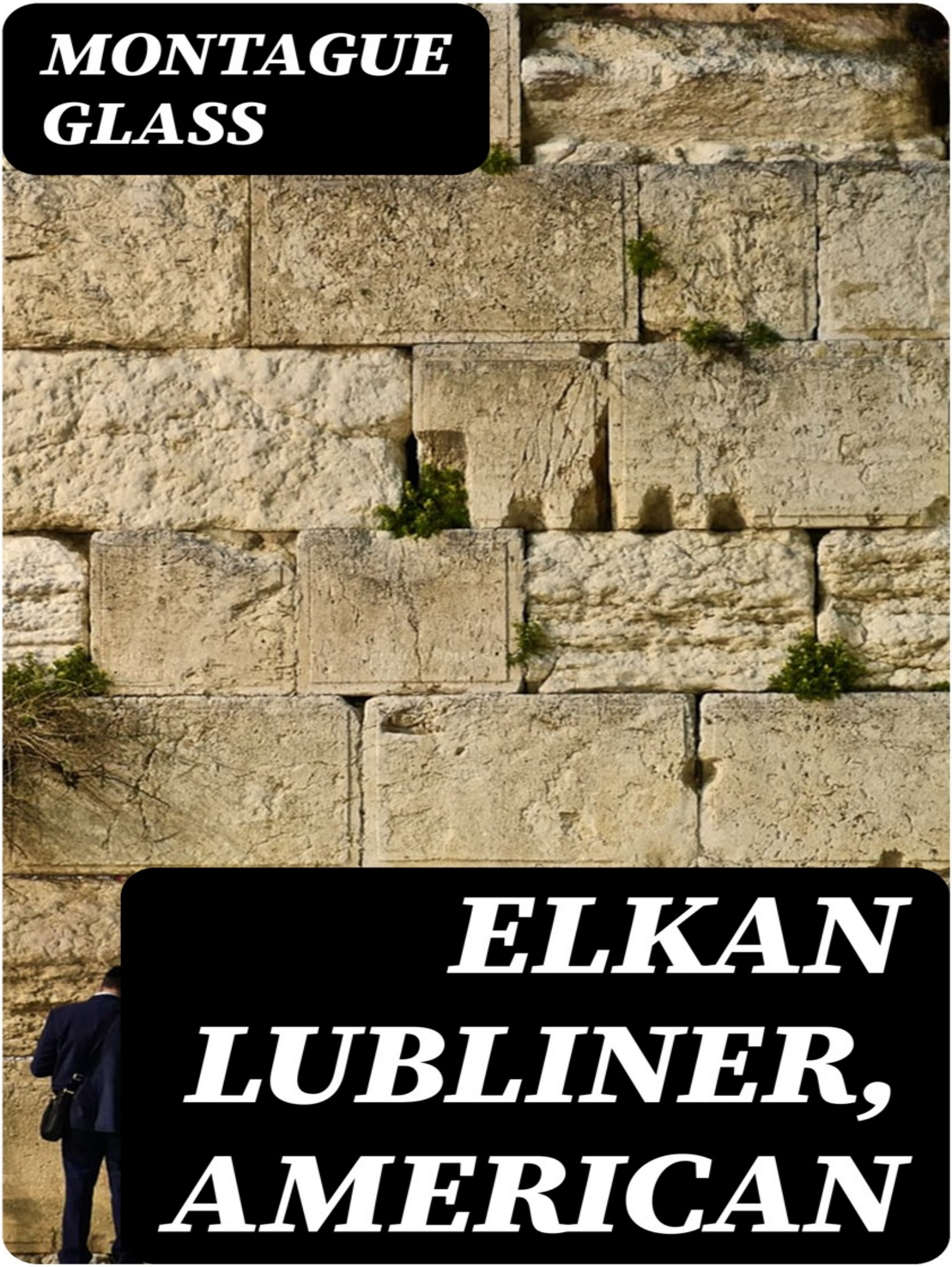
MONTAGUE GLASS



ELKAN LUBLINER, AMERICAN

MONTAGUE GLASS

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CHAPTER ONE

NOBLESSE OBLIGE

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POLATKIN & SCHEIKOWITZ CONSERVE THE HONOUR OF THEIR FAMILIES

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"NU, PHILIP," cried Marcus Polatkin to his partner, Philip Scheikowitz, as they sat in the showroom of their place of business one June morning, "even if the letter does got bad news in it you shouldn't take on so hard. When a feller is making good over here and the *Leute im Russland* hears about it, understand me, they are all the time sending him bad news. I got in Minsk a cousin by the name Pincus Lubliner, understand me, which every time he writes me, y'understand, a relation dies on him and he wants me I should help pay funeral expenses. You might think I was a Free Burial Society, the way that feller acts."

