

MEMOIRS OF A GRANDMOTHER

by

Charlotte Margulies

Translated from the German Original by Oliver Margulies

Smyrna, in December 1933

I wish to try to
bring into the shape of a book my life, beginning from my childhood.
I will describe it
As a souvenir it shall remain with my children.
I have not the intention of inventing stories:
I merely want to oblige them to read.

And now my life begins. –

My father¹ was a highly educated man, known in the hebrew-orthodox tradition as a *Hassidim*. He was trading grains.

Also my mother² was very pious. She was seventeen, he was eighteen when they married; that is, when they were married to one another, for at that time it was not yet common to marry according to the wish of one's heart, but only according to the wishes of one's parents. At that time the pious men dedicated their time very much to the temple and to the rabbis, and the women only to the households. A pious woman lived with the hope that her husband would prepare paradise for her...

In the meantime two small girls³ where born, one of them am I⁴. My father, who was open-minded and wonderfully intelligent, saw after several years of their marriage, that leading this religious life was nothing for him: He wanted

¹ Johann Kraemer, born around 1836/37, died in Vienna in 1905

² Golde Kraemer born Abramovitz, born around 1837/38, died in Sofia in 188[5]

³ Adele Kraemer, born around 1857/58 died as Adele Schapira-Kraemer, 12.10.1919

⁴ Charlotte was born on the 6.11.1855 in Kolomea.

to go beyond this! But as he only had a Hebrew education, he didn't dare to venture out into the world. Then my mother said to him: "As the praying and dancing with the Hassidim and their circle of people isn't enough for you anymore and you feel the inner power to create new things, well then, travel to Bottischani⁵

colonial goods, whose main attraction where its sweets and small delights to eat. To buy the products he travelled for eight hours to T u l t s c h a⁸. Tultscha was a major city compared to Babada.

The first thing my father did when the company began to flourish, was to reunite us. Now there were four happy human beings, two big ones and two small ones. Especially pleased where the two small ones, for in K o l o m e a⁹, the town I was born in, we never had seen such an amount of sweets. This reminds me of a small episode that I want to tell about now:

We arrived in Babada a month before our New Year¹⁰. I was at that point six years old, had not seen my father for three years and had forgotten him entirely. As the new year holidays came around, we proudly went to the temple with our parents, because our father already was playing a very important role in society. Suddenly I felt like enjoying all the sweets, of which we children always were dreaming of, and hardly had I made up my mind when I already saw my plan through. I went over to my father and asked him for the keys, because Mama wished to have them. He gave them to me, believing that mother wanted to go home with us to prepare all the food. I ran over to the shop immediately, opened it up on my own and filled my apron

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with delights. Unfortunately, I did not manage to close the door to the shop again. So there I stood outside.

In the meantime however my father had started to become uneasy and soon I saw the parents returning home. One can easily imagine their fright! I was given two slaps in the face. and asked my mother, shocked: " Who is this man, who is hitting me?" After this, I did not want to go back into the house, even though my father called me three times. Then suddenly, he seized my ear angrily and pulled me into the house – and from that moment onward I new I had a father.

⁸ Tulcea, Romania, 45° 11 N, 28° 48 E

⁹ Today Kolomyia (Ukraine), then part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, 48° 31 N, 25° 2 E

¹⁰ Charlotte arrived in Babada in August 1861. Rosh Ha Shana in the year 1861 was on the 5./6. of September.

Babada is a small town, surrounded by 20 to 30 villages, and in each of those two to three Jewish families lived. For the holidays they all came into our town to go to temple. Many young persons were among them; during the second day of the holidays they stood in a row in front of me and said I should choose one of them as my groom. I chose the the most beautiful of them. –

Several happy years passed. My parents were content, the business flourished and a boy¹¹ was born. Everything was fine.

Each person is responsible for his own luck: My father, who became increasingly successful in his profession, also went along with modern life, dressed in a modern way and expected his wife to do the same. But my mother was very pious and she did not want to move one step away from this way of living.

My father, being an open-minded person, had had enough opportunities to discover a new world for himself. Because of the success with his business, he needed not only to buy his products in Tultschea, but also in G a l a t z¹² in Rumania. Galatz was at that time the main center to buy products for the turkish provincial towns, and it was there that all rich salesmen met – my father was the leading one from our town. Accordingly, Galatz was a city full of pleasures...

But my father only encountered deaf ears in his home. He brought my mother the most beautiful clothes and undergarments – she did not want to wear them. He asked her to at least take off her wig, but she cut her own hair down to the scalp, tied a white cloth and a colourful silk cloth around her head and said:

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„A pious woman, who already has three children, must wear solid clothing“. My father was a tall, handsome man and leading in his clothing and his way of behaving. My mother was also tall and beautiful, but she remained an old-fashioned Jewess. The two did not fit together anymore, and what my father could not get at home, he looked for on his travels. Coldness settled over the marital life and would remain until their death.

¹¹ Leo[Lev] Kraemer, died in Izmir (Smyrna) around 1907

¹² Galati, Romania

In the meantime I was growing up. Then my father said: „What was done to me shall not happen to my children. They are growing up in the wilderness“ – as he called our town. There were no schools and I received lessons in Hebrew from the local rabbi. So my father brought me to Tultscha, to a protestant school, organised a good Jewish family for me to live with and paid a fair amount of money for me. I learnt a lot about the bible in one year, for this was the main subject of the school. Because one did not hear many good things about this school, and I was a very lively child, my mother saw to it that my father brought me home again after a short time. From then on I only received private tuition; a young teacher - 18 years of age - was brought into our house specially for me, and my sister, who was three years younger, also attended the lessons. Unfortunately, the young man from Lemberg was not a great sage. He stayed with us for three years and only taught us German for beginners.

Soon, the town became too small for my father, he could not expand his business further. Because he felt the inner strength to work more than before, he left for C o n s t a n z a¹³, so as not to rot in Babada.

Constanza belonged to the Turks at that point, nowadays it is Romanian. Compared with Babada it was „P A R I S“. The Black Sea, Railways constructed by the English, a large English colony, and many more attractions allowed for more opportunities to arise. There, my father settled and opened a new business for colonial goods. A year later, he opened an elegant Concert-Café, which was the largest and most beautiful of the square. All English families flocked into it, my father became the most influential salesman and also played an important role in the town's social life. All larger balls of the season were initiated by him. The name KRAEMER was soon known all over town, the government chose my father as a representative member and he became so popular so as to be able to even free a man from the gallows.

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My mother had stayed with us in Babada to liquidate our shop. Finally, father arrived, quickly settled all transactions and took us with to Constanza.

We had the nicest apartment in town, with an elegant *interieur*, but there was no suitable school for us, because the only educational institution of the

¹³ Constanta, Romania, 44° 11' N, 28° 39' E

English, which had been established in their quarter, was too far away. And also my mother did not even think about having me educated further. "By the age of fifteen a girl learns to cook, sew, knit and lead a household..." she always said when I insisted on going to school. – Also the relationship between my parents did not improve; my father became increasingly worldly and my mother started to lag behind ever more...

Unfortunately, life consists of two parts; one of day and one of night. When daytime is barely over, the dark nighttime appears, often without stars, let alone the moon.

Such a sinister period came over Constanza. Our town lived from the many villages, which were inhabited by Tatars, Turks and Romanians. These came into our town center to buy and sell goods. The large import also attracted many foreigners. My father continuously expanded his company and integrated, among other things, a department with porcellan goods and dishes. However, the harvest had not been good, already two years before my father had come to Constanza. Everyone was hoping that this would soon change and make business turn for the better.

But it happened differently. The drought lasted for seven years, just as it had Egypt. Farmers were brought into town, who had been living off grass and leaves for fourteen days. They were laid in front of the parliament building, the so-called "Konak", and were fed coffee by the teaspoon, to save them from starvation. It is easy to imagine how the company worked under such circumstances. The porcellan department was locked in the evening without one Para¹⁴ having been earned! The times were so hard that it even was impossible to sell real jewellery.

In the meantime, I had grown to be sixteen years of age¹⁵, I was a pretty girl and for those times was also considered well educated. From everywhere young suitors came to present themselves,

¹⁴ At the time of the Ottoman empire the currency used was the so-called *Akçe*, which later was replaced by the *Kuruş*. The smaller entity was the *Para*, which was the equivalent to a Fortieth of a *Kuruş*.

¹⁵ 1871

but my father declared that I was still too young and that I still had time. I was the favourite child of my parents – they were hoping for better times, also for me.

It was then that my father fell ill: we all lost our head, mother was despaired. The German consul, who also was a medical doctor without having his own practice and with whom we were close friends, came to our house twice a week without asking for money. One day I heard my mother saying to my father: “Our daughter is seventeen. What have we to give as a dowry? Since you have become ill, we have lost all our fortune ... I have already sold my pearls ... and our second daughter is growing up fast, as well.” Shortly after this, my father’s suffering increased. He complained that he was to die soon, that distress and worries were weighing hard on him. He had lost all from what he had built up for days and years with enormous effort.

It was during this time that a matchmaker came round and recommended a man to my father, whom I eventually also would marry. That is, whom I was married to, for not only was I very naïve and an obedient daughter; the general atmosphere of that time was so depressing that I would even have said yes to marrying a man without a nose!

The situation as it was in Constanza did not allow us to plan a wedding fit for our standards, or better our social status. The groom therefore offered us to arrange the wedding celebrations with all its expenses in C o s p o l i (Constantinople)¹⁶. We agreed, but nevertheless gave a farewell-celebration in our town, which cost us a fortune. During this celebration an episode occurred, which I cannot forget; so I will include it in my recollections:

In our house there was, as I had already mentioned, a Casino with a small band of bohemian ladies. The guests were first served up in the apartment and then one went downstairs to dance. My father had barely invited the guests to do so, when I grabbed three of my girlfriends and stormed downstairs. My fiancé was terribly insulted by such a behavior and became very jealous - as he would remain to be for all of his life. He even began so sulk over this occurrence and

¹⁶ Now Istanbul

completely refused to appear on the downstairs floor, for the simple reason that I had not asked for his arm to go downstairs with him.

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My father turned very grim due to this kind of behavior, for he could not understand that a man, who was twenty years older and who came from a large city, could take the comportment of a young village girl so personally. But he could not let his anger be felt to his guest, and so he had me called up again and asked me in the presence of my future husband, why I had gone down independently. I barely had the time to say “Ahem, not alone, but together with my girlfriends” when my father raised his hand and gave me two slaps in the face, saying: “Please, Simon¹⁷, bring Charlotte downstairs”...

I was so dumbfounded that my tears did not begin to flow and I remained silent due to my great astonishment. My fiancé said to me: “I am sorry, that your father has beaten you, but he is right to have done so. From the day that you have gotten to know me, nobody else may exist for you except for myself!” I did not answer but merely swallowed down my tears – and went dancing. I was at that time sixteen and three quarters years old.

Two days after this celebration my mother, my sister and my fiancé left our town. It was my first trip on a boat, war was raging – it was the year 1870¹⁸. The last French vessel was commanded away from the area in which we were travelling. When we arrived in Varna¹⁹, the harbor’s steersman asked the captain to remain anchored in Varna over night, for a terrible storm was predicted. “No”, said the captain, my home country is in danger. In view of this a storm has no significance! We had barely left the port, when a terrible wind started blowing, rumors were spreading that the ship would sink any minute. In the third class the storm flung children out of the hands of their mothers; they were found the next day, barely alive, on the other side of the ship.

We all suffered terribly and were constantly praying for the ship to sink. But when we eventually arrived in Cospoli, we were celebrated as persons saved from the storm and welcomed with music. Many relatives, who were unknown to me so far, came on board and led us to a very fine pension in a triumphant

¹⁷ Simon Margulies, born 1842 or 1843 in Constantinople as the son of [Baruch] Yaakov Margulies, died in 12.7.1900

¹⁸ Franco-Prussian War, 19.7.1870 - 10.5.1871

¹⁹ Varna, harbour city in Bulgaria, , 43° 13' N, 27° 55' E

procession, were we were able to gather strength again after our lucky-unlucky journey.

My father had been so worried after our departure that he needed to return and remain in bed again. However he thought it would be better to spare us with this news, for a brother of my mother, Abramowitz, was with him. The doctor was very alarmed by his state.

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Unsuspecting, we were in the midst of preparations for the wedding and the invitations for the celebration had already been sent out, when we received a telegram: "Postpone wedding, ill, can't come". It is impossible to describe the confusion and despair, which arose thereafter! Mother and I burst out in tears and were screaming that surely we were not going to let the wedding happen under these circumstances. My fiancé however firmly declared that he would not spend all this money in vain and that in the case of father's death at least another four weeks of mourning would have to follow. To cut a long story short: After much talking back and forth it was decided that the wedding would have to take place.

And it did, too.

Three days after the wedding, father arrived, half-dead, his ribs tied in bandages. When he heard that the wedding celebration was over, he collapsed. It was a harrowing scene full of sadness, which at the age of eighty-three I still see in front of me clearly.

As with all things in life, this too passed. A few days later my parents left – and I was on my own with my husband. My maidenhood was over and marital life approached me. - - -

MARITAL LIFE.-

My husband rented an apartment, furnished it and I, the seventeen year old country girl should begin life, run a household and start getting used to him, who was twenty years older than myself.

And he, who was so much older than I, lived according to entirely old-fashioned Turkish mores. I however was brought up in a modern way in my

father's house, had different, more 'liberal' views on things, was educated, well-read and, above all, was used to dealing with modern people, whom my father had frequently brought to our house and had done so with much pleasure.

When my parents had left, I was near to despairing. Without any courage remaining I constantly pondered over why my parents had left me all alone in the hand of strangers, when before they had not let me on the smallest walk without accompanying me. Then I gathered myself again and said to myself, as my dear mother had taught me: With God and good will you will succeed in everything you do.

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On Thursday my good parents departed, on Friday evening 2 large candleholders with two large candles placed in them were placed on the Sabbath table, where I prayed and cried a great deal. And it was in such a serious manner that I felt God would hear my young prayer.

When my husband returned home, he asked me: "why have you been crying? Don't you love me anymore!" Yet I could not tell him: "If ever I knew what love is!" - "When you are here, I am not bored by your presence, when you are not here, I do not anxious about you..."

Soon I became more friendly, for I was - and still am - a truly cheerful person. Very quickly I became highly popular within the circles my husband introduced me to. I was visited frequently and was often invited as well - both were very welcome to me. It was then that I suddenly felt I could be something: Not just the spoiled *shenderle*, but *M i s s e s Charlotte M a r g u l i e s*. And according to that I arranged my life.

One thing began to greatly disturb my young existence: Two months after my wedding I felt that I was becoming a mother. I experienced very bad hours, I could neither fall asleep nor socialize. Oranges were my only nourishment. I of course thought I had fallen very ill and called for a doctor. It was only after four and a half months that I began to feel better. My husband rented a larger apartment, furnished it in a splendid manner and we lived peacefully and in

great expectancy. After eleven months my first-born arrived.²⁰ It was the only man my husband was not jealous of.

For his jealousy were the dark clouds, which hovered above my head. I was neither allowed to go out of the house on my own nor to dress in a modern fashion!, according to the principal that a married woman must wear solid clothing. Luckily, my heart was not inclined to seek being in love otherwise and although all gentlemen admired and followed me around, I remained indifferent to them. But I did not renounce to laughter and dancing willingly. My husband was never at ease for this reason, even though he was very proud of me and went out with me often. When going to a ball, he would provide me with the most beautiful dress, but when I went dancing he followed me to see whether or not I was speaking with my dance partner! He kept a jealous eye on me, and when I saw or felt his look while dancing, I would shiver and did not know what face to put on.

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At two o'clock I had to leave the Ball with him, just when the most beautiful time was approaching. And back at home I had to listen to sermons . . .

It was under such permanent jealousy that I spent my life. I tried in vain to heal my husband from this malign illness. I did not go out for a full two years, only to prove to him that I could also live without the world. He was most pleased with this and told me that Turkish women also have souls and nevertheless live seclusively from men – and do not die doing so!

In the meantime, during the second year of my marriage, my second son was born in 1872.²¹ Upon this, a sister of my husband, who was living in the same house, confronted my husband and asked him, how long the barbarian treatment of the young woman would still be lasting, whether she would have to fall seriously ill in order not to live locked away. But only when I gave birth to a daughter in 1874²², my husband thought about it and gave me back my freedom. I was living among other people again, but always guarded by him. - -

²⁰ Isidore Margulies, born in Constantinople 1871

²¹ Josef ("Pepi") Margulies, born in Constantinople

²² Fanny Margulies

During the Russo-Turkish war²³ my husband was a supplier in the Russian army. He went to San Stefano²⁴, and then from there to Sofia. He remained there until the Russians had withdrawn and the country was given back to the Bulgarians.

During wartime, Cospoli was without men, everyone swarmed to the military, so that the women needed to take care of everything themselves. The city turned into a veritable *harem*. - We had a Jewish school with teachers from Vienna. In this school, also sixty poor orphans –boys namely – were being educated and clad from tip to toe each winter. Because all men were gone and winter was beginning to announce itself, one was worried about who would be caring for the orphans this winter. So I said that among us there surely were women that could make the right decisions. But because none did so, I quickly made up my mind and invited all ladies over to my place. I have an idea how we are going to clothe the children; it shall even be better than under the men's regime!

Barely said, already done! The next morning the school's clerk (my husband was member of the school's committee) was sent around to all the ladies, telling them they should come to my place for an important meeting... And all of them came, alone out of curiosity. I asked them if it was not a shame that whilst our men earn money and are busy,

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shouldn't we women not also be capable of collecting money? Especially during a time when there were many strangers and lots of money in town? – I asked the ladies to join me, a different lady each day, to collect money until the sum to provide all the children with what they needed would be collected.

