dilemma; the five years accorded to naturalized American citizens had expired. I was risking the loss of my American citizenship and I addressed a letter to the American Consul in Jerusalem to give me an extension of one year during which I was to liquidate my business before returning to the United States, which seemed to be one of the few countries of the world favoring the Jews. It seemed all others were in accord with the infamous Nuremberg laws and all those not openly antisemitic were at best indifferent to the Jewish plight. Italy, the traditional liberal country taking the cue from Hitler, started to flirt with antisemitic ideas. Mussolini had forgotten that the Jews were partly responsible for his rise to power. With theatrical gestures, he was making speeches extolling his Ethiopian Empire. But, contrary to Germany, the Italian populace was asking: "What do they want from the Jews?" It knew well that the Jews were loyal Italian citizens.

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In March 1938 a baby boy was born to Miriam and Leonico and they named him Yaacov after my brother, Jacques. We all in the family

were overjoyed for this addition to the Saporta clan. In contrast with my sister-in-law, Esther, who let us cuddle her baby, Daniel, Miriam thought of safeguarding the health of her baby, Yaacov, and did not permit anyone of us to caress him. It was a typical case of exaggeration in sanitary precautions.

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After the political surrender of Chamberlain to the demands of Hitler regarding Czechoslovakia at Munich, I thought that my best bet was returning to America. If things came to the worst, at least one member of the family should reside in the most powerful country in the world. In the U.S. they were conscious of the plight of the Jews and I could help my kin in case, God forbid, they would fall under the control of the demented tyrant Hitler.

My American passport had expired and I had to travel with Aurelia to Jerusalem for its renewal. The road Tel Aviv Jerusalem was not safe. In those days a prominent young Jewish man was killed by Arabs intent to harass the Jewish population on the same road. In view of these facts, the American Consul accepted to renew my passport, which I had sent to them by mail, for two months during which my wife and I should have ample time to reach America.

All my friends accused me of deserting the country in a period of danger. Some of them having in mind the worst situation, told me to share the fate of my family while I was thinking that by my presence in the U.S.A. I should be able to help them. My brother-in-law, Leon, thinking that only pecuniary consideration was prompting me to return to America, proposed to put me in the payroll of the bank as a real estate employee. He knew perfectly well that if I had accepted, I would amply earn my salary.

My dear mother told my wife that she thought we should be there to close her eyes for eternity when God would decree that her time had come to an end. It will be my everlasting remorse not to have been there in the last days of her life when mine and Aurelia's presence would have been of comfort to her. My father was the only one to agree with me that we should go, declaring that my guardian angel was tapping my shoulder to be on my way to the only blessed country in the world where, under the presidency of Franklin D. Roosevelt, Jews could retaliate when they were insulted. I felt that my most precious possession was my American citizenship and I shall do my utmost not to lose it. At first I was encouraged by a good size capital that Yoseph Alvo was going to advance me to be invested in whatever business I chose upon my arrival in America. In the last minute he changed his mind and I turned to Henri Bourla to invest some capital that would permit me to undertake some worthwhile enterprise in the only country in the world that I judged safe for the investment of funds. He, too, seemed inclined to acquiesce to my proposition at first, then he declared to me bluntly that I should make my proposition to the bank. My father told me that I should have the courage, with my own meager resources, to do what it was my destiny to accomplish. He blessed me "to make good encounters and find favor in the eyes of new friends." I bought then a set of samples of filigree jewelry, having in mind to show it to persons interested in their sale in the forthcoming World's Fair in New York.

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In the first week of November 1938, abundant rains were pouring in Palestine causing the streets in Tel Aviv to be flooded. My reluctant wife said that

this was not a good omen for our voyage. We were due to leave on our first leg of our trip to Italy on the ninth of November. On that day the rain subsided and the family comprising Leon and Mathilde were present in the house of our parents to bid us farewell. My sister-in-law, Esther, noticing that my wife was carrying an umbrella and wearing a plain coat, ran to her house across the street and upon returning presented Aurelia with a superb raincoat she had just bought and my brother, Sem, slipped me a one hundred dollar bill. We were overwhelmed by these marks of affection and Aurelia was crying and crying. Finally the time came to say good-bye to all present and we were on our way to the bus station waiting for a bus that was to take us to Haifa where we were to board a ship of the Lloyd Triestino due at Trieste five days later. The bus was delayed somewhat when we saw my father leaning on his cane appear for another good-bye. Aurelia, who had not ceased to cry, caused the comments of other passengers to exclaim how cruel it was to see this separation between father and daughter; they were amazed when I explained that he was my father.

The trip to Haifa was a bit scary in observing patrols of British soldiers stationed here and there, but we reached Haifa toward evening without mishap. We went directly to the ship which sailed at dusk toward Larnaca. After we sailed the next day from Cyprus we noticed some commotion among the Jewish passengers on board. A bulletin just posted was announcing the killing in Paris of a German military attache by a Polish Jew. The usual relaxed atmosphere aboard these ships was tense. After Pireus, where we heard news of Nazi retaliation against Jews, Jewish property and burning of synagogues in Germany, we were plainly scared upon going ashore at Trieste. The custom formalities were complicated

