

"Give it to me, Poppa, and I'll read it. So nervous you are you better sit down."

"No, no. I can stand. I'm all right. What's what has he did, you say?"

"Listen then, Poppa. He says: 'Dear Mamma, I am at * * * in * * * I took the D.C.M. at * * *, and was a prisoner for * * * weeks, but am now on my way home with a party of other invalided men. Don't worry about me. I will be all right. We are at the port of * * * waiting for the next ship. Love to all. P.S.—I am bringing home my D.C.M., but don't tell nobody.—Solle.'"

"What's a D.C.M.?" inquired Moses, squinting up his eyes.

Yetta sank down upon a counter stool, shrugged her shoulders, shook her head and sighed, gloomily.

"Always from a baby that Solle loved bright things. He couldn't keep his hands off them," she said.

"Joolry is it, maybe?"

"Diamonds—that's what 'D' stands for. And he says, 'Don't worry about me.' Now, for why should he say that? In some of them castles and things over there he maybe finds a lot of joolry, and they get after him and put him in prison, and he finds his way out and escapes to that port. Then he is still afraid they will catch him, so—"

"Ya, but Solle is clever. So long he gets away once with the goods he's all right, understand me. But wait till he gets home I maybe don't give it to him! I take that feller across my knee. It will be a lesson for him not to steal no more stuff, and disgrace us."

Moses had been combing his long whiskers with his fingers, his anger rising steadily.

"Now Poppa, mad you are getting! Keep cool. In war it is not called stealing. It is looting. I will go ask Uncle Izzy what a D.C.M. is."

"Na, na! Always your foot you put in it. Say nodings to nobody about it!"

"Not even Becky?"

"Not even her. When he gets home we take that D.C.M. stuff and go and bury it till the trouble blows over, for if that there stolen goods, understand me, is found on the premises up we all go to the law court and we be lucky if we get off with a hundred dollar fine. Nice elegant reputations for us, eh? And me, Moses Finberg, been in respectable business here for twenty years. All on account my son has to go and turn dip already!"

"Nu, Poppa! Always a big imagination you got."

"Stoi! It is the truth. Ruined we will be."

"Oh, surely not, Poppa. It—"

"I tell you, ya! You will maybe got to take in washing again. Me, I will got to be a knight of the push-cart once more, and holler: 'Rags, bones, bottles!'"

Moses continued to grouse on in this strain for some time. Yetta picked up the letter again and began to read it, examining each minutest word and sign. At length she gave a sharp exclamation.

"This here letter was writ three weeks ago!" she cried.

"So?"

"And postmarked twenty days ago. It has been delayed."

"He says he was waiting for a ship."

"To come home on."

"Ya. Well—get your wits to work! He must have come on the same ship, eh?"

"Just what I was thinking. It takes about twenty days to come from where he is. So I guess maybe—"

Just as she spoke a motor-car horn blared musically at the door.

"Ha, Poppa! Here's a sporty customer. Get him to buy that ulsterette with the plaid lining, oder the checked golf suit and show him them new ties."

Yetta spoke hastily, pushing Moses forward. She was again the keen woman of business, her maternal anxiety thrust momentarily aside.

Moses, who had been wiping his spectacles with a greasy silk handkerchief, pocketed both, and advanced briskly to the door, bowing low.

"What can I show you, sir?" he asked, as a man entered and closed the door behind him, "I got every kinds of stuff in stock—all new first-class second-hand goods. I would like to show you—Gott!"

At the same instant Yetta screamed shrilly:—

"Solle, Solle!"

"Hello Mamma! Hello Fader!"

Solomon Finberg, blithe and saucy, brown, and lean as a young panther, stood before his parents, his white, beautiful teeth showing in a broad grin.

"Ha, Fader! You would try to unload some of that junk on me, eh? Mamma, for Gott's sake leave me a little breath, yet. Where's Becky?"

"Pst! Solle, what's this I hear—" began Moses, nursing the hand which had been wrung by Solle's left one.

"He is wounded!" cried Yetta, noting for the first time that her son's right arm hung in a sling.

"I'm all right. It's my shoulder not healed up yet. Where's Becky?"

"Here!" cried Rebecca from subterranean depths, and then came the sound of her sharp little heels on the steps.