My plan was accepted and thereafter it was decided, which of the ladies were to accompany me. And so, the next day the first of the ladies did appear and we set out as planned for 3-4 hours. . . and received a lot of money. This continued this way every day, until I had the sum of money to clothe the orphans from tip to toe. Shoes, stockings and small shirts were organized additionally, one lady donated two pairs of socks, another had to sew small shirts, a third

²³ 1877-1878

²⁴ Treaty of San Stefano: March 3, 1878

contributed handkerchiefs, so that each child received two pairs of each item, which was necessary during winter. The men had never given these additional items.

In the meantime I had given birth to my third son²⁵, and my husband was earning large sums of money. After having clad the orphans I received an invitation from the head master of the school, and so did the ladies that had worked together with me: We were to show up at temple on Saturday. Not knowing what this all meant, we went there. I was moved to tears, when I saw the children standing in one row and they began to sing a prayer and blessing for me, whom they were looking up to. Today, as I am writing this down, I am 83 years of age, but this impression of the children's prayer is so vivid that even today I still see and hear it in front of me, even if nowadays I neither hear nor see well. Oh well, my dears, it is only once that one is young and stupid, then one becomes old and wise – but by then it's already too late! Tempi passati ...

During this period I was honoured yet a second time:

The women of Cospoli had suggested that each of us should receive a tin can, into which donations should be put and emptied once every month. Many members were asked to join, old and young ones alike, and so was I. Then the ladies asked the gentlemen to elect two ladies, who would form the committee: A president – who at the same time was to be the secretary – and a cashier. This occurred precisely at the time when I was in child-bed with my second daughter²⁶, it was a Saturday. My husband was in temple to give the child its name, as it was common during those days. Furthermore, the congregation was invited, they were served pastries and liquor, while the mother lay in bed with the newborn child. Then all men entered, wished the child 'mazeltov', and

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congratulated me at the same time for having been elected cashier of the tin can association. They had elected me, the youngest and the one most foreign to the city! The old ladies were deadly insulted that I had been chosen, without even the idea having come from myself. Old Misses Braunstein even wanted to

²⁵ Anselm/Angelo Margulies, born 1875 in Constantinople

²⁶ Sarina Margulies, born 1877 in Constantinople

resign from the association, but eventually calmed down and stayed on. Little did she know at that point that my oldest son²⁷ would later marry her grandchild. Another story was to happen between the two of us, which I will tell at a different point.

So this was my first, courageous good deed in a wider sense.

I have raised my children lovingly and strictly at the same time; I do not need to be ashamed of them today. Other than that, life together with my jealous husband continued in the same manner. Night after night I shed tears and complained, and my husband could only repeatedly state that I did not love him anymore.

The youngest child's²⁸ health often failed and this weighed particularly hard on me as I was expecting anew. I was suffering to such an extent, that the doctors advised me to remain in bed. I sat in bed, six months pregnant, held my ill child on my lap and cooled its heavily inflamed eyes. After two months I gave birth to twins, two boys, who said *adieu* to the nasty world, because they were not ready for it yet.

After I had recovered somewhat and my youngest child began to feel better, we began to think about emigrating to Sofia, for my husband predicted a great future for Bulgaria and wished to go there. So he rented the nicest shop that was to be found in Sofia and informed me about his decision. For he wanted to introduce ready-to-wear clothing in Bulgaria and travelled to Vienna to purchase the goods. I in the meantime was to liquidate everything in Cospoli.

The business went well right from the beginning, two branches were opened in succession. It was then that the old Mr. Braunstein²⁹, whose wife had been so insulted about me having been elected cashier, also came to Sofia. Mr. Braunstein ran a tailor's workshop and sold cloth for gentlemen's clothing. We agreed to move into apartments in the same street. The streets of Sofia were at that time so narrow that it was possible to comfortably lead a conversation through the window with the person living across the street.

²⁷ Isidore Margulies married Maria Braunstein, daughter of Adolf and Anna Braunstein

²⁸ Sarina Margulies, born 1877

²⁹ one generation before Adolf and Anna Braunstein

And now I wish to tell more about my dear parents again:

When they returned back home after my wedding, a slight improvement in the small town, which had been in dire straits, was noticeable; the earth began to provide its treasures again, but it was hard to catch up with the seven difficult years. My father fought for a living for some more time, but business did not want to seem to pick up. He also was not a human being, who could wait until something fell from the skies, for his motto had proven to be right every so often: Help yourself, for then God will help you, too.

Upon that it was quickly decided that the parents would also settle in Cospoli. Also for my sister, who was approaching the age to become married, this move was favourable. And my brother was sent to real schools. It was a good solution for everyone; we rented a large apartment, which was being financed mainly by my parents, and shared the dining room together. We lived together peacefully and happily. My mother dedicated much of her time to my children, so that my oldest son was calling her “Mama”.

My father only stayed with us for three weeks, then he travelled to S a l o n i k i and opened a large shop with colonial goods. Very soon, everything was going splendidly again, the name Kraemer became known and popular wide and far. Saloniki was a city, in which Turks and Sephardic Jews lived, my father was the only German Jew there.

Then came the time that my sister should be married, but even though many matches were available, there always was something to criticize. There is no possibility to fight against destiny.

Our uncle Abramovitz was living in G a l a t z³⁰ at the time. There he was befriended with a young man named SCHAPIRA. When this young man found employment in Cospoli and was preparing to travel there, my uncle jokingly gave him orders to visit his sister (our mother) and to send his regards, “for”, he added laughing, “she has a pretty daughter”. How right he was! One day, the young man shows up at our house, sends the greetings and – develops feelings for the daughter. Then he did not show up anymore for a long time. But when he did again, he immediately signalled that he had developed a deep affection towards my sister. We therefore wrote to Papa asking for him to come and

³⁰ Galati, compare footnote 12

deal with the situation himself, for a good match had shown up for his daughter.

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After a few days my father arrived and became fond of the young man. He suggested he give up his employment for the railway and that he move to Saloniki with him, where he would be able to pay him double the salary with an apartment and food in addition to that. Both were very pleased, especially father, who was in need of a human being over there.

The next morning my mother said to my sister: "Your father has betrothed you".

"To whom", she exclaimed, for she was in love with Mr. Schapira. When mother mentioned his name, she fell ill with joy, but recovered again after a few days. Then the engagement was celebrated and the next day father and the young bridegroom departed. In the meantime we got to work with the completion of the dowry, while my father was preparing everything for the reception in Saloniki. After six months everything was ready and we all travelled there, overjoyed.

However, it took another four weeks until all preparations had finally been made. For we had to comply with the country's customs, as we were the only German Jews among the Sephardic Jews. It was terrible!

So it happened that the bride had to be led into the Turkish bath; songs were sung for her, dances were performed around her and when everyone eventually became tired, one took a seat at a nicely prepared table, heavily laden with exquisite dishes, beverages and fruits. During the meal, more dancing was done and silly jokes were made of the bride. After the meal, one returned to the Turkish bath, the dancing and drumming resumed with all it's might, and finally the bride was led into the 'mikve'. After having spent hours in the bath, we returned home, completely exhausted.

On the following day, it was the bridegroom's turn to be led into the bath by the gentlemen. What happened there I do not know; I only remember that my father was loudly criticized the boring ceremonies. The next day, the wedding ceremony was held. It was a nice wedding, which people of the best circles came to. My father, who was in a lively mood, shouldered a bass drum and

danced through the wedding hall, exclaiming: “now I am dancing at your wedding” ...

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The worst thing of the whole wedding were the ceremonies. On the day of the wedding the holy cloth, which hangs over the Torah, was brought, fastened to the wall and the young couple was seated in front of it. The rabbi and all the wedding guests gathered around them and thus the couple was married to one another.

But on the next day the newly wed couple had to place themselves in front of the curtain again und stay seated this way for the entire day. This continued for e i g h t whole days, whilst visitors were permanently coming in and being received. The young couple took great umbrage at this custom, and we were all entirely on their side; father watched the comedy last for four days, then he lost his patience. He said that urgent business was necessitating the young groom to depart and so it was that the ceremony took a brusque ending. Of course, the Sephardic Jews were deeply insulted.

After about three months my sister felt that she was becoming a mother and immediately said that she would not want to give birth without me being present. For between us a deep affection and close friendship existed. As the eighth month was coming to a close, she cried ever more bitterly, yearning to be close to me. So it was decided that she was to be sent to Cospoli to be with us. A friend of my father, who had the same travel route from Saloniki, should attend to my sister and bring her to our house.

Barely had my sister embarked and the ship had begun to take its course, when she began to experience pain in her lower back. She thought she had made too much of a physical effort and soon calmed down. But as the pain grew ever worse and temperatures started to rise in the cabin, she went on deck and in her despair began to cry. With her seventeen years³¹ of age she was very young and inexperienced. After a while her chaperon appeared on deck and asked why she was crying. She said to him that she must probably have caught a cold, as she was experiencing severe pain every quarter of an hour. “No”, the old gentleman said, “you are in labour, my child. And above all, come back to your cabin and lie down.”

³¹ 1874 or 1875

Then he went to the captain and reported the occurrence. The captain was outside himself upon receiving this news. "What should I do", he repeatedly exclaimed, "my ship's doctor knows very well how to give a sailor a laxative when he has overeaten himself, but not how to supervise a delivery!"

To cut a long story short, the doctor eventually did dare to see my sister and brought her an irrigator. "Make yourself an enema, I cannot stay in the cabin".

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Luckily, the doctor's wife was also travelling with him; during their seven years of marriage, this was the first time. And as it is easy to imagine how my sister was feeling, the doctor's wife often came to her cabin to look after her. Also, by a lucky coincidence, a doctor, who was a friend of our family and was moving to Cospoli, was among the passengers. When he was informed about the case by the ship's doctor, the latter telling him that law forbade taking pregnant women aboard, the doctor calmed his colleague and promised to help him. In addition to all this he also had all the medical instruments along, as he was relocating.

At eleven at night the doctor came to my sister's cabin. Barely had she seen him, when she exclaimed: "God has sent you in my plight". He examined her and said that there still was time left and that he would help her to deliver. Then he had a chair and two large stones brought into the cabin, making a reclining chair out of them by placing the large stones under the front feet of the chair. This was how my sister lay there and the doctor said to her: "Now you can scream as much as you want to. I need to leave you now, because it is far too hot in the cabin and I will need my strength for later. If it gives you relief, feel free to scream as you wish".

The night passed and the doctor came to see my sister often in the cabin. Up on deck there were many passengers, among them a clergyman. Then, early in the morning, the priest went to the captain to ask who was lamenting below deck. When he heard what was happening, he did not allow the people in the IIIrd class to have breakfast, only the children should be given something. Everyone should pray kneeling down until the delivery had happened. Also the captain ordered that the tables were not to be set; it would only be allowed to eat after the accouchement. The ship remained silent in apprehension.

At eleven in the morning the doctor came to the cabin, placed the woman on the chair that had been prepared and told her that he would stay with her now. At half past twelve the boy was delivered.³² A hearty hurray sounded from the decks and all the way down to the tables. The captain let champagne flow and everyone was merry.

The next day at nine o'clock in the morning the ship entered the harbour of Cospoli and one can probably imagine my excitement. How was the weak mother, who had just delivered,

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to be brought on land, taking into account that she had suffered a heavy blood loss! Eventually, my husband rented a "Mahune", we placed a bed on top of it and the sailors brought my sister down the ship's stairs as carefully as they could, with her sitting on the chair.

The new mother in bed, the newborn baby next to her – this is how in an awkward procession through the streets, we arrived home. I was crying incessantly.

But only after a few days were we able to give a sigh of relief, when everything began to really take its normal course. The circumcision could be held on the eighth day and one can imagine how we were being stormed with telegrams from the husband and parents. Everything turned out so fortunately, that my sister was able to return home with her small sea-born citizen after five weeks.

Barely had my sister departed, when I was overcome with worries and fretful days. My son Pepi developed a serious illness of the throat – it was Crup – and upon orders of the doctor all the other children had to leave the house, as the illness was very contagious. Thus I was left alone with my fatally ill child, whose condition was worsening. On the third day a *consilium* was called in and medicaments were prescribed. But I realised that my small one was approaching his end two hours later. In my despair I reached for the encyclopaedia and lo and behold: Precisely the state, which my child was in, was mentioned; the illness could only be healed by an operation, no other possibilities existed. I threw on a jacket, took the book along and told my

³² Gustav Schapira, born in 1874 or 1875

husband to accompany me to Dr. Milch, who at the time was probably the best doctor.

In the meantime it was 10 o'clock in the evening, we went there on foot, for Dr. Milch was living on a hillside, which could only be reached by climbing it. We rang the doorbell several times in vain, but I rang the bell for so long until a servant finally opened the door. Very grumpily, he asked what we wanted, for the doctor did not see patients at night.

- But I urgently need to have a word with him!

- Impossible, came the reply.

- Fine, I said, then I will stay here for as long as he will see me nevertheless!

Finally, as the noise did not want to recede, Dr. Milch came down the stairs all the same and angrily yelled at me:

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- Why are you disturbing me at this impossible time of the day? It was only just this afternoon that I had been at the *consilium*! Do you think that I hold souls in my pocket?

- Doctor, I said, you have to listen to me!

- Go ahead then, what do you wish?

- You have to operate on my child, doctor!

- Which old hag gave you that advice?

- This old hag here – and I took out the book from under the coat. – This old “hag” says: Without an operation no upturn!!!...

- My god, he yelled, now very angrily, there is no way of getting rid of you. - Hm! are you very rich, coming to think of it?

- Why such a question, doctor, what doesn't one do to save one's child.

- Alright! For you need to know that after the operation two doctors need to be near the child, one during the day, the other during the night. A machine will

be inserted into the child, which needs to be cleaned and re-inserted every two hours. And all this you need to pay.

Upon this I was speechless and dumbfounded for minutes on end. Then I gathered myself and said with insistence:

- I know how to solve this, doctor. I am going to the German hospital with my child, there I will find everything I need, also the necessary nursing . . and do not need to be very rich at that! And also there shall you hold my child's soul not in the pocket, but in your diligent hands.

- For god's sake! as I cannot seem to get rid of you easily, go see Dr. Morotmann this very evening and have a room reserved under my name for a Crup-operation at nine o'clock in the morning. And make sure to appear on time, too.-

I took care of everything that night and returned home satisfied. But it turned out to be a terrifying night! We took turns sitting near the small one and feared that he would breathe his last any minute. But God remained merciful!

Early, at seven in the morning, my husband brought a sedan chair, seated me on it, placed the very ill child on my knees, and a small bottle of Cognac in one hand and

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a small spoon in the other. Whenever I saw that the child was suffocating, I gave it cognac.

After a painstaking hour we arrived at the hospital. Luckily, the doctors were already there, for there was not a second to loose! The child was brought into the operating room and I was led downstairs. It was as if I was sitting on stinging needles. After an hour, which did not seem to want to end, I was led upstairs. And there, on its back, lay the small one a machine in his throat and two tears on the cheeks. It was unable to speak.

For fifteen days and nights I stayed with my child in the hospital, even though it was run wonderfully. The nurses were all very kind to me and took

advantage of every free moment to lead conversations with me. Mostly – concerning questions about religion.

On the tenth day the machine was taken out, in order to judge if everything had healed. Unfortunately this was not the case. On the thirteenth day this was done anew, but only after another 3 days the child was declared cured. Dr. Milch invited a large number of doctors; also the newspapers reported this case, as it was unique at that time. On the eighteenth day the hospital allowed the child and myself to return home.

- You see, doctor, that you actually do have souls in your pocket, I said to Dr. Milch when saying goodbye.

Our house was disinfected, so that the other children could come home. Thank God, they were spared from this terrible illness.

A few days later, the six year-old child of our Maltese landlord fell ill. Commonly, these people are known to be extraordinarily pious. So he applied many household remedies, placed saints' images on the child and repeatedly said: "I would rather cut off my nose than to have my child undergo an operation."

On the fourth day after that, the child died. And so it was that the Maltese kept his nose, but not the life of his boy.

An enormous number of children died from this illness. Only a family Ungar, which we were friends with, said when their only small son fell ill as well: "we will take Mrs. Margulies' as an example". And lo and behold, also this child was saved from certain death. Our two young ones stayed friends until they were grown up and were both working in Smyrna.

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But now I briefly need to return to telling about the destiny of my parents:

Business in Saloniki was going brilliantly as always. It is only that dear God should have created the world without jealousy and envy; many a thing would have turned out better and nicer...

The rich Sephardic Jews joined forces in trade rivalry and with a large amount of capital opened a big company with colonial goods. Prices were cut and many customers left. But this did not seem to suffice. A large warehouse belonging to my father was set afire – competition was suspected behind this act. Eventually, precisely this building proved not to have been insured, which was astonishing for a salesman like my father. What was not burnt in this unlucky incident was then stolen.

My father could not bare this blow. Payments were stopped, an insolvency proceeding ensued, which was not favourable for my father. Thereafter, mother said:

- I will take the boy – my brother had just ended the French school – and bring him to my brother in Bottischani. What is he to do among these hostile salesmen! At least, my brother will not rebuff me as he had done with you, and then I will at least have the certainty that my boy will be educated to become a good salesman. I will accompany him and also stay there, for I can no longer bare the coldness of this life at your side. You will surely manage to overcome this critical period...