for Jewish passengers arriving from Palestine. We had to undress naked and an inspector had to verify if a paper or some currency was concealed in any part of our body. Finally the ordeal came to an end and we were free to proceed with our journey. The trip ticket bought in Tel Aviv from the Cook's Agency entitled us to free meals and hotels all the way to Cherbourg, but it had to be a continuous voyage. In fact, an employee of Cook's was waiting at the pier to take us for lunch and to show us the sights of Trieste. We thanked him and explained that we were in a hurry to catch a train to Milan. We reached there before nightfall wishing to be near one of Aurelia's sisters. We chose the Hotel Cervo to stay during the few days we wanted to visit Aurelia's family. The atmosphere for the Jewish population was gloomy. The Arch-bishop of Milan had just delivered a sermon attacking the racial laws which were not justified and the majority of public opinion was favorable to the Jews. My sister-in-law with her husband, Carlo Balconi, had decided to let their children choose their own religion when they became of age. Confronted with persecutions they decided to have them baptized to spare them restrictions imposed on children of mixed marriages. A law announced in those days prohibited such procedure. As for the Ternis, their position as Jews was desperate. Their daughters who were brought up with high education and fit to teach classes in higher schools were relegated to teach only Jewish children less than ten years of age. Gino Terni, who had been a theater manager as an employee of the Company Suvini Zerboni, had to relinquish his position in favor of a gentile manager.

Their plight was pitiful. They were used to an abundant life and having exhausted their resources they were forced to

parsimonious expenses. The couple Maranzana was faring better. Our brother-in-law, "Good Piero" as he was called in the family, was chief at the Scalo Farini; he was compelled with other railroad employees to parade occasionally in the streets of Milan in black shirts which was the uniform of the Fascist Party. In his heart he did not harbor any grudge against any human being; least of all the Jews. Now it was the turn of the Conca family. Our brother-in-law, Gaetano Conca, known in the family as Nino, was the managing director of the Electric Company in Piacenza. They lived there in a palatial apartment; a part of a castle many centuries old, and while I went with Mario, one of their three children, sightseeing in town, Aurelia had an opportunity to have a long conversation with her sister, Linda. Returning to Milan we had the pleasure of being invited for Sunday dinner. Our brother-in-law, Attilio, had a reputation of having his home closed to relatives and friends. Contrary to this he demonstrated to us his most friendly feelings. On that day he expressed to us in no uncertain terms his reprehension of Mussolini against the Jews. We were cheered up how Aurelia's sister, Esperia, well known in the family for her charitable heart, was caring for their spinster old aunt, Laurina. She was a daily visitor at the Vailetti home and her niece took charge to feed her properly.

My father, always alert to avoid future trouble, warned me not to take any money or valuables that Gino Terni eventually would give me for safekeeping in America. My brother-in-law had no treasures to entrust me with but he knew fellow Jews who were willing to split fifty-fifty with me funds to be deposited in America until normalcy would return to Italy. I could clean up a small fortune by doing so

but conscious of my father's recommendations and the customs procedure at Trieste, I refused categorically all propositions coming to me. We left the gloomy atmosphere of Milan and we were on our way to Paris. As the train was approaching the Swiss frontier, Italian customs inspectors came aboard and I prepared myself for the same ordeal as Trieste. But nothing of the sort happened; the men just asking the routine question: "Est ce que vous avez quelque chose a declarer?," to which I replied with a resounding "No." That was that without any further incident. When we were in Swiss territory I realized how easy it would have been for me to make a small fortune by accepting funds entrusted to my care. I kept repeating to myself the Turkish proverb, "kismetden ziyade olmaz," one cannot overcome the decrees of fate.

In Paris we were lodged for four days in a hotel near the Gare Saint Lazare at Cunard Line expense. We visited Aunt Doudoun who was living in Paris with her children. Her daughter, Mathilde, had married a young man from Salonica but then living in Paris, named Naar. She was a beautiful girl but she was affected by the same disease her father had died of, kidney trouble. Her elder sister, Sarina, had died previously while she was married to a brother of Menahem Simantov of Seres. Their younger brother, Albert Dassas (their name became more french by adding an S), lived in Anvers with his wife and four daughters. Isakino, his elder brother, who had remained a bachelor, was very attached to his immediate family as he was very affectionate with his cousins. He took Aurelia and I to Lariboisiere Hospital to visit our cousin, Moise Saporta, who was dying of terminal cancer of the colon. People afflicted with it nowadays live useful lives but then surgery was not advanced as of today. This visit to the hospital added up to our gloom and casually meeting our

cousin, Moise Asseo, did not help to strike a more cheerful note to our stay in the French capital. Finally we left for Cherbourg in rainy cold weather to board the "Queen Mary" for the passage to New York.

The voyage, despite heavy seas, was pleasant enough for the passengers who seemed to enjoy the amenities on board. As for us, the prospects of a hazy future did not allow us to participate all heartedly to the general holiday atmosphere. After five days, on December First 1938, late in the evening we reached New York.

I had written to my friends, the Cassutos, and we were happy to see them waiting for us at the pier. The weather was cold and the previous day New York had an abundant snowfall. Our friends took us to their apartment and we were staying there for two nights. During these two days we spent our time in a frantic search for a furnished room. Upon arriving, we got in touch with my cousin, Mathilde Alco (nee Benusiglio). Her father-in-law had died a couple years before and on the day we arrived the funeral of her mother-in-law was held. My cousin had heard of a widowed Mrs. Castro, who was looking for a couple like us to rent part of her apartment at 1355 Grand Concourse in the Bronx. A great number of Sephardic people lived in this borough of New York City and we considered it a good break when we agreed with Mrs. Castro that for twenty-five dollars monthly rent we had the front bedroom and practically the run of the entire apartment. At that time of cheap rents she was paying thirty-eight dollars monthly rental; she added that most of the time she was staying with a married daughter and consequently we could receive the visit of relatives who could stay overnight. This stipulation came handy when Aurelia's

brother, Nini, came from Texas with the youngest of his sons for the World's Fair a few months later. Mrs. Castro acted then as a true Saporta (she was nee Saporta, no relation of ours) and she went to stay with a daughter for the duration of Aurelia's brother's stay in New York. We were happy to move to our furnished apartment and to sleep in a comfortable bed.

