

Typed or
translated on

June 24/50

In these chapters Grandma Stursky is
reminiscing the stories told her by her
mother, Rachel Horowitz

Mother's stories [of village life
in the 1830's + '40's]

"Good morning Rachel dear. I have come to call -- how are things with you? Winter is almost here and I see you have your storm-windows up. My children promised to put my windows up for me. I am afraid of winter when the great frost comes and the water-carrier opens the doors to carry in the pails of water, then the children catch cold and they come down with all kinds of sicknesses -- diphtheria, scarlet fever -- Living through the winter is very hard.

So spoke Jacob-the-coachman's wife to Rachel.

Rachel asked, "Is your husband back from the road" What does he say?"

"Ah, he has big news: They have found a new way of making fire. One won't need to blow on the hot embers to make a fire any more."

Rachel said: "That isn't much. One can manage with hot embers. It is easy -- when the wood is nearly burnt, one has only to push the embers aside, cover them with ashes and keep them for a day."

"But the embers often go dead."

"What of that? One can always get a hot ember from a neighbor."

"But to blow up an ember is not easy either. A spark can blow into an eye -- and one can lose an eye, That has happened often enough. What a blessing if it would never happen again."

"Well tell me. How do they make fire by itself?"

"My husband told me, or was it my uncle. He even remembers
 the name by which they will be called. ^{"SPITCHKI."} Matches. They are made of
 little splinters of wood, capped with sulphur. They are carried in
 little boxes. You give the little splinter a rub -- and you have fire."

Rachel says -- "How good it is that clever people can think
 of such things."

"Yes, they have thought out windmills a good many years

ELIAS,

When my dear husband came into the house he was holding a glass lamp in one hand, and in the other he held a bottle of kerosene. His mouth was bandaged. He told me a lamp was invented which was very good and gave a bright light. "I bought such a lamp," he said and sent the maid for a bottle of kerosene." But instead of kerosene they gave her ~~gasoline~~ ^{ALCOHOL}, and as I lit it, the whole lamp began to burn. So I blew on it trying to blow it out with my breath and burned my lips. I was lucky that I wasn't burned and the house and all the people in it."

Everyone looked at the miracle as it burned by itself and gave so much light to the whole house and there was nothing to fear.

But the lamp was a wonderful invention. We all marvelled at seeing fire confined in a glass bottle, continuing to burn and filling the house with a bright and cheerful light.

On Sundays after mass, a peasant would say to his companions,

"Let us go to Strunsky's. He has brought with him a wonderful invention. It is a fire burning in a glass bottle! It never goes out and it lights up the whole house."

"How wonderful, we certainly must see it," another would say.

"But how dare we all go to him, we are such a big crowd."

"Never mind," said others, "he is very good-natured, and he certainly will be glad to show us the wonderful bottle and explain how it burns."

Whenever they arrived, explaining the object of their visit, "that they wanted to see the fire that burned in a bottle," my husband would light the lamp and show them how it worked. Often the peasants standing near the lamp would fill their pipes and place them against the lamp chimney, trying to light them in this way, and were disappointed that they could not. They would puff at their pipes in vain. My husband would have a hard time making it clear to them that though the fire can give a bright light, it cannot at the same time light a pipe. In the end, however, they would accept the explanation and go home satisfied.

GRANMA STRUNSKY WRITES ABOUT her mother - Rachel
(This section edited by Uncle Hyman) X

My Mother's Misfortune

My grandfather was the manager of a large estate which had belonged to a Polish nobleman, a bachelor. At his death, his heirs rented it to him- land, cattle, peasants- "souls." He handled it well and was respected and loved by both serfs and squires.

My mother was just married at the time, and my father helped his father-in-law in managing the estate. Suddenly one of my mother's eyes became painful. She suffered for a week, used various remedies, and felt no better! At this time news came of a nobleman in the vicinity who fell ill, and who had called a physician from the large and distant city of Danenburg. Our family rejoiced. They would ask the nobleman's permission to allow the great doctor to come to see my mother.

Grandfather went to the nobleman's court to ask for this favor, which was immediately granted. The doctor came back with grandfather. It was a winter night. He looked at the patient and said: "The sick eye is lost- but we must save the good eye." He ordered twelve leeches to be applied to the good eye, and when they would have sucked themselves full of blood to apply a dozen cuppings.

This was right away, and instantly she felt unbearable torment which lasted all night. In the morning she called her mother and said: "Mother darling! Look at my eye and tell

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me what happened to it. I do not know how I survived the tortures of the night." She spoke in a voice so faint it could hardly be heard.

Her mother approved, carefully opened the lid- and found to her horror that there was no eye left underneath the lid. The leeches and the cuppings had done their work. There was a deep hole in the beautiful young face of the newly wedded wife, where the sound eye had been. The other eye, the sick one, was left to her.

In those days they not only did not resort to artificial eyes, but even glasses were unheard of- so the disfigurement can be imagined!

Wolves

There is one wedding I remember distinctly. It was the wedding celebration of a peasant who was marrying off his daughter. All weddings generally take place after Christmas. It is then that the work is done, that the peasants have ample time, for there is neither plowing nor harvesting nor any other work to do. It is a time for merriment and happy occasions. The wedding generally takes place on a Saturday night at the home of the bride's parents. The guests generally come in couples, and all bring presents for the bride, which consist mostly of linen for dresses. The groom brings a large cake, so large that he can hardly carry it. The bride's father supplies the refreshments and the brandy, which is not bought in one gallon jugs, but in

five gallon ones. The drinking begins Saturday and continues until late Sunday, and generally there is much food and brandy left over. Early the following morning, all get ready for church, where the priest performs the ceremony. In this instance, they all rode in their wagons. At the very front sat the bride and groom. Next came the bride's parents and then the groom's. Then followed a procession of the guests, consisting of friends and neighbors. All in all there were about 20 wagons of merry-makers, all very happy and in high spirits.

But they had to travel through a forest. In summer there is never any fear of wolves. It often happens, though, when the shepherds watch their flocks, that a wolf will carry off a goat or a sheep. But winter-time is very dangerous and full of perils. Then it is that the wolves gather in packs, and are wild and ravenous with hunger, and they kill off everything that appears in sight. They attack both men and horses. When they saw the procession of men and horses, they attacked all with the exception of two last wagons, for those driving in them saw the tragedy ahead of them, and turned back, escaping the sad fate of the others.