Barely said – already done! My mother equips herself and her son elegantly and travels to Romania. They are warmly welcomed by the uncle, and he thinks that if my brother proves his worth, he could embark on a career in his company. But the decision – and a very favourable one at that – was taken only after a month of probation. Thereupon my mother said: “I will stay, too, because I can no longer stand life next to my husband”. And so she did.-

In the meantime my father liquidated everything in Saloniki and travelled to Smyrna. My sister with her husband and child join us in Bulgaria, worked for two years in our company and then opened up her own business.

In Smyrna things should begin on a small scale again, but my father’s efficiency helped him to climb the ladder all the way to the top within a very short time. A large hotel³³,

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³³ Hotel Kraemer Palace

with elegant halls, tea-rooms, a *brasserie* and so forth, emerged. Movie theatres were later added, a rink for roller-skating with an open-air theatre adjacent and several other things.

My father then insisted that mother return to him. But in the meantime the situation in Bottischani had also changed, for my uncle's business was in decline. Also, the following tragedy occurred, and I will also recall it at this point:

My uncle from Bottischani had two daughters, which he would like to have seen betrothed. He and his wife had set their minds on the older one marrying a nephew and my brother the younger one. But the human being thinks and God steers. The older daughter developed a strong inclination towards my brother, which he fully reciprocated.

When uncle became aware of it, they took my brother to task and upon that he had to leave Bottischani. My uncle's wish was fulfilled: He married his oldest daughter according as he had intended to and never regretted it.

My brother was given work in a porcelain factory in S t e i n s c h ö n a u³⁴, and within a short time climbed the ladder up to well paid positions. He travelled to Russia and was immensely successful. As his father, he was an excellent salesman. However his lot was only partially a lucky one, for a human being can never live contentedly, the evil follows on his heels. But I will tell more about this later.

So Father wrote in vain that his wife should join him. It had been agreed that the boy should stay in Steinschönau, for Father did not want that his children to come to Turkey. But when her boy had to leave Bottischani, Mother preferred to join us sisters in Sofia. Father sent her everything she needed until the very end, but never again was there a reunion. My mother lived in the house of her younger daughter, who already had three children³⁵. I had five in the meantime.- -

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³⁴ <http://www.luzicke-hory.cz/mista/index.php?pg=obksend>

³⁵ Gustav Schapira, Rachelle (later married Mayer) and Eleonore (later married Jokl)

After all these necessary deviations I now return to the time where we had to decide on trading Turkey for the new Bulgaria.

Shortly before our departure I was standing at the window and observed a beggar, who was knocking at the door of an immensely rich Armenian living on the other side of our street. He was an old, fat cheapskate by name of Aldwardonian and was living all alone in the beautiful, large house, with only a lady-cousin.

It was by chance that he himself opened the door. Barely had he seen the beggar, when he wanted to slam the door, even though the beggar was holding onto it with his fingers. By slamming the door, the poor devil's fingers were squeezed until they bled, and the old man angrily opened the door again and threw the poor chap onto the street, where he lay, fainted and covered in blood.

I quickly ran down, took along my medicine cabinet and a maid, sat the beggar up, took him on my lap, poured a glass of Cognac into his mouth, washed the terrible wound with iodine and bandaged it. The poor lad began to wail terribly, when luckily a gentleman, a Greek, came by and stared at the strange site we were. I hastily told him what had happened and asked him if he might drive the poor fellow to the next apothecary with a wagon, as there always was a doctor there. Before leaving with the beggar, he rapped at the windows of the nice house and scolded tremendously, so that the old man, who was surely standing behind one of the windows, was bound to hear it.

Yes, in this beautiful city there also was much misery and many a curious thing occurred. One day, just when I was about to get out of the house to do some errands, I see how a woman with a parcel is slowly crossing the street. Suddenly she puts the parcel down on the ground and begins to scream. I quickly run up to her and ask what is the matter. She could hardly answer - it was a very pregnant woman - when the child precipitated into her pants. I remained quick-witted enough to lay the woman down onto the ground and hold the child back in her body, for I feared that the umbilical cord would tear. Then my maid and I brought her to a wagon and back to her home. –

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The day of our departure was coming closer and closer and my heart grew ever heavier. For only now did I really become aware of how much Cospoli

with all its attractions and beautiful aspects, the splendid surrounding area, the marvellous Bosphorus, the merry hustle and bustle, the interesting oriental scenery, the picturesque costumes and last but not least the circle of people we moved in had meant to me. Many a thing one was closely attached to would be replaced by something entirely unknown. Who knows where one would be drifting to!!! During the liquidation of all the things I had to cry bitterly.

And on a Sunday our departure took place, with a heavy heart and yet merrily and lively on the outside.

T h e N e w H o m e B U L G A R I A

I arrived in Sofia, which nowadays is so beautiful. But how unpleasantly surprised was I, when I saw it then! Narrow, dirty streets, small houses, built densely next to each other, their roofs covered with shingles.

The inhabitants, Turks and Spanish-speaking Hebrews, wore broad, overhanging trousers, over them a 'Chalat', something resembling a sleeping gown. The ends of this gown, which was worn in an open manner, were stuffed in the pockets, so that the broad trousers could not be seen. The Turkish ladies also showed themselves in trousers and were entirely veiled, a custom that still remained for a long time.

In the city there were few Bulgarians. But soon they flocked in from all corners and ends of the world³⁶. These were the well-clad men and women, which brought culture into the country. They were extraordinarily industrious and active and immediately began cleaning the town and fixing the houses. For it was not allowed to build something new, as Engineers from abroad were expected, which were supposed to build our city according to a new plan.

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When Prince BATTENBERG³⁷ was expected, beautiful gardens and a new Konak³⁸ were designed. These innovations we appreciated as truly good fortune.

³⁶ Founding of the principality of Bulgaria after the Berlin Congress held on July 13, 1878

³⁷ Alexander Joseph von Battenberg (1857 -1893) was unanimously proclaimed Prince by the Bulgarian National Assembly on April 29, 1879

Also here we had one of the nicest apartments and a big store. When business began to flourish, we also began to slowly settle. My small girls attended the French school run by nuns³⁹, the boys were with the friars. There also were Bulgarian schools.

Every day more strangers began to flock into Sofia, and the city became more and more beautiful. A gymnasium was built and soon we had a colony of strangers of respectable size, which mainly consisted of European doctors and engineers. Within this society I was always at the forefront of all happenings. My husband soon expanded his business, two further branches were opened up, for ladies', children's and men's confection.

During this time the Russian plague had come over the Jews⁴⁰ and many thousands emigrated and spread over the entire world. Also to Sofia did such impoverished and destitute persons come. Yet, as in this city there only lived but few and better Ashkenazi Jews - as is known, all the others were Spanish-speaking Hebrews – the [support] was only very meagre. The numerous Spanish-speaking Hebrews openly declared that they were not willing to help and whenever such a poor Jew died, they refused to bury him, “because he was not a real Jew anyhow”. Except of course if they received large sums for a pious service, which is normally to be taken for granted. How I dealt with this, I will also have to tell about.

Because I very often took care of these unhappy persons, I was given the name “mother of the poor Jews” and they always came to me with their sufferings. One morning – we were just sitting at our breakfast, a certain Sternberg storms into the room, asks for forgiveness and tells us the following:

In a large 'Chan', a hostel or also courtyard, surrounded by small and halfway ruinous houses, Turkish gypsies had nested in. A Bulgarian had bought the property and was renting these rat-holes at a high price to the Jews, who had emigrated. Into such a housing a young married couple had settled. The man tried to make a living for his wife and himself by playing the trumpet. However, he fell ill and had to go to hospital. Neighbours, who took pity, took turns in sending small things to eat to his wife, who was very pregnant.

³⁸ Residence

³⁹ Presumably the school of the Soeurs de Notre Dame de Sion - OM

⁴⁰ Charlotte refers to the Anti-Jewish Pogroms in Russia in the period from 1881-1884.

When the day came where the rent was due, the poor woman didn't have half a Para. In a quick decision, the amiable owner of the property took the woman and the belongings and threw them out onto the courtyard, locking the door behind. The poor woman sat on the cold stones from 5 in the afternoon until 9 o'clock in the evening and cried pitiably. None of the people living there were thoughtful enough to take care of her. Suddenly the woman went into labour, she dragged herself to one of the many doors and collapsed into front of it with a bloodcurdling cry. Hearing her moaning, the Jewish peddlers living there opened the door and noticed with horror what was happening. They laid the woman on their only bed, the man went to search a midwife and at 2 o'clock at night a smart boy caught a first glimpse of the world's very dismal light.

Upon receiving this news I sprang up and exclaimed: „God, I swear to you, as long as I live and wherever I may be, never again shall a woman experience the same thing. I shall see to it.”.-

-“Go to the Bulgarian, here, take money, I said to the man, pay the rent, I will take care of everything else immediately”.

In the afternoon the woman who had just given birth was transported to her apartment and a lady was hired to stay with the weak mother for fifteen days. I took a bed from my home, a table from an acquaintance, others had to give me two armchairs, and by doing so I was actually able to furnish the poor woman's living space. Then I packed a basket with all groceries such as bread, butter, coffee, tea etc. and had all the people I knew promise me that they would take turns sending hot soup and meat and whatever else their good hearts wished to give. I personally supervised the move of the woman who had given birth and paid the midwife for two weeks in advance, so that she would take good care of the ill woman. My husband and I took on the task of arranging the ceremony of circumcision after eight days had passed: We had become godparents.

A month after this occurrence I began to realise that with this kind of charitable work the tears of the poor could not be dried. Day and night I was entertaining the thought of the necessity founding an association. The sources could surely be found for it!

So I invited the ladies of the best circles of society for tea as I habitually would have done...and all fourteen of them came, believing that it would be a nice

conversation as usual. When all were present, I raised the matter without further ado, told them about my plan and very

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emotionally described this woman's misery, who had had to give birth in the courtyard with no support at all. "You all know what becoming a mother means, I exclaimed; I appeal to listen to your heart and suggest we establish a women's association!"

Once the first astonishment in view of such a daring suggestion had passed, all ladies were enthusiastic about it and agreed. It was decided that a membership fee between 10 and 20 Francs would be raised, as well as a fixed monthly contribution of 5 to 10 Francs. Neither Propaganda nor great effort should be shied away from in order to help the poorest of the poor. The Austrian vice-consul, Mister Hamburg, who came to fetch one of the ladies, was immediately nailed down to write everything into a book for protocols.

My suggestion to help the people not only with food but also with things to help them build a life for themselves was enthusiastically accepted. Each and every person should be given a job according to their knowledge and skills. For myself, I began with my woman who had just given birth. I paid her a visit and asked, what she could do in order to make living. "I have not learnt a profession", was her answer, "but I can wash clothes and iron well". The next day I provided her with a trough for washing clothes in, 10 kilos of soap, soda and a wagonload of wood, gave her small change and brought her many customers within a short time. "There we are", I thought to myself, "now she can live".

Barely had the refugees heard of our newly founded association for supporting them, when they flocked together in hoards and asked for help. I suddenly realised that our means were much too little to face all of this misery and arranged another meeting of the committee.

I had been elected as president, Misses Gatser as vice president, Misses Horn as cashier and Miss Braunstein as secretary. Once all had gathered together again, I said that our earnings would never be enough to give immediate

support to all persons, and that it was a shame to people have to go begging. Thereupon I suggested organising a charity ball.

Now this was beyond all limits! And not only were the ladies astonished but also frightened. "Courage, ladies!" I exclaimed, "I will be glad to take the entire responsibility for the success of this event". Advertisement would be done on a daily basis, and every time a different lady would be accompanying me. Eventually, they all gave their consent.

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Immediately the day after, I inquired which steps were to be taken in order to get permission for our ball. The government did in fact give me approval and I immediately rented the most beautiful hall in Sofia, the "Panach-Halls" and furthermore hired the Bohemian "Hachaloff-Orchestra".-

Once the matter had progressed as far as this, another meeting of our committee was held over at my place, to which I also invited all the other ladies of the high society. Everything was talked about in detail and I asked for the ladies and their daughters to appear in dresses strictly designed for a ball and also to perfect their dancing skills at the Viennese Dance School Franz, in order to avoid any disgrace at our first celebratory event. My ball should turn out to be quite nice and set standards for those to follow...

In the meantime, many Bulgarian families had moved to Sofia, I had invited them and always received an acceptance. In a second meeting of the committee the sale of the invitation cards was decided, and shortly after I took to it with tenacity and willpower.

Neither did I know any women who came from Bulgaria, nor had I learnt to speak Bulgarian perfectly in the short time. I hired a coach, had a coachman drive me the most respected families, took along an employee who had to sit on the coach-box with the business cards in his pockets and the woman whose turn it was to accompany me, carrying the great wish in my heart that my name may bring me luck.

Off we went and, thank God, my name brought me luck and provided me with full pockets. All of it was in gold, for at that time paper money was unknown. We had barely ended paying visits to the families, when I already directed my coach to the authorities. In the departments we were received with great

amazement but also unconcealed joy, for something like this was entirely new for Bulgaria.

This carried on for four weeks. In the evenings I came home, entirely worked out and completely exhausted; but I had reached my goals and this helped overcome all fatigue. And the main event was still to come!

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I went to the Palace of Prince Battenberg to invite him in person. We were politely received and the prince even gave a nice little donation for our till, how much it was I do not know anymore, for today I am 83 years old and at that time I had barely reached 30!

Then came the day of the ball, which we had so much longed for but were also dreading. The ladies of the committee were decorated with cockade, two at the entrance where the guests were going to be received, two others at the cash desk, a table only a silver tablet and two silver candleholders had been placed upon. The ladies of the committee were in the hall by 9 o'clock already, both the orchestra leader and the guests were being expected.

When my husband and I were driving to the Panach-Halls, I was quivering all over with excitement. What was to be done if the Bulgarians did not appear? Will the ball be crowned by success or ... My husband permanently needed to reassure me, and even so I entered the hall with a feverish shiver. Finally, at ten o'clock God had mercy on us: The first Bulgarians appeared, then many officials and many Jews, all of them curious how the ball would eventually turn out to be, the first ball in Bulgaria and a Jewish one at that!

Prince Battenberg sent another nice sum of money and the evening was wonderfully amusing and exquisite. Without one break I had to dance with all the gentlemen I had invited personally, and there weren't few of them! My mother told me later that a polish nobleman, a piano teacher, had expressed his admiration for me: "Your daughter has manners like a princess. How she manages to treat everyone according to their social standing! I can only congratulate you for her."

After the ball finally ended - it had been a success in every respect - I was no longer quivering and drove home, filled with pride and joy. Already on the following day a meeting of the committee was held, the account was done and I

suggested that at least a quarter of the earnings should be invested into securities, so the association would be in possession of a fund; another part should be donated to schools or hospitals. With this idea I encountered strong resistance, but I didn't let loose and remained steadfast, explaining that to a large extent our success was made possible by the Bulgarians; also, it could be beneficial for future events. How right I was only became clear to everyone when in the newspapers the Bulgarians thanked for the donations in the friendliest way.

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Less than four weeks after the ball almost all the officials, as well as many families of the high society came and asked me to organize another ball. I had the outrageous courage to suggest a masquerade this time, which didn't only take its course brilliantly but also brought full cashboxes.

During one of the general assemblies that followed, which all the members were asked to attend, I insisted that everyone have insight into the earnings and spending of our achievement. I fervently asked the ladies to introduce collecting tins in the better-situated families. It was in winter that a lot of 31 or 1/12 was being played, and from the winnings of this pastime a part should also be given to the poor⁴¹; "maybe", I added jokingly, "the grandmother will appear in the dream and will also toss in a penny". And on a more serious note: For sisters, never may and shall it happen again that a women has to give birth in the courtyard!"

And it was true, the tins brought a lot of money. Many families were supported, but to most of them we gave back the courage to live and the joy of creative activity. And I was so happy about this!...

In the association everything was proceeding very well, but aside of this there were several worries. Our company had to face strong competitors, for when the Viennese department stores became aware of our professional advancement they opened up branches in our city, and this made both their as well as our situation more difficult. Regardless of this we remained the leading

⁴¹ The idea behind these tins is the same as that of the KKL (Keren Kayemeth LeIsrael), which was introduced already in the 19th century, where all Jewish families had these small boxes in white and blue with the star of David on it at their houses and into which coins (or bank notes) were put for charity. [M.M., translated O.M.]

store and played the main role as it always had been. But the worry lines on my husband's forehead did not seem to want to subside.

My oldest boy⁴² was now brought to Vienna for his further schooling and was taught at one of the best schools. The second boy⁴³ and the girls⁴⁴ attended the French schools.⁴⁵ To educate five children and then also to be the president of the association – I truly had enough to keep me busy.

One day we went on an excursion with the Pesario Barbier family, with which we were friends with, and a few days later I was called to the burial of the twelve year-old girl, who had been on the excursion with us. The child had suddenly fallen ill with scarlet fever. I went there, sat in the salon, but did not see the girl's body.

The moment I get home, my small boy comes running up to me, screaming that he is hungry. The very same night he was racked with fever and scarlet fever

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entered into my house. I immediately sent my sister to the hotel with the other children, but it was too late. Each day one of the children was brought home to me with scarlet fever and soon they all were laying ill, next to each other in a row. To add to my dismay, my family doctor, Dr. Schischmanoff, was gone. We consulted an Alsatian doctor, a Dr. Roi, who, barely had he entered the room and looked at the children, prophesied that they all would die. He said that all schools were empty and that the epidemic was raging terribly.

