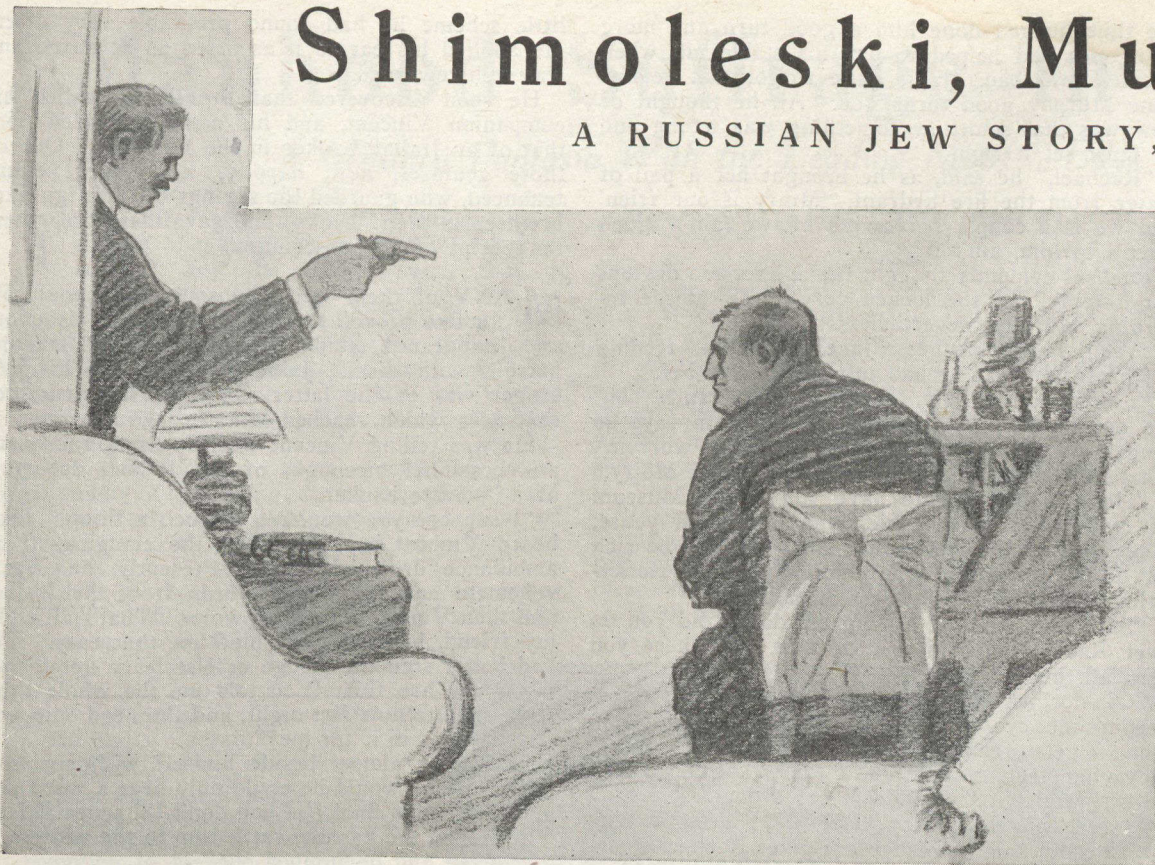


Shimoleski, Murphy & Co.

A RUSSIAN JEW STORY, By ED CAHN



"The detective, with levelled revolver, burst in upon Vincent."

MURPHY, policeman number 10999, stood in the shade of the larger trees bordering one of the few breathing spots in Greater New York, and, after a furtive glance around for the sergeant, loosened the top button of his coat and removing his summer helmet, wiped his feverish and perspiring brow with a handkerchief bordered with a violent shade of pink.

Along the curb was a scattered string of taxi and hansom cabs and one lonely coupe.

It was the hottest day in midsummer and the town seemed utterly deserted by the "good ones" who, most of the year, make a cabby's life not the most unremunerative in the world; for all they will each and every one of them pathetically assure you that though they are "always on the job" they are just about starving to death.