I was thinking then of seeking employment but it was a very difficult proposition in those days. Having resolved our housing problem successfully, I thought that my best procedure was not to spend my meager resources for everyday living expenses and that somehow I had to earn at least for our keep. I had bought in Paris with the help of good Isakino Dassa some novelty jewelry and a couple days of visits to stores revealed the fact that in this country there is someone ahead of you with substantial capital and the one with poor means has not got a chance. Nowadays it is different because the general public travels a lot to foreign countries and acquires exotic taste. In the thirties only American fashion could be sold. I had to sell at retail the items I had acquired in Palestine and Paris. After I did that, I wanted to resume the sales of barber supplies but my wife's opposition to this was categorical because I had to carry a heavy load with me. I wrote a letter to my Pennsylvania friends that we had returned from Palestine and I relied on their good judgment what this news implied.

Instead of replying to my letter the Lampel couple accompanied by Al Fried came to see us in New York. Some changes had occurred in their family. Their eldest son, Sam, was in the insurance business and doing fairly well. Their son, Harold, was an announcer at the radio station in Allentown. The youngest of their sons, Edward, was a

cantor at the synagogue. Jacob Lampel was a commission salesman for the Keystone Company of Allentown selling home improvements with financing by a bank with a guarantee from the F.H.A. They proposed to us to come to Allentown to work in partnership with them for the same company with me taking charge of prospective Italian customers. I followed them to Allentown to test my ground leaving Aurelia in New York in charge of the novelty jewelry to which I had added up some domestic items in vogue at that time. She was well introduced among the three Alvo brothers families and their younger sister, Lina, married to Daniel Aldorotty. I left with a sense of security; my wife having the company of Mrs. Castro at home and my cousin, Mathilde Alco, just across the street on the concourse. In the previous three months we had made a vast circle of friends including the families of Victor Matarasso and Albert Ezratty. My trip to Allentown proved to be my first right move since our return to New York. The Keystone Company had apparently a sole owner and like the Lampels he was an Hungarian Jew. He put me at ease as soon as he saw me on that March rainy cold day by telling the cashier to advance me fifty dollars on account of commissions and to reserve for me a room at the Americus Hotel, the best in town. I accepted the fifty dollars but I declined to be lodged at the hotel explaining that I wanted to stay with the Lampel family on Susquehanna Street that I knew so well.

Our first call that same morning was to a house whose owner, an Italian, had refused to see any salesman that approached him including my partner. I went in alone and tried the best I could to explain to him that the lumber on the outside needed two coats of paint every three or four years to avoid the rotting of the lumber. Why not have a more permanent job done by

having the house covered with shingles? As to the financing, he could select the installments from one to five years. He declared then that the proposition was never explained to him more clearly and that he and his wife wanted the outside of their home to look as meticulously clean as the inside ever was. With this the man gave his accord that a technician of the company was coming to measure the house and quote a final price. The blessing of my father that I shall make good encounters came to my mind and most important faith in myself was restored with this sale on my first attempt. The managing owner of the Keystone Company was gratified by my first success in earning two hundred and fifty dollars commission on this deal.

The acquisition of a car was imperative for us but I could not drive nor could my partner. After we bought a Pontiac sedan, the driving problem was resolved by hiring as our chauffeur, Eddie Lampel, at a salary of forty dollars a week, from Monday morning to Friday evening when he was to resume his duties as cantor at the temple in Allentown. We covered an extensive territory in Pennsylvania not without a few hitches. Business was proceeding at a brisk pace when one of the best salesmen working for our concern created for us hardships inspired by jealousy. The manager, it seems, liked that because it stimulated business. All salesmen were not mean; some of them were of pleasant company. I struck up an acquaintance with a middle age gentleman who was an addict in eating strong peppers at all times and to play the horses. He was Hungarian by birth and on the day the Germans invaded Poland I was riding with him in his car on our way to the race track where we were to meet my partner, Lampel. Arriving at Havre de Grace in Maryland, I liked the excitement of the crowd and since that day I became like Mr. Simone and every member of the Lampel

household, a horse player with small stakes. "Chi va con lo zoppo impara a zoppicare." He who goes with the lame learns how to limp. I learned my lesson the hard way; after ten years of moderately playing the horses I understood the futility of it and I never went to the track or to place a bet on a horse.

Rose Lampel had come to New York where together with Aurelia they were selling novelty jewelry and getting orders for stand photos. I had resumed my relationship with Mr. Licker and they were carrying his catalogue. I had furthermore established for them a source of supplies for the novelty jewelry with a merchant of Canal Street and they were moderately successful. What was important is this first attempt to sell novelty jewelry was the fact that it paved the way to sell precious jewelry for a period of twenty years of my business career. I had ceased to be a "luftmensh;" I had become a jewelry dealer permanently.

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Hitler was pursuing a policy of aggression by invading Poland and this provoked England and France to declare war on Germany; a war for which England was not prepared and France feeling secure behind the Maginot Line. That sense of security was to spell her defeat a few short months later. The American people were lulled in conserving neutrality because of the ocean separating America from the perennial conflicts of Europe. President Roosevelt knew better in thinking that the mad fuhrer of Germany would defy America and every human right, blinded by the crazy notion of the superiority of the German people.