"Sure, I know," Philip replied as he folded the letter away; "but this here is something else again. Mind you, with his own landlord he is sitting playing cards, Marcus, and comes a pistol through the window and the landlord drops dead."

"What have you got to do with the landlord?" Polatkin retorted. "If it was your brother-in-law was killed that's a difference matter entirely; but when a feller is a landlord *im*

Russland, understand me, the least he could expect is that he gets killed once in a while."

"I ain't saying nothing about the landlord," Philip protested, "but my brother-in-law writes they are afraid for their lives there and I should send 'em quick the passage money for him and his boy Yosel to come to America."

Polatkin rose to his feet and glared angrily at his partner.

"Do you mean to told me you are going to send that loafer money he should come over here and bum round our shop yet?"

"What do you mean bum round our shop?" Philip demanded. "In the first place, Polatkin, I ain't said I am going to send him money, y'understand; and, in the second place, if I want to send the feller money to come over here, understand me, that's my business. Furthermore, when you are coming to call my brother-in-law a loafer and a bum, Polatkin, you don't know what you are talking about. His *Grossvater*, *olav hasholem*, was the great Harkavy Rav, Jochannon Borrochson."

"I heard that same tale before," Polatkin interrupted. "A feller is a *Schlemiel* and a lowlife which he couldn't support his wife and children, understand me, and it always turns out his grandfather was a big rabbi in the old country. The way it is with me, Scheikowitz, just so soon as I am hearing a feller's grandfather was a big rabbi in the old country, Scheikowitz, I wouldn't got nothing more to do with him. If he works for you in your place, understand me, then he fools away your time telling the operators what a big rabbi his grandfather was; and if he's a customer, Scheikowitz, and you write him ten days after the account is overdue he

should pay you what he owes you, instead he sends you a check, understand me, he comes down to the store and tells you what a big rabbi he's got it for a grandfather. *Gott sei Dank* I ain't got no *Rabonim* in my family."

"Sure, I know," Philip cried, "your father would be glad supposing he could sign his name even."

Polatkin shrugged his shoulders.

"It would *oser* worry me if my whole family couldn't read or write. So long as I can sign my name and the money is in the bank to make the check good from five to ten thousand dollars, y'understand, what do I care if my grandfather would be deef, dumb and blind, Scheikowitz? Furthermore, Scheikowitz, believe me I would sooner got one good live business man for a partner, Scheikowitz, than a million dead rabbis for a grandfather, and don't you forget it. So if you are going to spend the whole morning making a *Geschreierei* over that letter, Scheikowitz, we may as well close up the store *und fertig*."

With this ultimatum Marcus Polatkin walked rapidly away toward the cutting room, while Philip Scheikowitz sought the foreman of their manufacturing department and borrowed a copy of a morning paper. It was printed in the vernacular of the lower East Side, and Philip bore it to his desk, where for more than half an hour he alternately consulted the column of steamboat advertising and made figures on the back of an envelope. These represented the cost of a journey for two persons from Minsk to New York, based on Philip's hazy recollection of his own emigration, fifteen years before, combined with his experience as travelling salesman in the Southern States for a popular-price line of pants.

At length he concluded his calculations and with a heavy sigh he put on his hat just as his partner returned from the cutting room.

"Nu!" Polatkin cried. "Where are you going now?"

"I am going for a half an hour somewheres," Philip replied.

"What for?" Polatkin demanded.

"What for is my business," Philip answered.

"Your business?" Polatkin exclaimed. "At nine o'clock in the morning one partner puts on his hat and starts to go out, *verstehst du*, and when the other partner asks him where he is going it's his business, *sagt er*! What do you come down here at all for, Scheikowitz?"

"I am coming down here because I got such a partner, Polatkin, which if I was to miss one day even I wouldn't know where I stand at all," Scheikowitz retorted. "Furthermore, you shouldn't worry yourself, Polatkin; for my own sake I would come back just so soon as I could."