"Hello Kid! Gee you're some young sport, ain't yuh? Got garlie all over yourself. Come kiss me," said Solle.

"Solle—did—did anyone see you come home? And where have you hid—that—" began Moses, in a whisper.

"Now Poppa, never mind yet, about that," chided Yetta.

Solle glanced from one parent to the other.

"Can the mystery stuff," he said,

"Whatcha talking about anyhow?"

Suddenly Rebecca shrieked. She had been examining her brother's tunic admiringly.

"He's got the D.C.M.! Mamma, Poppa, look! Oh! Say, he's a hero, our Solle is! Look!"

The young miss seized the medal pinned to her brother's coat and began to dance up and down excitedly.

"Sh—Becky!" interposed Solle, bushing. "Cut it out."

"How did you win it?" demanded Rebecca. "Tell us, quick!"

"Oh—it ain't much of a story. Me and two other fellers hid in a stable loft with a machine gun and peppered a company of Germans across a canal and kept 'em from getting over. They couldn't find our range for hours and when they did the danger to our troops was over, and so we didn't care. It gave our troops three hour's start on the road to V—. But Gee! They burned the stable under us lads! I was the only feller left, able to crawl away and I crawled some I tell yuh! Do I smell dinner cooking?"

"La—a hero he is, and so little he cares, he talks about dinner!" exclaimed Becky, admiringly.

"Maybe he's starving already," interposed Yetta. "We'll get the story right, from him, after he eats. Come."

"By the way, I thought I told you about it—didn't you got my letter? Us men were delayed at Quebec, but—"

"Just got it," and Yetta held up the missive.

"What did Fader say when he hears how I got a D.C.M.?"

"I—" Moses began, after an uncomfortable pause.

"We—" and Yetta stopped suddenly, ashamed to go on.

"Honest, Solle, you handed it to us," said the old man, candidly. "We thought you got into a scrape already, for you told us not to worry and to keep quiet about it and so on."

Solle laughed easily.

"You and Mamma got to learn some things yet," he said airily. "Always it is buy and sell, buy and sell. This here is a honor what I earned it myself and I didn't got to press pants oder run a pawnshop to get it, either!"

Then his mood changed to one of chagrin.

"Nu, don't mind me! I didn't mean to insult your business, Fader."

They all went down to dinner, leaving the shop clerkless for once. How Solle did eat!

"Well, if I sure ain't a dub!" he exclaimed, "I forgot to show you these. Look!"

He stopped in the middle of dessert and thrusting a hand into his pocket drew out a dozen gold pieces of a large denomination, and cast them upon the

table before his sire. The old Jew's eyes glistened.

"Schnorrer! Gott! Help, help!" cried Moses, "It is years since I seen it, so much gold! Mamma, am I awake?"

Solle took up a gold coin and spun it toward his sister.

"I guess twenty dollars buys you a new dress, eh?"

Rebecca gave a squeal of rapture, as she clutched the shining disk.

"A Englishman gimme them," explained Solle resuming his pudding. "I got just so many more in a belt around my stomach."

"A Englishman? For why?" demanded his mother.

"Well, I saved him from being blown to mince meat by a shell. I carried him two miles to a reserve trench, and he gimme the belt. He was dying anyhow, he said. I didn't like for to take it. But he made me. He died after."

"Poor feller!" exclaimed Yetta, "And it is English gold. It can soon be changed, though."

Moses was fingering the yellow pile, lovingly.

"What you intend to do with it?" he asked eagerly.

"It is for you," said his son.

"For me?"

"Ya. Didn't I told you? With the rest I get married and set up in a little joolry business. I lost two fingers off my right hand, but—"

"Two fingers!" cried his mother, paling. "You never told us—"

"Now you must go and propose by Miss Riesenthal," cried Moses, slapping his son on the back. "Right away quick. You should strike while the iron is in the fire."

"How proud she will be of you!" declared Yetta. "A fine rich girl, too—"

"Miss Riesenthal nothing!"

Solle rose from the table and brushed the crumbs from his tunic. Then he reached for his forage-cap.

"Where you off to with such a hurry?" asked Moses.

"I'm off to propose by Mary Czerwerki A fine daughter-by-law she makes you, and maybe I bring her back to supper. Ta ta, folks! Cheer up. It's a long lane what gathers no moss."