In Palestine the antagonism of the Arabs toward the Jews persisted unabated and

these two factors kept me, like every Jew, concerned for our future safety.

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This was the general background of events in early September 1939, with me improving my financial position. "J'avais brulé mes vaisseaux" (I had burned my vessels) by returning to America. This start of a moderate success was hampered by me becoming sick. It was first diagnosed as prostate trouble and then with a stricture in the urinary canal. I had to come back to New York for the prolonged treatment. A month later the principal of the Keystone Company came to New York and he invited me to his hotel and noticing my improved condition he proposed my resuming the functions of salesman in his company. I reluctantly declined because I was afraid of a relapse preferring the comforts of home.

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It was exactly one year after we had come back to America when Mrs. Castro proposed to cede us her apartment and acquire the furniture in it at a very moderate price. I refused her offer and she sold her furniture a piece here and a piece there at better prices than the one asked from us. I refused to live in her apartment and to buy her furniture because of the eventuality of differences with her daughter; she would want to stay with us. In effect, a few months later such was the case and I congratulated myself for having guessed right. After having lived with a daughter for about one year she rented a room in a lady friend's apartment. We rented an apartment consisting of a large room with a Murphy bed and a kitchenette at the same rental we would have paid should we have accepted the offer of our landlady for her much larger apartment. The size of our new home did not require

much furniture. It was part of a large building one block east of the concourse at 171st Street comprising two hundred and forty apartments with four elevators. It was a luxury building 40% vacant and the bank who was holding a mortgage on it was looking for a capable administrator with twenty thousand dollars equity on it. It would have been an opportunity for Joseph Alvo or Henri Bourla to become landlords of such a building had they advanced funds to me. A few months later every apartment was rented and the new landlord realized huge profits.

While I was undergoing medical treatment I could not stay idle and I made a connection with a marquissette jewelry factory and I started to take orders from their catalogue. This proved to be my introduction to the more precious jewelry line as this factory was located in a building which housed several jewelry manufacturers. Eventually I developed business with some of them.

The Alvo Brothers (no relatives of the Alvos of Palestine) had a printing shop located in Canal Street, a couple blocks distant of the jewelry district. They obliged me by giving to me a desk in their plant at a nominal rent for the purpose I should have an address downtown in a business district. It was a little over one year since our return to the U.S.A. and we had accumulated enough savings that permitted us to look with optimism to the future. My worries were not personal but rather general among the decent thinking people, particularly Jews. The invasion of Poland, the unnatural alliance of Hitler with Stalin and the funny war going on, on the western front, forebode of evil tides for the western powers because Hitler used to mark his time before starting on a new adventure.

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I kept on corresponding with my cousin, Isakino Dassa, in Paris. He had given us the sad news of the demise of our cousin, Moise Saporta. It seems cruel to relate that Aurelia and I were not shocked by this tragic news. He was about forty years of age but we had seen him in a hospital bed in Paris a few short months before with acute pains and it was the case to bless the Eternal from delivering him from further sufferings. It is ironical to think that the disease of which he died permits those now affected by it to live useful lives only hampered in their physiological natural functions but alive with the hope of further progress in the technique of surgery of the diseased colon.

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The year 1940 marked for me the consolidation in the jewelry business. The combined efforts of Aurelia and myself had created for us a nucleus of customers recommended to us by an original one that we came to know by our proper efforts; I had learned well the art of canvassing. It worked like a chain; once we had obtained the confidence of people a brother will recommend you to his brother, a friend to his friend and so forth. We were helped in our sales by extending credit that was repaid in weekly installments thus permitting us to remain in touch with the client. Anyway it was only novelty and marquissette jewelry and the amount of the credit extended was relatively small. Soon enough dealing with these buyers gave way to their demand for gold jewelry and diamonds. The only business connection I had was with the marquissette house of Kimler & Daniel. I had struck a note of curiosity in one of the two partners, Mr. Daniel Guglielmi, because I spoke Italian fluently and himself the son of Italian immigrants could not keep up a conversation in this harmonious language. He obliged me once with a small repair and he advised me to collect repairs from my jewelry

customers. He directed me to Mr. Joseph Chernick who was located across the hall in front of their factory. He explained to me that he would be glad to have me among his customers and thus creating another source of income for myself. I eventually had the opportunity to appreciate the advice of this fine man partly responsible for my initiation in the jewelry business.

My countenance must have puzzled many persons; it certainly did Mr. Chernick on a first encounter. He asked me what nationality I was and he seemed a bit skeptical when I told him that I was a Sephardic Jew. I had many opportunities to know many Askenazic Jews who never had heard of a Jew of Spanish descent. Their world was confined in the "stelt" and they seemed incredulous when they met other western Jews. Mr. Chernick thought I was trying to assume the Jewish religion for mysterious reasons. He got up from his seat at the bench and walked to a shelf and getting hold of a tiny bible he proceeded to make me read the first page. I am not a bible expert but I knew by heart the first paragraph of it and I recited to him "Bereshit bara elohim et ashamayim ve et haarets," and from that moment on his whole mien changed. He offered me a chair next to him and he continued with his work asking me all kinds of questions. It was evident that he had met for the first time a Jew of my kind and he was pleased with what I told him. At that moment I was not thinking of business but rather wondering what I had in common with this man so different in speech from myself. I came to realize that despite centuries of separation and climates a common bond held us together: The religion founded by our common ancestor, Abraham, and codified in Moses' laws. Finally I gave him the few pieces of jewelry I had collected for repairs, and I saw him

handling each item with dexterity filling here and torch in hand soldering there. Getting up from his seat he polished the whole thing and I thought of seeing new jewelry. I was surprised of the moderate prices charged. He was not doing special favors to me but getting paid honestly by the prices of the day. In a couple hours I had learned an aspect of the jewelry business and the blessing of my father came to my mind: "To make good encounters." So far I had met only modest individuals but they were of great help to me. I was since that day an assiduous visitor with some work at Chernick's place.

