

The Blindfolded Goddess

By Mary Willard Keyes in The Outlook

"A letter from America for you Isaac."

The old man who sat in the corner by the stove took the letter eagerly. Holding it close to his eyes, he commenced reading it.

"Are you not going to let me hear it, also?" asked his sister Marta in a querulous voice. "Not that I expect it will be any better than the others."

"Yes, yes; you shall hear it. Listen: 'Dear Father—I hope you are well. Aunt Marta and Cousin Isaac also and the children. We often think of you in our old home in Warsaw and wish we could see you but it would be strange for you here, and you would not be happy in America, it is all so different from your home. If you were not so old you might come. But we must give up that thought. Perhaps I will visit you in a year or two if I can leave my business. The clothing trade is very good at this season. We are all doing well. You would certainly like to see us in the house we have here. We keep our carriage and we ride in the Central Park. Shendela and Rebecca and little Yetta take music lessons. They are like you, they love the violin and the piano. All the children but only Moses are musical, and Moses has high marks in school. I send you a money order. It is all the change I happen to have by me at the moment. When you receive this, you may think of us in the feast of the Passover. Rebecca and our children send their love to you."

"With love, from your son, 'Morris Zakovitz.'"

After a silence old Isaac said, "It is well that they are prospering."

"How much did he send you?" queried Marta, sharply.

"It is twenty rubles. He said it was all he had by him at the time of writing."

"And last time it was how much?"

"Twenty rubles."

"And the time before that?"

"The same. He knows my wants are not many. There are five children and it costs a great deal to live in New York."

"Yes," sneered Marta, "it does cost a great deal to keep a carriage and drive in the park. And violins and pianos for three children! And music lessons! Silk dresses, too, I've no doubt, and plenty of meat and good wine! But the old coat and the old hat for the father left behind! Morris is a good son since he went to America, truly!"

"Yes," asserted Morris' father, stoutly. "Yes, he is a good son. Perhaps he has forgotten how it is in Russia now he lives in a free country. I, too, would go to free America if I were younger."

"If I was a man, I'd go, whether I was old or not," declared Marta. "If I had a rich son, would I live here and work and make my old sister work for me, and my nephew give me a house? Isaac has six children, but he can't look after his old uncle. Morris has five, but he can send no more than twenty rubles once in three months. He is rich and proud. He has rich friends. He is ashamed to have his fine friends in America see his poor old father."

Much as he longed to see his son, it is doubtful if Isaac Zakovitz would ever have left his corner, but for Marta's goadings.

And now he was going. He had his passport and his letter of credit. A small bundle contained all his goods.

"Take enough for the voyage only," advised Marta. "Why should you hinder yourself with old clothes when you can soon have fine new ones in America?"

His violin was not left behind.

On the deck of the steamer that carried Isaac up the harbor stood a hearty young German. He had been in America before.

"Hello! old Frau Liberty," he saluted. "I seen you before, and I know you. I know just how much to believe in you. Liberty—to slave in a factory! Liberty—to sicken in a dark tenement. Liberty—to get bare living wages in a coal mine. That is what you give to enough of us. You stand at your front door and you don't know what is going on in your house. You should have your great eyes covered with a great bandage."

"Still, you seem to be coming back to try again," suggested a neighbor in the crowd.

"Richtig. There is always a chance. Once get a start! Your grand children may live on Fifth Avenue! No laws hold you back. It is not so bad, but, at the same, I would like to see that old lady there with her eyes well tied u

and then she would not look so much like she would show you into her Vorzimmer!"

Isaac Zakovitz had been patiently miserable throughout his voyage. In all his wretchedness he had had only to touch the letter in his bosom to feel comforted. He did not doubt that his son would be glad to see him, though he had not apprised that son of his coming. He was entirely confident of a glad and warm welcome awaiting him. He thought with pleasure of seeing the children—Shendela, Moses, Rebecca, and Yetta, and a six months' old baby he had never seen whose name he thought "American" name of Eleanor Frances, after some rich American friend.

The steamship had sailed up the bay in the morning, but it was late afternoon before the barge to which Isaac had been transferred left him at the barrack-like Barge Office on Ellis Island. The weary official, leaning over a counter, had uttered the same questions that day in twenty different tongues. Toward five o'clock he glanced at the little, stooping, long-bearded figure before him, and commenced in Yiddish. "How much money have you?"

"I have five rubles."

"No money! Do you know we deport people who have no money? You are too old to earn your living." He indicated to Isaac a portion of the bare wooden hall barred off from the rest and filled with a collection of human beings old or diseased or penniless, all with aspects of misery and fear.

Old Isaac perceived them with terror, and understood only too well.

"But I have a son," he cried. See! Here is a letter from my son."