Only two days later did my family doctor come back from his trip. He came running over to our place, stating that the help solely depended on me. "You have to paint two of your children four times a day and two every half an hour, for it is most dangerous diphtheria". In those days one did not have a lifesaving serum yet. I had to fabricate brushes made of Charpie⁴⁶, dip the brush into alcohol and with it intensely rub in the tonsils, which had turned septic.

⁴² Isidore Margulies

⁴³ Josef Margulies

⁴⁴ Fanny und Sarina Margulies

⁴⁵ In Bulgaria, both the Soeurs de Notre Dame de Sion and the Alliance Israélite Universelle ran schools, where French was the language spoken.

⁴⁶ a bandaging material commonly used until the beginning of the 20th century

How I suffered while doing so I prefer to conceal. The children did not want to open their mouth and therefore I applied force. With a spoon, I tore open the mouth and quickly the bobbin of yarn was pushed in. When the child let the teeth fall onto the bobbin, there remained just enough space that I could manage using the brush. After each painting I collapsed. But I was not only constantly crying, I was also continually fabricating brushes. The children were all lying next to each other on the table, just as if they were lying there to be sold.

Every so often the scream of a mother could be heard, whose child's life had been snuffed out. When I saw how awfully skilled the Spanish-speaking Hebrews were in nursing their children, I took numerous brushes and a bottle of alcohol and went from house to house with it. Wherever there were ill children– in I went to paint. Many a mother, who was not willing to learn how to do it and who was saying I should come by every hour, was given a slap in the face!

God was merciful and my children recovered. Only my husband, who had held the children while they were being painted, was infected with the illness. So I painted him

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just as I had done with the children before. Luckily, I myself was spared.

I will now take a small pause in telling the story of my life and will return to the destiny of my brother. I have already mentioned that he climbed the career ladder in Steinschönau swiftly and that he was immensely successful as a travelling salesman for the porcelain factory.

Then, upon returning merrily and satisfied from one of his trips, he met a pretty girl at the train station in Vienna, who was erring around looking for something and who suddenly addressed him: "Excuse me, please, where is it that one can buy a ticket for Steinschönau?" My brother said that he too was travelling there and they fell in love during this journey.

This girl was the daughter of a porcelain manufacturer, had a bad character and was as lazy as sin. Her three sisters were nice girls and came to be good landladies; only *she* made an exception and remained the sputum of humanity. So this was the woman that destiny had chosen for my good-hearted,

industrious and beautiful brother. He was the most tender and caring husband and she threw bottles at his head in gratitude. For love's sake he let himself be baptised, for the father-in-law had said that he would rather poison his daughter than give her away to a Jew.

Had he only done it! It would not have been a pity about her, especially as my pious mother suffered terribly from this marriage. Four children, three sons and a girl were the offspring of this union.

Out of sorrow my poor mother fell ill so severely that she could not be saved anymore. Her laughing ceased, she hid her grief from us sisters and also never complained openly. We called our brother to her sickbed – he arrived with his wife. My mother was intelligent enough not to unveil her grief with even one single mien. The daughter-in-law knelt down before her and asked her for blessing. We siblings stood in tears next to what was happening, for we knew how much this was hurting mother.

At the table my brother sat next to his wife and was cutting the meat into small pieces for her, that is how lazy this bird was. I found that with this behaviour he was only supporting her laziness even more.

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As my brother had business to do in Constantinople, he asked the doctor if he could dare to leave for a few days. He wanted to be back latest after five days. The doctor's opinion was that the danger was not as imminent and thereupon my brother left, leaving his 'puppet' with us.

But God did not want the son to stand by the mother in her last hours! On the way snowdrift occurred and the train got stuck for more than five days. On the fifth day after my brother's departure, our mother's condition suddenly worsened and she exclaimed: "Poor son, all he has is being burnt and demolished!"

On the same day she died and in that very hour the factory in Steinschönau burnt down. Everything was destroyed.

I only managed to recover from this blow after months, for I adored my mother more than anything else. Everyone was despaired about the double misfortune and one can easily imagine my brother's grief! Only the puppet was waiting for breakfast to be shoved into her mouth by him as usual. Both of

them departed and we stayed behind alone, in grief over our dear mother and our living brother.

It was assumed that the brothers of the wife had set fire to the factory, in order to get rid of my brother, who had become the head of the whole enterprise. My brother's father-in-law had invested his entire fortune into securities. As they were all sitting around the table shortly afterwards, a telegram arrives stating that the securities have lost all of their value. Upon having read the telegram, the old gentleman gave a shriek and dropped dead onto the floor. The telegram had to be taken out of his hand.

After the funeral a murderous fight began over the possessions left behind. It went as far as the two brother-in-law menaced to kill my brother. This disgusted him so much that he stopped to wear down his strength there and left everything in possession of the other two, whilst he himself travelled to Smyrna to talk over with father, how he could create a new existence of his own. Father was already doing brilliantly at that time, he was the best salesman down there and a highly respected and much-liked person.-

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The saying that into every life a little rain must fall also came true in the case of my sister and especially of my brother-in-law. Business did not start up very well. Upon that they accepted an offer of uncle Abramowitz – that is the rich uncle in Bottischan – to found a company together in I z k a n i⁴⁷.

This place was situated on the border between Austria and Romania, and because there a lot of goods were traded, a toll had to be levied on all of them.

My sister managed to get settled quickly in the small town and was glad to have such a large number of Austrian people around her to keep company. The disappointment however did not wait a long time to come.

For thirty long years Romania had been bringing a lawsuit against Austria in order for the toll levying to happen in Romania. Why this was demanded, I do not remember anymore today. But eventually Izkani was in fact attributed to Romania and from then on it was out of reach for the Austrians⁴⁸.

⁴⁷ Before 1900, Itzkany 47°41'N 26°15'E, is situated in the Suczawa-District in the Bukovina, belonged to Oesterreich-Ungarn. Today it lies 2 miles north of the Romanian City Suceava.

⁴⁸ Izkani/Suceava fell to Romania in 1918.

Izkani was populated almost exclusively by Jews. It was a small place, with many warehouses, which were specially fitted out for levying tolls. All businesses and everything else, which was a part of daily life could be obtained in the town, which was three quarters of an hour away⁴⁹. Once a week there was a market in Izkani and there the peasants brought in everything; there even was a 'shochet' and kosher meat, because very many Chassidim came over from Poland. These were extraordinarily pious people, who ate at the shochet and also rented small apartments from him. The entire place was made up of 40 to 50 families. There one could see, what pious behaviour can mean! On Friday evening, after the Chassidim had eaten, they began to sing Shabbat songs and to sing and dance to them. This dancing is unforgettable for anyone who has seen it! The Pajes fly around like birds, the shtreimel shifts on the head the feet hop around with pleasure, just like during a merry waltz. This induced my sister to do the following joke:

She borrowed a caftan, belt and shtreimel from the shochet to appear as a rabbi at a ball in town. Then she sewed curls onto the shtreimel – in those times chignons with curls were modern – and on Friday evening, as the dancing was in full swing among the Chassidim, she sprang into their midst loudly proclaiming: "Git shabbes". I hid myself in order to observe what was happening and laughed myself silly. There was a big commotion, everywhere one was saying:

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"Scholem Aleichem, do you want to eat, young man?" – No, said my sister, I do not want to disturb the dance, I want to dance with you earlier – and she began bouncing around wildly.

When we became aware that she was being observed all the same, she quickly slipped away. But for the entire month one was still speaking about "Misses Schapira, the rabbi".

But let us return to the more serious events: The Romanians did not leave the others much time and had occupied all positions with own officials in no time, and from then on only the Romanian laws were in force.

My uncle and brother-in-law ran out of work soon. So my father had to give them considerable financial support. At that time, my brother suggested to create a company with my brother-in-law and to move to Karlsbad to build up

⁴⁹ Suceava, Romania, 47° 39' N, 26° 15' O

a business with fine, gold-plated porcelain. For my brother was an expert in the field, the brother-in-law should run the business, while my brother would be on business travels. They were hoping to recover soon this way. Father contributed quite some money to what my brother and brother-in-law had rescued and so it happened that both families moved to Karlsbad, full of hope and courage.

The success did not take long to arrive, at least that is how it appeared to be. But the more the company flourished the more money would have had to be invested into it and there was not much capital available. Father would again have had to give financial support, but he did not want to cause more problems for the two walking disasters and bluntly proclaimed that the company should be liquidated. The brother-in-law Schapira should come to Smyrna and leave the family in Karlsbad, because there was no perspective down there for the girls. My brother however should look for a good position in Europe and send the family to live in Steinschönau.

Later on my brother also came to Smyrna, but this needs to be told in a different part of my story. And, even if I only know few exciting things to tell about, I will nevertheless return to our life and activities in Bulgaria.

The conditions in Bulgaria were becoming more and more difficult, the competitors ever more disturbing. It was not easy to play the main role. Each winter I organized two balls, which were always crowned with the most splendid success. Among other,

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I organized a raffle and all the ladies of the association got busy selling the raffle tickets. Around midnight the winning tickets were drawn and the main prize was a pair of sausages. Everybody was greatly amused by this joke! The newspapers always reported in detail about these social events and thanked for the entertainment I offered the public.

The association flourished well and at the annual general assembly I was always re-elected, so that I eventually received the nickname 'sempiternal president'.

In between I received an invitation from my uncle⁵⁰ in Bottischan, who asked me to join him in Dornavatra⁵¹, a nice health resort. Dornavatra is a health resort in the style of Franzensbad⁵², only that then it was not as large and elegant . . .

My mother stayed with my children and I departed, first to Bottischan, where I stayed for 10 days, then with the entire family of my uncle to Dornavatra. I was an entertaining guest; in those days these distances were covered by means of a coach and we laughed, danced and sang a lot. Even today these funny songs resonate in my ears. We stopped in each village we passed through and were given good coffee and wonderful milk from the Austrian peasants; even young chickens were slaughtered and roasted. The entire route was part of Austria in those times, today unfortunately it is Romanian.

In the evening we eventually reached Dorna, where a splendid apartment had been prepared for us. It was a wonderful time, I was really received just as a king would be. In the short period I gained 13 kilos and this was mentioned in the medical annals, for the doctor working there assured me that it was the first time in the 20 years of his practice that such a remarkable success could be recorded.

But into each cup of joy falls a bitter drop. After having ended my course of treatment, I did the same thing as everyone else, for after the warm baths one took cold ones in the B i s t r i z a . The day I had fixed the appointment with five other young women was not a very friendly one. I knew nothing about the maliciousness of the river and that it had dangerous currents in some places. These currents turn with immense power and sweep away everything with them.

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So I had no idea that one only was allowed to swim at the edge and because we wanted to do a swim race, the prize being a snack, I jumped into the waves and began to swim hard. For I was a good swimmer and used to the sea, so that I did not go into the water using the steps but jumped in directly from above. Suddenly, I realize that I do not need to swim at all and that I am being swept away at incredible speed.

⁵⁰ Abramowitz

⁵¹ Nowadays Vatra Dornei in Romania, the historic Region of Bukowina. 47° 21' N 25° 22' O

⁵² Situated in the western part of the Czech Republic and is known as a spa resort until today. 50° 7' N 12° 21' O

The guests of the health resort applauded Bravo, while I saw death in front of myself. I was very aware of what was happening and said to myself, your only rescue is to get away from the middle of the current. And so I began to swim to the shore with all my might with mortal fear, even though I was a good swimmer.

The people on land suddenly realized that what was happening could not be for fun anymore, they did not continue to clap, but some tore off their clothes and were swimming in my direction. After a terrible effort I managed to get on land half-dead. Then I had to walk a distance in the wet bathing suit and caught a serious cold doing so. I developed a sore throat and a severe cold and had to stay in bed for four full days. The doctor recommended I should leave immediately if I wanted to get rid of the cold. For that reason things were soon packed up again and we left beautiful Dorna.

But I had freed myself from a suffering of the larynx, which had been impairing my health for 14 years. It was for this reason that I had to do a cure every year in Bad Gleichenberg⁵³.

When war broke out between Bulgaria and Serbia we had great difficulties with our business⁵⁴. Everyone went to war, even fourteen year-old equipped youngsters were seen leaving.

Many women came to my apartment, we sat around for days on end plucking Charpie. Months later panic broke out, there was a rumour that the Serbs were outside the city and would storm it at night. The government had asked all foreigners to hang out flags, so one would recognize the houses right away and spare them. I will never be able to forget this day!

Early, already at 5 o'clock, the women of the Spanish-speaking Hebrew community began to flock into our house. They brought me men, money, rugs and valuables. We stored everything in the cellar as well as it was possible, only the women and children sat at my side, trembling. The men erred around the streets looking for food.

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⁵³ Spa resort 42km southeast of Graz, 46° 52' N, 15° 54' E

⁵⁴ 13.11.1885

At eleven o'clock, Prince Battenberg arrived on his horse, clothes spoiled and black in the face. The houses shook with the thunder of the canons. He remained seated on the horse and was brought some coffee. But he said: "first I will tear my country from the hands of the enemy and then I shall drink". All men and boys remaining in Sofia had gathered around him. The Prince then spoke to the people and all men went away with him, also the reserves were taken along. The boys, among which also my son Angelo, were kept busy polishing bullets.

When Prince Battenberg rode away in a gallop I very sadly returned to my house. For my husband thought that one could not speak of any danger - there was a troubled silence everywhere - and so I had the opportunity to take a look at everything around. Back home I was besieged with questions and had to give an exact account on what was happening outside. The look on the face of the old Prince Battenberg is unforgettable for me, even today.

The thunder of the cannonballs continued for the entire day, only towards the evening it grew fainter and at midnight stopped entirely.

The king of Serbia had however rejoiced to soon! The moment he thought he had conquered Bulgaria, ladies, generals and all the leading figures were invited to a splendid feast and one ate and boozed until three in the morning. That was the Bulgarian's lucky chance. Sober and with incredible courage they pushed back the enemy at night and re-conquered their country⁵⁵.

The next day Prince Battenberg rode into Sofia again, and one should have seen this procession! He and his horse were covered with wreaths, the jubilation and the hurrahs did not end. Together with him, all fighters came into town and it was a celebration of joy beyond words.

But also sorrow moved into town once the wounded were brought. They were mainly very young persons. Also the Jews had set up a military hospital, I immediately signed up as a nurse and there saw pain and suffering, which any description would be ridiculous, but enough of this now. For as with everything in the world, this too passed, time healed all wounds and the daily needs of human life came to the fore again.

Caused by the stupid incident in Dornavatra, I developed a suffering of the larynx, enabling me to communicate with gestures only. After a cure in Bad

⁵⁵ Between the 17. and 19. November 1885

Gleichenberg I began to recover and to gain five kilos. My hoarseness however did not leave me so soon.

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Already during that very winter I offered the Bulgarian public something new. Two plays were staged and performed by the elite of the society, the engineers Deutsch and Fischer, vice-consul Hamburg and Professor Handel. The play, in which also a lady played a role in, Miss Braunstein, was called "The Absent-Minded". A further play, "The Seven Dwarfs", was performed by children and until I had finally rehearsed everything with the small ones, I had almost become a dwarf myself. Do not ask me either, what sacrifices this all meant! My apartment had to be available for rehearsals for months on end, and naturally I myself, too.

But the audience was very pleased with the success – and our association's cashbox not less. For that eventually was the most important.

In the meantime, my oldest son⁵⁶ had completed training in business school in Vienna and now it meant to look after the second one⁵⁷. During my stay in Bad Gleichenberg I had become acquainted with the Rabbi Dr. Jellinek. He was my dinner partner and very often sent me flowers. But this was not especially dangerous, for my admirer was 68 years of age and a highly educated philosopher. It was this Rabbi that I eventually asked to give me a recommendation for my boy, for it was intended that the youngster was to get work in a factory and learn mechanics. He was also not supposed to go through the usual years of apprenticeship - I was willing to pay everything - so that he could start work directly at the lathe⁵⁸.

Even though this was really a great exception, the steps I took succeeded and soon I was able to telegraph my husband, telling him to send the boy to Vienna, where I was aiming to find work for him.

And what was to happen now with the oldest boy, who had finished business school? I did not see a suitable future for him in our business. For the Bulgarian people had become very impoverished through the war, they became nationalistic in their attitude and did not wish European clothing;

⁵⁶ Isidore Margulies

⁵⁷ Josef Margulies

⁵⁸ A machine in which work is rotated about a horizontal axis and shaped by a fixed tool

instead, they began wearing the national dresses. So I thought again of my uncle in Bottischan⁵⁹ and barely said, already done! I was in Vienna with the boy and organized passports and money in order to leave. But as we had a whole hour left before the train's departure, it came to my mind, that we could still visit a relative, a Dr. Vogel. When we arrived there, my cousin asked me if I didn't also wish to visit the uncle, who lived very close from here. Ready for travelling as we were, off went to Bleinfahren, the place where my uncle lived.

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Just around midday we arrived and I spotted Uncle standing in the garden, hands behind the back and turned away from us. I quickly placed my hands over his eyes and kissed him. He was unable to speak from astonishment. "It's you, Charlotte!" "And who is the young man, who is standing next to you?" "This is my son, who has finished business school". Upon that I had to explain, how and where I had heard he was not in Bottischan but in Bleinfahren, how old my boy was and so forth.

In those times my boy had a moustache like a drum major, twirled according to the current fashion called "it has been achieved". He made an excellent impression on Uncle; for example when Uncle wanted to light a cigar, he jumped for the match. In a word, he left the uncle nothing to be desired, which greatly pleased him. "What do you intend to do with the boy", he asked me.

- I would like to entrust you with him for his apprenticeship, so he may become a capable salesman!