Despite the offensive repartee that accompanied Philip's departure, however, he returned to find Polatkin entirely restored to good humour by a thousand-dollar order that had arrived in the ten-o'clock mail; and as Philip himself felt the glow of conscious virtue attendant upon a good deed economically performed, he immediately fell into friendly conversation with his partner.

"Well, Marcus," he said, "I sent 'em the passage tickets, and if you ain't agreeable that Borrochson comes to work here I could easy find him a job somewheres else."

"If we got an opening here, Philip, what is it skin off my face if the feller comes to work here," Polatkin answered,

"so long as he gets the same pay like somebody else?"

"What could I do, Marcus?" Philip rejoined, as he took off his hat and coat preparatory to plunging into the assortment of a pile of samples. "My own flesh and blood I must got to look out for, ain't it? And if my sister Leah, *olav hasholem*, would be alive to-day I would of got 'em all over here long since ago already. Ain't I am right?"

Polatkin shrugged. "In family matters one partner couldn't advise the other at all," he said.

"Sure, I know," Philip concluded, "but when a feller has got such a partner which he is a smart, up-to-date feller and means good by his partner, understand me, then I got a right to take an advice from him about family matters, ain't it?"

And with these honeyed words the subject of the Borrochson family's assisted emigration was dismissed until the arrival of another letter from Minsk some four weeks later.

"Well, Marcus," Philip cried after he had read it, "he'll be here Saturday."

"Who'll be here Saturday?" Polatkin asked.

"Borrochson," Philip replied; "and the boy comes with him."

Polatkin raised his eyebrows.

"I'll tell you the honest truth, Philip," he said—"I'm surprised to hear it."

"What d'ye mean you're surprised to hear it?" Philip asked. "Ain't I am sending him the passage tickets?"

"Sure, I know you are sending him the tickets," Polatkin continued, "but everybody says the same, Philip, and that's

why I am telling you, Philip, I'm surprised to hear he is coming; because from what everybody is telling me it's a miracle the feller ain't sold the tickets and gambled away the money."

"What are you talking nonsense, selling the tickets!" Philip cried indignantly. "The feller is a decent, respectable feller even if he would be a poor man."

"He ain't so poor," Polatkin retorted. "A thief need never got to be poor, Scheikowitz."

"A thief!" Philip exclaimed.

"That's what I said," Polatkin went on, "and a smart thief too, Scheikowitz. Gifkin says he could steal the buttons from a policeman's pants and pass 'em off for real money, understand me, and they couldn't catch him anyhow."

"Gifkin?" Philip replied.

"Meyer Gifkin which he is working for us now two years, Scheikowitz, and a decent, respectable feller," Polatkin said relentlessly. "If Gifkin tells you something you could rely on it, Scheikowitz, and he is telling me he lives in Minsk one house by the other with this feller Borrochson, and such a lowlife gambler bum as this here feller Borrochson is you wouldn't believe at all."

"Meyer Gifkin says that?" Philip gasped.

"So sure as he is working here as assistant cutter," Polatkin continued. "And if you think that this here feller Borrochson comes to work in our place, Scheikowitz, you've got another think coming, and that's all I got to say."

But Philip had not waited to hear the conclusion of his partner's ultimatum, and by the time Polatkin had finished Philip was at the threshold of the cutting room.

"Gifkin!" he bellowed. "I want to ask you something a question."

The assistant cutter laid down his shears.

"What could I do for you, Mr. Scheikowitz?" he said respectfully.

"You could put on your hat and coat and get out of here before I kick you out," Philip replied without disclosing the nature of his abandoned question. "And, furthermore, if my brother-in-law Borrochson is such a lowlife bum which you say he is, when he is coming here Saturday he would pretty near kill you, because, Gifkin, a lowlife gambler and a thief could easily be a murderer too. *Aber* if he ain't a such thief and gambler which you say he is, then I would make you arrested."

"Me arrested?" Gifkin cried. "What for?"

"Because for calling some one a thief which he ain't one you could sit in prison," Scheikowitz concluded. "So you should get right out of here before I am sending for a policeman."

"But, Mr. Scheikowitz," Gifkin protested, "who did I told it your brother-in-law is a thief and a gambler?"

"You know very well who you told it," Scheikowitz retorted. "You told it my partner, Gifkin. That's who you told it."