"Is he waiting for you outside?" asked the officer.

"He does not know I am here. I have made for him a surprise. But he is rich! He will take care of me and I will be no burden to your country. Do not—do not send me back to Russia."

"Where does he live? How will you find him?"

Isaac brought out a worn piece of folded paper and displayed his son's address at the same time boasting. "My son keeps a carriage and drives in the park."

The interpreter shot one searching look at the letter and another at Isaac; but in that patient face he discerned only what he so often saw—a blending of weariness, anxiety and hope. He motioned the old man on to the next official, having given about one minute and forty seconds to the consideration of the emigrant Isaac Zakovitz, from Warsaw, Russia.

After being shoved here and there, on cars and off cars, his strength nearly spent, his mind quite dazed, Isaac at length found himself on a horse car. Something made him feel strangely at home. Opposite sat a patriarch almost his counterpart, and several others in the car wore the high hats and long coats with which he was familiar. Also the women and young men were of a type he knew well.

"You have just come to America?" His vis-a-vis had crossed to him.

"Yes," he said, "from Warsaw."

"I am from Kiev. If I had lived in Warsaw, I never would have left it to come to this New York. They do not murder us in Warsaw. Have you friends here?"

"Yes; my son. I have come to surprise him. He thought the journey would be too hard for me, but, behold me! He will take care of me and I shall do well. Is this place far from here?" and he showed his tattered scrap of paper.

Isaac's new friend peered at it and read out, "127 Hester Street, No, we are nearly there. I myself live not far from Hester Street, and I will go with you."

Isaac gratefully acknowledged his kindness and thankfully let him appropriate his heavy bundle as they left the car. Something like a shock came to the old man as he looked around him in the street. The building all about were tall, built of brick and trimmed with stone. They seemed new, and appeared rather fine to him. But the glimpses he caught of their interiors showed them very mean and squalid, and the street itself was unspeakably dirty. The crowds that surged by, filling all the space not occupied by push-carts, was a poorly dressed, a dingy, and a ragged crowd. There was no sign of any park.

They made a turning. Isaac's friend was by this time supporting him with one arm. Wonderful is the power of endurance in the Jewish race. But for this race heritage the old man would have fainted long before, for he had

been standing, on the steamer deck, on the barge deck, or in the Barge Office, most of the time since morning. And now he began to think the limit of his strength was reached.

All at once he heard music, blatant and rollicking music. He struggled to make his way through a crowd of children around a hurdy-gurdy, dancing by pairs on the sidewalk and in the street.

"Here we are," said the man from Kiev. "This is 127 Hester Street."

"No!" in distress from Isaac. "No! it cannot be. My son would not live here. My son is rich. He keeps—Oh, I can go no further!" He sank on to the doorstep.

"What is your son's name?"

"Morris Zakovitz."

A few inquiries were made. Then a shrill cry arose from the children.

"Yetta Zakovitz! Yetta Zakovitz! Here's an old man wants your father."

One of the little dancers detached herself from the crowd and ran up.

"I don't know him," she said. "What does he want?"

But Isaac knew his granddaughter. "Little Yetta," he whispered, "I am your old grandfather. Don't you remember Aunt Martha and grandfather in Warsaw? Take me to your father."

Five-year-old Yetta handled the situation with composure.

"Moses," she bawled, "here's our grandfather. You come and take his bundles," and from somewhere Moses did appear. The two children helped the old man to rise. Leading him by the hand, Yetta piloted him through a hallway, numbers of children trooping after. Out into the courtyard they came, then into another building, a rear tenement, up the stairs, up, up, up—not so far in reality, but seeming endless to him who had begun in Warsaw two weeks ago the journey of which this was the finish. Somewhere in the darkness of the hallway Moses, by instinct found the door handle. "Father!" he shouted, with a full sense of the import of his news; "Father! here's grand-father!"

And, after all, it was Mrs. Zakovitz who fainted. Her husband caught his father in his arms and laid him tenderly on the bed in one corner of the kitchen. Few words were spoken, and tears flowed freely down the faces of the men as well as of the children. Yetta revived her mother, and Moses, shutting the door, with difficulty against those who pressed around it, placed his back against it. As the mother began coming to herself, she commenced wailing. "Oh! why ever did he come? Why did he come? Why didn't he stay in his good house in Warsaw. He will die here!"

"Hush!" said Morris, roughly. "Do you want to kill him now, to night?" Then to his father: "Poor father! We thought to keep it from you. To myself I said: 'I will make the old man happy. I will write to him that all with us is fine, just as he hoped.' I sent every penny I could spare, and went without food and clothes, and then I was sick. And I thought, 'Never shall I see my good old father's face again, but he will be glad if he thinks we are prospering.'" Then, after a silence broken by sobs, "But I am glad to see your face, my father."