Mince Meat Recipe.—Two pints of lean beef that has been cooked and ground, 4 apples, 1 pint of currants, 2 pints of raisins, 4 pints sugar, 1 pint molasses, 1 pint vinegar, 1 pint cider, 1 pound citron, 1 nutmeg, 3 tablespoons cinnamon, 2 tablespoons cloves, 1 tablespoon allspice and 3 tablespoons salt.

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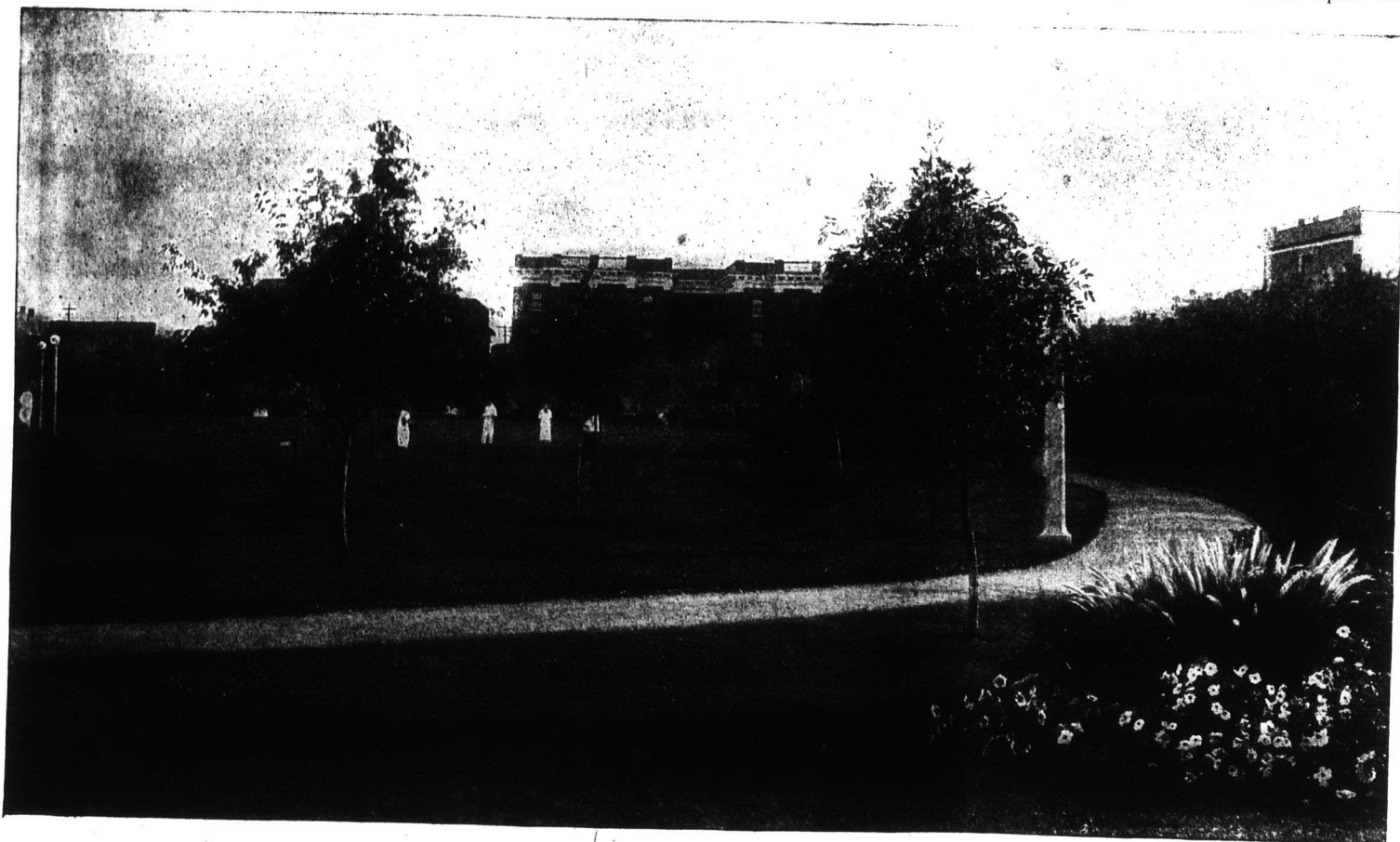
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