"But I says to him he shouldn't tell nobody," Gifkin continued. "Is it my fault your partner is such a *Klatsch*? And, anyhow, Mr. Scheikowitz, supposing I did say your brother-in-law is a gambler and a thief, I know what I'm talking about; and, furthermore, if I got to work in a place

where I couldn't open my mouth at all, Mr. Scheikowitz, I don't want to work there, and that's all there is to it."

He assumed his hat and coat in so dignified a manner that for the moment Scheikowitz felt as though he were losing an old and valued employee, and this impression was subsequently heightened by Polatkin's behaviour when he heard of Gifkin's departure. Indeed a casual observer might have supposed that Polatkin's wife, mother, and ten children had all perished in a common disaster and that the messenger had been indiscreet in breaking the news, for during a period of almost half an hour Polatkin rocked and swayed in his chair and beat his forehead with his clenched fist.

"You are shedding my blood," he moaned to Scheikowitz.

"What the devil you are talking nonsense!" Scheikowitz declared. "The way you are acting you would think we are paying the feller five thousand dollars a year instead of fifteen dollars a week."

"It ain't what a feller makes from you, Scheikowitz; it's what you make from him what counts," he wailed. "Gifkin was really worth to us a year five thousand dollars."

"Five thousand buttons!" Scheikowitz cried. "You are making a big fuss about nothing at all."

But when the next day Polatkin and Scheikowitz heard that Gifkin had found employment with their closest competitors Philip began to regret the haste with which he had discharged his assistant cutter, and he bore his partner's upbraidings in chastened silence. Thus by Friday afternoon Polatkin had exhausted his indignation.

"Well, Philip," he said as closing-time approached, "it ain't no use crying over sour milk. What time does the boat arrive?"

"To-night," Philip replied, "and the passengers comes off the island to-morrow. Why did you ask?"

"Because," Marcus said with the suspicion of a blush, "Saturday ain't such a busy day and I was thinking I would go over with you. Might I could help you out."

Philip's trip with his partner to Ellis Island the following morning tried his temper to the point where he could barely refrain from inquiring if the expected immigrant were his relation or Polatkin's, for during the entire journey Marcus busied himself making plans for the Borrochsons' future.

"The first thing you got to look out for with a greenhorn, Philip," he said, "is that you learn 'em good the English language. If a feller couldn't talk he couldn't do nothing, understand me, so with the young feller especially you shouldn't give him no encouragement to keep on talking *Manerloschen*." Philip nodded politely.

"Look at me for instance," Marcus continued; "six months after I landed, Philip, I am speaking English already just so good as a doctor or a lawyer. And how did I done it? To night school I am going only that they should learn me to write, *verstehst du*, *aber* right at the start old man Feinrubin takes me in hand and he talks to me only in English. And if I am understanding him, *schon gut*; and if I don't understand him then he gives me a *potch* on the side of the head, Philip, which the next time he says it I could understand him good. And that's the way you should do with the young feller,

Philip. I bet yer he would a damsight sooner learn English as get a *Schlag* every ten minutes."

Again Philip nodded, and by the time they had arrived at the enclosure for the relations of immigrants he had become so accustomed to the hum of Marcus' conversation that he refrained from uttering even a perfunctory "Uh-huh." They sat on a hard bench for more than half an hour, while the attendants bawled the common surnames of every country from Ireland to Asiatic Turkey, and at length the name Borrochson brought Philip to his feet. He rushed to the gateway, followed by Marcus, just as a stunted lad of fifteen emerged, staggering under the burden of a huge cloth-covered bundle.

"Uncle Philip," the lad cried, dropping the bundle. Then clutching Marcus round the neck he showered kisses on his cheeks until Philip dragged him away.

"I am your uncle," Philip said in *Jüdisch Deutsch*. "Where is your father?"

Without answering the question Yosel Borrochson took a stranglehold of Philip and subjected him to a second and more violent osculation. It was some minutes before Philip could disengage himself from his nephew's embrace and then he led him none too gently to a seat.

"Never mind the kissing," he said; "where's your father?"

"He is not here," Yosel Borrochson replied with a vivid blush.

"I see he is not here," Philip rejoined. "Where is he?"

"He is in Minsk," said young Borrochson.

"In Minsk?" Philip and Marcus cried with one voice, and then Marcus sat down on the bench and rocked to and fro in

an ecstasy of mirth.

"In Minsk!" he gasped hysterically, and slapped his thighs by way of giving expression to his emotions. "Did you ever hear the like?"