Every box was deserted and the cabbies were lolling on the railing surrounding the park; their coats were open, their shabby silk hats removed altogether or tipped so far back that a juggler might well envy them the dexterity they displayed in keeping them on at all.

Murphy strolled a few steps nearer, more to be on the move than because he wanted to get any closer.

"There's Baldy," he thought, disgustedly eyeing a red-faced villain who had been kicked off nearly every cab-stand in New York. His head was as innocent of hair as a billiard ball and his face was coloured the brilliant hue of a broiled lobster by years of wind, whisky and a violent temper.

"Ten to one they are jawin' about the ponies or Tammany Hall. Sure they are a bad bunch. I bet every one of them deserves to be doin' time for something. I've a good notion to run them in for obstructin' the sidewalk. 'Tis Tammany Hall an' me in particular," he told himself, for, as he approached, a sudden silence fell, and Baldy cut short a sentence.

"They're wonderin' why I don't get busy on th' graft. Sure can't they give me time now? I'm only on the beat two days." When he was well past he indulged in a grim smile, for officer Murphy was that *rara avis*, a policeman who scorned petty graft.

Cabbies on a second-rate cab-stand such as this, peanut men and push-cart vendors, unless they "got fresh," were as safe from any depredation from him as if unborn.

Lest you think this paragon never lived in real life, I will hasten to add that Murphy was not averse to turning an honest dollar whenever he got the chance.

Many was the time his heart had softened to an inebriate reveller who had the mischance to roll into his arms in the wee small hours, after a softener of suitable size had changed hands.

Often and often in those same small hours had over-speedy joy-riders contributed, and—whisper it low—more often than once or twice, had a skylarking Madame High-Society been put into her carriage with a fatherly admonition and had wisely seen the needfulness of propitiating her admonisher

with whatever lucre she had about her, often considerable.

There is nothing like fear of Mrs. Grundy for making her worshippers and slaves generous to "the boys in blue." And for a money-maker, there is nothing to compare with a station at the opera house, combined with a memory like a filing-cabinet for names and the faces framed in carriage and auto windows during the season.

"Say," said "Freddy the Kid" to Baldy, after Murphy was out of hearing. "What cher tink about dat guy? Tink we oughta make a crack ter 'im?"

"Wot kin' of a crack?" said Baldy, yawning.

"Aw gwan! Do youse tink I means a crack on de coco? Naw, I means shall one of us do the Love Kiss Waltz up to 'im an' ast 'im wat 'is graft is."

"Kid, youse gimme a pain in de necktie. If any of youse is dat soft, I'll put cher lamps out," said Baldy. "Not on your life; we'll hold our mugs, see! Let 'im make the first break. I betcha he's been sent over here from the wes' side some'her's fer goin' de graft too strong, an' he's layin' low, see."

"Den if dat's de dope, he won't try to ring in on us fer awhile yet. Hully gee! We'll have de coin now," said the kid, hopefully. The others laughed derisively and the talk turned to the eccentric behaviour of the ten to one shot they had backed, to their everlasting sorrow, the day before.

MEANTIME, Murphy went his way, dolefully musing on the futility of human endeavour, his own in particular.

Who would have thought that last drunk he had "shook down for twenty" should have been a friend of one of the police powers and have been responsible for that uncomfortable half hour on the carpet and that bothersome two weeks of suspension?

Heretofore Murphy had gone his devious way unsuspected and unquestioned.

He was a big, handsome son of Erin, generous, did as he was told without question or comment, and had the finest "forgettery" in the department.

He was unfailingly loyal to Tammany and did valiant duty at election time. You never caught him remembering anything inconvenient, and his superiors, in private, used to swear by him. Besides, he was never caught "holding out" and was not averse to dividing the spoils.