My cousin, Isakino Dassa, was the representative of a manufacturing firm in Japan making decorative Christmas lights. A brother-in-law of Jack Alvo was in the same business in New York and I caused them to initiate a correspondence but the war interrupted this embryonic relation. As for myself, I was not completely cured of being a jack of all trades and I gave an order of some paintings to my Paris cousin. I had noticed some paintings displayed in the sidewalks of Paris by different artists, some with a degree of talent. Paintings were in style in New York. Cousin Isakino filled up my order with accuracy. I received the shipment in May 1940 on one of last freighters arriving from France before the German occupation. As soon as I had received the lading I remitted the amount of the invoice in a bank check to the sender. Isakino Dassa wrote at war's end that he had cashed the check just in time before fleeing Paris. The city was occupied the next day by the Germans and Hitler made his triumphant entry in the capital of France under the same "Arc de Triomphe" erected to the glory of the French army. I was shocked by the news and I imagined the feelings of every proud Frenchman. Mussolini blinded by the success of his fellow dictator declared war on France,

stabbing in the back a sister Latin country claiming for Italy Nice and Savoie. I followed the behavior of President Roosevelt who, it seemed, would not permit two evil men to rule the world. My main worry was the fate of the Jews of Palestine. The letters of my father were apprehensive but he seemed to expect that a just solution to the political problems was going to prevail.

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The tempo of my activities in the jewelry business was increasing by the demands of my customers for more expensive articles. I felt uncertain when I had the first inquiry for a diamond ring of $3/4$ of a carat. I relied then on my friend, Chernick, to put me in touch with a supplier. After I had made my first sale of a diamond engagement ring, the same merchant who had supplied me with it offered me a "melange" amounting to three thousand dollars. I declined his offer. I came to regret my reluctance to invest my money when a few months later the price of these gems skyrocketed. I made another mistake: I had in Tel Aviv an independent radio repairer named Rabinowitz. He was a clear cut honest young man who had seen better days in Wien with his widowed father. With the rise to power of Hitler they both emigrated to Palestine. After his father's death there he emigrated to the U.S.A., at the time of my return to this country. On the way to America he visited an uncle in the Jura region of France who gave him a few parcels of semi-precious stones for sale in America. He knew of my becoming interested in the jewelry business and he gave me the lot trusting that I would be able to dispose of it better than he would do himself. The stones were of excellent quality and having been recalled by relatives in California he proposed I should buy the lot at the import cost. This time also I declined his offer and I returned to him his merchandise and

since then I did not hear from him. I had many opportunities as my business progressed to acquire stones similar to the ones I refused to buy and paying high prices for them. Once more I had missed a genuine bargain and it seemed I had no flair for the right speculation.

It seems a thing without importance nowadays when you can have a telephone installed in your apartment or office as soon as the request is made to the phone company. In 1941 it was very difficult to have a one party telephone line. It was imperative for us to have a telephone to keep in touch with our customers. We were lucky to have one installed in our apartment and it became virtually impossible after to obtain one. All the material necessary was diverted to the war effort in which the U.S.A. was going to be involved a short time later.

The forty paintings I had received from France I sold to a storekeeper near to our house and having a slight profit I preferred to keep four "Aquarelles" and a large painting for myself.

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The short lived alliance of Hitler with Stalin to dismember Poland came to an end when the German dictator considered Germany strong enough to attack Russia. Mussolini followed suit and at the beginning it looked like a triumphant march of the Nazis inside Russian territory. At a certain moment I was desolate when news came of the bombing by the Italians of Tel Aviv killing a few children in a school. My feelings of revulsion were accentuated by the fact that Italian airmen were responsible for this outrage. The Italians who coveted Albania declared war on Greece also and it was a sad day for me when Hitler exhibited himself in a mad dance of joy at the railroad station in Salonica.

It was the start of the tragedy that annihilated the major part of Salonica Jewry. The eyes of the world were focussed toward the U.S.A. and it seemed impossible that our adoptive country was going to permit the outrage to morality and to human decency to persist indefinitely. The catastrophe caused by the bombing of Pearl Harbor on December Seventh 1941 was the occasion for Persident Roosevelt to give his famous speech in Congress saying that the day was going to live in infamy in history. The tragedy of thousands of lost lives and the greatest part of the American navy caused the American people to resolve that it would be a war until the complete victory for America and its allies was achieved.