"Polatkin, do me the favour," Philip begged, "and don't make a damn fool of yourself."

"What did I told you?" Polatkin retorted, but Philip turned to his nephew.

"What did your father do with the ticket and the money I sent him?" he asked.

"He sold the ticket and he used all the money for the wedding," the boy replied.

"The wedding?" Philip exclaimed. "What wedding?"

"The wedding with the widow," said the boy.

"The widow?" Philip and Marcus shouted in unison. "What widow?"

"The landlord's widow," the boy answered shyly.

And then as there seemed nothing else to do he buried his face in his hands and wept aloud.

"Nu, Philip," Marcus said, sitting down beside young Borrochson, "could the boy help it if his father is a *Ganef*?"

Philip made no reply, and presently Marcus stooped and picked up the bundle.

"Come," he said gently, "let's go up to the store."

The journey uptown was not without its unpleasant features, for the size of the bundle not only barred them from both subway and elevated, but provoked a Broadway car conductor to exhibit what Marcus considered to be so biased and illiberal an attitude toward unrestricted immigration that he barely avoided a cerebral hemorrhage

in resenting it. They finally prevailed on the driver of a belt-line car to accept them as passengers, and nearly half an hour elapsed before they arrived at Desbrosses Street; but after a dozen conductors in turn had declined to honour their transfer tickets they made the rest of their journey on foot.

Philip and young Borrochson carried the offending bundle, for Marcus flatly declined to assist them. Indeed with every block his enthusiasm waned, so that when they at length reached Wooster Street his feelings toward his partner's nephew had undergone a complete change.

"Don't fetch that thing in here," he said as Philip and young Borrochson entered the showroom with the bundle; "leave it in the shop. You got no business to bring the young feller up here in the first place."

"What do you mean bring him up here?" Philip cried. "If you wouldn't butt in at all I intended to take him to my sister's a cousin on Pitt Street."

Marcus threw his hat on a sample table and sat down heavily.

"That's all the gratitude I am getting!" he declared with bitter emphasis. "Right in the busy season I dropped everything to help you out, and you turn on me like this."

He rose to his feet suddenly, and seizing the bundle with both hands he flung it violently through the doorway.

"Take him to Pitt Street," he said. "Take him to the devil for all I care. I am through with him."

But Philip conducted his nephew no farther than round the corner on Canal Street, and when an hour later Yosel Borrochson returned with his uncle his top-boots had been

discarded forever, while his wrinkled, semi-military garb had been exchanged for a neat suit of Oxford gray. Moreover, both he and Philip had consumed a hearty meal of coffee and rolls and were accordingly prepared to take a more cheerful outlook upon life, especially Philip.

"*Bleib du hier*," he said as he led young Borrochson to a chair in the cutting room. "*Ich Komm bald zurück.*"

Then mindful of his partner's advice he broke into English. "Shtay here," he repeated in loud, staccato accents. "I would be right back. *Verstehst du?*"

"Yess-ss," Yosel replied, uttering his first word of English.

With a delighted grin Philip walked to the showroom, where Polatkin sat wiping away the crumbs of a belated luncheon of two dozen zwieback and a can of coffee.

"*Nu*," he said conciliatingly, "what is it now?"

"Marcus," Philip began with a nod of his head in the direction of the cutting room, "I want to show you something a picture."

"A picture!" Polatkin repeated as he rose to his feet. "What do you mean a picture?"

"Come," Philip said; "I'll show you."

He led the way to the cutting room, where Yosel sat awaiting his uncle's return.

"What do you think of him now?" Philip demanded. "Ain't he a good-looking young feller?"

Marcus shrugged in a non-committal manner.

"Look what a bright eye he got it," Philip insisted. "You could tell by looking at him only that he comes from a good family."

"He looks a boy like any other boy," said Marcus.

"But even if no one would told you, Marcus, you could see from his forehead yet—and the big head he's got it—you could see that somewheres is *Rabonim* in the family."

"Yow!" Marcus exclaimed. "You could just so much see from his head that his grandfather is a rabbi as you could see from his hands that his father is a crook." He turned impatiently away. "So instead you should be talking a lot of nonsense, Philip, you should set the boy to work sweeping the floor," he continued. "Also for a beginning we would start him in at three dollars a week, and if the boy gets worth it pretty soon we could give him four."