- You can demand everything from me, the uncle said quite astonished, but not this. We have made a clear decision not to include any further relatives in the company.

- Uncle, I insisted, I am not bringing you a relative like those from Colomea, but a finely equipped young man. Also, you shall not have any expenditures and shall not have to pay him a salary, only some pocket money according to what you deem best. Only once you are pleased with him shall you pay him a salary.-

Eventually, the uncle merely scratched his head and said: "It is impossible to deny you, Charlotte, any wish. But luck is on your side that you have come here, for without my consent you would have had to leave again immediately".

⁵⁹ Abramovitz

We then continued to spend a very pleasant day and only left in the evening for Bottischan. When we arrived there and the relatives heard that I was bringing my boy for an apprenticeship, they said they were very sorry, but that without the consent of the uncle no relatives were allowed to be accepted. How astounded they were when I produced the letter Uncle had written, and from then on everything was in perfect order. – I remained there for another two weeks, to see whether my boy really was familiarizing himself with the work. He was standing on the ladder for the entire day, was studying the prices and learnt to distinguish between the products, so that everybody was delighted by him. Then I returned home satisfied and found that all was well. Only on the forehead of my husband the worry lines were increasing in number...

Despite the worries about business the hustle and bustle in society continued. In May we performed the plays as usual, in winter the balls returned.

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Also the association needed to be looked after further and it was blessed. Even today, - I am 83 years old and founded it at the age of 30 – it still exists and has always emerged victorious from all difficult situations. Many associations either perished through materialistic crises or even discord, but mine persevered.

Another association, the mothers' association 'Maika', was founded according to our model. But there, different opinions existed and one time the president sprang to her feet and exclaimed: "I will have Misses Margulies sent for, she will create order here". This made the ladies feel ashamed and silence spread. And as a lady told me, Misses Schreiber, wife of the engineer Schreiber, similar words were said to have been spoken in the men's associations, when there was unrest there.

My second son⁶⁰ worked very industriously and perseveringly in the factory and learnt bookkeeping by visiting evening classes. After the exam he received a savings book from the school with five guilders. On it was written that, had the boy been impoverished, he would have received a scholarship. I think the book still lays in the savings bank in Vienna until this day.

⁶⁰ Josef Margulies

At that time my father came to Vienna by coincidence and suggested to my boy that he might come to Smyrna with him. This also happened, the mechanic of the business was dismissed and my son took over his position. When he was done with the work for the day he went to the office, learnt a lot and eagerly and soon became the right hand of his grandfather. He could do whatever he pleased.

This way I had taken care well of my two oldest sons. I was left with my girls and the youngest boy, who now is a superior medical counsellor of the state [Obermedizinalrat] in Smyrna and in whose presence I will conclude my twilight years. In these days and in his company I am writing these pages...

In the meantime, summer had returned to our place. The mountains have done away with their white dress and are letting themselves be shined on by the sun again. Also the human beings became merry and happy and showed a more friendly face. After having lived through the hard winter, the urge to travel re-awakens and one aims to piece together one's health again. Thus, I journeyed to Vienna, visited Professor Schretter because of the suffering of my larynx and stayed with him for 20 days of a very unpleasant treatment. I was painted with burning remedies and began getting nervous, so that I was soon dismissed to Bad Gleichenberg for a cure. Then I travelled home again and came across very distraught faces:

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Russia seriously wanted to turn Bulgaria into a province. This the noble Prince Battenberg did not want to let happen by any means. Upon this, Russia demanded that the Prince step down and take off the crown. To avoid war, the Bulgarians elected Prince Ferdinand of Coburg⁶¹. The Prince's departure was very sad. The Prince stood upright in the wagon, two ministers supported him, he appeared very sorrowful and greeted sadly to both sides. The people shed tears heart-rendingly. So sad it was that the tears were streaming down my husband's cheeks.

But like everything in life passes, so does grief as well! Also for Ferdinand of Coburg, the new prince, there was cheering and the pain and feelings for Prince Battenberg stopped.

⁶¹ Ferdinand I. of Sachsen-Coburg (1861 in Vienna – 1948 in Coburg), Inauguration on 7. Sept 1886 after the abdication of Prince Alexander I. (Battenberg)

After a year his mother, the ex-queen Clementine of Coburg-Gotha⁶² came to visit. She remained in Sofia for many a year. When we gave our next ball, I suggested to present an invitation to the queen. And so it also happened.

A lady of the committee and I drove to the palace, where we were welcomed in a very friendly way by a lady of the court, who inquired what we desired. "We wish to deliver an entrance ticket for our ball to her majesty". "I regret, but today her majesty is not receiving anyone, because she needs to leave for Philipopol"⁶³

On the evening of our ball an adjutant appeared and presented me with 20 Napoléon. I considered the story as having ended there. But this was not the case!

One fine day, when the queen returned to Sofia, I received an invitation to an audience. Well, one can imagine my excitement and pounding of the heart! For after all I had not associated with queens and princesses and did not want make a fool of myself.

But god was merciful and sent me the right state of mind at the right team. On the day of the audience I summoned a meeting of the committee and asked them to wait until I had returned. Then I dressed myself very elegantly, matched a large black hat with peacock's feathers on it to the elegant black silk dress and took a young man along from our business, who was to sit in formal dress next to the coachman.

Once at the palace, I was led into a large hall, in which several ladies and gentlemen were already waiting. An officer in livery appeared from time to time and called the names of the parties who were led to the queen.

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Finally the door opened and my name was pronounced. I heard it very clearly: Misses Charlotte Margulies, lady-president of the Jewish Women's Association! Then I was led into the queen's reception room, which made an infinitely vast

⁶² Clémentine d'Orléans (1817 in Neuilly-sur-Seine – 1907 in Coburg)

⁶³ Plowdiw, Bulgaria, 42° 9' N, 24° 45' E

and large impression on me. In the middle of it, deep armchairs were set up in a row.

The queen stood all the way at the other end of the hall, and whilst I only approached her very slowly, bowing deeply, she came to meet me, nodding her head in a friendly manner, so that – I do not know how – we met at the height of the armchairs. Thereupon she took a seat and invited me to sit down next to her. Then I was asked in which language I wished to speak to her and, somewhat astonished, I answered: In German. The conversation began to flow, the queen made in-depth inquiries about how long I had been living in Bulgaria, whether we had many poor people and whether I visited them alone. After some time the queen began to talk about the weather and I immediately knew that the audience was meant to end here. I immediately rose, fell to my knees and threw myself at her feet and begged for her to become our association's honorary president. The queen placed both hands onto my shoulders, ordered me to stand up and said: yes, I accept your proposal. Then I bowed to her in a slightly bewildered mood and, bowing in the usual way, went in the direction of the door, which the adjutant opened, and disappeared with a pounding heart.

In a frenzy of happiness I drove back home, where all the ladies and the vice-consul Hamburg were expecting me. I told them about the entire course of events and, as my masterpiece, brought my request I made to the woman of high ranks. The ladies flung themselves around my neck upon hearing this wonderful idea and then also wanted to know how the queen had replied. But in my excitement I did not know anymore and began despairing. Upon that Mister Hamburg took a seat at the table and in my name wrote the following letter to the queen:

“Her royal majesty received me for an audience yesterday and I was as daring as to ask her majesty to become our association's honorary president. Due to my sensation of joyous surprise I do not know anymore, whether your majesty has accepted. Please may I most humbly ask you to reply”...

On that very day still I received a confirmation. Now our ladies went to work to fabricate a nice document of admission to welcome of our noble honorary guest. The secretary of the Austrian consulate, who was wonderfully gifted at drawing, worked on it for an entire week. Then it was framed with a velvet border and once it was finished, I requested another audience, for which I immediately received the permission.

Once again I dressed very nobly and drove to the palace full of expectation. This time, the queen received me instantly, extended her hand to me and I had the pleasure of presenting to her the document of admission. "May your name bring you luck", she said to me, and we chatted in a friendly way.

It seems as if my name did bring luck to the association indeed, for it still exists today and just 4 months ago its 50-year anniversary was celebrated. As its founder I was invited to the event in a heart-warming fashion by the ladies of the committee, but, even if unwillingly so, I have had to take into consideration my 82 years of age. I was represented by my daughter, who is living in Sofia. In the temple, some of my letters were read out and I was very much acclaimed.

From then on I also never missed the receptions at the palace, and on the birthday and the Saint's day of the queen there were celebratory audiences, where she graciously received the well-wishers, among which I always was, too. Those were nice times ...

A very close friendship connected us with the Braunstein family. The old lady's daughter was a well-read and educated girl, who helped me very much in the association. I had often tried to arrange a marriage for her, but it did not want to work out. There were very few German-speaking Jews in Sofia, all the others were Spanish-speaking Hebrews. All the more closely our circle grew together, for we were not recognized and acknowledged as real Jews.

Then suddenly old Misses Braunstein fell ill and I was over at the neighbour's house day and night, so as not to leave the daughter alone. After a long suffering she passed away and with every burial so far we had encountered many difficulties in dealing with the Spanish-speaking Hebrew community. I found this so disgraceful that I decided to found a Khevra Kadishah, so as not to be dependent anymore on the Spanish-speaking Hebrews. I summoned the oldest women of our community and asked them to observe how the women of the Sephardic community prepared their dead for burial. Also the men had to do likewise. Naturally, I was present while all of this was happening.

When it was time for the burial of my old friend, I held a speech in front of the whole congregation and said that with this day the Khevra Kadishah was founded and we carried out the body, all the ladies of the association held a mourning tassel. The men had had to hold a meeting beforehand, each had put in a 'Pinkis' and it had been decided how exactly everything had to happen.

For if I could provide enjoyments, the mourners should all the more be catered for.

This happened four months before Sukkot. It was customary in those days that all families went to temple on the evening of Simcha Torah. When we had returned home and were sitting around the table, we heard a great racket outside and suddenly our windows were brightly lit up. With a start we ran to the window, thinking that fire had broken out. But what did my astonished eyes see! All gentlemen had swiftly come over to our house from the temple, were holding lampions in their hands and called out in a chorus: "long live Misses Margulies, who helped us to found a Khevra Kadishah". I was deeply moved, had to invite the entire crowd to our house and the jubilation and dancing carried on until midnight. – I am not telling about great deeds, but they have clung to me and are dear memories to me, too.

I would like to tell about my youngest son now, who has become a superior medical counsellor of the state.⁶⁴ He had gone through the French elementary school and attended the Bulgarian gymnasium. During that period, the youth was very restless and, in this new country, quite wild. The young people, still mostly boys, formed groups held together by their bonds of friendship, and ventured deep into the country to hunt for bears. This way, my son came far into the Balkans, stayed away from home for nights on end and could not be held back from these paths, which meant danger. He was one of the most daring among his friends and his colleagues dedicated a poem to this only 15 year-old, in which they honoured in song his courage of a hero. I only was able to do away with my fear and worries once he had been sent to Berlin to do his studies, where he was to learn medicine. This had always been his dream. Already as a six year-old little fellow he secretly stole away with my electric apparatus and applied it on the people of the neighbourhood.

He was greatly gifted in grasping things quickly and a very eager learner and was able to finish his exams earlier than his fellow students. The professors all liked him, for he worked in the hospitals and clinics with much tenacity, also during holidays, and received his diploma with distinction. Love, luck and success are faithfully accompanying his life, even if blows of destiny were part of it. But it shall be in a different part of the story that I will tell about how he

⁶⁴ Angelo Margulies (11.10.1875 Constantinople - 4.9.1951 Wallisellen, Switzerland)

managed to keep his marvellous courage and how it came about that today I am lucky to write these memoirs under his roof.

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But I wish to return back to younger years: Also during this summer I travelled, as usual, to Bad Gleichenberg. After a wonderful stay of short 20 days however I received a telegram, reading that my husband had fallen very ill. I returned home on that very same day.

And it so happened that my husband stayed in bed for an entire year. I am unable to describe how much trouble and hardship I as a person full of the joys of life was burdened with. Many doctors' appointments and a lively exchange of telegrams with professors in Vienna, but most of all probably God Himself, had mercy upon me. After 14 months, my husband's state allowed him to leave the house again. But business had become ailing. One of my husband's brothers-in-law, who was working for us, had in the meantime taken over buying the goods and had bought ladies' undergarments in large quantities in Vienna. But these were not products that could easily be sold in Bulgaria; for any Bulgarian woman, however rich she was, takes great pride and considers it honourable to sew her undergarments herself.

In those times it was common that a girl was only allowed to marry after having gone through the 'Stopanska'-school. There, one learnt how to make clothes and everything, that was part of running a household. There always was a brilliant housekeeper from Vienna and the young girls all learned how to cook and to bake, yes, even how to set a table. The food was sold to public officials at cost price and the young girls also had to serve, clean the dishes and the kitchen themselves. A doctor verified the cleanliness of the institute. This is how advanced the Bulgarians already were 60 years ago. Whether this has changed I do not know, but if so, it surely would be too bad.

So Bulgaria then was a new but poor country. And lives were led in an economical way, fashion only picked up with some difficulty. The increasing competition also led to an increase of our worries. I remember beautiful and marvellous times, and also sad ones. Among other things I still vividly remember how the people mourned for the noble Princess, who died shortly thereafter⁶⁵. The emperor Franz-Joseph sent the funeral carriage and the ceremony was sad but nevertheless magnificent. This happened not long after

⁶⁵ Marie Louise of Bourbon-Parma (1870-1899)

Prince Ferdinand's marriage⁶⁶ and the births of the princes⁶⁷. At least this is how it seems to me to have been...

In our nice apartment – in those times there were no big apartments, almost the whole town consisted of small Turkish houses – a merry circle of people ever so often gathered, who liked to spend a good time and entertain themselves, and who was made up of youths most of the time. One time, when merry dancing was going on, it was a quadrille, a young pharmacist⁶⁸, who was playing the fiddle, also wanted to join in and, holding his violin in his hand, called out, asking who would like to dance with him.

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Thereupon my small daughter⁶⁹, she was barely five years old at the time⁷⁰, pushed into the drawing room and clearly and firmly pronounced: "I want to dance with you!" – "Very well, the pharmacist said, put your little hand into my pocket here so you don't get lost." And so the two of them laughed and danced together. When the quadrille had ended, he lifted up the small girl and gave her a kiss. How could I have guessed then that this young man would become her husband later on?

This young pharmacist was working for the royal pharmacy and regularly visited us during many years. As I always observed him being lonely, I frequently made attempts to arrange a marriage for him, but he always replied that he would only marry a girl, whom he would have seen growing up, for he wanted to be the first to fill out the entire space of her heart. I laughed about such quirky ideas and was unable to understand them, for the young man was an excellent match and a handsome person.

In the meantime, my daughter had grown to be a very beautiful girl, had attended the French school, was a preferred student there and extraordinarily musical. Her 15 years of age began to attract suitors, but we did not even think of marrying her at such young an age.

On the day of her sixteenth birthday the sister of our young friend came around on his behalf and asked for the hand of my daughter in marriage. Her

⁶⁶ 1893

⁶⁷ Heir to the throne Boris III. (1894-1943) and Kyrill (1895-1945)

⁶⁸ Srebrov (also: Srebroff or Srebrow)

⁶⁹ Fanny Margulies (1874 - ?)

⁷⁰ around 1879

brother had not wanted to marry as a salaried employee and for that reason had not dared to proclaim his heart's desire, she told us. But now he had obtained the rights to work independently in Bulgaria and was already busy getting his new pharmacy ready. I was genuinely stupefied, for I had not realised anything during these many years and had never understood our friend's allusions. Nevertheless I was highly pleased and said that I would be very happy if her brother came by himself, for he was not unknown to our house. We would therefore be expecting him on the next Thursday, his day off.

On Thursday my candidate appeared on time and repeated everything his sister had said. He told us in detail how he had ordered the fitting-out of the pharmacy in Vienna and that he was hoping to take delivery of it in 7 – 8 months in Rasgrad⁷¹. He had chosen this small town as his field of work.

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I responded: "My daughter still is too young, her 'YES' cannot be taken seriously yet. Therefore we have a long time ahead of us, during which you can give various things a second thought. You could for example make a match with somebody who is richer, for my daughter only will be receiving so and so much, given the times as they are. Should business improve, she will receive more, but this we cannot promise. Neither should you feel obliged and bound to her now, for I do not wish to betroth my daughter at this point. Furthermore and most importantly, my daughter herself must choose you, for I will never force her. Also, I would like you not to turn her head and to limit the number of your visits. If you agree with all this and continue to consider both yourself and my daughter as not being promised to one another, then I will be glad to congratulate you for your choice and hope that your wishes will all be fulfilled." We shook hands upon this and even though I realised that my small little pharmacist was not very pleased, especially not to be able to visit as frequently, I felt that my daughter had been as good as betrothed. Each Thursday the young man came by and I did not leave my couple out of sight, for I did not want that my child's head would be turned.

A year passed this way. The fiancé continued visit our house and always said to me: "I take you by your word". Then, one day he appeared and said to me that serious decisions would have to be made, he wished to publicly announce the betrothal to my daughter, for he would have to depart in two weeks' time

⁷¹ Rasgrad, a town in north-eastern Bulgaria, 43° 32' N, 26° 31' E

to get everything arranged and to marry as quickly as possible. "Please call your daughter", he then begged me. "No, my dear, I answered, you leave it up to me to ask my daughter. She could say no upon getting so frightened but still mean yes when doing so! If my daughter is in agreement, you shall be our dear guest on the coming Thursday".

