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R E C O L L E C T I O N S

L. Sz.

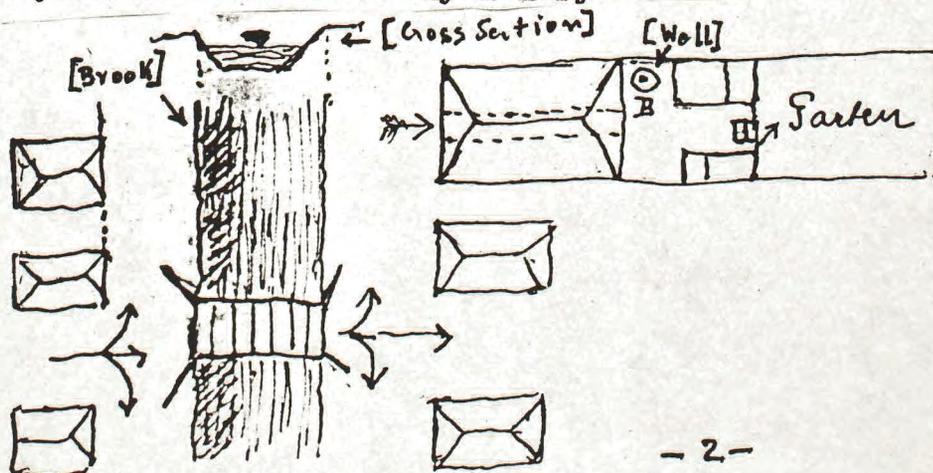
Yonkers, N.Y. August 1953

The loneliness of the last phase of my life which I am spending, bedridden, in this nursing home [Saw Mill River Convalescent Home in Yonkers] gives me the impulse to describe my life and that of my immediate family, its rise and decline, as all this lives in my memory, so that my dear children who never knew their paternal grandparents and hardly knew anything about them, may read these pages, should they evince any interest in them.

My recollections go back to the time when I was four years old; and, owing to my excellent memory, I have not forgotten anything worth describing. My parents as well as myself were born in Slovakia, in the mountainous region of the County of Arva, to which their forefathers had migrated from the East, several hundred years ago. My parents were orthodox Jews, not so much with respect <sup>to</sup> their religious faith, but by the tradition of past generations. My mother was given in marriage at the age of fourteen by her father who lived in Matina, a small village (which was also the birthplace of my mother), high in the Tatra Mountains, just this side of the county line, the County of Liptó lying beyond, where he [as a Jew], according to the general custom in Slovakia, ran the village tavern. The necessity for that marriage, at such an early age, came, after the death of his first wife, from the desire of the father to eliminate all possible obstacles to his second marriage, which, by the way, was <sup>also</sup> to alleviate the situation of his small household. This proved to become possible only

if the wish of the woman he chose for his second wife, was satisfied, that all the children of the first wife leave the home. These were numerous, and I never learned anything about their fate, except that of one of my mother's youngest sisters, whose husband later became an employee of my father's.

I was the ninth child, [This is an error, it should read: the eighth child] of my parents, and when I was four years old, there were two older brothers and five older sisters, and also a one-and-a-half year old brother in our family. At that time my oldest sister had already been married, a year earlier, at the age of sixteen. My family lived in Turdossin, a nice little town in the valley of <sup>the</sup> Arva river, which divided the town in the middle, in a home which my parents had built for themselves and which contained two large apartments, separated by a vaulted-over entranceway for carriages, [leading from the street to the courtyard]. A large farmyard was reached through this entranceway; and further-on there was an even larger garden. On one side of the yard were the stalls for two cows and two horses, in a large clean barn with a high loft for hay and straw. On the other side there was a shed for a light gig and a larger coach with top, plus an enclosure for garden and household paraphernalia. Here is a sketch of the general layout as retained in my memory:



Many of the inhabitants of that town were educated Jews who had gone to high school in Vienna or in cities of Silesia, after having attended the six grades of the excellent local Jewish elementary school. My brothers and sisters went to this same school. They received their further education from governesses who were licensed teachers. We had two excellent physicians in town who had studied at the University of Vienna. Many years later, one of them was still living in that same house of ours, and finally purchased it to become its owner. A family relationship also developed with that physician, by way of the marriage of my second oldest sister to the brother of the doctor's wife, a man who was part owner of the great iron wholesale establishment in Sillein, that belonged for generations to his family, the Rosenbergs, who were held in great esteem in the County.

Our next door neighbor in the house, this Dr. Kux, had at the time he moved in, already three little daughters of whom the oldest was my senior by one year and became my only playmate, since my brothers and sisters, being so much older, showed little interest in me. This girl was plain and had the "voluntary limp" [probably a congenital limp] which, however, improved considerably in later years. But she was a smart child with wonderful ideas for games. Our preferred play was at the brook in front of the house; and whenever its water stood low, we would climb down the steep rocky embankment all the way to the bottom, and would pick from between the rocks, shiny little stones and empty shells which had

been washed down from the mountains at flood times. There were also half-petrified pieces of pure clay there which could be easily worked with a knife, and out of which we carved plates, pots, and pans for the kitchen of a doll house. We were under strict orders of our parents to get back inside the house when we would hear the bells of the returning cow herd, even though the cows were well-behaved. **Every single one of them** came home by herself, without any prodding, to its own stall, where the preparations had already been made for relieving her udder from the milk accumulated during the day, a task accomplished without delay by a maid, trained for this work, **whose** hands had to be well washed.

A very exciting thing happened to us one day. Involved in our game of collecting shells in the brook bed, we almost missed hearing the cow bells of the returning herd and we were still struggling up the steep bank of the brook when the herd had already passed us partially, and had reached our house. We dared not crossing its path, so we stopped at the brook's edge, intending to wait for the entire herd to have passed. At the rear came the "obligatory" bull, included in any herd for providing it with progeny, which those bulls accomplished conscientiously albeit unconsciously. This particular bull faced me suddenly, motionless. He appeared to like children and had wise eyes; and before I knew, I found myself sitting up on one of his horns, holding on to it for dear life and howling full blast, until the neighbors came running from their houses and rescued me from my awkward involuntary perch, carrying me off,

and delivering me straight to my mother's arms. I do not recall having been punished for disobeying the rule to be home safe in time. The fright I experienced made up for the punishment I would have deserved. I was almost five years old at that time.

My father was engaged in the business of felling trees and merchandising of the logs, an enterprise which in the course of the years had made him quite wealthy. For this business he purchased from the forest manager of the squire the stands on the slopes of the narrow valley of the Árva river. These were all fir and spruce. The specimens serviceable for building purposes were felled late in the fall; in winter-time they were stripped of their branches and let slide all the way down the mountain slopes which were amply covered with snow and ice, to be assembled to rafts, without however damaging the logs. The so prepared rafts were pushed and let down into the Árva as soon as the thaw came and <sup>had</sup> filled the river; then, appropriately manned, and guided without effort in the ample waters of the river, to where it emptied into the river Vág, the latter carried those rafts into the Danube at Komorn. Most of the lumber was taken from the river at that point and was offered for sale to the owners of saw mills, which cut up the lumber for building purposes.

This type of business enriched many Jews living in Slovakia, who then endeavored to employ their so acquired capital in different, less risky enterprises, even though the latter were hardly lucrative in those northern and eastern counties

of the Country. So, some of these people did leave their hereditary homeland and settled further westward. The young men, intelligent and ambitious, did not see any future for themselves in these parts and, bent on acquiring academic degrees, abandoned parents, brothers and sisters, without compunction, even in view of the possibility of want and privation they would have to face in satisfying their ambitions, in which efforts they mostly succeeded. As graduates of universities in western capitals they would then settle in Budapest, capital city of their own country [Hungary] to become soon the most sought-after physicians and engineers whom the fast-developing city lacked to a serious degree.

My father who began to worry about the support of his numerous growing daughters, which to safeguard did not seem possible if he didn't make a change, made up his mind to join so many of his correligionists, to give up the lumber business, and to start a new life in farming, on better land further west. He soon saw his plan carried out. His connections in the capital made it possible for him to find a suitable location, through intervention of some non-Jewish lawyers who were acquainted with Hungarian land-owner aristocrats.

The one found for him was a country estate in the broad valley of the river Zalatna in the County of Sohl, with rich stands of **beech** suitable for use as heating material, as well as for charcoal burning. The insufficient yield of this estate as income for Count Almásy, in his own operation of the land, induced him to lease his property at conditions favorable

to the lessee. He, himself, lacked the necessary working capital because he, as so many of his social equals, had drunk up and gambled away in Paris and in Monte Carlo what he had inherited from his forefathers. The contract of lease was for fifty years, with no right of the owner to terminate it, including to the lessee's privilege to occupy, together with his family, one wing of the ancient castle Végles, that was part of the estate. That castle was built above the main road [in the valley], perching on rocks that juttred out over the valley; this situation provided an open view in three directions over the valley, bringing within view the buildings of the farm which went under the name of Prstusch. The lease agreement took effect immediately upon signing. It had been prepared by the lawyer who had acted as the go-between. However, it did not contain, as it turned out later, the usual stipulation that the lessor shall have the leasehold recorded in the Record of Deeds, as an encumbrance, which my father, ignorant in legal matters, failed to observe, and which was to have dire consequences later on.

It was not too late yet for the winter sowing as the fields had already been plowed. So M. Ring, my oldest sister's husband, was promptly engaged as manager, and he moved with his wife and his few-weeks-old daughter into a nice two-room apartment in the administration building of the farm. At that time there was no railroad line there, but one was promised for the near future. The soil of the farm was generally not good; in fact, because of many years' lack of sufficient cattle, and

consequently of manure,<sup>it</sup> was poor. It was suitable only for growing rye, oats, clover, and, in the low-lying parts, hemp, but not for wheat or corn. Large areas were planted to potatoes, which furnished the income of the lease. These were used for the production of alcohol in the distillery established at the castle, already there, but antiquated and much in need of repair; while the by-products were excellently suited for cattle feed.

Years later, at the age of ten, I had an opportunity to observe, and to have explained to me by the foreman of the by then modernized still, the simple chemical process by means of which the alcohol<sup>was</sup> manufactured, a substance that was much sought after, mainly as liquor for human consumption, and only to a minor degree as alcohol for medicinal use. The process practiced on our farm, briefly described, was as follows:

In the fall, the ripe potatoes were dug from the soil, stripped clean and conveyed to the point of use by shoveling them, through vertical shafts, into deep, dry cellars built of brick, where they were stored for a while so as to rid them of all dampness. The cellars were so arranged that their floors were level with the floor of the distillery building, and connected thereto by wooden bridges leading to openings through which the potatoes fell directly into vats, in which, when these were closed airtight, the potatoes were boiled to mash by high-pressure steam, together with molasses, a by-product of the manufacture of beet sugar, until the fermentation was complete. This chemical process converted the starch content of the raw

material into alcohol vapors which then were liquified in the condensers and conveyed into well-made oaken barrels, and thus made ready for sale. Before these barrels were closed airtight, the alcohol was officially tested for proof which was the basis for the amount of alcohol tax to be paid.

Following this, perhaps superfluous, description of a chemical process, I shall now revert to our moving [to the castle] which occurred after the spring thaw. The reason for the delay was a need to subject the rooms which we were to inhabit to a thorough cleaning. These rooms had remained unused for many years and served bats and other creatures for nesting. Cobwebs covered the corners, and dirt lay an inch deep on the oaken floors. Broken window panes had to be replaced, doors and windows painted, and the walls whitewashed. After all this was accomplished, moving could begin. Three days were allotted for the trip [to the new place]. Thus an ample supply of baked things had to be prepared, since nothing else could be considered for the many children, who were raised mainly on high quality pastry and boiled farinacious meals, anyway. My mother did the baking herself; she knew to prepare, with lots of butter and cream, marvelous pastries, filled with ground walnuts, poppy-seed, and raisins, that were first mixed with pot cheese. At the same time the servants, who were of a goodly number, assembled all the furniture and household goods and everything else in the nature of fixtures and then loaded all this on large peasant carts and covered everything with waterproof tarpaulins. **After** this was done, the children, under the supervision of our older sisters, settled, two and two on seats

fashioned ~~from baled~~ dry hay, in peasant-wagons of a better kind, with tarpaulins stretched on hoops high above <sup>the</sup> our heads. At the head of/caravan of wagons traveled my parents in their good carriage, with the youngest child and its Slovak nurse. After four hours of traveling, we reached our first night's stopover, the village of Kriva, whose tavern was run by my father's brother-in-law named Buchbinder, husband of his oldest sister. A very religious man, this Buchbinder was; and I will refer to his family later on. There were few sleeping accommodations available, since that family was very numerous, too. Nonetheless, the four youngest children were put into beds, while the older ones slept in the hayloft. My parents, the baby, and the nurse, found a suitable place in the **nearest** village. We spent the <sup>following</sup> / ~~the~~ night with my father's parents, then already very old, in the Village of Nagyfalva which we had to pass on our way. There were enough sleeping accommodations there, since most of the members of that family had already left their parents' house as grownups. On the third day we reached a well-built military highway which led, by hairpin curves, over the watershed into the County of Sohl where, towards evening, we found shelter at the well-kept inn in the lovely market town of Altsohl. The loaded carts had fallen back several miles, but reached our abode nevertheless during that evening. We reached our final goal during the next morning and stopped in front of the ancient gate of the old castle where the farmhands were awaiting us respectfully at the drawbridge that was lowered immediately upon our arrival. As far as I remember, the sight of that half-ruined castle

did not please me at all. We drove straight into the inner courtyard where the wing of the castle with the living quarters was situated. A wide flight of stairs, with worn out stone steps, interrupted by several landings, ended, at the top, at the entrance to a very wide corridor which ran the full length of the wing and onto which opened the doors of all of the rooms.