The state of war between the U.S.A. and the axis powers had caused all postal communications with Greece and Italy to be interrupted. I lost all correspondence contact with my sisters, Julie and Allegra. We did not know immediately when my sister, Allegra, had given birth to her second baby girl. The only relatives we were able to get news about were those in Palestine. My father always in his own concise style wrote to us about the good health of the family without ever mentioning the many dramatic moments caused by the reverses of the British in North Africa. He seemed to rely on divine providence to save the Jewish people from Hitler's scourge. I realized in those days that my duty as a responsible person was to be prepared, if need be, to help my parents and my sisters and brothers. To achieve this aim Aurelia and I were working very hard in our jewelry business to accumulate savings. Our efforts were successful; I was not a jack of all trades anymore. I was selling jewelry as my only line of business and I built up an array of customers and they were increasing every day. As I looked around us to analyze the situation of my friends I discovered what took them years to accomplish I did in a

short period of time. I was not proud of that attributing it to luck. I prayed for the safety of the ones I loved and prayed fervently in the street, in the subway and in our home. My activities were confined in the building at 83 Canal Street where so many manufacturing jewelers and dealers were concentrated. I gave up my desk at the Alvo Brothers Printing Plant and rented a desk at the Chernick Shop. He was the tenant of the room but he rented a bench each to two jewelers and a diamond setter. The location was convenient to me because the section was the center of jewelry manufacturing and most storekeepers were wholesalers for the jewelry trade. The jewelry exchanges were located on the Bowery corner of Canal Street, a couple blocks away. In the past the trade was concentrated on Maiden Lane and vicinity, which retained the prestige of jewelry wholesalers and particularly silversmiths from New England who had showrooms in that section. Another center started to emerge on the block of 47th Street between Fifth and Sixth Avenues which eclipsed eventually in future years the other centers located downtown.

Most of our customers in the Bronx were divided in sections by us and we called on them on a certain day every week. The most important were around White Plains Road and in the Pelham Bay section that included a large territory. It seems impossible nowadays how we covered those distances on foot to collect the weekly installment for jewelry sold on credit. We were very careful to select reliable customers, generally pleasant people mostly Italian Americans with a sprinkle of Irish Americans. Our low prices combined with our extension of credit was the cause of our success. We enjoyed also a reputation for probity so necessary in jewelry transactions. Although it was inconvenient we made the trip every Thursday in the Bensonhurst section of

Brooklyn to attend to the few requests of our customers there; it served our purpose also to keep in touch with our sister-in-law and her children.

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The vicissitudes of the war kept us in suspense during the long months of preparations before the allied offensive that was to liberate Europe of the Nazi menace and occupation. In the Pacific the newly built American fleet was attacking the Japanese entrenched in the Philippines and numerous bases in the islands of the Pacific. Meanwhile America was secretly working on the atomic project which was to win the war over Japan abruptly and dramatically.

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Although we were not accumulating any riches, my wife and I were satisfied with our pecuniary condition. We had a steady business, a steady income derived from it and enough capital beyond our needs to sustain our operations. In retrospect I think this was the period when I should have expanded my activities by hiring help. I was afraid by my past experiences to upset a business that seemed to be running smoothly by trying to impart new impulse to it. It was time to write to my father of our condition just before the High Holidays of 1944. I was told that he was supremely happy to know that not only I was financially independent but that we wanted to share with the family if need be the fruit of our efforts. He had a first stroke during the Holiday of Succoth and he did not survive a second one a few days later when he died on the seventh of Heshvan. We were advised of his demise by friends to whom my brother-in-law, Leon, had sent a cable telling them to inform me and they should save my any sudden emotion. I was undergoing a period of religious fervor and I kept seven days of mourning faithfully as prescribed. My father died without knowing for sure the fate of my

sister, Allegra, her husband, Elico, and their two babies. He was spared from knowing the news of their tragic death after having been deported. He was spared from knowing of four human beings that he loved tenderly who had disappeared in a martyr's death in Hitler's holocaust.

I was worried over the condition of my dear mother knowing of her attachment to my father during the 54 years of their marriage. I was relieved when I knew that my sister, Mathilde, was caring for her part time in the Recanati household. I expected her to live many more years and see her at the end of the war. She was not feeling well and trying as usual not to be a burden she returned home preferring to be sick in her own room and bed. She felt she was not alone because my brother, Sem, and his family were living in the same apartment and Leonico was coming everyday to see her.

On Iyar 19, 1945 he came on his daily visit to our mother and not noticing anything special in her condition, he went away. A few minutes later Rahelica, the daughter of Sem, heard moanings coming from her bedroom. She ran to her to bring help but her grandmother was already beyond help and she expired in the arms of her granddaughter with the name of my father on her lips. She had survived him about six months, having been married for fifty-three years sharing joys and sorrows. My father had a strong character and she was docile to his whims but loving each other tenderly. His feelings for her were expressed when he often called her "Hjia de Un Clavero," his endearing name for the mother of his children.

My brother-in-law, Leon, cabled a friend in New York advising him to cautiously inform me of the death of my mother. We cried bitterly over our loss, sorry for the fact that we did not see her once more.

Now that both my parents had gone to their rest, we relied on Leon Recanati's counsel, having great respect for his wisdom and affection for us. We were deceived in our expectations because six months later he was no more.

As I was commemorating my father according to Jewish custom on the first anniversary of his death with religious services in the Sephardic synagogue I received a cable from my brother, Sem, informing me that our sister, Mathilde, had become a widow with the death on Heshvan Six 1945 of her husband. The news shocked Aurelia and me tremendously. It was the third time within a year that we had received such tragic news announcing the death of a person we loved dearly. On the two previous occasions our sorrow was assuaged somewhat by the fact that both my parents had gone beyond the three score and ten considered having attained old age. Leon Recanati died at age fifty-five when his tasks were not completed yet. He had started to meet success in his efforts to make the bank he founded a first class financial institution. During his married life he had loved his wife and children passionately and had imparted to his sons the best possible education. Would they be capable of successfully follow in the footsteps initiated by their father who they loved and respected? How was my sister, Mathilde, going to cope with her new condition of widowhood after loving and being loved by a husband of remarkable qualities? Those bitter thoughts came to my mind and Aurelia and I were sorry for not being able to be in Tel Aviv to bring a measure of comfort to a dear sister and her children in their time of sorrow. Since then I have commemorated my father and my brother-in-law in common religious services, the two of them having passed away one day apart after one year. With these deaths the mourning for persons dear to us did not