In teaching his nephew the English language Philip Scheikowitz adopted no particular system of pedagogy, but he combined the methods of Ollendorf, Chardenal, Ahn and Polatkin so successfully that in a few days Joseph possessed a fairly extensive vocabulary. To be sure, every other word was acquired at the cost of a clump over the side of the head, but beyond a slight ringing of the left ear that persisted for nearly six months the Polatkin method of instruction vindicated itself, and by the end of the year Joseph's speech differed in no way from that of his employers.

"Ain't it something which you really could say is wonderful the way that boy gets along?" Philip declared to his partner, as the first anniversary of Joseph's landing approached. "Honestly, Marcus, that boy talks English like he would be born here already."

"Sure, I know," Marcus agreed. "He's got altogether too much to say for himself. Only this morning he tells me he wants a raise to six dollars a week."

"Could you blame him?" Philip asked mildly. "He's doing good work here, Marcus."

"Yow! he's doing good work!" Marcus exclaimed. "He's fresh like anything, Scheikowitz. If you give him the least little encouragement, Scheikowitz, he would stand there and talk to you all day yet."

"Not to me he don't," Philip retorted. "Lots of times I am asking him questions about the folks in the old country and always he tells me: 'With greenhorns like them I don't bother myself at all.' Calls his father a greenhorn yet!"

Marcus flapped his right hand in a gesture of impatience.

"He could call his father a whole lot worse," he said. "Why, that *Ganef* ain't even wrote you at all since the boy comes over here. Not only he's a crook, Scheikowitz, but he's got a heart like a brick."

Philip shrugged his shoulders.

"What difference does it make if he is a crook?" he rejoined. "The boy's all right anyway. Yes, Marcus, the boy is something which you could really say is a jewel."

"*Geh weg!*" Marcus cried disgustedly—"a jewel!"

"That's what I said," Philip continued—"a jewel. Tell me, Marcus, how many boys would you find it which they are getting from three to five dollars a week and in one year saves up a hundred dollars, y'understand, and comes to me only this morning and says to me I should take the money for what it costs to keep him while he is learning the language, and for buying him his clothes when he first comes here. Supposing his father is a crook, Marcus, am I right or wrong?"

"Talk is cheap, Scheikowitz," Marcus retorted. "He only says he would pay you the money, Scheikowitz, ain't it?"

Philip dug down into his pocket and produced a roll of ragged one and two dollar bills, which he flung angrily on to a sample table.

"Count 'em," he said.

Marcus shrugged again.

"What is it my business?" he said. "And anyhow, Scheikowitz, I must say I'm surprised at you. A poor boy saves up a hundred dollars out of the little we are paying him here, and actually you are taking the money from him. Couldn't you afford it to spend on the boy a hundred dollars?"

"Sure I could," Philip replied as he pocketed the bills. "Sure I could and I'm going to too. I'm going to take this here money and put it in the bank for the boy, with a hundred dollars to boot, Polatkin, and when the boy gets to be twenty-one he would anyhow got in savings bank a couple hundred dollars."

Polatkin nodded shamefacedly.

"Furthermore, Polatkin," Philip continued, "if you got such a regard for the boy which you say you got it, understand me, I would like to make you a proposition. Ever since Gifkin leaves us, y'understand, we got in our cutting room one *Schlemiel* after another. Ain't it? Only yesterday we got to fire that young feller we took on last week, understand me, and if we get somebody else in his place to-day, Polatkin, the chances is we would get rid of him to-morrow, and so it goes."

Again Polatkin nodded.

"So, therefore, what is the use talking, Polatkin?" Philip concluded. "Let us take Joe Borrochson and learn him he should be a cutter, and in six months' time, Polatkin, I bet yer he would be just so good a cutter as anybody."

At this juncture Polatkin raised his hand with the palm outward.

"Stop right there, Scheikowitz," he said. "You are making a fool of yourself, Scheikowitz, because, Scheikowitz, admitting for the sake of no arguments about it that the boy is a good boy, understand me, after all he's only a boy, ain't it, and if you are coming to make a sixteen-year-old boy an assistant cutter, y'understand, the least that we could expect is that our customers fires half our goods back at us."

"But——" Scheikowitz began.

"But, nothing, Scheikowitz," Polatkin interrupted. "This morning I seen it Meyer Gifkin on Canal Street and he ain't working for them suckers no more; and I says to him is he willing to come back here at the same wages, and he says yes, providing you would see that this here feller Borrochson wouldn't pretty near kill him."