My sister, whose apartment was at the farm, did not meet us at the time of our arrival at the castle, as that was so uncertain. However, all preparations had been made to render our stay in the rooms, for the first few days after our arrival, somehow possible. An adequate number of bed frames, fashioned of wooden boards, had been distributed in the rooms. A large quantity of fresh milk products, honey, rice, and cream of wheat, as well as much preserved fruit, were stored on shelves in the deep, cold cellar. My parents were driven, within an hour **after** our arrival, and after leaving us little ones in the care of our older brothers and sisters, to the farm, to see our oldest sister, and spent the night there. The same day, towards evening, the loaded carts also arrived and were quickly unloaded by the numerous farm help. That night, the furniture was left temporarily where it had been unloaded; and next day it was distributed in the rooms as required for the purpose of each.

After only a few days, the process of the household ran with the usual smoothness. Meat had to be brought from Altsohl nearby, three times a week. But the youngest children ate only eggs, milk, butter, cereals, and pastries. My mother continued to do the cooking by herself, since the household was kosher

in the traditional sense, and therefore the cooking could not be left to the servants. For a better understanding of the castle's layout, I would like to describe it here.

The castle <sup>was</sup> built on rock, with walls three feet thick, had two huge courtyards separated from each other by one of the wings, with living quarters for the administrator of the country estate who stayed there to check on the compliance with the contract of lease. The first courtyard was the farmyard, complete with sheds for horses, cows, and poultry; and adjoining them were the spacious living quarters of the yard-hands. In the center there was the deep draw-well, sunk into the solid rock by blasting, which collected water that seeped under the road from the mountains that the castle faced. The well was enclosed, for protection from contamination, in a wooden structure with roof. Next to it and at the proper height was an inclined open channel, made of heavy boards, that led to the trough for watering the horses and cattle. The second apartment wing joined the first one at right angles at the common flight of stairs, with entrances at the top, right and left, to the two apartments. My parents took for us the first four large halls. There were also, in addition to the very large kitchen and pantry, two smaller rooms, set aside for the soon-to-arrive teacher and his young wife. The lower floor consisted of vaulted-over storage spaces which, judging from what had been left there, may have served for storing military equipment. In the same courtyard, adjoining the end of the apartment wing, was a pool that had been blasted out of the rock for receiving the waters that drained from the two court-

yards after every heavy rainfall, in which swam the ducks and geese that were raised in the yard.

On the road from the castle to the village of Zalathna there was a large tavern serving liquor. This tavern was part of the country estate and thus at my father's disposal; he left it to his brother-in-law to run/<sup>it;</sup> he was the husband of my father's youngest sister. The tavern was a stopping-place of the peasants who carried their surplus produce along that road to the weekly market at Losonc, where such produce was bought by Jewish merchants. Losonc had already its railroad connection to the capital and thus had become a commercial center of the surrounding counties, since produce brought to its markets could be promptly transshipped by rail to Budapest, where it found a retail market at good prices.

A highly educated teacher had been engaged exclusively for my sisters' private schooling, as my oldest brother was, at that time, already at a German commercial school in Budapest,<sup>and</sup> the second-oldest at a high-school in Silesia, and myself not yet ready for being taught.

There were ample opportunities for me to play in the courtyards of the castle, but I lacked a playmate because my younger brother was yet too young to serve me as one. My mother, in order to remedy the situation, decided to invite the son of the bar-man of the tavern, a boy of my age but mentally rather retarded. He came to the castle every morning, but because of his mental retardation, he was not a great help to me. Catching and

running races were the only games we could play. One day, when we started once more to race around the pool in the rear yard, the boy fell into its deep water and sank into several feet of heavy mud at its bottom, accumulated there perhaps for hundreds of years. Upon hearing my shouts for help, the women came running from the first yard, but none of them knew what to do to avert a catastrophe. Consternation of all those at the castle could not undo the disaster; and the despair of the boy's mother had no bounds; she loved him dearly, retarded as he was. Being of melancholy disposition, she now lost her mental balance entirely, and several weeks after the tragic loss of her son, the poor woman was found in the attic of her tavern, hanged by her own hands. Her husband, now left entirely alone, moved away in a short while, and we never heard of him again.

Now, let me report yet another tragic occurrence, this time in the family of my father, about which I heard later, at mature age. This happened in the Buchbinder family; he was one of my father's brothers-in-law. For his Jewish studies and his righteousness he had earned the special respect of the Jews of his own village and those of the surroundings. Among other things, he was authorized by the medical authorities to perform circumcisions, which were done on all male children of the Jews and which he practiced, without a fee, in a wide surrounding area. He had two daughters and four sons. The oldest son graduated with honors from the medical school in Vienna, was called, after completion of his studies, to the

medical service of the army where he stayed for some time, since he had little hope for success in private practice, having had no connections in the capital cities of the <sup>[Austro-Hungarian]</sup> Monarchy. He was transferred to Brünn where he served in military hospitals. He received due recognition and, in a short time, advanced to be regimental medical officer of that garrison. Those in higher command recommended to him that he change his religion and assume the Catholic faith, the only one offering salvation, which he then proceeded to do without any particular qualms. Soon thereafter he became court physician to the Baroness Seefried, a granddaughter of Emperor Franz Joseph and daughter of Princess Gisella von Habsburg. His parents never learned about his change of religion, but it was known to his brothers and sisters.

It was about that time that tragedy befell that family. It happened on the Jewish holiday of New Year. Buchbinder and his entire family, except for his oldest daughter, left behind to watch the house, drove to a nearby village on the eve of that holiday to attend a festive religious service, prepared for the Jews of the whole area, at which the pious Buchbinder was to lead in prayer. The strict order given the daughter, who stayed behind, was not to let anybody into the house and not to give out any liquor under any circumstances, not even through the window. A young peasant who appeared on New Year's Day at the locked door of the tavern, refused to give up, and when, in spite of his repeated demands, the girl didn't unlock it, he broke it open and threatened the scared, delicate girl if

she wouldn't give him any liquor. However, as a precaution, all the liquor had been moved, the previous day, to the cellar, and locked behind its steel door; thus the man failed in his search behind the counter. Over that he got into a wild rage, attacked the young girl, threw her to the floor and, in spite of her desperate resistance, raped her. There were no next-door neighbors who could have heard her frantic shouts. She kept the disgrace done to her as a secret from her parents, who got home the next day, out of fear that a criminal complaint, which they would lodge with the police, might bring about deathly vengeance of the young [Slovak] peasants upon her family, a thing that was by no means impossible. The girl sank into a state of melancholy which her parents observed with great pain, without having even the slightest idea of what the cause might have been. When the girl became aware of what had ensued from the terrible deed, she did not hesitate any longer, in her deep shame, to put an end to her life by her own hands, so as to spare her parents the inevitable disgrace. One day she threw herself into the wild, swollen brook in her village, from where her dead body could be retrieved only several days later. She was the third victim of an unnatural death in my father's family. I met a brother of this girl on occasion of a memorial service for Max Polacsek that took place in the synagogue of the orphanage in our neighborhood. [This was much later, in Budapest. The orphanage was on the same street where I grew up.] He had married a niece of Max Polacsek and therefore, was considered a relative of ours. [Max Polacsek's

daughter Lincsi married my mother's younger brother, Alfred.] That brother of the young girl later became wealthy by speculating in houses of which he owned some himself in the neighborhood of the Budapest School of Technology.

Now let me return to my own family [and the story of my childhood]. The work on the farm at that time was already in full swing. New, modern stalls had been built, the shingles of the barn roof replaced, and all preparations made for starting up the distillery right after the potatoes would be harvested which was soon to come. The ample stands of beech trees on the hillside served as fuel. Those trees, thought to be suitable herefor, had been cut down during the winter, split into logs three feet long, piled up so as to lose their humidity faster, and transported to the farm at summer's beginning. The same material was used as fuel for the rooms of the castle. The spacious kitchen of the castle had a large hearth built of bricks, the lower part of which was a vaulted oven lined with fireproof bricks. This oven served for baking the large weekly requirement of bread for the family and the servants, the latter having been accustomed to consume a goodly amount of bread. The baking process, which I observed with great interest, was as follows: On the eve of the day appointed for bread-baking, all of the flour was sifted, mixed with a little water in large troughs hollowed out of beech-logs and polished smooth on the inside; then prepared, by the admixture of yeast that had been dissolved in warm water, to rise during the night. Early in the morning, a fire of beech logs was built in the oven.

At the same time, the mass of dough was thoroughly kneaded until none of it stuck to the hands of the kneaders anymore. As soon as the fire had burned down, the oven was thoroughly cleaned of the ashes that covered its floor, by means of wet rags wound around long-handled push-brooms. The loaves were placed, with the help of similarly long-handled wooden "baker's spoons", on the hot floor of the oven and the latter was then closed air-tight. After a time, determined by experience, the properly baked-through bread loaves were pulled out of the still very warm oven. Its door was left open to speed the cooling of the oven. The foregoing description of a simple process should serve a better understanding of an exciting occurrence at the beginning of our second year at the castle. The kitchen was located with its back **facing** the castle-wall, in which there was a small trap door just in line with the oven. This trap door seems to have been provided [in olden times] as an escape hatch, leading outside the wall, should ma-rauding bands try to force their way into the castle yard and thereby make the defense against them hopeless, so that the inhabitants of the castle could, by opening the trap door and lowering a ladder from the kitchen, descend onto the terrace below from where it was not difficult to reach the valley. In our quiet times, the ladder was left leaning against the wall, below the trap door, to give access to that open terrace for a promenade. One day, which happened to be bread-baking day, the following took place: My mother came into the kitchen that the servants had

already left after the baking had been done, to inspect the loaves which by that time were out of the oven. Her attention was caught by a noise that reached her ears from behind the open oven door, so she cast a glance inside the oven. A man's distorted face, teeth gnashing, stared at her and scared her so terribly that she fled; yet she had enough presence of mind to slam the oven door shut first. The intruder had gotten into the kitchen, seeing that he was unobserved, by way of the ladder, and through the trap door, [and then hid in the oven]. Now the terrible pain that he suffered in the still very hot oven gave him the force of desperation to break the frame of the oven door out of the brickwork that enclosed it, and to disappear as fast as possible by the same route by which he had come. The yard-hands, roused by my mother's shouts for help, came running into the kitchen, armed with iron bars, but didn't find the burglar whom they sought in the oven. While his escape route was obvious, his pursuit remained unsuccessful. The very same day the opening for the trap-door was expertly bricked-over, to forestall a repetition of the break-in.

That autumn I turned old enough to go to school [apparently just short of six years, since my father's birthday fell in December], and I was sent, together with my younger brother, who would have nobody to watch him at the castle, to Altsohl, [about fifty miles from the castle] to board with **the family** of the rabbi who ran a private school in his home. We shared a room with his two daughters who were our age, and who slept in

a single bed, same as we did. The room was spacious and light and was used as a bedroom only at night, because during daytime it served for teaching the older pupils. This was a private school for children of well-to-do parents who didn't want to send their children to the public elementary school. A Jewish maid was charged with the supervision of the four of us and also helped us to get dressed, and to get undressed in the evening. It happened one evening that this maid, out of sheer mischief, or perhaps out of curiosity about the reaction of the older girl to her stupid prank, put her into our small bed, whereupon the child yelled mightily. Her father who happened to be in the next room, hearing his child's cries, came running immediately, saw what was going on, picked up his daughter in his arms, unexpectedly slapping her face out of sheer excitement, and had his daughters moved, then and there, to a different room. The next day the maid was sent away without notice. I used to sleep restlessly and often woke up during the night. On one occasion, when I was restless once again and then woke up, I saw a light move back and forth over the wall along which our beds were placed; it frightened me very much and I connected it in my mind with ghosts, about whom our Slovak nurse had told us so many stories. Of course, as I could explain it to myself later, it was nothing but light that came from a room of the house across the street, reflected by an open window, swinging back and forth in the wind. We did not stay there long, because the rabbi needed the room for his daughters and asked

our parents to place us elsewhere. We were transferred to the next town, Neusohl, to board with a teacher of the Jewish elementary school there, a Jew from Germany, Dr. Joseffi by name. Winter had already set in and the school was rather far from Dr. Joseffi's place. His German wife, a "blue stocking", as such women were called at the time [a snob], who thought she had received an extra portion of wisdom at birth from the good Lord, showed little interest in us. We did not get enough to eat, our room had no stove, and only the warmth coming from the room next door made it halfways tolerable.

Going to school early in the morning was, in that cold climate of Slovakia, as well as because of our rather tender constitutions, bad for our health. We got chilblains on our toes which, for lack of medical attention, turned into open, festering wounds. The only treatment of these painful sores were warm footbaths at bedtime, a method of treating festering sores which, according to my present knowledge, would be rejected by any physician. We could not wear stockings but had to wrap our feet in pieces of linen and pull over those wide boots made of felt which had been made for us in the meantime. It took a long time for our wounds to heal sufficiently so that we could be taken home to our parents.