cease. Finally Hitler, who was responsible for scores of millions of people who lost their life, committed suicide in his bunker in Berlin. The Western powers and the Russians were victorious on all fronts in Europe. The Jewish people then started to realize the immensity of the tragedy that had befallen them. With the liberation of Hitler's concentration camps in Germany and Poland the surviving haggard last inmates told tragic stories of tortures and deaths of people whose sole crime was to be born Jews. My young and dear sister, Allegra, with her two baby daughters were deported from Salonica and disappeared from the face of the earth. My brother-in-law, Elico Haim, was also deported but as an able man he was separated from his wife and children and he was sent to a labor camp where he perished from an infection in a cheek.

My sister, Julie, was spared the fate of Allegra due to successful efforts of her son, Maurice, who saved his parents and his younger brother, Daniel, from certain death. The Nazis had divided the Jewish population of Salonica in sections, assembling them for deportation each district by turn. Maurice Saltiel had joined the resistance who was fighting the Germans and Italians by whatever possible means. Alerted when the turn of his parents and his younger brother came to be assembled in a public place prior to deportation, a Greek non-Jew clandestinely approached the three Saltiels and motioned them to pull out of the ranks. Surmising their fate if they would be deported, they followed the young man companion of Maurice who succeeded in accompanying them out of town. It was a true odyssey for them for many days playing hide and seek with the Nazis and going hungry at times until they reached Athens. The trip was accomplished on foot and by train whenever possible but always with the fear of being discovered not knowing especially who was an enemy or a friend. As the Jews were hunted by

the Nazis some Greeks were fearful for their personal safety although sympathizing for the Jewish plight they tried not to have any relations with them. Others in the minority as habitual antisemites were overtly against the Jews. The patriotic majority of the Greek people saw in a Jew another Greek of a different religion fighting for the same cause and they tried to help them, sometimes at the risk of their own life. My brother-in-law, Salomon, my sister, Julie, and their two sons had to contend with this situation during the long months they remained in hiding in Athens.

I had seen at the liberation of Greece by the British army a snapshot of my emaciated little nephew, Daniel Saltiel, and I imagined that his parents and older brother's appearance was not any better. At least they were safe! The presence of mind of Maurice had saved their life.

In every generation and in every country around the world there was always a fringe of Jew haters. At times the whole population of a country expressed their hatred against the Jewish people who had given the world the Prince of Peace and the Twelve Apostles and yet Torquemada preached hatred instead of love. Nothing had approached the savagery of Hitler and his cohorts of Nazis against a defenseless people. At least on previous occasions the zealots tried to impose on the Jews their brand of religion but Hitler was trying and almost succeeded in eliminating the entire Jewish population of the world. I scan recorded history without finding the example of this degree of savagery. The cruelty of Genghis Khan was applied to all his enemies but Hitler's hatred was applied especially against the Jews and he was responsible for the death of six million of them. Among them scores of Salonica people I knew, my dear friends, Peppo Menahem and Moise Molho. After Mussolini's death and the liberation of the entire Italian peninsula news from

Aurelia's folks was not any better. Here also despite the general benevolence of the population of Italy for the infinitesimal proportion of their Jewish compatriots the Nazis had left their cruel imprint. Indirectly my wife's sister, Martha, was dead as the result of an amputation of a leg and buried as Catholic; so was the fate of their old Zia Laurina. Eventually this situation was remedied by reburying their remains in the Jewish cemetery of Milan. Aurelia's oldest sister, Ida, had gone through the ordeal of wanting her sons baptized to avoid persecution for them but the racial laws prohibited such baptism for children of a Jewish mother. Unable to withstand such trials she died of heart failure. Her husband at war's end met the same fate as his wife, exhausted as he was trying to help his sons who for the duration of the war had remained in hiding tracked down by the Fascisti and by the Nazis for fighting in the resistance. My sister-in-law, who had remained a widow since the beginning of the war after the death of her husband, good Piero Maranzana, went to work in an office. She was hunted by the Nazis as a Jewess and on a certain day she received a phone call from her portinaia advising her not to come home in the evening because the Gestapo was looking for her. Prior to that the racial laws obliged Jews to change their first name for a more biblical one and accordingly she changed her name of Antonietta to Leah. After the phone call she did not dare to come home and pedaling her bicycle she escaped the Nazis in a remote village where she remained in hiding to the end of the war, going some times hungry. Most of Aurelia's cousins and nieces escaped to Switzerland to avoid consequences which entailed sometimes even death; their only crime was of being born a Jew or of mixed parentage.