"What do you mean pretty near kill him?" Scheikowitz cried. "Do you mean to say he is afraid of a boy like Joe Borrochson?"

"Not Joe Borrochson," Polatkin replied. "He is all the time thinking that your brother-in-law Borrochson comes over here with his boy and is working in our place yet, and when I told him that that crook didn't come over at all Meyer says that's the first he hears about it or he would have asked for

his job back long since already. So he says he would come in here to see us this afternoon."

"But——" Scheikowitz began again.

"Furthermore," Polatkin continued hastily, "if I would got a nephew in my place, Scheikowitz, I would a damsight sooner he stays working on the stock till he knows enough to sell goods on the road as that he learns to be a cutter. Ain't it?"

Scheikowitz sighed heavily by way of surrender.

"All right, Polatkin," he said; "if you're so dead set on taking this here feller Gifkin back go ahead. But one thing I must got to tell you: If you are taking a feller back which you fired once, understand me, he acts so independent you couldn't do nothing with him at all."

"Leave that to me," Polatkin said, as he started for the cutting room, and when Scheikowitz followed him he found that Gifkin had already arrived.

"*Wie gehts*, Mister Scheikowitz?" Gifkin cried, and Philip received the salutation with a distant nod.

"I hope you don't hold no hard feelings for me," Gifkin began.

"Me hold hard feelings for you?" Scheikowitz exclaimed. "I guess you forget yourself, Gifkin. A boss don't hold no hard feelings for a feller which is working in the place, Gifkin; otherwise the feller gets fired and stays fired, Gifkin."

At this juncture Polatkin in the rôle of peacemaker created a diversion.

"Joe," he called to young Borrochson, who was passing the cutting-room door, "come in here a minute."

He turned to Gifkin as Joe entered.

"I guess you seen this young feller before?" he said.

Gifkin looked hard at Joe for a minute.

"I think I seen him before somewheres," he replied.

"Sure you seen him before," Polatkin rejoined. "His name is Borrochson."

"Borrochson!" Gifkin cried, and Joe, whose colour had heightened at the close scrutiny to which he had been subjected, began to grow pale.

"Sure, Yosel Borrochson, the son of your old neighbour," Polatkin explained, but Gifkin shook his head slowly.

"That ain't Yosel Borrochson," he declared, and then it was that Polatkin and Scheikowitz first noticed Joe's embarrassment. Indeed even as they gazed at him his features worked convulsively once or twice and he dropped unconscious to the floor.

In the scene of excitement that ensued Gifkin's avowed discovery was temporarily forgotten, but when Joe was again restored to consciousness Polatkin drew Gifkin aside and requested an explanation.

"What do you mean the boy ain't Yosel Borrochson?" he demanded.

"I mean the boy ain't Yosel Borrochson," Gifkin replied deliberately. "I know this here boy, Mr. Polatkin, and, furthermore, Borrochson's boy is got one bum eye, which he gets hit with a stone in it when he was only four years old already. Don't I know it, Mr. Polatkin, when with my own eyes I seen this here boy throw the stone yet?"

"Well, then, who is this boy?" Marcus Polatkin insisted.

"He's a boy by the name Lubliner," Gifkin replied, "which his father was Pincus Lubliner, also a crook, Mr. Polatkin,

which he would steal anything from a toothpick to an oitermobile, understand me."

"Pincus Lubliner!" Polatkin repeated hoarsely.

"That's who I said," Gifkin continued, rushing headlong to his destruction. "Pincus Lubliner, which honestly, Mr. Polatkin, there's nothing that feller wouldn't do—a regular *Rosher* if ever there was one."

For one brief moment Polatkin's eyes flashed angrily, and then with a resounding smack his open hand struck Gifkin's cheek.

"Liar!" he shouted. "What do you mean by it?"

Scheikowitz, who had been tenderly bathing Joe Borrochson's head with water, rushed forward at the sound of the blow.

"Marcus," he cried, "for Heaven's sake, what are you doing? You shouldn't kill the feller just because he makes a mistake and thinks the boy ain't Joe Borrochson."

"He makes too many mistakes," Polatkin roared. "Calls Pincus Lubliner a crook and a murderer yet, which his mother was my own father's a sister. Did you ever hear the like?"