At the beginning of our third year at the castle, the teacher [of our older sisters], Fogelhut, left us to take over as first teacher at the Jewish elementary school in Liptó-Szent-Miklós, that had six grades. He was soon to be

replaced by a governess from Berlin who, upon my father's instructions, came to us loaded down with all the German classics and other good literature, published at that time, all of which became my sisters' preferred books. My brother-in-law, Ring, who had run <sup>our</sup> / farm operations, left us, too, in order to manage, together with his younger brother, their father's estate. They had a sister who married a lumber dealer named Trostler and lived in Turoc-Szent-Marton. That estate included a large, two-story house, whose long courtyard was enclosed by buildings on all four sides, one of which contained a distillery for liqueurs, and the others had numerous solidly built storage rooms.

Across the back of that courtyard extended a building with a spacious apartment, occupied by a teacher named Venezianer and his family; he was teaching Jewish religion classes at the school. My brother-in-law moved into the apartment on the ground floor, which his father had been using, but his brother, with wife and daughter, retained his own place. Both families were amply supplied with produce from the large vegetable garden behind the main house. Next door to my sister's apartment there was a large tavern serving liquor as well as liqueurs. Close to the railroad station lay the fields owned by my brother-in-law's father. A spodium factory was later built on that land. When my brother-in-law moved to Liptó-Szent-Miklós, my eldest brother took over the management of our farm, after having helped my brother-in-law in this task, for several months.

That spring, when the distillery had finished the season's production, and after the fattening-up of the cattle was also completed, my brother was entrusted with the sale of these animals. Some reliable employees tended the animals on the usual way of transportation to the capital, where they were offered for sale without delay. The sale went forward in my brother's presence and under his supervision, and the proceeds were handed over to him. A week later, he appeared back at the farm, and when asked by my father to turn over the money, he explained that he had invested it in several barrels of old wine which, when placed on the market in bottles, would bring a considerable additional profit. My father, although furious about my brother's self-willed disposition of the money entrusted to him, had to face the accomplished fact. After a few weeks, the railroad office notified us of the arrival of the goods at the station of Losonc. These were three large oaken barrels; they had to be picked up at that railroad station, which was done without delay. Under my father's supervision, the barrels were cautiously lowered, by means of heavy ropes of hemp and using inclined beams for a slide, into the cellar and there placed on previously prepared wooden supports. My father, who knew little about the quality of wine but wanted to satisfy his curiosity about the wine purchased, caused an employee of his, who was an expert, as his father was a wine merchant, to take samples right away from each barrel. The samples satisfied the man and, after he had made an estimate of the sales price that could be achieved, my father was visibly pleased.

Autumn had come and with it the start of the distillery's operation which, however, in such a tragic way, came to a premature halt. It was the beginning of the end. It happened in full daylight, towards the end of the day's shift, when the machine-operator left the boiler room for a short time [as he thought] to hurry up the workers who moved the potatoes towards the distillery. As it turned out later, he had failed to check the safety-valves of the boiler on that morning. I have mentioned before that the machinery of the distillery came into our possession in a very neglected condition. In particular, the boiler had become less resistant to the steam pressure because of many years' accumulation of sediment that enhanced the formation of scale. During the machine-operator's absence from the boiler room, the steam pressure rose above the permitted limit, and then, because of the failure of a safety-valve, climbed further and further until the boiler exploded and crashed through the wall of the distillery, killing those workmen nearby who were moving the potatoes to the stills. The number of dead was eleven, including the husband of my mother's younger sister, who had supervised those workmen just at that time. The machine-operator got away with his life but was scalded by the hot steam escaping from the boiler. What a consternation in the farmyard and at the castle! My father was on his way home from a trip to the capital but was back in the castle the next morning. He had them report to him exactly what happened, and it became clear to him that this tragic event would have unforeseeable consequences. First of

all, the desperation of the wives of the dead men had to be alleviated by the promise of monetary compensations, which proved not to be too difficult. An official commission, that included an expert [in industrial safety], appeared on the third day. In addition to an examination of the site [of the disaster] it heard witnesses, including the machine-operator, whose testimony was very damaging to himself. The judicial inquest began promptly. The day before, the dead had been buried in the small cemetery nearby, according to the Catholic rite, with a Catholic priest officiating, since this was the religion embraced by all Slovaks. The machine-operator was picked up the day after the visit of the commission, by the rural police, taken to Altsohl, placed under arrest, jailed, and remanded for trial. Nor did my father avoid prosecution, seeing that eleven lives were lost due to negligence. Indeed, my father's conviction was to be expected. Now, the heads of the county government recommended to him to file a petition for clemency, addressed to the Emperor's governmental office, and praying for the discontinuance of the prosecution against him. This was put in motion immediately, together with a request that the Emperor grant an audience. My father's good connections made it possible that my mother would soon be notified of the day and hour of the audience granted to her. She appeared at the Hofburg [Imperial palace] in Vienna, accompanied by [my parents'] lawyer-advisor, at the appointed hour and, after showing her orders for appearance, she was led into the ante-

room of the audience hall. There she was received immediately by the Emperor who stepped forward to meet her and bade her take a seat, and told her to be brief since he was already aware of the petition. My mother, coached ahead of time by the lawyer, described the disaster that would befall her and her children, whose number by that time had already grown to twelve, if their breadwinner were to be kept away by a conviction for negligence in the operation of the distillery, of which not he but a licensed professional had been in charge. The Emperor rose to signify the end of the audience and said: "My child, go home to your children, your petition will be considered with benevolence." After a few weeks my father was notified that the proceedings against him were terminated for lack of evidence.

My second-oldest sister, Rosalie, was married off towards the end of our second year at the castle. There had been no lack of acceptable suitors. Her choice fell on a Mr. David Rosenfeld, the oldest son of his father whose wholesale iron business in Sillein he managed, together with two of his younger brothers. Late that same autumn, the wedding took place in Szliács, a spa near Altsohl. My new brother-in-law decided to settle in Losonc and to start there an iron business similar to that of his family in Sillein. Being an experienced iron merchant, it didn't take him long to carry out his plan. Yet, a few years later when his old parents had died, one shortly after the other, he liquidated his enterprise, to carry

on, in partnership with his brother [in Losonc], his father's great wholesale business. His three yet unmarried sisters were thus orphaned and required both female protection and further education. My sister, a wise and sensitive woman, undertook to become the head of that refined household and to see to the necessary completion of these still very young girls' education, who would soon behave most lovingly towards my sister, with the result that life in that home became all harmony. An exception was the youngest of the brothers who exhibited an unruly behavior and for whom nothing that was done for him was satisfactory. But my sister just didn't give him any attention.

As to myself and my younger brother, it may be reported that, after the bad experiences of our stay in Neusohl, we were not sent back there, but were taken, at the beginning of the following school year, to my sister's home in Liptó-Szent-Miklós, where we very much enjoyed our stay that lasted for several years. Only when my sister's own family had grown to be more numerous, were we moved, to become boarders with an old, retired teacher of the local German Jewish elementary school. That school had excellent teachers who had studied abroad. The school was housed in two separate buildings located in the backyard of the temple, one for boys, the other for girls. Except for religious instruction and for drawing, each grade had only one teacher for all of the subjects. Each morning, before classes, the children gathered in the temple yard where the Jewish cantor led them in the singing of the

Emperor's anthem which began, as is well known: "God save and protect Kaiser Franz, etc.". I took little interest in school-work and was a poor student, who nevertheless had not ever suffered the rod because of my rich brother-in-law, Ring, who was honorary mayor of the town and head of its Jewish community. My schoolmates were physically more well-developed than I, so I was never asked to join their ball-games which they played on the meadows behind the houses lining the streets. In the same house in which we were boarders, there was a stationary store that carried decalcomanias, which children bought in large quantities. [So I deemed] this business to be profitable for the store's owner. To satisfy my craving for sweets, for which my pocket money was not enough, I needed a source of income, for which I considered dealing in decalcomanias very suitable. **So I proceeded**, first of all, to obtain an illustrated price list of these decalcomanias from the capital. Since we children, whenever we went to buy some of these, were shown a catalogue, so that we could make our choices, I could observe the name Seefellner, the stationary wholesaler in Budapest, from whom the owner of our local stationary store got these pictures.. Then I wrote to that company in Budapest and asked for the illustrated price list which I received promptly. When at last I had a working capital of two florins, which I scraped together with the help of my younger brother, I placed my first order with the wholesaler and asked for a shipment COD. I received the pictures which I had ordered, by return mail; I had selected them to meet the taste of the children and consequently I sold them quickly. Soon my working

capital was doubled, and my orders could become larger, and be sent at ever shorter intervals. I accomplished my plan and could now satisfy my sweet tooth. I was at that time eleven years old and in the fifth grade.

During the winter seasons a dancing teacher came to our town in which there lived many well-to-do, educated people, to whose children the best was offered. This teacher held evening dancing classes, which the parents were delighted to make available to their children. I, too, participated in two of these dance courses which, although this was a total loss of my time, seeing my utter lack of musical aptitudes, **yet** gave me an opportunity to associate with girls, a thing from which we boys were otherwise excluded. A girl of my own age attracted there my attention, and I endeavored to get friendly with her, which I soon achieved, as I was, according to my family, a good-looking boy. My hair was fair and curly, and I was known to be the child of well-to-do parents. That girl was living in my immediate neighborhood, was always very nicely dressed, and was fair-haired like myself; she was the daughter of a contractor engaged in the building of a railroad line from Kaschau [in Slovakia] to Oderberg [in Poland]. As the girl's parents would not tolerate social intercourse between boys and girls, we, myself, and that sweet girl, were forced to meet without her parents' permission, while her mother was away from home. To remain unobserved, we chose to hide in a large empty wooden box which was standing in our courtyard and belonged to the owner of the store in the same house. We set up house in there, promised to marry in time, and alternated in telling each

other stories that we had read lately. We arranged, for those days on which we may not be able to meet, to exchange letters, to be safely hidden in a certain place in the courtyard. One day these childish notes, written on pink sheets of paper, got into the hands of the girl's mother, and that put an end to my first love. The girl's name was Ilka Diener and I met her, a married woman, later in Budapest, where two of her brothers lived and worked, one as a journalist, the other as a<sup>a</sup> police captain. At that later time, they were using the name Diener-Dénes.

A year later I returned, carrying a poor report card, to the home of my parents, which was not in the castle anymore, but in the large village of Detva, not far from our farm. What had happened that had wrought such a radical change in the life of my family? But before I report on that, I want to refer to the cholera epidemic which struck the entire Country, at the time of my return to my parents' home in Detva, and which took the life of countless people in our village, too. My mother was full of fear for the lives of her children, a fear that overshadowed everything else. In her childhood she had been accustomed to a simpler life in her parents' home, and therefore she had resigned herself easily and quickly to her own family's new, less favorable financial situation; and now she held on to her trust in her own energies, to safeguard the future of her loved ones. Everything that could have led to picking up the contagion of that dread, and at that time, incurable disease, had to be strictly avoided. All contact with outsiders was shunned. Only boiled water was used for any

purpose and our food was limited to boiled farinacious and cereal courses. Our family was spared, the epidemic subsided, and now the time had come to think about the task of supporting the family. In the end, my parents decided to move to Kremnitz, where their children had opportunities for continuing their education and where there were possibilities for my father to earn money once more. Also my mother's eldest half-sister was living there.

Now I will report about the occurrences that turned my father's financial situation around so completely. Thus, I am returning to the time of the tragic event of the boiler explosion. The premature ending of the distillery's operations resulted, first of all, in the incomplete fattening of the cattle, since there was no more of the valuable potato-mash, the by-product of distillation. This feed-material contained a substantial residue of molasses and yeast, and now there was no other way but to replace it by inferior feed, such as raw potatoes, far from sufficient for complete fattening of the cattle. The animals, only partially fattened, could be sold only at prices that were much too low to cover the increased costs. This was a substantial loss of a most important source of income. Then a drought in the summer of that year brought the raising of sheep, done on a high grazing plateau in the mountains, which ought to have brought a considerable profit, to a premature end, even before shearing could have begun. All grass, the only source of nourishment of the sheep, dried up. The large flock had to be sold in a hurry, and this caused a serious loss of capital. A new, modern distillery had to be built speedily to make operation

in the fall possible; otherwise, the expected new potato crop would remain unused. These circumstances and occurrences badly depleted my father's working capital. At the beginning of the fourth year of the lease, there came the construction of the Losonc-Ruttka rail line, bordering the estate at its full length, which raised the value of that property quite considerably. This increase of the value of his lands induced Count Almásy to think about selling his property and thereby acquire capital whose yield would give him sufficient income for supporting his irresponsible way of life. Soon he found a suitable purchaser in his own circle. It was a Count Sigray, a passionate hunter who cared mostly for owning the castle so as to accommodate his hunting companions during the the open seasons. There was no shortage of quarry on the wooded mountain slopes included in the property and elsewhere in the valley. The absence, from the contract of lease, of the usual clause requiring the recording of the lease in the Record of Deeds, an omission for which our lawyer was responsible, permitted the new owner to give notice to the lessee. Thus, immediately after completion of the change in ownership, a written notice to my father cancelled the contract that had been concluded with the former owner. My father, believing that his lessee's rights were uncancellable, ignored the notice, whereupon the new owner asked the court for a judicial annulment of the contract. My father, still unaware of the significance of the lacking clause with respect to recording the lease, was not particularly worried about the notice. Then the Count started the litigation with a view to eviction. His attorney's brief was answered by

one that attempted to clarify the legal situation in a way favorable to my father. Thereafter negotiations ensued with the opposing attorneys, which resulted in repeated interruptions and continuations of the court-proceedings and ~~end-~~ ~~less delays~~ of the judgment by that court of the lowest level, a device used to boost those attorneys' fees, a scheme used by lawyers to this very day. My father was still hopeful of a favorable outcome in the courts. In the meantime, the following occurred at the castle. At the beginning of our fifth year there, my mother observed the German governess to have developed a belly. After continued observation, this situation became clear. The governess had an affair going with my brother Arnold [the oldest of the brothers], and its consequences were well-nigh unpredictable. To forestall the possibility that my two grown sisters would become aware of this shameful situation, the governess who, by conceding that she had hoped to have her relation with my brother legalized by marriage, confessed her affair with him, was let go the next day; she was paid some compensation. Nobody inquired of what had become of her; they were simply not interested. Soon she was replaced by a Hungarian woman, a licensed teacher, engaged by my parents upon recommendation of one of my father's business friends. She was officially engaged to a non-Jewish teacher named Szöke, who lived in the capital, and was still waiting for his tenure. He came, on the occasion of holidays, to visit his fiancée, and, because of his pleasant character, my family welcomed him and treated him in a friendly manner. A year later he came to pick up his bride and they got married.