Thereupon I spoke with my child and when she heard that Mister Srebroff had asked for her hand in marriage, she flung her arms around my neck in tears and told me how very much she had longed for this man. I then asked her in a very serious tone of voice whether she was willing to lead her life in a small town together with her husband and once she confirmed this with shiny eyes I gave my blessing with a cheerful heart.

G-d did not give his to the young couple, for my son-in-law died at a very young age. He left behind a young mourning wife with three children⁷². Luckily she had had the time during the long illness of her husband to become acquainted with the pharmacy under his instruction and to acquire the necessary skills. She also knew how to do bookkeeping, which in Bulgaria was especially difficult, due to the strict controls.

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Besides, she needed to have enough time to educate her three children, however well behaved they were. Because she was an excellent pianist, she taught them music herself. Once all three of them had finished the Gymnasium with merit, she travelled to Berlin to have them given further professional training. The oldest has become a mechanical engineer, the second son a construction and railway engineer. The daughter studied pharmaceuticals so as to be able to become the successor of the pharmacy. But the government had in the meantime forbidden the widow to keep on running the pharmacy, so that her child, Olga, had to re-train and has become a gymnastics teacher.

Even though my daughter was a beautiful and desirable woman and had often had the opportunity to marry again, she remained a widow because of her children. – When Bulgaria entered the world war⁷³, both sons were called up, but thanks to merciful providence they were spared and were not lost to their mother. They had especially dangerous positions, the mechanical engineer was a platoon leader and the other accompanied German officers, who were

⁷² Heine, Olga and George

⁷³ 14. October 1915

supposed to spy on dangerous enemy positions. It was only after the war that he was able to complete his studies and was recommended by his professors, who were very fond of him, to a large enterprise, who gave him work during one and a half years. When the company took over the construction of a railway in Anatolia⁷⁴, he travelled to Turkey and after some time had the mother and sister join him from Paris (Olga was studying rhythmical dance and gymnastics there). After many pilgrimages, the family definitely installed itself again in Sofia and the mother continues to live in the place where she spent her childhood years, adored by her children. - - -

But now the story of my older, beloved daughter is so far completed and I will tell about the destiny of the younger⁷⁵ and sorrowful one.

When this child was 7 years old, a fire broke out in the neighbourhood one evening, and I grabbed the small one to bring her to safety. That instant, she observed through the window how a man next door fired a shot from a revolver, which then was usual to make aware of the fire. The small girl screamed in fear, thinking that the shot was meant to be directed towards us.

The fire was put out, but I still was to have more bad luck with my little daughter. She repeatedly made twitching movements and I had terrible arguments with her because I did not know she had the “Veitstanz”.⁷⁶ A lady explained the situation to me and I immediately went to the doctor with the child. Even so this did not stop until her 15th year and the short moment of fright led to these nasty consequences over many long years. For months on end the small girl lay in bed and often was so weak that one had to get the noodles out of the soup, which she then was barely able to swallow.

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We followed every advice from the doctors and from laypersons, but nothing helped. We were even close to sending her to an asylum. But then we consulted a young doctor, who had just settled in town. He listened to everything we had to tell him and then said that one would need to try by applying 30 whole-body massages; only if this did not help, we would have to send the child to an asylum.

⁷⁴ Chemin de fer Otoman d'Anatolie

⁷⁵ Sarina Margulies (born approx. 1876/77 -

⁷⁶ Presumably *Chorea minor* after scarlet fever

After the 4th massage the child was in fact able to get up already, and after the 10th she was leaving the house. The joy in our house cannot be described and the child began to develop wonderfully. My means of home teaching everything that had long been missed needed to be caught up with. The doctor became known everywhere because of this case and later said that my child had brought him fortune.

One day my husband went to the pharmacy to fetch a remedy for me. After some time this pharmacist – he was very well known around town – came to our house to inquire whether his potion had helped. Thus, my husband introduced Mr. Heilperno to us, who eventually also stayed for tea, and did not wish to leave again. As he was a fine and educated young man, I invited him on the coming Saturday, the day on which I had already invited people over.

After six months of acquaintance he had a family he was friendly with inform us that he wished to marry our daughter. We made inquiries and heard only good things about him. At that time my oldest son in Jasi (Romania) wished to get married and I thought I would take advantage of this occasion to inform myself there about Mister Heilperno. For he came from Galatz⁷⁷ and the people in Jasi always know what those people in Galatz are cooking.

My oldest son⁷⁸ had become the director of a branch of the Bottischani-based company Abramovitch in Jasi, had gotten to know Miss Braunstein there and became engaged with her shortly after. The wedding was supposed to happen in winter and I began to journey there.

Well equipped with the addresses of Mr. Heilperno's relations and full of joy in my heart in view of the nearing wedding I got caught in the most beautiful snowdrift. The trains to Galatz and Jasi were stuck at a train station and even though the trains were well lit and heated, we were all in a rush. The travellers had made themselves comfortable on the couches and tried bridge the lost time by sleeping. Next to me a woman happened to be laying, who was incessantly praying in Yiddish that G-d might melt the snow so she would arrive in time for the delivery, which her daughter was going to have. To calm her I told her that I too was in a great rush, for I needed to attend a wedding – and was keeping quiet despite that.

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⁷⁷ See footnote 12

⁷⁸ Isidore Margulies

For by praying, G-d would still not send the sun to melt the snow. Even so the woman's mumbling made it impossible for me to sleep and so a conversation arose:

- Who are you travelling to in Jasi, she asks, who is the bride?

- To the Braunsteins.

-Really? Also my relatives will be there, and she mentions the names Rapaport, the banker Wassermann and others.

- I think those are the names I have instructions to send greetings to in Mister Lasar Heilperno's name.

Suddenly the woman exclaims: "but that is my son!", hugs and kisses me and tells me that he never returns home, never writes and never is in touch, even though she is crying her eyes out. "He left home at an early age, he did not want to stay and work in the bank of his father, but preferred to run around the world freely. But now I am glad to hear something about hi

much as she had been happy to be a bride, she would be just as happy now to be alone again. I was glad to hear this confirmed from her own mouth and we decided on the next day, when Mister Heilperno was supposed to come, to annul the engagement.

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The next day, my daughter was just relaxing on the divan, he came charging up the stairs, making a racket as always. I had been given the watch by my daughter, his gift to her, and welcomed him with the words: "From today on your visits will stop, Mister Heilperno, you are no longer my child's bridegroom".

- What mistakes do you reproach me for doing?

- I have no right to reproach you for your mistakes. Please go quietly and without causing a scandal, just as well-behaved human beings would normally do.

Sarina, my love, he exclaimed, forcing his way into the room, you hear what your mother is saying and are remain silent?

Only with a great effort was I able to make him leave. But he continued to follow my daughter's every step, so that she was unable to go out into the street anymore. Misses Weiss, an advocate in his cause and friend, came to our house daily, bombarding us with his pleading. Eventually we had to forbid any interference in this matter, yes, it was not even permitted to pronounce his name.

When the time came round for me to travel to Vienna to make acquisitions for the business, my husband and my daughter promised me not to grant this man an audience under any circumstances. But barely was I gone, things started over again from beginning. Heilperno did not give up and molested my

am able to do so nevertheless. After that she ran further until she reached the business.

After this story I travelled to Hungary, because Heilperno had a friend there, with whom I wanted to make inquiries about him. This gentleman received me in a splendid manner, lauded Heilperno extraordinarily and said that he would give away his own sister to him, if he had one. But the dowry you better not place into his hands, much rather you should open a pharmacy. He is immensely industrious... I was very grateful for the good advice of this friend. He had even paid my bill for the hotel!

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This testimony, as well as my husband's letters, made my heart soften a little. When I returned home, his employer, his friends and our relatives besieged me: He had mobilised all of them and everyone recommended having the thing become reality all the same.

Unfortunately it also did in the end! They married and travelled to Munich, where my son-in-law enrolled for studies. We kept our promise and provided the monthly support right away. In the meantime I had informed my father about everything and he quickly sent me the reply that only the diploma was important, all other papers were worth nothing and that he would find a spot for Heilperno in the shop of a good German pharmacist in Smyrna after the completion of his studies. I let the children know immediately what luck was awaiting them, he should just please study hard.

But what did my Lasar do? After short 6 months he arranges to take on a position in the royal pharmacy, which is not paid, believing that good recommendations can compensate a diploma and that with ability alone the entire world's doors stand open – even without being able to give proof or certificates!

The year passes by, Mister and Misses Heilperno travel down to my father in Smyrna via Sofia. We had covered all expenses and I had to work terribly hard day and night to be able to provide them with what they needed. Also my father rented an apartment for them in Smyrna, furnished it and when the couple arrived, he immediately went to see Heilperno's future employer and with whom he would potentially be running the business together with. He

made a good impression on him and also seemed to work well, but Mr. Haug, that was the German pharmacist, wished to see the Diploma... and would you believe, there only were certificates around. "Without a diploma I cannot use you in this country, Mr. Haug said, I had told your grandfather right from the beginning". And with that the story ended.

My father was seized by a terrible anger, he did not wish to see the young people any longer; he gave them money to travel and sent them back to Sofia.

With great effort and thanks to connections I managed to provide him a job as an accountant. People were pleased with his work and he also began to earn a fair amount of money. But instead of bringing this money home he brought it to gambling houses and soon lost all he owned. His wife was near to giving birth but whenever she needed something he sent her to us, for: Your mother has no more daughter to give away, you can demand of her anything you like.

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The misery increased, the longer the more, the child was born⁷⁹ and he was fired. A girl⁸⁰ and another boy⁸¹ were born. It was then that he suggested travelling to Paris, there was the exhibition⁸² at that time and one could earn money there. Wife and children were to follow later. We had no choice, other than to give our consent to this plan, for he would have travelled one or the other way! After five weeks a little money arrived and tickets for the family. This man had cost us a fortune, for wife, children and a wet nurse had to be financed by us. And even though letters with good news began to arrive from Paris, I had lost confidence in my son-in-law.

My fear was confirmed just after the end of the exhibition. The letters sounded altogether different, each of them turned into a bitter pill. "My husband has no work" could be read again and again between the lines. Then "he wants to send me back to you, but I prefer to sell bread here wheeling a cart".

Nothing helped her. He sent wife and children to Sofia and our suffering cannot be described. We had to work hard and slave away bitterly to provide the family with what it needed.

⁷⁹ Jack, born 1900

⁸⁰ Dorette, born 1898

⁸¹ Simon Heilpern-Hil(l)ston, born 1903, died 1991 in Australia

⁸² Exposition Universelle in Paris, 1900

This is how it came about that I did not have the time anymore to dedicate my work to the Association and was unable to deal with it as before. For this reason I called for a general assembly, to which nobody appeared, because the ladies knew that I no longer could take on responsibility for this organisation on my own. Not lazy as I am, I took all the items belonging to the association and made my way over to the wife of vice-consul Hamburg. I passed my presidency on to her and remained available to what we had built up as all the other members, which I commended to G-d. That it has remained under his protection, I know.

After a few months my dear son-in-law travelled to Sofia personally. He continued to loose his money on gambling and he did not bring anything he earned back home. Upon that I lost my patience and I implored my daughter to divorce him. When he saw that things were becoming grim, he decided to travel to Alexandria to open up a pharmacy there or to find other work. He left and my daughter gave birth to her third child. Again, a wet nurse had to be hired, because my daughter had to work in the business with me.

For business was indeed going downhill. The plans for the new commercial street had been completed and the merchants were give 4 weeks' time to leave their shops. Because no place could be found in such a short time, my husband brought the merchandise over to our house. This had

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a terrible impact on sales, all the more because our merchandise had to be sold as long as it was in fashion. As soon as something began to get slightly out of fashion, it was sold off cheaply. We did not find a new shop very soon, because people were frantically storming the few things available and the owners had rent paid for 2 to 3 years in advance. For all this an enormous capital was needed, my husband's health was not in good shape and so we went through difficult times. An entire year passed, during which I got to experience the saying: The higher the mountaintop, the deeper the fall. And in society we still had to play the important role.

In our desperation we were unable to take any decision. When suddenly unforeseen help arrived: I received a letter from a former teacher, namely the teacher, which my father had brought to Babada. He wrote that he had never forgotten our family. He wished to know something about his favourite pupil and so forth. In the meantime he had become a rich hat-maker in the Mariahilferstrasse in Vienna.

When he heard about the state we were in, I received more news from him: He wrote that now the moment had arrived where he could show his gratitude for the motherly care he had received from my mother. He thought a lot of my intelligence and willpower. I should please come to Vienna, he wanted to procure me with credit and a new existence.

Barely said, already done. I sell many things to have money at hand and set out on my travel. My husband rents a large shop in the main commercial road, just next to the palace. In Vienna, I was welcomed very kindly by the Brauners and we developed the plan to launch the hat industry. Just as I had at 12 years of age, I learnt from my former teacher again. Then we went to Gerngross⁸³, he chose everything that belongs to the hat trade, sorts of straw and items for marriage and dowry, even wreaths for burials. Everything was packed up well, I was given unbelievable [hat] models from Brauner's production site, hired a milliner and sent her home with all the things, whilst I myself said farewell and travelled to my oldest daughter. She was about to give birth and I did not want to leave her alone in this small Bulgarian town. And even if business were destroyed by doing so, the heart of a mother was stronger; I had to help my daughter during her first delivery⁸⁴.

So I was there with my child and we were expecting the event any hour. But 10 days passed and there was no sign of anything.

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But bombarded with letters from back home I was, reading I should return urgently to Sofia. It was as if I were sitting on needles. But all the same – I couldn't leave. Then telegrams came raining down. My husband wrote, "we do not have a second set of jewellery to sell.." and I knew that if business broke in now, we could go begging, and I was responsible for everything.

When my daughter read this telegram, she brought my travel bag into my room and said: "Mama, you have to leave! G-d will not leave me alone". I was unable to eat for the whole day and was permanently in tears, and then I decided to stay over night all the same. In the evening I went to my room early to shed the remaining tears unobserved. I did not even undress, so miserable was I feeling. I prayed to G-d that he should not keep me in such suspense, lay my head on the table and must have fallen asleep.

⁸³ Department store Gerngross in Vienna, founded 1879, Mariahilferstrasse 48/Kirchengasse

⁸⁴ After her move to Rasgrad, meaning approx. 1891/92

Around midnight there was a knock on my door. Fanny was going into labour. Midwife and doctor arrived soon after and only around 12 o'clock a boy was born⁸⁵. Now I was just as worried, for how could I entrust such unknowing hands with the young mother! I asked for my husband's consent by telegraph to stay until the circumcision and received it.

When I returned to Sofia after this happy event, I let myself be taught everything by the young lady. The day after I was completely informed and was selling with the same ability and industriousness as I was dedicating to social life again. And it went as if I had always been in this trade...

I travelled to Vienna twice a year to purchase the merchandise and took care of everything on my own. As I expanded my business thanks to the recommendation of a neighbour, I soon was buying merchandise in Berlin, too, with the main magnet however being my youngest son⁸⁶, who was studying medicine there. Berlin was less expensive than Vienna, so I was able to cover travel costs and made brilliant profits.

But the blows of destiny were not missing, either. On a winter evening, it was terribly cold outside and there was ice on the street, my husband comes home and says that he has fallen and has crushed his liver. "I have killed myself", he said exactly with these words.

And he remained sickly for three years after this accident, laying in bed for three years. He was brought to Vienna twice and came back without any great success in the treatment. It is impossible to imagine what it meant as a businesswoman to cater for a sick person for three years, who did not want to receive food from anybody else but myself!

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Aside of this I also had a daughter with three small children at home. And everything had to be orderly and proper – and money had to be earned for everything. Luckily, the apartment was located opposite our business and down the road a bit, so that I managed to run over three times a day to serve my husband during the meals. These were bitter times...

My oldest son visited me during my husband's illness and also my youngest son, the student, came from Berlin. But everyone had to return to their

⁸⁵ George Srebroff, born 1892, died 1966 in California

⁸⁶ Angelo Margulies

obligations. My daughter and I, the two of us slaved away – during the season often until two in the morning. And from Mister Lasar letters arrived, that he had not found what he had been looking for.

In the meantime my son Pepi came up from Smyrna and suggested to bring the father to Vienna once more and have all the experts in the field do whatever they could. My husband died in the “Allgemeines Krankenhaus” in Vienna, after six months of treatment.⁸⁷ - - -

After one year Mister Lasar re-appeared in the same clothes as he had left with. We were prepared. Everything was taken care of in a pleasant tone of voice. Both went to the Rabbi, where Heilperno tried to persuade my daughter a last time. But the Rabbi made a calculation of the years, which he had let pass by without them having been of any use and the suffering the wife and children had had to undergo because of him. He soon became silent and the couple was divorced. Each sat in a corner of the room, in tears. At home I was so brought up that I collapsed and fainted. With an unhappy daughter also a part of my own life was in shambles. We had very much to do in order to take care well of her and the children.

Even though this lies further back in time, I would like to tell about an episode, which occurred during Rosh Hashana.

At that time we did not have an own synagogue yet and like all the other Jews and the Spanish-speaking Hebrews we went to the Sephardic synagogue. A Sephardic family, who owned a large tavern, was also going there, except for the young highly pregnant young woman, who stayed home. Then, three young persons – Bulgarians - noisily rapped on the door and the windows, asking for spirit. The woman goes onto the balcony and calls down that on this day she may not sell anything. The young people don't let themselves be driven away and ask for spirit most urgently, saying the doctor was waiting for it with a very ill person, so as to be able to sterilise the syringes. Well, the woman lets herself be persuaded

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and comes downstairs, opens the door and tells the people that she would give them the spirit for free because it was intended for a sick person.