It was unmercifully hot and Murphy, besides being par-boiled outside, boiled within. His tongue was parched, and he felt as if a dollar was not too great a price for just one long, cold, schooner of beer. There were moisture-parlours on all sides, but he had the oppressed feeling of the watcher watched, and did not care to risk it on unfamiliar ground.

But physical thirst was as nothing to the thirst for revenge which consumed him.

Curiously enough, he felt no anger toward the superior who had dealt so severely with him, that was part of the game, but if he could have planted his great red fist squarely in the offending eye of

the man who had not been too drunk to remember him, he would have been happy.

This new beat was second class with a vengeance, and unless he descended to extorting tribute from the push-cart men and the cabbies, he would not make here in a month what his old ground had never failed to net him a day in the season.

Oh, yes, gentle reader, there are seasons in graft just the same as in lobsters and strawberries and opera. The more unseasonable, apparently, the better.

Of course some lobsters, like the poor, we have always with us. I don't exactly refer to the canned variety, but I will admit they ought all to be canned.

The season for strawberries is, as everybody knows, from November to February, when they are hot-house, flat, tasteless, painted like a Forty-second Street rose, and expensive! Oh, dear, yes.

When the strawberries are at their very most superlative worst, and the lobsters are biting well, excuse me, I mean have bitten well and are at their biggest, best, reddest and juiciest, as they lie in their cosy nests of lettuce with tasty trimmings, and you watch "her" clasp her dainty, jeweled fingers and exclaim, "Oh, isn't he a nice *fat* one!" and you—complacently pleased with her toilette and the hit she is making with the folks at the next table—gaze around at the glittering roomful, eager and anxious and falling over each other to make Becktor and Stanley rich, and wonder how in the name of modern miracles you are to pay the piper and keep out of the bankruptcy court; then—or rather some three hours before—you get your opera, and men like Murphy begin to collect their graft.

Who says things are not even in this dear, delightful, blandly wicked and fascinating old world?

AS Murphy trudged wearily along, every generous pore bursting with perspiration and wrath as he thought of his afflictions, he failed to observe a hansom drawn by a decrepit-looking grey horse come to a stop by the curb.

The driver, from his airy perch behind, threw out the weight, and with the devilish perversity often shown by inanimate things who through long association with ourselves get to take on our own humours, it rolled merrily along on one ear, so to speak, and if officer Murphy had not suddenly come to himself, and removed his number twelve from there in less time than it takes to tell it, would have come to a stop on his pet corn and given him a real grievance and another vacation.

"What the —" he began, violently. The cabby uttered one horrified "Oi!" hunched up his shoulders, ducked his head, and closed his eyes to shut out the vision of a jellified foot and the horrible fate that would surely descend upon him.

But as we have seen, Murphy was spared and there was no tragedy.

He stopped in the middle of the long breath he had drawn in order to properly express his opinion and stared at the bony Rosinante who stood meekly between the shafts, one flank hitched up, for all the world like a lazy cash-girl. What advancing years had left of a once very fine rat-tail was swishing flies. One ear was cocked forward like a rabbit's, and the other lay back in a dejected, oh-what's-the-use sort of manner that would go to your heart.

Murphy took in all these details and turned his eyes on the huddled little figure upon the box.

Surely he knew that battered old tile hat, half-hidden between the shoulders of the ragged coat which was two sizes too large for its wearer and had once been the most dignified of Prince Alberts. And that beast! Although he had seen it carried away dead with his own eyes, he never doubted for the smallest fraction of an instant but what it was Rachael.

THE cab-man grew tired of hiding his head ostrich-wise, and his curiosity to see why retribution was so slow about overtaking him made him brave enough to uncover one eye and peep at the man he had come so near to hitting. One glimpse was enough.

He straightened up. A wide, glad smile spread over his round face, lifting his fan-like ears until the tile bade fair to be roughly displaced from its comfortable seat upon them, and waving his hand in greeting he jumped down and reached Murphy in one jump.

"Moify! Gott in Himmel! Belief me, I am so glad to see you I assure you honest, I can't tell