I will refer later to those people once more.

Now our seventh year was drawing to an end [at the farm and the castle]. The judgment of the court in our own suit against the termination of the lease could be expected any day. During this same period of time, there occurred the complete collapse of our precarious situation. One night the stalls and lofts of the farmyard suddenly went up in flames; people whispered that it was the doing of arsonists, paid agents of Count Sigray. It was impossible to bring the flames under control because there was not enough water; to try to save the cattle was hopeless, because the animals felt safer in the stalls and refused to be led out. They burned to death or fell victims to suffocation in the dense smoke. For my family, this was almost the last nail in the coffin of their former prosperity. And then, a few weeks later, the mail brought to my father the court decision which declared the termination of the lease by the Count valid, since the contract of lease did not contain the usual clause with respect to recording the lease in the Record of Deeds and, consequently, the lessor had the legal right, as conferred on him by existing and valid laws on leases, paragraphs so-and-so, to terminate the lease, wherefore it was incumbent on the lessee to accept such termination. The lessee was ordered to vacate the property within three months from the date of that court decision, without any claim to compensation for his investments into any new facilities, since the latter were but replacements for what has been in existence there prior to the commencement of the lease. The reasoning of the court did not make it advisable to file an appeal to a higher tribunal,

and also there was no more money available to cover the costs of further litigation. So there was nothing else left for my father, then to save what he could. The remainder of the potatoes were sold at a very low price to the distilleries that operated in the surrounding area; furthermore, whatever was left of oats and barley, was taken to market in Losonc; and finally, all that was not clinched and riveted, was sold to the highest bidders. And now the move to the village of Detva was to begin.

After my parents had definitely decided, as I have already said, to settle sometime in the near future in Kremnitz, and while the enrollment of pupils at the [non-classical, or non-humanist, but technical] high school of that town was still in progress, my father took me there. The principal, a friendly gentleman, attended to the acceptance of newcomers, while the class teachers enrolled those who had attended that school the previous year. That principal, Schröder by name, spoke a correct German, so my father had no difficulties in talking to him in German. He supplied the information about my previous year's attendance at the Jewish elementary school at Liptó-Szent-Miklos, which school the principal said to have known by reputation; and he asked that my birth certificate and the transcript from the sixth grade be submitted to him. Now I had to explain that, for the moment, I was not in a position to submit the requested transcript, since I had somehow misplaced it during our moving from Végles to Detva. However, I said, I would make an effort to find it and then would submit it. The principal gave credence to my words, and since I was already

twelve years old and had completed six elementary grades, he was willing to enter me in the second year's courses of high school, to give me an opportunity to acquire knowledge of the Hungarian language. He reserved to himself though to revise his decision and to change me over to the first year's courses after receipt and perusal of the above-mentioned transcript. With that, he let us go. Now, I still had to be taken care of with respect to room and board.

I have reported earlier that my mother's oldest half-sister had her domicile in that town [Kremnitz]. My family did not know her, but was informed about her in every respect by her old father who visited her once a year. She was willing to give me lunch and dinner, but there was not enough appropriate space in their place for a room for my use. However, just across the street from their apartment I could be accommodated, as she had heard, by the owner of a small grocery store there, who had a room upstairs which he would let to a student. We crossed the street to get more information about that situation. Although the room was already occupied by two older students, it was not impossible that those two might not object to the setting up of a third bed for which the room was large enough, provided that such a change would bring them some reduction of their **rental**. As the two boys, who were brothers, happened to be in their room, the matter could be clarified then and there. The landlord was willing to reduce their rental to meet our wishes, if for no/<sup>other</sup>reason ~~then~~ out of consideration for the wholesale merchant just across the street, of whose wife I was a nephew, according to what he had learned earlier. After a

few minutes' conference [with the students], he returned to us with the report that those two will not object to the setting up of a third bed in their room. My father soon settled the amount of monthly rent, including breakfast, with the landlord. My valise, temporarily left with my aunt, was brought over from across the street, and I became the third man in the boat the same night. My father returned the same evening to his family in Detva, feeling good about having well taken care [of everything]. Next morning it turned out that the two brothers, one fourteen and the other sixteen years old, were nephews of my brother-in-law, Moritz Ring, being sons of his sister who had married a lumber dealer, Tröstler, and lived in Túroc-Szent-Márton. Now that they had learned about our family relationship, the boys treated me in a friendly manner, the more so as I made an effort to disturb them as little as possible.

My brother, Arnold, after liquidating the residue of our possessions, took a job as bookkeeper and assistant to the manager at the great lumber mill in Polhora, in the Árva valley, which was owned by the wholesaler, Popper de Podrágy, a man who later acquired the title of Baron. At one time he had been a business acquaintance of my father's. My second-oldest brother stayed, for that school year, still at his high school in Silesia, while my youngest brother continued in the fifth grade at the Liptó-Szent-Miklós elementary school. My mother did not want to move to Kremnitz before the following spring, and so they stayed temporarily in Detva. It was necessary first to find a suitable apartment in Kremnitz, which

was not easy, as there was a shortage of apartments there, due to the fact that many families settled in town during the building of the railroad line, in order to participate in the benefits awarded in those years of good business, an endeavor in which they did not fail to succeed. There was only one free apartment, located at the foot of a hill, off the center of town. It was a detached building, directly on the bank of a brook which flowed from nearby mountains. So, temporarily we had to be satisfied with that. Moving took place at the beginning of spring. For simplicity's sake, our furniture came loaded on ~~some~~ peasant wagons and was distributed, under my mother's and sisters' supervision, in the rooms. So I was back in the lap of my own family.

As to the supposedly misplaced transcript [from the elementary school] which I failed to produce at the time of my enrollment [at the high school], its story is as follows: Shortly before my trip to Kremnitz, where I was to go to high school, I gathered up the report cards I had received at the elementary school in Liptó-Szent-Miklós, and held them in readiness for being taken along to Kremnitz. I knew that on the occasion of my enrollment into high school they would ask me for my last year's report card, or a complete transcript. However, the last of these report cards showed the mark "unsatisfactory" for Natural History and Algebra; and I knew that showing that card would lead, without any doubt whatsoever, to my being placed in the first year's courses rather than those of the second year. [Of the altogether six years, or grades, in technical high schools, for twelve to eighteen year olds, as

it was arranged in those times]. That would be appropriate on the basis of my having successfully attended only five years of elementary school. That, of course, had to be prevented be hook or crook. After a lot of brooding over this problem, I decided on the easiest way out [as I thought], and to accomplish the deception by simply making that first syllable: "un" in the word "Unsatisfactory" disappear somehow. But to try to erase it by scratching it out with a sharp knife could possibly make a hole at that spot in the report card, and **that** would immediately reveal the falsification. Then I remembered that we children used to drop "silberlings" [small silver coins worth ten kreutzers] into nitric acid, in which they were dissolved, and then we put copper kreutzers into the liquid, whereupon a thin layer of silver got deposited on the copper coins. These, being of the same size as the silberlings, were thereby made quite similar to the ten times more valuable silver coins, and store keepers would inadvertantly accept them as if they were the latter, for our purchases of sweets. I figured therefore that it would be even easier to dissolve ink in this same manner. Our pantry contained residues of a variety of disinfectant liquids that had been used during the last cholera epidemic. There was some nitric acid among those, properly labeled as such. I made up my mind to go ahead and employ that method for removing the syllable: "un". I did succeed in making it disappear, by using a quill, which I dipped into the acid and then brushed over the syllable "Un" repeatedly, until those letters were completely gone; however, there appeared in their place a conspicuous yellow spot. I got so terribly frightened and

enraged over that, that I tore that report card into small pieces and then said to myself: Now come what may! My father never learned anything of all that, since he showed no interest in his sons' report cards. Now classes were to begin at the school, right after the enrollment period had ended.

The school was a large, old building on a plateau cut into the slope of the hill. A section of the town was built on that hill, around a large rectangular square on the top, with kind of a monument in the center. Earlier, that school may have been a government building, judging by the layout of its floors. The classrooms for the lower grades were very spacious but still scarcely large enough for accommodating the great number of students who came from all around the County of Bars and from the surrounding counties to this school, the only high school in that part of the Country. I picked for myself the last bench in the last row, as my aim was to remain as unobserved as possible. Ignorant as I was of the language [Hungarian] in which the subjects were all taught, I had no interest in what was said, and, oblivious of my surroundings, I got immersed into reading my story books which I had brought along to school. The consequences could not fail to show up. At the end of the school year I got a poor report card and I had to repeat the second year's studies. A few weeks after school had opened, I was called to the principal who, with a stern face, reprimanded me for my failure to produce that old report card

from the elementary school, and wanted to know the reason **therefore.** I repeated my earlier story and promised to get busy looking for that report card. The principal let me go, after threatening that, if the report card were not in his hands within four weeks, he would transfer me to the first year's studies. As an experienced pedagogue, he may have been fully aware of the fact that I had very good reasons for not producing that report card. I was most elated when I was not called again to the principal's office after those four weeks had elapsed, or any time later on. He may have asked for and received the information that he wanted to have, in the meantime, directly from the school office in Liptó-Szent-Miklós, and might have decided to await [before he would do anything] the teacher's comments about my progress at their half-yearly conference. There were no complaints about my behavior, but my teachers, naturally, were uninformed about what knowledge I may have acquired, since I could not speak the language of instruction [Hungarian], and my silence at the examinations was attributed to that. The principal thus gave me the temporary benefit of doubt; yet, and again for reasons of pedagogy, he continued for no less than three more years to stop me every time he espied me, with the question: "Well, what about that report card?". By that time I became aware of the fact that, by having deliberately lied, I had committed a most incorrect deed which I could remedy no more. My bad conscience about that gave me no rest and contributed considerably to the unfavorable influences that affected my

diligence at school. Not until I finally reached the fourth year of high school studies and made conspicuous progress, did the good man stop to vex me with that question.

We did not stay long in that poor apartment. My father had decided to go into business as a liquor wholesaler, an activity which he intended to start as early as the fall of our first year there [in Kremnitz], as soon as the distilleries of the nearest country estates would have made enough of their product, so he could start selling it. He intended to buy up that product, to store it, and then merchandise it in the original barrels, selling it to the Jewish tavern-owners in the surrounding villages. By a lucky break, a detached house with a good apartment and good yard-buildings was offered for rental across the street from the new technical high school, erected on an empty lot, which opportunity we eagerly grabbed; we moved in at the end of that fall and my father thereby gained the space for storing the merchandise received, for which he had made payment before, so as to assure their later delivery. There was no need to advertise, because those tavern-owners usually ran country stores, too, thus were customers of my uncle, Heller, from whom they could purchase their merchandise requirements, at the lowest prices and on credit, and they appeared every week on market-day in our town and heard, on those occasions, that they now could buy what they needed in the way of liquor at favorable prices. Up to that time, their shortage of capital did not permit them to purchase anything but in

small quantities from the distilleries, which did not allow them any credit, as a consequence of which they were forced to return to those sources ever so often, which in turn increased their costs. My father was willing to sell them liquor in a quantity corresponding to the size of the original kegs in which the liquor was received by him - kegs which had to be returned empty - against payment of no more than the going prices, for six-month promissory notes, and at an interest rate of six percent per annum. Such advantageous terms made them switch to purchasing their requirements from my father. Unfortunately, it did happen sometimes that the maturity of promissory notes had to be extended when the customer did not have sufficient funds available on the original date of maturity. But, as my father himself had but a limited amount of capital, and as his customers' notes lacked endorsers and therefore could not be discounted [at the banks], he could, as time went by, purchase less and less from his suppliers. It happened more and more often that he could not supply what his customers were ready to buy at the time they presented themselves, and these then stayed away. This business stopped to be worthwhile and thus had to be given up.