⁸⁷ 12.7.1900

In the cellar lay barrels filled with spirit and under every barrel stood a bowl to catch the spirit that dripped down. While the woman is serving the fellows, two of them put flammable material into those bowls and leave again. They have barely left, when things explode downstairs, the flames shoot up so high that the woman is unable to reach the stairs anymore. She pulls herself up on the iron rods of the window and screams for help pitifully. The iron rods of the window had to be bent apart to pull out the half-burnt woman.

In the meantime the commotion had become so big that everyone came out of the temple. In those times the Sephardic Jews wore wide pants, which hung down to the ground. The burning spirit was already flowing across the street, but was barely visible because of the sun, which was shining so brightly. So the men, who ran into the street, caught fire and their feet were burnt.

It was terrible! The crowd was screaming that the woman, who had suffered the burns, should be brought into my courtyard. I was very busy - wearing a silk dress and having come out from the temple. In the courtyard behind my kitchen stood a pale with calcium hydroxide; I poured water into it until it turned clear, filtered it and mixed in oil. I applied this kind of salve on the wounds with pieces of cloth and managed to sooth the pain. I had the other wounded do the same thing as well. Those who had only been slightly wounded went home soon after, but gradually another 20 wounded were brought in. Those people all looked terrible, their pain cannot be described! Especially the pain of the woman who had been wounded so terribly. I sat with the wretched woman day and night and bandaged her over and over again. When the people saw me they called out: "Kokona⁸⁸, G-d bless your hands". My patient soon felt better and I managed to recover a bit from the stresses and strains.

But during the same night the woman went into labour, she was not doing well and I was sent for. When I arrived I saw that she was in a very bad state. I immediately called a doctor and the midwife and asked for hot water. But the people did not want to make any because it was Saturday. I yelled at the people terribly, asking whether Shabbat was more important to them than the ill woman. Get me water on the spot! "Kokona, the woman exclaimed, don't go away, don't leave me"! I saw that the midwife did not understand anything and stayed until the doctor arrived. Unfortunately, the poor woman died during

⁸⁸ Colloquial Turkish word describing a woman, who takes great care of her appearance and dresses in a very chosen way.

that very night and for days after I still could hear her scream: “Kokona, don’t leave me”.

[Page 58 is missing.]

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Two years passed. I received a telegram from my father, who was just in Vienna, that he had developed pneumonia and lay very ill there. I immediately departed, but my father only lived for another short three days⁸⁹. With a broken heart I left the Sanatorium Fürth⁹⁰ and travelled home, only to give up everything once again: For my father’s will read that we three children should come to Smyrna to take over his company. The sales of our possessions took a whole three months. After this I met my sister (about her I will tell something very soon) in Cospoli, from where the journey continued to S m y r n a.

The train to Cospoli left at 12 o’clock, but all of us were already at the train station at 11. Who can describe my astonishment! The entire women’s association had gathered to welcome us, each lady held flowers and a small “package of love” [“Liebespäckchen” cannot be translated] in their hand, and not only the association but also many Jews and Jewesses from Sofia had gathered to say farewell. There was much going on at the train station and because the travellers were assuming that a high-ranking clerical person was being expected, they too flocked together. By mere coincidence the train was 1 ½ hours late and I implored the ladies to go home because it was around lunchtime. But they all stayed, so I quickly took the decision to go the restaurant with all our friends and acquaintances, where I had Cognac and everything that was edible brought in. And now also the landlady flung herself around my neck, because it was the first time in the five years since she owned the restaurant that she was sold out.

When the train rolled in, a kissing started, which cannot be described; the confusion was so great that one also flung oneself around the men’s necks. At the end I saw how my Paraschkawa fainted and heard many voices calling out: “With a lot of luck”...

⁸⁹ 17.6.1905

⁹⁰ Sanatorium Fürth in the Wiener Josefstadt, Schmidgasse 12-14, 8. Bezirk, founded 1895 by Julius Fürth

In Cospoli my nephew was expecting us and these were 2 wonderful days, during which I was able to freshen up nice memories and then the journey already continued to Smyrna.

My sister had in the meantime engaged and married her oldest daughter to a Mister Meyer. This man could have asked for the largest dowry, he owned a travel agency, had trained his social skills to perfection and his clients were exclusively American and British. In addition, he was the most handsome man in Karlsbad, briefly, it seemed as if my sister had hit the main prize in the lottery with this son-in-law. Unfortunately this marriage did not turn out to be a happy one, the husband was vexatious, however full of worldly allures he might have been, but who wanted to change his wife according to his imagination. My sister did not want to see this happen und moved to Vienna with her son and sent him to a good school there.

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In Smyrna I moved into my father's house, my brother-in-law Shapira had already furnished a house as well, and a wealthy life began for me. But man always finds bitter things among the sweet. I discovered that there was no perspective of re-marrying my divorced daughter⁹¹ in Smyrna. So I decided to send her to my son⁹² in Jasi⁹³ and kept the three children with me.

After less than a year my daughter found a fine, well-behaved man from a very good family, with whom she married and led a happy life. He was the owner of a small estate⁹⁴ and 2 girls⁹⁵ and 1 boy⁹⁶ came out of this marriage. Once these children had grown up, the parents sold the estate and moved to Bucharest. This way, everything was taken care of and I began to grow younger. -

But still it was not quite easy to be a mother again. The burden of taking care of them and the education of three small children was loaded onto my shoulders. With my person the saying became true that the human's willpower allows accomplishing anything, for the sacrifice, which parents make for their children is impossible to describe.

⁹¹ Sarina

⁹² Isidore Margulies

⁹³ Iasi, Romania

⁹⁴ Simionovitch

⁹⁵ Nitza und Ninette

⁹⁶ Tony

My life flowed along in an orderly fashion, but just as life happens to be, a bill business with four seasons. The Italian war⁹⁷ came around and much damage was done. Thank G-d our business was so strong that this crisis did not manage to harm us.

In the meantime my son Angelo, who had been co-responsible for running a larger sanatorium close to Berlin, decided to come to Smyrna⁹⁸. He quickly became a sought-after doctor and could soon send for his family. His practice grew steadily and because of his achievements he was given the title as superior medical counsellor to the Austro-Hungarian state [Obermedizinalrat] by the ministry. In Smyrna, his wife⁹⁹ gave birth to his second wonderful boy¹⁰⁰ and soon thereafter he received the Kaiser-Franz-Joseph-medal. Then, Cholera broke out in Smyrna and my son was the only doctor who dared to be together with the ill people in the isolated area day and night. This way he

on a Sunday and we were all invited to the marriage of Dr. Spierer's son, a family we were very close friends with. My brother insisted that we sisters should go to the wedding ceremony. My son, the doctor, had prescribed that he be transported to the Hotel¹⁰¹ in order to breathe the air from the sea. When my sister and I returned after two hours, my brother stood at the window, fully clad and waiving to us with the hand. But when we got back home, my brother-in-law Shapira was in a very confused state. What is the matter, we asked. "Just imagine, Angelo is saying that Laser will die today." "What should this mean, he is not a G-d!" Nevertheless, we were near to having a breakdown. We immediately returned to the Hotel and dined together with my brother, but felt as if we were sitting on needles. The waiter brought his favourite dish, "Garidia". But the moment he wanted to swallow them down, he suffered a choking fit and was immediately brought to his room. I believe it is not necessary to describe how we were feeling, all the more because my son, the doctor, strictly forbid any visits. Only at eight o'clock did we return to our house, two hours later the distressing news of his death reached us.

This sad occurrence made us postpone the marriage of my son Pepi by six months. We could not take the decision to travel to Athens with a sad heart and to enjoy merriness. But the saying "Let the dead rest, the living need to carry on living", also came true in our case. Joyful hours followed the sorrowful ones. The bride and her family came to Smyrna and whoever has seen this marriage can understand that I say that in my life I have also seen beautiful and magnificent things. The stairwell to the Salon and the hall itself, the largest

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in Smyrna, was strewn with flowers. The wedding ceremony was held in the temple, the bridegroom appeared overjoyed. Music was awaiting us in the hotel, a marvellous buffet had been set up and the invited public came to the evening Dîner.

The couple went on their honeymoon – but the buffet remained. In those times it was common for the invitees to return on the third day after the celebration to show their gratitude. Everything was decorated again, like for the wedding, especially the large buffet. I felt a feeling of delight, which I cannot even describe. After a month, the young couple returned.

¹⁰¹ Hotel Kraemer Palace, Smyrna

My son Pepi travelled abroad frequently and concluded large contracts everywhere, in Berlin, Vienna and Paris. Luck was on his side and he earned a lot of money, but man proposes, G-d disposes. The day after his arrival in Smyrna the world war broke out. Because of this, my son immediately departed again, because he owned movies in Cospoli, Athens and Saloniki, which needed to be checked on. He wanted to return right thereafter and said "The Austrians will bash the Serbs heavily, in six weeks the war will be over". But in the meantime all frontiers were closed and Pepi was unable to return to us. His young wife was in tears day and night. I couldn't take this misery any longer and told her she should take the last ship, which was going to leave the next day, in order to travel to her husband. The joy of this young woman, my dear daughter-in-law, cannot be described; I personally brought her to the ship the next day.

The burden of the sad time, which followed, I can barely give an account of; within a year, all enterprises failed and we hardly had enough to run our large household. My son living in Athens¹⁰² was only able to send little and my sister's¹⁰³ son had to join the forces. Every day, we went to business empty-handed, and even more empty-handed we returned home. It would have been possible to earn a lot in these unhappy times, but the business' burden lay on my shoulders and those of my nephews, Egon and Fritz¹⁰⁴, two good-for-nothings. Surely, it is unnecessary to sing a song of these times, for everyone has experienced sadness and suffering in an own way.

It came as far as that I couldn't keep the enterprises running anymore and had to lease them to a Greek. The earnings were shared between myself, my sister and the two Kraemer sons. I sold the Hotel to a Turk, Naim Bey, and then made the most stupid mistake of my life. Instead of keeping the money until the end of the war, I went to the Consul with my thousands of Liras, presented him our book of debts and asked him to pay all of them. This was at a time, when all payments were put on hold and I thought these companies ["houses"] would trust us again entirely.

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But the war carried on for years, human beings died away like flies and businesses were ruined. When my son Pepi returned to Smyrna after many

¹⁰² Joseph Margulies

¹⁰³ Gustav Shapira

¹⁰⁴ Egon und Fritz Kraemer, sons of Leon (Laser) Kraemer

years he tore his hair out. What had he left behind and what did he now find! Because he had lost everything, he returned to Athens, where the movie theatre still stood. He represented "Pathé" of Paris with great success and worked day and night until he brought business back to normal heights again. During this time he lived with his sister-in-law, together with his wife, and hoped to be able to have his furnishing of 8 rooms brought back to him soon, together with those of his wife. I had taken their entire household over to my place, as I owned a large 10-room apartment. Everything, everything was consumed by the flames of the terrible fire, which destroyed my entire apartment and the possessions of my children.

I need to confide yet another of my heart's sorrows to this paper. My daughter's three children were living with me¹⁰⁵. The father had taken the oldest boy¹⁰⁶ to live with him, I brought up the girl and the second boy. This grand-daughter broke my heart. She fell in love with one of these good-for-nothings, this Fritz Kraemer. I did not want to allow this under any circumstance, for I knew that she would be unhappy with him, but she did not want to know anything about it and did not want to separate herself from him. I loved this child like my own and my feeling was confirmed in a terrible way. When Dorette realised that I would not give my consent to this marriage, she let herself be baptised and married her chosen one. The lady of the Austrian consul was her godmother. The marriage immediately followed the marriage¹⁰⁷ and then the couple came to the hotel, which at that point had not been sold yet.

It is impossible for me to describe this pain, the wound still is bleeding. My granddaughter has become an unhappy creature and with her three children is dependent on receiving support to this very day. The husband loses everything by gambling and does not take care of his wife and children. But I want to stop telling about this misery now.

The younger brother, Simon, has become a splendid person and a good brother at the same time, for the sister is stuck to him like a bur. Simon has become an industrious salesman helping my son in Athens as a valuable workforce. His older brother, Jacques, is an engineer, but his heart hasn't the sensitivity of his brother Simon.

¹⁰⁵ Dorette, Jacques (Jack) and Simon Heilperno-Margulies

¹⁰⁶ Jacques (Jack) Heilperno - Hilston

¹⁰⁷ more likely: baptism?

I also want to tell about the destiny of my unhappy and most-beloved sister. We were two hearts and one beat, two heads and one thought. Everywhere, we were seen as an exemplary love between siblings. In Smyrna we had our apartments next to each other. Of five sons only one, Gustav, remained with her, both of the daughters had married and gone abroad. Gustav fell in love with an Armenian girl, whom he dragged along day and night and whom he married after the peace settlement had been reached. He left his mother in ignorance about this, who was in Vienna at the time. It was

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by coincidence that at that time our hotel's cellar-master was dismissed and returned to Vienna. One day, he met my sister there in the tramway, greeted her in a friendly manner and during the conversation mentioned that her son had married an Armenian woman. She had a stroke on the spot. She suffered a paralysis on her right side, which she never recovered from. After fighting for two months, she died.

Mister Meier, her husband's daughter, also passed away and left the widow behind with a travel agency doing good business and a bank. As she was unable to run it on her own, she sent for her brother, Gustav, and they became very rich. Two months ago however, in March 1934, I read in the papers that the bank was closed down because one had not set out to work in an honest fashion. I do not know how this will end, but I am glad that my sister does not have to witness this anymore.

At the time everything was lost in the flames in Smyrna after the end of the war, I was in Jasy with my oldest son. I had locked my apartment and given the keys to my son Angelo. Could I ever have guessed that I never would see any of my belongings again?

I stayed with my oldest son and his wife for eight years and was taken care of in a friendly and loving way. I experienced great joy there and was able to witness the beautiful weddings of two granddaughters¹⁰⁸ and one grandson¹⁰⁹. But man's existence is divided into day and night as the world is, too, and many a night is lit up with the stars in the sky, but others are full of darkness, sad and hopeless. The same it was in my case, for I knew that this magnificent and kind woman, the best wife and mother, the wife of my son Angelo, was

¹⁰⁸ Olga Agatstein, born Margulies and Sidy Wohlgemuth, born Margulies

¹⁰⁹ Aurel Margulies (1899-1991), married Elsa Zoller in 1929.

very ill.¹¹⁰ I prayed to G-d that he be merciful and spare this marvellous, flourishing young woman for the sake of her husband and her children.

But the disaster soon happened, and when I heard that this noble-minded person had been relieved from her suffering, I was in deep grief, for I knew what this loss meant for my son. We then also feared for the life of my son, and I do not know what would have happened, had there not been his well-behaved and faithful children, who cared for him at every step. Only after two years of fretting did my son visit me in Jasi and we travelled to Dornavatra, a Romanian spa resort. When I saw that my son was sick at heart, I felt the strong desire to no longer see him solitary. Now, as I am writing these lines, this wish has also been granted.

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In Jasi I was also visited by my son Pepi and his kind wife. And however great the joy of reunion was every time, the pain of separation was greater. When children are small, they belong to their parents; once they are grown, they belong to the world. And because of my longing for my children I began to write poetry; I confide everything that moves my heart to the paper, and today many of my poems are hanging in my children's bedrooms in Smyrna, where I am spending my life's autumn in peace and harmony with them. The quill is my intimate friend, the quill it is I confide my worries and longings to.

One day - I was in Jasi at that time - I read that all of Smyrna had burnt to the ground. I sat in the chair for two hours, entirely frozen, held the newspaper in my hand and gazed at the article. Why, was it at all comprehensible? My children in Smyrna, my house with its 10 furnished rooms, the whole belongings of my son Pepi and his wife, the large house of my son Angelo, his precious equipment, all of this was supposed to have been burnt? And where were my children, were they alive? That I even survived this uncertainty! From this I conclude that there is a G-d, who gives strength to humans in such unhappy moments. How else could a human being, who is weaker than a fly, endure so much.

My children over there comforted me however, saying that I still had them despite the impoverishment. Only after three fretful and difficult days we received a telegram that Angelo and his family had been saved. But they experienced frightful things. Not only his fortune, but also his scientific work, all his possessions, everything was lost. Not a shirt, not a stone remained for

¹¹⁰ Rosalie Margulies-Halpern (*January 188[5/6?], Czernowitz- [2?]0.October 1925, Smyrna)

him, he had barely managed to save his own hide, and Turks, who had taken pity on him, gave him shelter. This was the fire of Smyrna in 1922.

Many years later, in 1929, my son Angelo decided to marry again. His oldest son¹¹¹ was working in a large hospital in Eisleben as an assistant doctor, as a surgeon. The youngest son, Otto, was an expert for Tobacco for the Spierer company in Trieste. Only his small daughter Irène¹¹² was living with her father in Smyrna. But she was supposed to and wanted to study at university, and for this reason it was good that the father decided to marry. And thanks to which coincidence did he owe his wife? This I have to tell about in more detail. In any case, he has made a good match, for his wife reads his wishes off his lips. Through her good character she has won him, the children and the mother-in-law, over. In brief: The marriage is a happy one.

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Before I came to Smyrna, I lost my beloved daughter¹¹³, despite all help one provided her with. Her husband¹¹⁴, the son-in-law, tried everything he could, she was operated on but fell ill again after that, so that I travelled with her to Vienna and also to Joachimstal¹¹⁵, where she was treated with Radio. In the spa resort she fell ill so gravely that one only managed to bring her to Bucharest with great difficulty. She was bedridden for three months and only then did death release her from her great suffering. – She was 48 years of age.

