

Rosenstein or Jones?

By Ed. Cahn. Specially written for W.H.M.

MRS. LEVINSOHN had asked her daughter Rosalie twice, if she would have her dessert, and received no reply.

Rosalie was looking straight at her mother, but there was a far away look in her eyes and around her full red lips there played a tender little smile. Evidently, she was not listening, and her thoughts were not on such a prosaic thing as dinner.

"Come out of it! Wake up there! Here you are!" cried Moe, her irrepressible small brother, snapping his fingers in her face, as he had seen a hypnotist do in a show. For this he was instantly sent from the table. "Rosie's in love! Rosie's in love, I know she is," he flung over his shoulder as he made his exit.

Her tell-tale flush did not escape her father, and his heavy brows contracted. As he put on his hat, lit his evil-smelling old briar and departed for his usual evening stroll around the block, Levinsohn wondered uneasily if by any chance Moe could be right.

"Rosie is now a woman, nearly," he mused, "it ain't strange if she thinks of love. But I better get her a decent young feller with a business, or at least good prospects to fall in love with. I ain't going to have any such a foolishness as what Symon's daughter gets into, by marrying a good-for-nothing without a cent or a business, only a curly black mustache. Now Symon supports, besides the girl, him and the curly mustache. Such a nonsense I don't allow." And he scowled savagely at his pipe.

Characteristically, Levinsohn forgot that he and his patient Martha had been married on considerably less than five dollars, and done very well indeed.

He had come to America from Russia when very young, but not soon enough to escape the heavy sullenness of the oppressed Jewish class from whence he sprang, and he had never been able to rid himself of the strong accent which bespoke his humble origin.

By dint of much crafty struggling and hard work, he had become a rather well-to-do clothing merchant, and at fifty-five was a morose, unimaginative, plodding old man, who ruled his family, as he did his clerks, with a rod of iron, a terrible voice, and a bitterly caustic tongue. Deep down in his crusty heart he loved his family, but he concealed the fact so well, and with so much pains, that no one ever suspected it but his wife.

He was so intent on his plans for Rosalie, that he paid no attention to where he was going.

"Good evening, Levinsohn! Ain't you going to speak to your old friends no more?" It was his one crony, Abraham Strasser, who was lounging in the doorway of his little tobacco shop.

"Sure I am," said Levinsohn, coming out of his reverie with a start.

Stepping into the store he took the battered old arm-chair, which had been sacred to him from time out of mind, and seated himself where he could look out on the dirt and turmoil of Third Avenue and get the full benefit of the summer evening breeze.

"Well," said Strasser, after he had sold two five cent cigars for the best two for a quarter to an inebriated gentleman in overalls and a joyful humor, and had short-changed him outrageously, "How was business to-day?"

"Rotten," said Levinsohn, laconically.

"How about you?"

"If it gets any worse, I haff to close opp."

Never, in all the years they had known each other, had either confessed that business was good. They smoked awhile in contented silence.

Levinsohn," said Strasser, suddenly.

"You got a daughter."

"Sure I know it. I had her already nineteen years. Tell me some recen ter news."

"Ach, Gott! Wait a minute, always you got to be fussy."

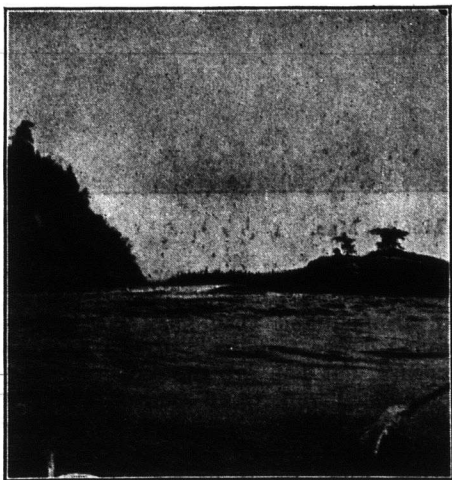
You know my cousin what I often tell you about what is now deal? Well, his son by his first wife has come by New York to live. He is a fine young feller but he giff me the shock of my life when

he comes in by the store and calls me by mein name."

"He iss the lifving image of his mother he says. I take his say so for it, for he sure don't looks like any of us. His mother was not Yiddish and dot's why when she died her folks took the boy to raise, and we nefer heard no more about him."

"That's bad," said Levinsohn, shaking his head.

"Just what I told him. The idea, I says, of you, what don't look no more like a Jew than what a Irisher does, having



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such a name as Isadore Rosenstein."

"He says he can't help it if he don't look Jewish, but he is a Jew and he don't care who knows it. His mother's folks tried to make from out of him a congregationaler, but Izzy says it wasn't no go. I tell you, Levinsohn, blood is thicker than what holy-water is, and I'm proud of that boy."

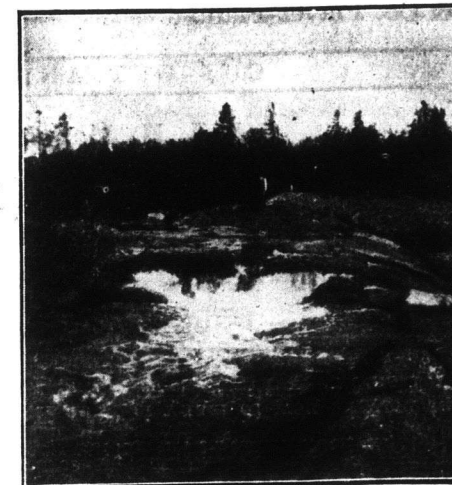
"Congregationalers don't use holy-water, I guess you mean Catholics," objected Levinsohn in a bored tone. "One's just the same what another is, but what's the difference so long as he is a good Yid-disher?"

"He already has got it himself a bookstore on Second Avenue for a bargain, and he says he is going to live here now, for ever in New York. He has got money in the banks also, but how much he didn't say yet, and real-estate in the sub-burbs from San Francisco, where he used to live."

"He is twenty-eight years old, and a nice, decenter, young feller from all around with no bad habits you couldn't find it. The only thing that the most particularist person could take exception to is that he don't look like a Jew."

"Well!" said Levinsohn, "In other words, all this here feller ain't got is a hook nose and a pair of wings. But what's my Rosie got to do with it?"

Strasser took his pipe out of his mouth and turned slowly round in his chair until he was facing Levinsohn. "What you think? You're her fadder ain't you? What you spose I'm telling you all bound who he iss and where he comes from, and what he's got? To hear myself talk? He wants to get for himself a wife. That's why." And he resumed his pipe with a deeply injured air which he only assumed to mask his delight at the impression he had made.



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