It was at that time that my third-oldest sister, Ernestine, got married to David Schlesinger, who was a lower level employee at the saw-mill in Polhora and to whom my brother, also an employee there, recommended that he step forward as a suitor. It was at the time of the vic-

torious conclusion of the military campaign in Bosnia, to be annexed by the [Austro-Hungarian] Monarchy, in which my newest brother-in-law had participated as a sergeant-accountant, serving with a honvéd regiment [regiment consisting of Hungarian troops only], where he had the opportunity to learn a little Hungarian. The young couple settled in Sillein where my new brother-in-law, as a veteran of the Bosnia campaign, obtained employment as bailiff for the Circuit Court [a court below the level of County Court] there. That was a job which paid a low salary and thus commanded a modest household. My younger brother, Adolf, who, after completion of the fifth grade of elementary school at Liptó-Szent-Miklós, was back again, like myself, in the home of our parents. He had been accepted on the basis of his excellent school record [the year before] into the second year of studies at the technical high school [in Kremnitz], and consequently was by now in the third year of studies at the same time that I was in the fourth year. Just at that time all technical high schools having a six-year program were transformed, in the entire Country, without changing their programs, into eight-year teaching institutions, so as to conform to the eight years of studies in "gymnasiums" [classical or humanistic high schools]; thus I would have needed to attend my school for four more years before I could graduate from it. I was, therefore, wondering whether I shouldn't give up my further studies at my school after completion of the fourth-year studies in which I was then enrolled, and to apprentice

myself to my uncle's store, a plan in which my aunt, Heller, encouraged me; she got to liking me and saw in me a pleasant potential successor to her aging husband, unto whom he could transfer the management of his flourishing department store, should he decide to retire from that business. She also had some other plans [perhaps plans for some marriage] for me, should that business be conferred upon me, in fact, at some later time.

After my father was compelled to terminate his liquor business, we left the apartment which we could not afford in our new situation that left us without income, and we moved to one that was cheaper, although it was larger by one room, and which was situated in a section of town higher up in the hills. My mother had planned to rent this extra room and to give board to students, so as to earn money for our livelihood, until my father would once more have an opportunity to make a living. She succeeded, in fact, at the start of the new school year, in getting four well-brought-up boys from the circle of my father's former customers, as boarders, whereby part of the expenses for our household were covered. I discussed my plan, to quit school for good at the end of the school year, with my younger brother who was smart and sensible, to hear his opinion about such a move. He listened to me with obvious indignation, considered my plan, a decision which would be shameful for the family and which he said I must give up immediately. After a long and more mature reconsideration of the matter, I agreed to the validi-

ty of the arguments he had made to me, and made up my mind to continue my schooling, after all. I resolved then and there to become a diligent pupil and a good student, which I knew I could achieve only by the most intense application of my energies, seeing that I still did not master the Hungarian language to a satisfactory degree, in contrast to my [younger] brother who, because of his better faculties of comprehension, had, by that time, full command of that language. World history and history of Hungarian literature were the two subjects of which I crammed, word by word, albeit in abbreviated form, the text in my school books, a thing that caused me very great difficulties.

My father, bent on finding a new source of income, pondered the possibility of importing Silesian coal from the Guttman mines to our part of the Country. He recalled from his own experience what difficulties the distilleries and other small factories endured in using low quality coal from the Salgotarján mines nearby, due to its low caloric content and lack of screening for uniform size, coal which those enterprises generally used in view of the proximity of its source. The Silesian coal cost twice as much as the coal from Salgotarján, yet its higher caloric content and the fact that by screening it was rid of stones, still made its use more advantageous. He traveled to Silesia, made contact with the commercial managers of those mines, to whom he described the advantages to result for

them from from an enlargement of their market, allowing an increase of production, to which purpose he offered to introduce and import their coal in Slovakia, if they would entrust him with their exclusive representation there, **against** payment of a specified commission for each carload of ten tons of coal, sold in that territory. They readily agreed to such an arrangement, and a contract incorporating all the conditions was handed to my father the very next morning. He returned to his family full of hopes. Since coal was generally in short supply in Hungary at that time, it could be imported there free of duty from any other part of the Monarchy. My father used the services of my fourth-oldest sister, already grown up, intelligent and smart, for the bookkeeping and correspondence which, of course, was conducted in German. A circular letter that was dispatched to all coal consuming factories, large and small, and to farmers who used threshing machines in their operations, located within ten miles right and left of the railroad line, notified them that my father, as the exclusive representative of the source of supply, would be able to furnish high quality Silesian coal from the Guttman mines, coal which, because of its high caloric value, they may be able to use much more economically than the brown coal, full of stones, which they had been using before. He would be pleased to furnish further information with respect to prices and conditions on the occasion of a personal visit planned for the near future. He rented a carriage in which he visited potential customers, furnishing the necessary in-

formation, and he succeeded in a short time to reach a satisfactory level of sales of that coal. It was unavoidable to grant credit of four weeks for payment of coal bills, in many instances, particularly with respect to owners of small establishments. This, however, entailed, according to the form of monthly accounting agreed upon with the mines, a charge that corresponded to the coal actually furnished, against my father's collections of bills and his earned commissions. However, in the course of time it turned out that those small agricultural operations, because of a poor harvest, could not pay up in time, so that at month's end my father found himself unable to pay the amount [necessary to even out the account], since he did not have any capital of his own at his disposal. That balance to his debit increased from month to month and that caused the managers of the coal company, who were aware of my father's financial situation, to cancel, at the end of two years, the sales-representation and to stop the delivery of coal altogether. He was told to pay the balance of that account within a month, otherwise the managers of the coal company would make him judicially responsible, by turning the matter over to their lawyers for litigation in the court. To avoid the consequences of what was threatened, my father was constrained to go ahead right away with the sale of his [old family] home which he had left, but which he still owned in Turdossin, to keep as a reserve against the future need to provide for his daughters. Our tenant there, Dr. Kux, who had said, several times in the past, that he was desirous of acquiring

the house, was now notified that he may make an offer. His offer, received by return mail, was satisfactory, and so he was invited to visit us for concluding a contract of sale, whereupon he appeared on the weekend, was received by my father and my mother [in the friendliest way] as a relative, since he was in fact a brother-in-law of my sister, Rosalie, whose husband, Mr. David Rosenfeld, was the brother of the doctor's wife, as I have mentioned before.

After an ample meal, the contract, prepared by a local attorney who was a nephew of my brother-in-law, Schlesinger, was laid before the parties and, after payment of the price of 5000 florins, was signed by both sides; and finally, it was handed to Dr. Kux. The contract included the authorization for him to have his ownership recorded in the Record of Deeds. That amount sufficed for paying the balance of the account with the Silesian coal company. However, the sale of the house now deprived my family of the benefit from a monthly **rental**, so badly needed for paying the household expenses. My father, perhaps as a consequence of his many trips by carriage, during those raw and cold winter months, contracted an ailment that affected his legs, which our doctor thought to be rheumatism. He prescribed hot mud-baths that were offered to the sick, summers and winters, at the spa of Pöstyén. My father now had nothing to do, and, not wanting to lose any time, he began that prescribed treatment for his leg ailment in the mud-baths of Pöstyén; but he returned from there after a month without having ex-

perienced any improvement.

While my father was away, my brother Max returned to the home of our parents from the capital, where he had graduated from the German commercial school. A store at street level in the house where we lived had been empty for quite some time and was still waiting for an occupant. My mother, with a quick decision, rented that space so as to open a grocery store there, which my brother was to manage together with my sister Amalie. It was intended to be a branch of my uncle Heller's store, who lived [and had that store] in our town, but limited himself to the wholesale business and was willing to supply us with his merchandise [for retailing], on a commission basis, that is, to give us a share in the profits on these items. We ourselves would obtain from other suppliers around the Country those goods which he did not carry, such as salt, petroleum, lard, liqueurs, and many other household needs, and we would sell those wares for our own account. Fresh bread, a much sought-after item, was to be carried, too; my mother would bake it herself so as to insure its being tasty. Now the necessary shelves were set up, the wares received from my uncle's store taken in stock, and the **store was opened**, without waiting for the arrival of the rest.

That part of town was inhabited mostly by lower level employees and workmen of the mint, the only one in the Country, as well as by miners of the few ore mines that were

still operating, all of whom were eking out a living in their small homes. In olden times, many of the now exhausted ore mines in the mountains surrounding the town, had been the source of <sup>the</sup> greatest wealth in the land in precious metals, copper, and mercury ores. That was the reason for locating the mint there. In the few mines still being worked, the precious metal ores were found to be enclosed in tufa-like stone in the shape of small granules. In those days the precious metals were recovered from the ore not by smelting but by crushing the ore, by means of steam-driven hammers, to a fine sand, from which the precious metal was recovered, in employing sedimentation in water that was guided along well-joined wooden troughs. The precious metal, due to its high specific gravity, sinks to and collects on the bottom of these channels, while the lighter substances are being washed away. The gold and silver granules collected in that manner were then melted in a smelting oven and separated from each other by a process unknown to me. The employees and workmen [of the mint] were paid in gold coins minted there, which they then exchanged for paper money, at a premium, when they went shopping to the stores. In my brother's and sister's store, these workers could buy food-stuffs which they needed for the week in any desired quantities, even the smallest. In addition, they were granted one week's credit for the **cost** of the food they purchased. Therefore, they liked to come to my brother's and sister's store and buy there all that they needed. The net income of this

store fell nonetheless short of what was needed for household expenses of our family, of which numerous members were still living at the parents' home. The **rentals for the** apartment and the store, taxes, and imposts, as well as the expense for clothes for my growing sisters, absorbed a considerable portion of the income. Also, the small amount derived as the share of profits from the goods sold on a commission basis, for which a large sales volume - that never came - had been expected, kept the income of the store at a low level. The workmen's wives preferred to purchase flour for bread-baking, that should have become our mass-sales item, at a lower price from the peasants who brought their surplus flour and other produce to the local public market. That flour came from the peasants' own corn harvest which they took, for being milled, to the many small water-mills along the brooks. The farmers generally raised, around their homes, one pig at a time, to supply their yearly requirement of **lard**. For the reasons mentioned, it became unavoidable for the family to take, day after day, small amounts of money out of the receipts of the store. Therefrom ensued a shortage of money [in the store's business] which, in time, brought about our inability to pay the bills for goods purchased from producers around the Country, in a timely fashion. As a principal~~ly~~, uncle Heller was always paid first, before others, for the merchandise furnished by him. Thus, the other wholesalers withdrew the credit that they had granted us and would not send any more goods; and one day my

brother was constrained to declare himself bankrupt, which was communicated to the creditors by our lawyer, to whom the liquidation of the business was then entrusted. He offered the creditors, in the name of his clients, the payment of 50% of their unpaid bills, as a full satisfaction of the debts. Since large amounts of debt were not involved, the creditors were amenable to continue negotiations towards a settlement that would be acceptable to them, so that they would save what they could. Finally, agreement was reached on a 70% settlement with the stipulation that the payments were to be made within four weeks. My brothers-in-law, Ring and Rosenberg, were willing to make available the sum of money necessary for these payments so as to avoid possible consequences of bankruptcy. The settlement was fulfilled, the store closed, and once more my family found itself without income. After consultations between my mother and those two of my brothers-in-law, it was decided not to engage in any further business enterprises for a while, to give up the large apartment, and to endeavor first of all to get my sister, Amalie, married. My two brothers-in-law, together, would make available the means for the future needs of the family household. The change of apartment followed very soon thereafter.

How did my father fare and behave in this period of my family's life? Upon his return from Pöstyén, he was exceedingly upset by my mother having opened the store without telling him and asking him for his consent. He would never

have given it, if for no other reason than for that of his reputation. My mother was aware of his vanity, requiring that he still be thought of as a substantial businessman, and therefore had the store officially registered in her own name. Now my father resolved not to bother about the store and, in fact, he never entered it. His illness became worse, and he could walk only with the aid of two canes. His unsuccessful business ventures of the past, as well as his illness, totally destroyed his vitality and he had stopped to think about any future activity altogether. He was sitting down, or was walking back and forth in the apartment, read neither books nor newspapers, and became so arbitrary that we children avoided even coming too close to him. His legs got better with the arrival of warmer weather and he profited from the opportunity to go to the club on afternoons, which was his privilege as a member. The club was pretty much frequented after five o'clock, since the town was inhabited by so many active as well as retired officials [and employees] of the mint, of the mines, of the circuit court, of the tax administration, and of other offices. This was a German town whose citizens of long-standing were well-to-do. [In the club] my father soon found partners for the card game called "Klabrias", widely popular at that time, played with the smallest stakes of money. He was a good card player, much better than his partners; and now he went there every day, finding his partners already waiting for him. My mother soon found a smaller apartment which suited our changed financial situation, near the place of her half-

sister, Heller. The apartment was in a building near the great and beautiful gate of the town, leading to the large market place. It was the most beautiful section of town. I would like to mention here that, years later, the [Hungarian] painter, Max Bruck, invited me to visit him in his studio [in Budapest], and that I found there to my surprise a beautiful painting of Kremnitz which he had painted in that town during a summer vacation. It was a picture of that same beautiful gate including the houses next to it, and among them the one in which we had lived. I inquired about the price and decided to buy it as a present for my brother, Arnold, who lived [by then in Budapest] in his villa across the street from us [i.e. from the villa of the Szilard family, where I, myself, grew up]. My brother was very happy with it when it arrived soon, to embellish his living room as the only painting there, since neither he nor his wife had any understanding of art and therefore never bought any paintings. This picture might very well still be in existence, because my sister-in-law, Martha, continued to live there after my brother's death and even after the death of her [oldest] son, Richard, together with her widowed daughter-in-law, Klara, who later, by her second marriage, became the wife of [Doctor] Thein, and because no changes whatsoever were made in that apartment at any time.