"You have been sick, Morris?"

"Yes, I could not find work one time. The children cried with hunger, and it drove me wild. I am better now, I have work—not steady. If I can keep up, I will find something in the end. God help us!"

It was indeed a very carnival of sadness. A neighbor sent in some wine, and the old man drank a bit, but the bread and garlic the others were having for supper he refused. Moses was despatched with the dozen cats his father had just finished stitching. The other children stood around gazing at the old man, who lay in the corner with his eyes shut. Suddenly he opened them. "Little Yetta, come here," he whispered. "Bring me my violin."

It was put into his hands. With shaking fingers he undid its cover and brought out five little packages.

"This for Moses," he said, with a wan smile, "this for Rebecca, and Yetta, and the baby. But where is Shendela?"

"Shendela's at music school. She is very late," explained her father, as the children were too absorbed in their new gifts to answer.

"Then that is true? The other children, play they a 'sol'?"

"Oh, you shall here! Becca, take grandfather's violin and play for him."

Rebecca seized the violin lovingly, tuned it, and played a simple air quite correctly. At that moment Moses returned.

"Look!" he cried. "Behold Shendela!"

"Behold our Shendela!" exclaimed father and mother in amazement.

There she stood, their oldest daughter, a pretty, self-possessed girl of



eleven. Her bushy curls were neatly tied with a broad red ribbon, her short dress was of spotless white linen, her shoes and stockings were new and neat. For a moment the children stared, speechless. Then a hubbub began.

"What for a dress has Shendela!"

"Oh, ain't she beautiful!"

"Oh, don't Jenny look handsome!"

"Where did you get them?"

"I know. Miss Parker gave it to you. Hurrah for Miss Eleanor F. Parker!"

"Be still, you," urged the father. "Remember your grandfather. Tell us, my Shendela, the good news."

"Sure I will," she replied. "Look here." She held up two dollar bills and a fifty-cent piece. "That's what I have earned this week. I earned it giving lessons to the music school, and Miss Parker says I am a good teacher. I am patient with the little ones. Miss Parker says I must not eat garlic any more and I must have neat clothes. She got me these. By and by I pay her back for them. I will earn ever so much money. Miss Parker says we must move to a better tenement—"

"Oh, yes!" cried Mrs. Zakovitz, sarcastically; "we'll move on Fifth Avenue to-morrow."

"Here is a note for father," Shendela went on, breathlessly. "She's found a job for him. Her tailor wants a finisher, and Miss Parker has found out from the boss that father does the work fine. Only we've got to move to where it's clean, and she can let us have the money till we save enough, and—"

The voices broke out again, and tears of joy came to wash away the traces of the tears of sadness.

"And that isn't all, though it's the best," the beaming little messenger continued. "We're all going to play in a musicale, us children; little Yetta, too. Yetta's going to play 'Reverie' on the piano. A great lady is going to sing. She was at the music school this afternoon. She sings at the Metropolitan Opera House. I had a love on her at once. Miss Parker said to me, 'Play that thing I like so much to Madam—I forgotten her name. So I played this. I can't never remember where I learned it, it was so long time ago. You know it, father.'"

And Shendela raised her violin to her shoulder and commenced the sad strain in a minor key. It wailed and rebelled and then it became patient again.

"Hold! Shendela!"

For the first time the young girl noticed the presence of the newcomer. Of all the children she alone had a clear remembrance of him. Not yet greeting her, old Isaac stood upon the floor. He raised his violin, and where Shendela had paused he took up the theme. She accompanied him, but presently he carried the music on where the child could no longer follow. Its mournfulness turned to triumph, its patience to solemn joy. Life returned to the limbs and animation to the weary face of the tired traveller.

"I taught you it, Seendela," he cried. "You heard me play it when you were a baby, often. It is my own song, a song of the Jew in Russia. When I was a young man, I made it. But never after I grew older did I play the ending. I despaired. I said 'Never shall we be free. My grandchildren, perhaps, but not I.' Yet now, courage! For even I am come. The road to freedom is here. Little Shendela shall show us the way. Come to your grandfather, little Shendela."

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Turco-Italian Peace Pact

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Man Who Shot Col. Roosevelt Pleads Guilty

Milwaukee, Wis., Oct. 15—John Schrank, Colonel Roosevelt's assailant, pleaded guilty to a charge of attempted murder when given a preliminary arraignment before Judge Nolan in the district court today.

Judge Nolan held Schrank to the criminal court for trial under bonds of \$7,500. Tentatively the date for the trial was set for the November term of the criminal court.

The Miners' Federation of the United Kingdom passed a resolution in favor of a five-day week at their recent meeting. The proposal will be submitted to a ballot of the men in all the mines of the county.

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