He made a threatening gesture toward Gifkin, who cowered in a chair.

"Say, lookyhere, Marcus," Scheikowitz asked, "what has Pincus Lubliner got to do with this?"

"He's got a whole lot to do with it," Marcus replied, and then his eyes rested on Joe Borrochson, who had again lapsed into unconsciousness.

"Oo-ee!" Marcus cried. "The poor boy is dead."

He swept Philip aside and ran to the water-cooler, whence he returned with the drip-bucket brimming over. This he emptied on Joe Borrochson's recumbent form, and after a quarter of an hour the recovery was permanent. In the meantime Philip had interviewed Meyer Gifkin to such good purpose that when he entered the firm's office with Meyer Gifkin at his heels he was fairly spluttering with rage.

"Thief!" he yelled. "Out of here before I make you arrested."

"Who the devil you think you are talking to?" Marcus demanded.

"I am talking to Joseph Borrochson," Scheikowitz replied. "That's who I'm talking to."

"Well, there ain't no such person here," Polatkin retorted. "There's here only a young fellow by the name Elkan Lubliner, which he is my own father's sister a grandson, and he ain't no more a thief as you are."

"Ain't he?" Philip retorted. "Well, all I can say is he is a thief and his whole family is thieves, the one worser as the other."

Marcus glowered at his partner.

"You should be careful what you are speaking about," he said. "Maybe you ain't aware that this here boy's grandfather on his father's side was *Reb* Mosha, the big *Lubliner Rav*, a *Chosid* and a *Tzadek* if ever there was one."

"What difference does that make?" Philip demanded. "He is stealing my brother-in-law's passage ticket anyhow."

"I didn't steal it," the former Joseph Borrochson cried. "My father paid him good money for it, because Borrochson says

he wanted it to marry the widow with; and you also I am paying a hundred dollars."

"Yow! Your father paid him good money for it!" Philip jeered. "A *Ganef* like your father is stealing the money, too, I bet yer."

"*Oser a Stück*," Polatkin declared. "I am sending him the money myself to help bury his aunt, Mrs. Lebowitz."

"You sent him the money?" Philip cried. "And your own partner you didn't tell nothing about it at all!"

"What is it your business supposing I am sending money to the old country?" Marcus retorted. "Do you ask me an advice when you are sending away money to the old country?"

"But the feller didn't bury his aunt at all," Philip said.

"Yes, he did too," the former Joseph Borrochson protested. "Instead of a hundred dollars the funeral only costs fifty. Anybody could make an overestimate. Ain't it?"

Marcus nodded.

"The boy is right, Philip," he said, "and anyhow what does this loafer come butting in here for?"

As he spoke he indicated Meyer Gifkin with a jerk of the chin.

"He ain't butting in here," Philip declared; "he comes in here because I told him to. I want you should make an end of this nonsense, Polatkin, and hire a decent assistant cutter. Gifkin is willing to come back for twenty dollars a week."

"He is, is he?" Marcus cried. "Well, if he was willing to come back for twenty dollars a week why didn't he come

back before? Now it's too late; I got other plans. Besides, twenty dollars is too much."

"You know very well why I ain't come back before, Mr. Polatkin," Gifkin protested. "I was afraid for my life from that murderer Borrochson."

Philip scowled suddenly.

"My partner is right, Gifkin," he said. "Twenty dollars is too much."

"No, it ain't," Gifkin declared. "If I would be still working for you, Mr. Scheikowitz, I would be getting more as twenty dollars by now. And was it my fault you are firing me? By rights I should have sued you in the courts yet."

"What d'ye mean sue us in the courts?" Philip exclaimed. He was growing increasingly angry, but Gifkin heeded no warning.

"Because you are firing me just for saying a crook is a crook," Gifkin replied, "and here lately you found out for yourself this here Borrochson is nothing but a *Schwindler*—a *Ganef*."

"What are you talking about—a *Schwindler*?" Philip cried, now thoroughly aroused. "Ain't you heard the boy says Borrochson is marrying the landlord's widow? Could a man get married on wind, Gifkin?"

"Yow! he married the landlord's widow!" Gifkin said. "I bet yer that crook gambles away the money; and, anyhow, could you believe anything this here boy tells you, Mr. Scheikowitz?"

The question fell on deaf ears, however, for at the repetition of the word crook Philip flung open the office door.

"Out of here," he roared, "before I kick you out."