Now my mother was trying to find a possibility for getting my sister, Amalie, married; she was neither young any more, nor beautiful, but very smart and intelligent, and

had a German classical education. A matchmaker in the capital who had been recommended to my mother by Mrs. Szöke, the last governess of my sisters, undertook this touchy assignment, after having received all the necessary information through Mrs. Szöke. He recommended a leather dealer named Josef Eckstein who lived in Nagy-Becskerek, who wanted to marry a modest woman with some dowry. My brothers-in-law Ring and Rosenfeld had promised my sister a dowry of 5000 florins. Now the matchmaker contacted his client in Nagy-Becskerek and gave him the information he had gathered. In the meantime Mrs. Szöke obtained information about Mr. Josef Eckstein's character and about his family. Since the information received by both sides was satisfactory, the gentleman was invited to visit us. He came, and as he was favorably impressed by our family, and the promised dowry satisfied his expectations as well, he declared himself ready to enter into wedlock with my sister, and so informed the matchmaker. My sister did want to get married and gave her consent to this match, even though she did not express herself with respect to the impression which her suitor had made on her. To me he appeared to be very unpleasant, in particular he had some expression of strangeness in his look. The wedding took place in the nearby spa of Stubna. On the following day the young couple left for Nagy-Becskerek, accompanied by the best wishes of the family.

Now I want to go back again in my recollections to the time when I abandoned my plan to quit school. I have already mentioned how difficult it was for me to be a good student, since I

was lacking proper knowledge of the language in which we were taught, [Hungarian]. Our teachers, except for a substitute teacher who taught my class geography, were excellent, specialized educators, some of them of German, others of Slovak nationality. The teacher of Hungarian literature was the only Hungarian; he hailed from Kolozsvár in Transylvania. He was a lyric poet whose poems had appeared in print, I chose the seat at the end of the second bench so as not to miss any of the lectures to which I listened most attentively. The program for geography included the knowledge of the European countries with particular concentration on Hungary, of which we had to draw an exact map. I made a special effort to produce a drawing that would be both precise and pleasing to the eye, in which I actually succeeded. When I handed in my completed work, our substitute teacher remarked, for reasons unknown to me, that he doubted/<sup>my</sup>having made the drawing myself. This insinuation angered me and offended my self-esteem to such **a degree** that I resolved not to answer any of his questions at the forthcoming examinations. My behavior at that first opportunity revealed to him my purpose to demonstrate my scorn of him. After a repetition of this action of mine, he became certain that his first impression was valid. So, after the class was dismissed, he had me summoned by the beadle of the school to the conference room, and he wanted to know from me why I left his questions unanswered. Thereupon I told him that his remark about my drawing must have been attributed to an anti-semitic attitude which I did not think fitting for an educator and which constituted a sufficient

reason for me not to answer his questions. His amazement about my impertinent answer was obvious and he dismissed me with threats of further consequences of my improper behavior. I resolved that, should I be ordered to appear at the principal's office, I would repeat, even if the teacher were present, that which I surmised to have made him utter those unfounded remarks, and that they justified my own behavior towards him. However, as nothing of this sort ensued, it became clear to me that the teacher must have come to consider his accusation as one which, from the pedagogic/<sup>point of view,</sup> should never have been made in the first place, and that he must have wished to forestall any further developments in this matter. From then on he did forego though calling on me to step up to the maps and to answer questions. At the end of the school year I was given a "satisfactory" mark in geography. Then, in the following term, this teacher was entrusted with teaching the lower grades only, since the school had secured a new, fully licensed, teacher of this subject for the higher grades.

When I had finished the sixth grade/<sup>of high school,</sup> I was invited by my sister Rosalie, together with my younger brother, to spend our vacation at her home in Sillein. The guest-room of that large house had been prepared to accommodate us. There were yet other school children, relatives of ours and of our age, from Vienna in town, who had been invited by their own relatives. These were boys and girls, all of them merry and without cares. The youngest sister of my sister's husband was still living with my sister at that time; she was a quiet but lovable girl whose two

older sisters were married to two brothers named Salvendi. We organized afternoon games at which we had a jolly good time. The young people from Vienna knew how to propose smart games which gave us great pleasure. We much enjoyed, too, the game of forfeit which often went to the brink of flirting. For instance, the loser had to retrieve his forfeited "collateral" with a kiss to that girl among the players who had been elected to that role by secret ballot. In this way we spent <sup>a</sup> marvelous vacation and we said a regretful farewell to the Viennese youngsters, wishing to meet them there again during the following vacation.

Upon our return to our parents' home, we found them in a worried mood. My sister Amalie's letters brought no pleasant news. She complained about not feeling well and she felt being pregnant already, and wished to return to our parents' home after the birth of the child she expected. As there was no obstacle to that, she was notified that she could expect a warm reception and that the parents would do anything to help restore her health. Several months later her husband brought her home together with her daughter Erna who had been born in the meantime. From that time on she was bedridden. The doctor who attended her found her illness to be cirrhosis of the liver, to which she succumbed within the year. The child, of course, stayed with my mother who brought her up and kept her with her until she got married.

By that time, I was a pupil in the seventh grade. The seventh and eight graders were permitted, subject to their class teacher's permission, to participate in the weekend dancing parties which were started by the innkeeper on the premises of the

inn in town. From time to time I, too, asked for permission to go, not really to participate in the dances though, but to accompany there my sister Jeanette who otherwise would not have had a chance to go. She was a well-built, pretty girl, who in conformity with her considerable musical talents, also danced well and was very keen on doing so. She was now the oldest daughter at home and my mother shared with her the duties of keeping house and was glad to see her grown daughter profit from opportunities to enjoy life. From time to time, some unmarried teachers of the technical high school appeared, too, at those dancing parties, to initiate contacts with the daughters of prosperous citizens of the town, hoping to find there marriage partners who would please them, in which they always succeeded. Almost all of the teachers who were unmarried when they came to town, would marry daughters of such burghers and enjoyed thereafter the benefits of their parents-in-law's affluence. None of these teachers was transferred against his wishes to a school in a different town; the nice school principal, who himself was happily married to the daughter of a well-to-do local citizen, took care of that.

That school principal was an engineer who had been educated abroad and was licensed by the authorities in charge of education to teach descriptive geometry at any technical high school in the Country. That new technical high school was built according to his designs and its layout and details left nothing to be desired. I followed his lectures, which the students attended when they were in their seventh year at the school, with great interest, and I recorded his presentations with great zeal in my draw-

ings, during the afternoon periods reserved for drawing. Those lectures continued into the eighth year. As a result of the clarity of the principal's lectures and their easily understood presentation, I mastered that discipline so completely that later, at the Institute of Technology in the capital, where great importance was assigned to that subject, it was easy/going for me.

Vacation time brought me a big disappointment. I had hoped to spend it again, as the year before, in Sillein, in the company of young people from Vienna. But my brother-in-law Rosenfeld fell seriously ill, and, going by the doctors' findings, one could hardly hope for a recovery; indeed, he died of pneumonia soon thereafter. My sister who was childless, did not want to stay there after **her husband's death**. He had died intestate and thus she was compelled to assure her inheritance rights by negotiations with her deceased husband's two brothers, one of whom had always encountered <sup>her</sup> with hostility. Those discussions were **very** embarrassing to her. According to the law, there was no doubt about her entitlement to half of her husband's acquired assets and to the refund of her dowry. But she did not want to assert her claim through litigation, and she was intent on avoiding anything that would have caused offense to the large family of the Rosenfelds. As the first phase of her negotiations had produced no satisfactory result, she turned to that brother of her husband who lived in Vienna as a high executive of a bank, to be an arbitrator. He was president of the Länderbank and was highly respected as a man of special correctness. He was willing to accede to her wishes to clarify the matter with his two brothers right away, which led very soon to a solution of the

matter of my sister's inheritance, a solution to which she agreed. She was satisfied to receive double the amount of her dowry, coming to 30000 florins. She left Sillein after the settlement, taking along her own furniture which she <sup>had</sup> brought from home when she moved to Sillein, and she settled in the capital where my brother Arnold had been living for the last two years. My sister wanted to stay with my brother, which conformed to his own wishes. Therefore, they rented, in good time before her moving, a suitable three-room apartment, [in American parlance this would be a four-room apartment] with a view of the beautiful, well-tended [gardens of] Elizabeth Square. My sister arrived soon thereafter. With the help of a nice maid the apartment was fixed up, and the household going along at its usual pace within a short time. When the weather was nice, my sister would sit in the garden of that square on afternoons and would enjoy the popular outdoor concerts given there. My brother was a lumber agent. His duties were to negotiate sales of the lumber, cut in the mills, to the many contractors engaged in the building of housing in the rapidly developing capital. Thanks to his commercial acumen, he soon had **firm** ground under his feet again. This was in the year 1879. [My father was then 19 years old.] In the following year, my brother succeeded in convincing an Austrian count, or rather the manager of his estates, [of the merits of] producing thin boards of beechwood coming from his beech forests, and making them into crates which were in demand in southern Italy for the shipping of fruit. He offered to purchase large fixed yearly quantities, if the count would assume the obligation of producing the material. A contract was concluded to this effect. However, it soon became clear that

the count, because of inadequacy of his estates' management, could not fulfill his obligations with respect to deliveries, for which the contract stipulated a penalty. And since the count had no hopes for being ever able to fulfill his obligations, he sought to cancel the contract, which he achieved by paying a rather large sum of money. This was my brother's first great business success.

By that time I had become a student in the eighth year of studies, [that is, a senior] in the technical high school. It was the first year in which a baccalaurate examination was prescribed for students of technical high schools, too, and those examinations were upon us. The ignorance of what would be required of us in these exams caused great anxiety to my classmates. Our teachers, who were university graduates and had thus become familiar with baccalaurate examinations in their time, tried to quiet our fears with assurances that no student who had kept up with his studies at all times would have any reason for anxiety. A part of the study materials of the eighth year had to be refreshed in our minds, and another part had to be re-studied from scratch, so we would master the whole at the examinations, which then followed one another at a steady pace. All this involved mainly the two subjects of world history and Hungarian literature. All else was no problem for us. The fearsome day came and went, and passed tolerably, the more so as the guest member of the examining team of teachers, a Professor Stoezek, from the physics department of the Institute of Technology in Pest, [later the Institute was moved to Buda, the erst-

while sister-city of Pest, across the river Danube, the two having been unified in 1873]; thus he was interested only in the students' answers to questions in physics. The students who had an "excellent" mark in a subject in the last year in which they had taken it, were excused from taking the respective oral examination, from which rule I myself drew a benefit. We celebrated the completion of our high school years with a common dinner, which the principal, accompanied by our teachers, also attended; and he wished us, in a beautiful speech, the best for our further development.

Here I would like to go back to an occurrence which, due to my inexperience, caused me quite some anxiety. I reached my twentieth birthday while attending the last year of studies at high school and that made me subject to military subscription. Since graduates of high schools of advanced standing were entitled to serve for only one year as officer-candidates, as against the standard three years' service of all others, I applied to the appropriate military authorities for a grant of that preferred service at government costs. [Apparently, the officer-candidates generally had to cover some of the cost of their service, such as uniforms, etc., themselves.] I submitted a certificate of indigence in support of my request. I did not have to wait long for the approval; it came together with orders to present myself on a certain day at the headquarters of the honvéd regiment [a regiment manned by Hungarians only], garrisoned in Losonc. Conforming to these orders, I traveled the night before on a so-called mixed train, a [freight] train, to which third class and

fourth class coaches were attached, with a ticket at half price to which students were entitled, to Losonc. There I checked into a hostel, just in case that I should decide to stay in town for one or two days. My physical examination by the military doctors was performed by the regimental physicians of the garrison, on the morning of my arrival, with the decision: "at this time unqualified for service", and I was dismissed with orders to report back in a year. Thereupon I proceeded to my hostel, ate goulash with a lot of potatoes, and then planned to look around the town; but before I got up, a man approached and sat down at my table, involved me in conversation and asked me about the purpose of my stay there. After I had satisfied his curiosity, he offered to acquaint me with an interesting card game by means of which it was possible to win a lot of money. It was a trick of card-sharpers; he called it "Where is the red? Here it is!". In a split second, he had slipped two cards out of the deck, face down on the table, and invited me to pick out one of the two, and if it should be the red ace, he would repay me double my wager. I should make an experiment first, just to see whether I had any luck with cards. I let myself be led down the garden path and wagered one florin. The card which I turned over was, of course, the red ace, since - as I realized later - both cards were red aces so as to make sure that I would win. He repeated this trick several times to win me over for yet more of this game. From that point on, he managed to let me lose consistently, by reversing the trick and not having any red ace among the two cards on the table. Within fifteen minutes, the small sum of money that my mother had given me for the trip, was

in the pocket of that card-sharper. Now he left me, and I was stunned. The innkeeper's wife who had observed the game and surely was in cahoots with the card-sharper when she saw my desperation, and aware as she was of its reason, advised me to pawn the gold ring she saw on my finger, a gift of my mother, received from her after completion of my seventh year [junior year] at high school, as a reward for my zeal in studying. I got the information from the woman about the location of the town's pawn shop, and she urged me to go there right away since they would close at three o'clock. I arrived there soon and explained what I wanted. I received 5 florins for the ring as collateral; and because I was not certain whether this sum would cover my bill at the hostel and the return fare, I took off my top coat and asked for a loan on that, too. I received another 3 florins, returned to the hostel, paid for my mid-day meal, and left with the feeling of having been the victim of a bandit. In the evening, I started the trip home the same way I had come. In the morning, upon reaching my parents' home, where my mother was awaiting me, I first reported briefly about the regimental physicians' finding of "at this time unqualified for service", about which my mother was glad. But now it struck her that I had returned without my top-coat. Upon her inquiry where I left it, I told her of my adventure at the hostel and of the necessity that followed therefrom to pawn not only the coat but also the ring that was her gift, to cover the cost of my return trip. Although my mother was very upset when she heard that story, she did not get angry. She patted my head and said only that this experience should make me more cautious in the future.