To prepare for Hitler's downfall and with the advance of the allied and Russian armies in Europe President Roosevelt met Stalin and Churchill at Yalta. I had seen

him riding in a car along the concourse in the Bronx when he came in that borough of New York City during his campaign for a fourth term for the Presidency and to me he looked pale and emaciated. So he looked to the general public at his return from Yalta. The preparation for Germany's surrender and the forthcoming foundation of the United Nations must have tired him very much. Yet he traveled and cruised in the Red Sea in an American destroyer sitting with the King of Saudi Arabia in two golden armchairs brought for this purpose. I mention this because it struck me at the time that the President of victorious America had started to flirt with a country rich in oil. He died April 12, 1945 and with victory within his grasp he could not assist in Hitler's downfall like Moses who did not see the Promised Land. I deplored his untimely death like millions of his admirers around the world, especially Jews. Without him the scourge of Hitler would have dominated the world probably for a very long time. He certainly did commit some error (errar humanum est) but without prejudice to his qualities that make a man great. For his fourth term as his vice president he had chosen Harry Truman over Henry Wallace. Personally at that time I considered this a mistake but with the passing years I came to realize that this was a lucky choice for America and, without impinging on the qualities of Mr. Wallace, Harry Truman was one of the best presidents America has ever had. In 1948 on his first elective candidacy for president of the U.S.A. I have voted for him. The bad news of Hitler's victims did not come in one day. We were prepared for the worst when we came to realize that my sister, Allegra, was among the martyrs of the savagery of the Nazis. We were thankful to God for having spared Julie and her family.

Immediately as postal communications were restored we were engaged in correspondence. It was a trickle of daily bad news of

friends and acquaintances that did not return from concentration camps. Fifty-five thousand Greek Jews had perished after deportation.

The war in the Pacific went on but after the drop of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Japan surrendered formally to the U.S.A., in a ceremony on board the Battleship Missouri in Tokyo Bay on September 2, 1945. The victims of Honolulu were avenged and victorious America had recovered her pride.

Harry Recanati had married Pauline Goldeberg in 1942 when war was at its worst for the western allies and for the Russians. It was an elaborate wedding for the first son of the Recanatis. In 1946 Daniel Recanati celebrated his marriage to Maty Carasso in strict familial intimacy. After a few months Raphael, the third son of my sister, Mathilde, was married in Tel Aviv to Diane Hettana, a girl he had come to know and love while on a mission in Cairo, Egypt.

Travel for civilians was difficult for lack of regular communication services but a trickle of travelers from Palestine and Greece had started to arrive in New York. The first such visitor was a son of Moise Carasso and after a few months he came to America himself. Other visitors included my cousin, Mathilde Botton (nee Saporta), with her daughter, Dolly. They resided in New York for a couple years and were frequent visitors at our apartment.

In March 1948 my nephew, Raphael, wrote from London informing us of his forthcoming trip to New York. In fact I was at the pier to welcome him to the U.S.A. Since then he has resided with his wife in New York where their children were born. Up to that period, Aurelia and I felt at times a nostalgic feeling and a sense of loneliness; with the arrival of this dear nephew this feeling was to disappear. We had hereafter a blood relative in our midst

and we were happy to have him and his
family to love and cherish.

Epilogue

I did not follow any specific composition rule to write this memoir. Perusing some years ago in a Bronx branch of the Public Library, I noticed a few books on the art of writing for publication and how to become a successful author. I did not have then, the least intention of becoming one. I discarded those books without reading any of them. When I was about to write my recollections, I thought for a moment to read those publications to guide me in my attempt to be an author. I quickly dismissed my temptation because I wished to be as natural as possible in my narrative. I have tried to convey my thoughts in simple terms and I have only followed the advise of Boileau, the French poet of the seventeenth century when he exhorted would be authors with these verses: "Cent fois sur/le metier remettez votre ouvrage, polissez le sans cesse et le repolissez." I have corrected my writings continually and this method has required a long time to complete my task. If I have succeeded in clearly expounding my life and beliefs, my efforts have not been wasted.

Upon reaching the year 1948, I have finished my recitation of events because at this point, I feel it would not be right to relate facts about people I live and deal with at the present time. The last thirty years have been rich in situations never experienced by me before. I regret feeling obliged not to write about them. It would have been a source of information about my character to my relatives in the future and to whoever cares to know the history of a segment of Jewish Sephardic life for this period.

I have recited events as I have seen them

or heard of them. I have my moods and my way of thinking in each period I have depicted, as truly as I was able to remember the particular episode. A person is not proud when his stomach or some other organ of his body functions to perfection. Likewise, I do not mean to be proud when I state that I have a keen memory and when I assert that I can repeat almost "verbatim" important conversations that I had some years ago. I am rather conscious of my shortcomings and I consider my recollections a quality of my brain. A person should be proud of a quality acquired by proper effort. I have strived, especially in the last few years, to correct, to cite an example, my irascible character. I owe a great deal of gratitude to my wife whose motto is: "Bien faire et laisser faire." I have learned from her to look with charity and equanimity at what makes people to act the way they do. I try hard not to show my resentment when I do not like the behavior of persons and to understand their attitude, generally the aftermath of past frustrations. In my adult life, I have put emphasis on others qualities and have overlooked their character defects. I have managed always to respect the dignity of people around me to the point of pusillanimity and have been deeply hurt when they have taken me for granted and hurt my feelings.

Aurelia and I have always liked people and our house was opened to our friends with whom we have shared our good moments. We always had a great affection for our nephews and nieces but have for long years been deprived of their presence. We were the only ones out of a large family to have come to America and never having been blessed with children we were overjoyed when Raphael and Dinah came to establish residence in New York. When their children were born here, we were genuinely happy we had a dear family near to us, to love and cherish. We shall love them for the rest of our life unconditionally. It

makes us happy to give our love to them, not by design but by instinct. We are fortunate because they are good and deserve all our affection.

I have no message nor advice to give to nephews and nieces and their descendants. I have not the necessary wisdom to make recommendations for posterity. The intelligent person with average education should be able to find his place in life without the aid of my counsel. If some of my relatives shall read this book with indulgence towards me in the future, my aim would be attained.

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