When I heard about her decease I went out of my mind. I stood in the room with eyes wide open talking in a confused way. I sat Shivah, the children cut Kiria for me and the doctor permanently gave me prescriptions for soporific drugs. After 24 hours I awoke from this state of giddiness but had completely forgotten about all that had occurred before. I asked my son whether he knew how my daughter was doing; “But dear Mama, I have already told you a week ago that she has died”. I screamed, shed bitter tears as only a mother can shed in such distress. However, my mental faculties I did not lose again.

During the time I was in Joachimstal with my poor daughter, I made the acquaintance of a friendly family from Berlin. We also led a conversation about

¹¹¹ Helmar Robert Margulies, born 9.6.1903 in Berlin, died 1955 in Kairo, was working in the surgical wards and the gynaecology department of the Clinic in [Halte-] Eisleben, Germany

¹¹² Irène Satori – Margulies, born 1906 in Berlin

¹¹³ Sarina

¹¹⁴ Simionovitch

¹¹⁵ Jáchymov or Sankt Joachimsthal, Czech Republic, belonged to the Karlsbad region, 50° 22' N, 12° 55' O

my son in Smyrna, and I inquired whether they might not know a suitable wife for him, as I would have liked to see him married again. Once returned to Berlin, they mentioned this conversation and asked a lady¹¹⁶, who had been widowed for just a year, if she might not like to accept this offer.

Barely four months had passed... The lady in question had made an appointment with her doctor that day because she was suffering very much from the great heat. By coincidence, she also mentioned that she held a ticket for the theatre but was undecided whether or not to go out in the evening because of her indisposition. But the doctor encouraged her to go see this particularly good play, and so she went to the theatre, actually against her own will.

When returning home, the underground was overcrowded. The young lady was fighting an ever-increasing feeling of discomfort during her homeward journey, which grew more intense with the fresh air. So it came about that she just managed to find a bench in the square she just had gotten out at and sit down on it. She had barely collapsed onto this bench, when a gentleman, who had gotten out of the same underground and who had observed her feeling unwell, approached her. This gentleman now asked if he could be of any help, upon which the lady wanted to stand up and leave, for midnight was already approaching. The gentleman repeatedly offered to accompany the lady to where she lived, but this was out of the question as well, as she claimed to be living nearby. "I too am living nearby", the gentleman said

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and so they walked together for some way. After a few steps the gentleman stroke up the following conversation:

- Indeed, madam, I live not far from here, but only since today, for I am just here temporarily. I am a doctor and normally live in Smyrna. May I introduce myself?...
- You needn't give me your card; I know who you are.
- This is not possible, neither you nor anyone else knows me around here.
- And yet I know who you are. Do you remember the family...?

¹¹⁶ Johanna („Aenne“) Schlesinger, 9.8.1884 in Witten, 6.12.1975 in Vevey

Both of them were stunned! For this was not merely a coincidence, this seemed to be a higher decision. Of course this conversation was continued during on the following day. Soon thereafter, the young doctor from Eisleben¹¹⁷ joined to get to know his new mother, and four months later the young lady made her festive entrance in Smyrna

With my son's wedding I decided to trade Jasi for Smyrna, in order to stay with my children forever. Here I have found paradise on earth ...

The house was decorated in a festive manner for the wedding. Countless flowers and gifts piled up, and the large rooms hardly managed to hold the number of people who had come to wish their doctor well. The small daughter¹¹⁸ had not missed the opportunity to get the home ready for the new mother in an incomparably loving way. She worked day and night with her cousin Olga¹¹⁹ to prepare everything nicely. This cousin, my granddaughter, the child of my daughter from Sofia¹²⁰, was a gymnastics teacher in the Turkish and French school in Smyrna. I was delighted about her as she always reminded me of my daughter.

Today, I am living with my children in Smyrna for almost five years. My life has turned out to be a happy one. With my new daughter-in-law I have found a replacement for my beloved daughter, even though I will never be able to get over this great pain. From her second marriage she left behind two daughters¹²¹ and one boy¹²². One daughter is a pharmacist, the other a lawyer; the first married an engineer¹²³, whilst the other is working in a lawyer's office.

My daughter-in-law is an angel, not only for me but also for my son and for his family. As if reborn I have arrived in a harbour. Shortly after, my dear granddaughter¹²⁴ departed to study at university.¹²⁵ In Berlin, she became acquainted with a fine and educated young man¹²⁶,

¹¹⁷ Helmar Robert Margulies (9.6.1903 in Berlin – 1955 in Kairo)

¹¹⁸ Irène Satori-Margulies

¹¹⁹ Olga Srebroff

¹²⁰ Fanny Srebroff-Margulies

¹²¹ Nitza Simionovitch und Ninette Fuchs-Simionovitch

¹²² Tony Simionovitch

¹²³ Married Fuchs

¹²⁴ Irène Satori-Margulies

¹²⁵ Irène studierte Germanistik und Zeitungswissenschaften in Berlin.

¹²⁶ Max Leopold Schacherl. In WWII, Schacherl took on a cover name, this after their trip to France: Satori.

a happy couple, two like-minded harmonizing souls. Poldi's mother¹²⁷ welcomed the new little daughter with great love, as she only had two sons.¹²⁸ But I will tell about all of them later on.

Often a block of snow falls into the midst of the sun, chasing away the sunbeams or melting them away. This was the same in my case. Barely had I become used to the nice conditions when the block of snow appeared. One evening, my children were sitting with me in a café, which has been built into the middle of the sea. Suddenly I feel a frosty sensation down my back and upon that we immediately left to return to our house. I turned into a terrible lazybones, for I only stood up again after two whole months. After and next to each other I caught sciatica, pneumonia and pleurisy, what a miracle that a love-infection was not among them, for other than that all other infections appeared. My doctor – my son, was with me day and night, I was often close to being wiped out. But G-d and his assistant, my good son, did not let it happen. Everything was applied, I was given injections incessantly until I slowly recovered again.

I had long left bed again, when my daughter from Sofia visited to keep me company during the time of absence of my son and his wife, who travelled to Europe to take a cure. I remained in Smyrna with my daughter, my granddaughter, the usual household help and the doctor replacing my son. But barely four days after the departure of my son I suddenly had a strong bleeding in my lungs. One can imagine our despair: The doctors gave up on me and telegrams came raining down on my son, who wanted to recover in Europe¹²⁹. Of course his time of rest was over and still he needed it so badly. I was very sad to have to die without this very son and G-d heard my prayers: he let me stand up after four weeks, even though the doctor treating me had only given me three more days. Only my son Angelo had not given up on me.

As I am writing this, I have to laugh cheerfully, for by now already three years have gone by since. In the meantime, many a thing worth mentioning occurred. When my children returned from Europe, I had recovered very well. But after two months I suddenly had another bleeding in the lungs, my son put me to

¹²⁷ Charlotte Schacherl, geborene Levin

¹²⁸ Max Leopold Schacherl und Hans Peter Schacherl, später Peter Satori

¹²⁹ Possibly in Heringsdorf, 1931 (according to dated photographs). Heringsdorf was a large spa resort on the seacoast of northern Germany.

bed immediately, where I was supposed to stay for three weeks. And this repeated itself another six times with time gaps in between. Whilst in my youth I had been lying in once every year [giving birth], now with my age I was lying in bed every two months.

In the following year, as the time approached when my son had to recover in Europe, the [part of the text is missing]

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country. I can hardly describe how caring my dear daughter-in-law Alexandra was in order to provide me so warm-heartedly with everything. She ran around in the great heat to get everything needed in the apartment that would contribute to my recovery. I shall always be grateful to her.

We had barely been in our summer residence for one month, when I suddenly experienced another bleeding in my lungs during a walk. One can hardly picture our fright: Us women alone without a man, for also my son Pepi was in Europe, and what was more no Jewish cemetery in the country. Off I went to bed, all remedies my son Angelo had given me, were applied and my good daughter-in-law stayed up at my bedside all night. The doctor came every day and gave me camphor injections and also prescribed medicaments, but I only took those prescribed by son. Very slowly I recovered again and still was very weak when Angelo and his wife, and to my greatest joy also my granddaughter Irène, fetched me from Athens and brought me back into the warm sun of Smyrna. Even though I had felt very well in Athens, I nevertheless was very happy to travel to Smyrna with them because I knew that a son is with me, who will at some point close my eyes.

I felt well and happy, but G-d had other intentions with me. After four weeks, my unwanted guest appeared yet again, I had a strong bleeding in the lung and was very ill. My beloved granddaughter Irène was nearby day and night. Even though I had an orderly, it was always her, who heard my call first. May G-d reward her for this. My son did not want to give me away and as many a time already he managed to save me from imminent death, which was sitting over my head. For this, it is the year 1934, I am still feeling quite well - knock on wood.

When the next summer came around and with it the time when my son Angelo wanted to give his daughter¹³⁰ in Berlin away in marriage, he had my granddaughter Dorette and her children come to Smyrna so I would remain in good company. A doctor, who was replacing my son and the two girls were always around the house and took care of me. G-d was merciful; I remained healthy and was expecting my children's arrival with great joy. But barely had they returned when I fell so badly while up that I almost broke my small of the back; my screams were even heard in the street. And once again I gave work to my son; the poor lad had to be nearby day and night. I lay in bed for entire six weeks with terrible pain and stiff like a board. I have gotten my own back on my son a long time ago already: I have busied him just as he busied me once upon a time. What he owes me is love and recognition, and this he gives me exceedingly.

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And then - - - came Hitler.

How shall I describe, what we as poor Jews lived through and how each and every one was affected. My poor son¹³¹, who was certain to have his children in the best positions, had to experience hard blows. The daughter and her young husband, both situated in the best-possible way and just before the completion of the doctorate, had to leave Berlin¹³², even though the son-in-law's father¹³³ had fallen during the war. The business, a large publishing house, underwent forcible-coordination [Gleichschaltung] and so they had to seek for their future elsewhere. Also the son Helmar, until then the first assistant doctor in a large hospital¹³⁴, had to give up his position and all three of them moved to Paris¹³⁵.

I cannot describe how hurt I feel to see my son, who knew his children well taken care of, suffering so much. And even if the pain has become more silent, deep down in the heart the trouble is gnawing away that the innocent are suffering. My soul finds no rest, and only hope, the comforter of all sufferings, is keeping me alive. I hope that for my grandson, the excellent surgeon, something else can be found all the same.

¹³⁰ Irène Margulies

¹³¹ Angelo Margulies

¹³² To Paris, 19, Avenue de la Porte Brunet, Paris XIXème arrondissement

¹³³ Edmund Schacherl, died in the battle of Karfreit (Battaglia di Caporetto), 24.-27.10.1917

¹³⁴ Surgery and gynaecology-wards in the Clinic of [Halte-] Eisleben (Germany), Knappschafts-Krankenhaus. Collaboration with Prof. Hartung. Today, the clinic exists under the name of Klinikum Mansfelderland.

¹³⁵ Helmar specializes there in urology with Prof. Marion.

During this barbarian time of Hitler's rule I had another great worry. My beloved son Pepi fell ill very badly, had to leave everything as it was standing and laying around, travel to Vienna and stay in the sanatorium with his good wife for six months. Success did not fail to materialise, G-d always sends his help at the right time. The quill cannot give an account of the worries and the grief I endured during these six months. But everything changed for the better and I returned to being merry. During this summer my son Angelo had to frequently dedicate his care to his ill brother Pepi, he stayed in Vienna twice for a prolonged time¹³⁶. During my children's absence marvellous little Otto stayed with me in Smyrna and a large part of my description shall be dedicated to him. When he heard me cough at night, he was in my room immediately and always dragged along the doctor whenever I had any trouble, I shall never forget his deeds of love.

As I am writing, my calendar shows the month of September 1934. Much has happened in the meantime, but unfortunately the situation of our Jews has not improved yet. My poor son Angelo had great worries because of his son, this exquisite surgeon. He is in negotiations with places everywhere, but nothing positive has arisen. For me, paradise is here in the house, but my worries about my grandchildren are gnawing at my heart. G-d knows, will it get better??? I am old, will I still live to see that my children can earn their living in an honest and honourable way??? I pray to G-d: I wish to see just one more happy face on my son Angelo, who is able to help anyone but himself.

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Recently we went through hard, fretful days full of worries and were close to despair. My beloved son Angelo had to have a tooth pulled out. Was the dentist not hygienic enough with his apparatuses? However, a few hours later great pains set in, the apical gland under his chin began to swell up and took on the size of a goose's egg despite the treatment. One had to operate immediately and my son had unutterable pain. Only G-d knows what I suffered. My daughter-in-law¹³⁷ stayed upstairs with her husband and did not come down even once. G-d has heard my pleas and has let our dear one get well again. But these days have not passed by without leaving traces. The whole town expressed its sympathy, the front door to the house did not stop opening and the sickroom was a sea of flowers. On October 11 we celebrated my son's

¹³⁶ One of these sojourns took place from July 22 to August 10, 1933. Angelo was living in the Hotel Astoria und Wandl in the first *Bezirk* in Vienna.

¹³⁷ Aenne (Johanna) Margulies-Schlesinger

birthday, to which doctors and some friends had been invited. For this occasion I presented my son with the following poem:

How shall I thank G-d for the precious gift he has
made me?
Instead of making me cry he has made me laugh.
My precious child lay in bed endangered,
G-d let him live and that is marvellous.
Rejuvenated my life has become through this.
Decorated is his chest with medals.
I have lived to see,
That my children are going down good paths.
The Almighty shall delight you, son to my heart so close,
With pride I look down upon thee.
Here, many people envy me.
G-d, my son, shall [bless] you;
Like stars in the sky shall your eyes shine, bright like the
sun shall your life be,
Today, we all drink a small glass of wine to your health.

Before ending my book, I quickly want to add several stories:

In the year 1874 my father had taken on the task of delivering to the military¹³⁸. He purchased goods in Cospoli and was living with me. As always, he also took the early train this time and had to up and running already at five o'clock. And as always I stood up even earlier to be able to serve him a glass of warm milk. He scolded me terribly and said that the next time he would have to live in a hotel. Even though it was a little late, I insisted that he drink his milk before leaving. Angrily he drank out the glass and almost angrily he left, but returned after a little less than half an hour, because the train had just been rolling out of the station when he arrived. That I had saved my father's life without knowing we heard shortly thereafter. The train had an accident and not one person was saved. a large bridge goes across the marvellous Maritra Between Adrianopol¹³⁹ and Philipopol¹⁴⁰. It so happened that during the night it had rained so much that the

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¹³⁸ Jonas Kraemer

¹³⁹ Today Edirne, Turkey, 41° 40' N, 26° 34' E

¹⁴⁰ Today Plovdiv, Bulgaria

water rose above the bridge. The personnel had drunk and danced throughout the night, so that nobody realised this. The train sped over the bridge, which collapsed beneath it, crashed into the currents and nobody could be saved. People came running, called out for men, women, fathers, children and there was terrible misery in the entire town. My father stood with me at the window, held my hand and repeatedly said: You have saved my life.

You see, my dear ones, my father's rescue, my son Angelo's marriage, these are things, which are being decided by a higher being.

And I still want to tell about an accident, which occurred in Smyrna in 1910. It was a day before Christmas and all people came into town from the suburbs to do groceries. Besides, it was Ramadan and Smyrna was at its busiest. The ships travelling back to Karsijaka¹⁴¹ were overcrowded and this despite the bad weather. The terrible storm and the cold air drove the passengers down into the Salon. The first captain left his position over to the second, as the time of fasting was over and he wished to go eat something. In the dark, the ship hit another one in the middle of the gulf and immediately began to sink. The people down in the cabin were unable to save themselves because the doors opened to the inside and were locked.

Terrible scenes took place: Among others, a four-month old child was found on the upholstery, the mother had drowned. A woman who knew how to swim very well, told her husband, who was a non-swimmer, to jump after her so that she could take him onto her back. When the woman happily reached the shore with her heavy load, she found on her back with great horror a stranger, who had overheard this, had pushed aside her own husband and had saved his life in this terrible way.

Both my sons were saving angels that evening. My son Joseph went into the hotel's upper rooms and incessantly let searchlights dance over the sea's surface, so that the people who tried to save themselves in the pitch-black night, gathered more hope and swam in direction of the shore. Those pulled out from the sea were immediately brought to our place in the Krämerpassage, where my son Angelo took care of the poor people all night. There was great grief around town, for almost every family had been affected by this terrible accident.

¹⁴¹ District of Smyrna, situated directly at the bay, but opposite the city's centre.

I have confided many a sad thing to this paper, but I now I also must tell about something happy. In the years 1933 and 1934 I was given two great-grandchildren, only recently did a grandson marry and I am hopeful to also be presented with a great-grandchild from this side. Today, I look upon 10 great-grandchildren and 14 grandchildren. More will follow in the

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appendix.

And now I have completed my large work and can dedicate my time again to reading, my favourite activity. It is unlikely that in Smyrna there exists a German book, which I would not have read yet, for all my children's friends and acquaintances bring me reading matter. And if I do not have a real supply of books I do not feel comfortable. Also my grandchildren think of me, send me books and newspapers, for I follow politics just as I follow the entertainment section. I have only one great and urgent wish: To be able to witness Hitler's fall. For too much have our family members been affected and I still would like to know that my children and their children in turn are in a carefree situation. INSHALLAH!¹⁴²

Smyrna, the 8th of November 1934, the fifth anniversary, blessed be
He, since I have come to Smyrna to my
children.

¹⁴² Arabic idiomatic expression for „May it be G-d's will“.