After graduation from high school, my mother wanted to do something pleasant for me, and she offered to let me visit my place of birth and my relatives who were still living there, and who would surely be happy to see me again, now that I was a grown young man. **For lack** of any other [attractive] idea, I decided in favor of such a vacation trip. We notified my relatives of my forthcoming visit and my uncle Buchbinder, whose wife was my father's sister, met me on the appointed day at the railroad station at Kralován, the terminal of the line which brought me from Kremnitz to the county line of Árva, to take me from there in his carriage. He still remembered me very well, greeted me warmly, and the carriage trip began. A good road, built in the last ten years, led us, climbing over hills in some places, along the narrow valley of the Árva river, soon to the first large village of Nagyfalú. This was the birthplace of my father, whose parents had at one time run the village tavern, **there, but** were by that time **not living any more.** The next village was Kriva, where my uncle Buchbinder had his home, of whose family I have already reported some details. My aunt welcomed me with great joy, and after I had answered all of her questions about the well-being of my parents, brothers, and sisters, I was led to the adjacent room, where a festive table was set for the mid-day meal. To my query about the children of the family, I was told that the sons were already grown up and had settled, one in the capital, the other abroad. There were two more children, still small, who were about to be fed their meal in their small room by a Slovak maid. We had roast lamb and apple strudell;

which I ate with gusto and of which, being urged by <sup>my</sup> aunt, I ate a lot. As there were no young people of my age in the house with whom I could pleasantly spend my time there, I decided not to stay long, particularly as there was only scarce accommodation there for me. My aunt had yielded her own bed to me for the night, while she fixed up a primitive contraption for herself in the tavern. My uncle, busy as he was in the tavern, had little time for me; nor ~~did~~ <sup>was</sup> my aunt, for that matter, because of her manifold household duties, in the position to keep me company. The following day I walked around the village and its immediate surroundings which were not particularly interesting. At night I asked my uncle to take me, very early the following morning, so that during the day he would not have to be away from his place for too long a time, to my other uncle <sup>[Schlesinger]</sup>, who lived not far from there, in Turdossin [my birthplace], and whose wife <sup>[Ernestine]</sup> also was a sister of my father, and who owned the inn [in Turdossin], on the highway near the bridge, shown in the sketch which I have made [for the beginning of these Recollections]. There, too, I was welcomed amiably, and the two growing daughters greeted me as a close relative. Both were merry maidens, ready for any mischief. I recognized the small, clean village very well; and I profited from the first opportunity to visit the playmates of my youngest years, the daughters of Dr. Kux, who still lived in our former home. The girls were still unmarried and were staying with their parents; they had grown into plain girls, nor were they pleasant, according to my first impression. I would like to mention here that the younger brother of these girls named Wilhelm attended,

as I had done, the technical high school in Kremnitz, and had boarded there with the teacher of German, Jankowsky. My second visit was with my physician, Dr. Langfelder, who was also my godfather and, as such, had entrusted my mother with a gold ducat, intended for me on my seventeenth birthday. My mother, after having saved it conscientiously all the time, did give it to me on that appointed day. However, even afterwards it remained in my mother's custody until the day I left my parents' home to continue my studies in the capital.

I spent pleasant days in the company of my aunt's young daughters. After a week's stay with these relatives, I was driven, at my request, to Alsó-Kubin where Gustav, the second-oldest son of my grandfather Klopstock, (my mother's father), had his medical practice as official town-physician. He was honored as a good doctor, but as a person he was not likable, nor was he particularly friendly towards me. The following morning my [maternal] grandfather picked me up and took me to his home in Malatina. His wife [that is, his second wife, my paternal grandmother's stepmother] received me in a friendly manner, and so did her youngest daughter Mathilde, a sixteen-year-old, shy, pretty girl. On the same day my grandfather killed a young lamb from his flock of sheep which attracted my lively interest. After skinning the **Carcass** and removing its innards, and thoroughly washing **with water**, he profusely salted <sup>it</sup> inside and out and stored it in the cold cellar to furnish a week's meat supply for family and guest. The bony parts of the carcass were hung from hooks in the smoking chamber, to serve, after being thus processed, as a meat reserve

for the winter months. In addition to being an inn/keeper, my grandfather also raised sheep on a fairly large scale. The sheep's milk was made into cheese, pressed between two cone-shaped, hollow wooden forms, thoroughly smoked and taken by my grandfather on market days to Liptó-Szent-Miklós, where it sold like hot-cakes. It was a very tasty cheese [called ostyepka in Slovak], much enjoyed in Slovakia at that time, and was very much in demand later in the capital also; and even now it is available here in New York at Paprikás Weiss, the food import store. At the time I and my younger brother still attended school in Liptó-Szent-Miklós, my grandfather, whenever he brought his wares to market, would give us such a double-cone-shaped cheese called kásel [in German, the word being probably a diminutive for Käse which means cheese], but only if we had the so-called "zidakl" on our bodies, [a fringed undershirt, worn as an orthodox ritual]. Otherwise he would give each of us only a Groschen (worth four Kreuzers).

We had nice autumn weather and I went with Mathilde on hikes in the high mountains from where the even higher, snow-covered ridges of the Carpathian mountains could be seen. Beyond that border [of Hungary] lay the Austrian territory of Galicia whose capital city Lemberg was captured later, during the world war, [that is, the First World War, and this **happened in 1915**] by the rapidly advancing hordes of the Russian army. After a pleasant stay there ~~for~~ a week, I left to take a trip, suggested by my grandfather, to see the market at Liptó-Szent-Miklós and to visit there my sister [Josephine] Ring, a visit which I myself had

planned. She received me with great joy and I spent very pleasant days there. I visited our erstwhile tutor [of my sisters] Mr. Vogelhut, who was still serving as head teacher at the Jewish elementary school there. Many of my past schoolmates who were by then attending universities, were in town on home vacation with their parents, and we enjoyed meeting each other; <sup>we</sup> organized get-togethers at the inn, "The Black Eagle", which was still operated by the father of a dear friend of mine, Kálmán Weiser. My childhood girlfriend, Ilka Diener, to whom I had vowed eternal love, did not live in that town any more; she had moved with her parents, after completion of the railroad line Kaschau-Oderberg, to a place which was not known around there. Three weeks had gone by since I had embarked on that trip around the world when I decided to go home.

When I got home, my aunt Heller asked me to keep her twelve-year old daughter, who had too much time on her hands, busy with some worthwhile study. I proposed to acquaint her with some German classical literature that would be fitting for her age, to read aloud some of it to her, and to induce her to learn by heart some of the beautiful ballads of Schiller and Göthe. Her father, an educated retired teacher, was very pleased with my suggestion, and it was arranged that I should use the afternoons for that activity. One of the girl's friends of the same age was urged not to miss such a favorable opportunity for instructions, and thus both girls came every afternoon to the home of my parents. First I described to them the life and work of these great minds, whose poetry will be forever the heritage not only of Germans

but of all cultured nations of Europe. We read Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre [William Meister's Years of Apprenticeship, by Göthe] and many other books that kept the girls' interest in these reading sessions alive.

The day [in 1880, when my father was twenty years old], set for my departure for the capital, for continuing there my education to become an engineer, was upon me; and when I went to take my leave of my aunt, she gave me two rolls of fifty silver florins each, as a fee, she said, for my lectures to her daughter. For me, such a sum was a fortune and it enabled me to support myself for fully two or three months without the need to ask any of my brothers or sisters to help me. I arrived in Pest [that flat part of the later unified city of Budapest which lies on the left bank of the Danube, just opposite Buda, the hilly part which was the capital city] at the railroad terminal in the borough of Josefstadt. At that time that was the only station for long distance train service, aside from the South Station in Buda. I was met there by my sister and taken to her home by streetcar. Registration at the Institute of Technology had not yet started, so I had a few days at my disposal for orientation in those for me so strange surroundings. There were no difficulties in enrollment at the Institute. The students were registered in the office of the "Questor" [chief cashier]. Each of us was handed a questionnaire which we had to complete, and the so-called "**index**", a booklet in which we ourselves entered our personal data as well as the list of those courses which we would attend, with the names of the professors, whom, incidentally, we were permitted to chose [from

among several who taught the same subjects]. After paying thirty florins tuition for the semester, receipt of which was acknowledged by an entry in that "index", enrollment was completed. Of course, it was mainly the high school transcript which was the basic document underlying the permission to enroll, and it was retained in the Admission Office. At that time, the Institute of Technology was housed in a very old building near the beginning of Üllői Road [the road in Pest, leading to the suburb of Üllő in the southeast], with lecture halls not large enough to have seats for all the students, so that many of them had to listen to the lectures standing up. However, the erecting of a new building for the Institute had already been started on Museum Körút [a section of the "outer ring" of boulevards, forming a half-circle around all the main portions of Pest, while an "inner ring", a smaller half-circle encloses the older downtown area], near the National Museum, which promised to satisfy all requirements of such an institute. Within a very few days after my arrival I visited Mrs. Szöke, the erstwhile governess of my sisters, who received me in a very friendly way. I asked her at that opportunity to communicate to her husband my request that - since I was compelled to support myself - he be good enough to help me to get tutoring jobs with elementary school pupils, which he, as an elementary school teacher, may be able to do for me. She promised me that she herself would not spare any effort to help me to find work. It did not take long until Mr. Szöke invited me to visit him at his school on a certain day and at a certain hour. Of course, I appeared there on time and was introduced to a lady who was waiting there for me and whom Mr.

Szöke had informed about me before I arrived. She was looking for a university student, for supervising her three boys who attended the same elementary school in the first, second, and fourth grades, respectively, my presence to be required in the afternoons, between noon and five o'clock. She would not eat lunch with the children, since she usually stayed, even during lunch time, at her husband's jewelry store, located in what at that time was called Hatvany Street, but later-on was known as Kossuth Street, where she ate lunch with her husband. She offered me for that schedule of watching her children and supervising them while they did their homework, twenty florins a month, which I considered an appropriate fee, and, therefore, I accepted her offer with satisfaction. I was to start that job at the beginning of the following week. I agreed to that, too; she gave me her address, and took her leave from Mr. Szöke and myself, after having thanked him abundantly for having arranged our meeting. In the afternoons there were no lectures given at the Institute. Two afternoons a week were assigned to free-hand drawing classes, while two more offered the students the opportunity to prepare drawings, required for the course in descriptive geometry. As my high school transcript contained an "excellent" in drawing, I was excused from the free-hand drawing course. As to the drawings for descriptive geometry, those I could do at home. Thus I could take care of the supervision of the lady's children without interference with my studies. The lady awaited me at the appointed time to get me acquainted with her children and she stayed with us for the mid-day meal, too, so as to observe the impression that I would make on them. After

lunch she left me alone with them. There was a maid there to do all the work, including the cooking, and a governess to watch over the children. The latter sat with us at table, served the children their meal, and then put the **dining** room in order. On the very first afternoon it became clear to me that I would not have an easy way with these children. They were disobedient, unruly, wild children, with no respect for anyone. It was impossible for me to work with them in a serious manner. Children are generally cruel, with few exceptions. They are apt to discover soon how they can curb their guardians. I observed this [here in America] with respect to my beloved grandson Andrew, too. I will tell about it here. When I arrived here, the child was one and a half years old. He did not talk or walk yet. To make myself useful, I would take him out in his stroller. It was autumn and he wore light **knitted** gloves. The moment we reached the street, he would strip those gloves from both hands and throw them to the pavement. I picked them up and put them back on his hands, but he took them off immediately and threw them out on both sides of the baby carriage, obviously enjoying what he did. This was repeated without let-up until we were back at the apartment. Day after day this went on. He had found out that his doings annoyed me and, after I got tired of bending down so much, I would become impatient. Then winter came. Now he wore heavy gloves, but in spite of the cold weather, he continued his game of stripping them off. To spare me the **stooping** and picking up the gloves from the pavement, Bözsi sewed the gloves to the cuffs of his warm jacket. Now there was no need for me to stoop down anymore, but he continued his game of **stripping** off the gloves, which I, out of fear that his

hands might freeze, put back on him right away. As I, in spite of making a stern face, did not succeed in stopping him, finally gave up taking him out.

The lectures at the Institute had started. I sat in the front bench so as to be able to listen to them undisturbed. In the first term mathematics was the most important subject for me. In addition to the prescribed course on the theory of equations, I also enrolled in the elective course on the theory of numbers. Both were taught by the famous mathematician Julius König who presented his lectures <sup>in a</sup> language on such a high level of erudition that it took my greatest effort to follow him with unflagging attention. I missed none of his lectures, so that the professor observed that my seat was never unoccupied. Thus, when it came to the examinations at semester's end, he offered to give me a mark of "good" in both subjects in which I had been enrolled, without an examination, which I, of course, accepted with joy, in view of the very stiff requirements which he had set for his students. Since I got marks of "good" in the other subjects also, I could qualify, using my certificate of indigence, for a 50% rebate of the tuition, which I continued to enjoy for the four subsequent semesters, too. In the second semester, I took, in addition to the second half of the course on the theory of numbers, one given on linear equations by Professor Hunyady. I spent the first long vacation after the end of the second semester with my parents, and upon a new request by Aunt Heller, I took up the teaching of **the two young girls**, who had finished the eighth elementary grade, once more. We read "Werther's Sufferings" and now also several

plays by Schiller, such as "The Robbers", as well as some other works. I introduced those girls to some Shakespeare plays, too. When I took leave from my aunt before returning to the capital, I received from her once more two rolls of fifty florins each as a fee for my work with her daughter. At my parents' home, there were at that time, in addition to my sister Jeanette, the three younger sisters: Hermine, Malvine, and Gisella. My sister Flora who, after completing the eighth elementary grade, wanted to prepare for a profession, was taken to Pozsony for this purpose, took there a one-year course in the teaching of needlework, and after graduating therefrom, she got a job as a needlework-teacher in the Jewish elementary school at Sillein, where she stayed with my sister Schlesinger. [My sister Flora] continued to hold that job for the following year. My younger brother Adolf, having just graduated from high school, and having earned there the overall mark "excellent", and myself, now traveled together to the capital.

Right at the start of the first semester, I left the home of my sister Rosalie and rented a room, together with a school-mate from the Institute of Technology, at 15 King Street [along arterial street, leading from where the Institute was at that time towards the City Park towards the northeast], from a Dr. Samek, whose wife had just borne her first child. It was a girl who, twenty years later, became the most famous singer in the Country, and as such the prima donna of the Opera House. [There was only one in Hungary at that time, the Royal Opera of Budapest.] That room could be reached both from the main staircase through the anteroom of the apartment, and from the direction of the court-

yard through an entrance which, in addition, offered access to the kitchen and to a narrow passageway leading to the dining room. The apartment was in a building that had, at street level, a night spot, a honky-tonk so to speak, with a back door **that opened onto** the courtyard. Admission was free, and the guests were only asked, every now and then, for any contribution they chose to make, for which a collection was taken up in the simplest manner. Free access to that place and egress therefrom to the courtyard through that back door gave us the favorable opportunity to get to our room, even after the door of the building was locked for the night, without paying the custodian for unlocking it for us. [This is still the custom in most European countries, except for its modified form practiced in France, where the **Concierge** opens the front door by remote control, pulling a cord that ends in her "loge".] We exploited this convenience thoroughly, as it permitted us a longer stay **at** the small coffee shop across the street where we regularly had our very frugal suppers, consisting mostly of a small amount of cheese for four kreuzers, with a slice of bread for two kreuzers, completed by a glass of coffee with milk and a fresh "water-roll" [a large, round, smooth-surfaced hard roll, baked with plenty of yeast to make it light and as large as possible out of the smallest amount of dough, a roll still standard in central Europe], all of which cost, including the tip for the waiter, ten kreuzers. For the duration of the summer vacation, I left the room to my roommate who then shared it with another school-mate of ours. When I reappeared in Budapest, now together with my younger brother, I again took possession of my room and asked my roommate to rent a place elsewhere, so that I and my

brother could stay together. My brother chose to study machine engineering; his enrollment at the Institute went off without a hitch at the new building on Museum Ring where it was now located. [Later the Institute was moved again, to a large campus in Buda, where I myself attended the first year of my engineering studies.]

Now I would like to report on how the futures of my brother Arnold and of my sister Rosalie, who shared an apartment in Budapest, developed further. My brother wanted to get married. Upon recommendation of friends he therefore turned to a matchmaker, a woman who was widely employed as a marriage broker by well-to-do Jewish circles. She was the wife of an orchestra conductor, and was glad to be at my brother's service, of whom she kept a record on her list of eligible young men who intended to marry. She suggested to him a Miss **Mandel**, daughter of a physician who had come from Croatia to settle in **the** capital, and then had given up his practice. Dr. **Mandel's** wife was a sister of Horace Landau, a very rich bachelor who at that time lived in Florence. His and his sister's family hailed from Posen [in Pomerania, then Germany], from where they immigrated **to** Hungary and settled in Budapest, together with their very close friends, the Davidsohn family, [my mother's maternal forebears]. Old man Landau had been, in his homeland, a Jewish teacher and now was supported by his rich son Horace, one of his three sons, and was staying, together with his very much younger wife, at his son's large [apparently second] house that was on Váci Ring in Budapest, generally known as "Landau Palace". The two other sons of the old man and some of his numerous daughters lived in Vienna, some other daughters in Budapest. The young lady

mentioned [in connection with my uncle Arnold's marriage plans], was the third of her mother's five daughters, three of whom were already married. The oldest was married to a Mr. Krieshaber, a second to a Mr. Mandello, and another to a physician in Karlsbad. The youngest was still a child. Said young lady had been promised by her rich uncle a dowry of twenty thousand florins. She was not young **any more**, nor was she pretty, but educated and raised in accordance with her family's social standing. Before she and my brother met, Mr. Mandello was asked by the girl's parents to proceed to Kremnitz and to gather there the necessary information about our family. Then, as his report was satisfactory to the Mandel family, the matchmaker suggested that my brother pay them a visit. It did not take long until my brother came home one evening joyfully excited, and gave us the news that he now considered himself engaged. In accordance with custom, my sister, not losing any time, paid a congratulatory visit to the Mandels the very next day. The bride-to-be accepted my sister's good wishes with a cool demeanor and made the remark that those seemed to her somewhat premature, since she had not yet definitely made up her mind. My sister, much embarrassed, excused her having come as a result of <sup>a</sup> confusion, got up, and left after a very brief goodbye. When my brother came home for supper that night and my sister reported to him on her visit, and how it went, he decided to stop further visits to that family. However, two days later he was politely invited there, together with my sister, to a family supper, without even a trace of a reference to the remark, very embarrassing to the parents, too, which their daughter had

made to my sister. My brother, to whom this proposed marriage appeared very desirable, explained the fact that he had not paid any visit for two days, by saying that he had been out of town; but my sister, claiming a slight cold, declined the invitation with thanks. The result of that tactless behavior of her future sister-in-law was a later lack of a close family relationship, not only between the two of them, but even with respect to all of us brothers and sisters. For us, she remained a stranger.

Further developments came soon thereafter. After the wedding, which my parents did not attend, and after the return of the young couple from the customary honeymoon, they moved into an apartment that was free in the "Landau Palace". The furniture, custom-built from drawings that they had approved before, was awaiting them there.

Nor did my sister stay a widow for long. In that very same year she was visited by the matchmaker whom she already knew and who brought her an offer of marriage. It came from a Mr. Josef Rotthausen, the well-known owner of the great toy store at the corner of King Street. He had been a widower for some time and had a daughter who lived with an aunt of his late wife's youngest sister, that aunt having been born a Davidsohn and being married to Dr. Sigmund Vidor [that aunt Jeanette and Dr. Vidor were my maternal grandparents]. My sister, barely forty years old, **and** having lived for years with a sickly husband, and now tired of the lonely life of a widow, did want to get married again. After talking it over with her brother, she promised the lady an answer which the latter may fetch from her in a few days, together with

information on her financial situation. My sister, after confer-  
**ring** once more with my brother, who had gotten in the meantime  
the necessary information [on Mr. Rotthauser], declared herself  
ready to meet the gentleman. Mr. Rotthauser was a good-looking  
man **of** worldly manners, and he made a good impression on my  
sister, so there was no obstacle in the path of the marriage,  
which in fact followed soon thereafter. It was, however, ac-  
cepted only reluctantly by the family of Mr. Rotthauser's first  
wife, out of fear of a strained relationship between the little  
girl, Vilma, and my sister, her step-mother, a fear which **later**  
proved entirely uncalled-for. The newlyweds moved to a nice  
apartment on Andrassy **Avenue**, near the coffee-house "Japan", which  
contained their combined furniture. When I, together with my  
younger brother, reappeared in Budapest for the start of the  
second year of my studies, I considered it my duty to call on  
Mrs. Wirt **but** did not intend to get involved once more with her  
ill-bred children, and I told her so, using the excuse that I  
needed the afternoons for my own studies. I recommended to her  
instead my very poor schoolmate Neumann. He, too, was born in  
the County of Árva and had attended the technical high school in  
Kremnitz at the same time as myself. Of course, it would have  
been only natural to recommend my younger brother, but I con-  
sidered him much too restless and impatient for being able to  
cope with those children. Now I had to look for some other  
source of income. One of my schoolmates knew about a family in  
Altofen [a northern suburb of Budapest, on the Danube, on the  
Buda side]; they wanted a tutor for their only son who attended  
elementary school in the fourth grade. My schoolmate did not

need this job, since he had a similar one already. That family [in Altofen] were Czechs called Zaicsek, owners of a pawn-shop on Gisella Square. My schoolmate gave me the exact address and I presented myself to Mr. Zaicsek the very same day and asked him for details of the tutoring job. His son, who lacked company, was to be watched from four to seven o'clock, for which a fee of twenty florins a month was set. That was an offer that suited me, and as I appeared to please Mr. Zaicsek, I got the job. At the beginning of the following week, I presented myself to the family at the appointed hour, and after an exchange of the customary courtesies, I turned to my duties, to keep the boy occupied. Before we started, we were served coffee and cake. He was a quiet, well-behaved boy, a late child of his parents, his sister being seven years older. These were simple Jewish people who had come there twenty years earlier from the German part of Bohemia [the Czech dominion of Austria, now part of Czechoslovakia], **and owned** the one-story, rather old house in which they lived. The daughter, who was active in their household, was a plain girl. She was born there and thus had a command of the Hungarian language. After the boy was done with his homework, I would read to him stories to which he listened attentively, and visibly with great interest. I would have been satisfied, if only the distance between my place and their home would not have been so great. I walked across the Margaret Bridge. I rarely took the trolley, to save the fare which would have cost me a goodly portion of my fee. It took me almost an hour to walk home and I reached my room quite tired out.

One evening, as I was sitting in the coffee shop across the

street from my place and had my usual cup of coffee, a young man, apparently my own age, joined me at my table, which was next to the entrance door. We got into conversation, and when he heard my name, he was visibly very much surprised, gave me his own, which, in turn, awoke my own surprise. His name was Strumpf and he turned out to be the son of my mother's youngest sister, the same whose husband had died such a tragic death [from the boiler explosion] at our farm **Petrusch**. Thus, he was my cousin. He was employed as a salesman at a cigar store nearby with a salary of thirty florins a month. When I asked him for his address, he did not give it to me, which made me assume that he stayed at a shelter. I was struck by his rather miserable attire. His mother and sister were living in Alsó-Kubin in the County of Árva, and were supported by his mother's father Josef Klopstock, our common grandfather. We agreed to meet again at the same place, and he departed. The fourth semester of my studies was nearing its end. I was still a zealous student of the Institute and passed my examinations with good results. During the summer vacation that followed, I stayed on in Budapest to earn some money, if possible. My brother-in-law Rotthausser had a friend and Brother-Freemason who was a building contractor. My brother-in-law told him that he would be very pleased if I could find work in his friend's office during the university vacation. That builder, by the name of Klein, a non-Jew, proved to be willing. His office was near the City Park. He had an employee, likewise a civil engineer, and they were entrusted with the construction of a two-story apartment building and of a large fountain in front of the exhibition hall in City Park. With a salary of eight florins a week I thus

began my first activity as a future civil engineer. My assignment called for preparing a front view, on a scale of 1 to 50, of the building then being erected, from some sketches and from the already completed construction drawings. The employee helped me in my work and Mr. Klein was satisfied with my accomplishments. On Saturdays it was my duty to take the payroll list and the cash wages, counted out for each worker, to the building site, where the foreman handed out the individual wage amounts in my presence. I also had to prepare the accounting documents necessary to obtain progress-payments, documents that had to be prepared on the basis of the contractually fixed unit prices, which helped me to learn that simplest and most exact method of accounting for work completed. But now the vacation was over. The fifth semester was to begin, and with it, my worries about a livelihood. My brother Adolf showed little interest in his chosen studies of machine engineering and just decided to make a switch so that he, too, would become a civil engineer. He had great difficulties in earning his livelihood, and since he had reached military age, he intended to do his service at that time, provided he were found to be physically **acceptable**. He applied successfully for the privilege of serving for one year as an officer-candidate at government cost, was found acceptable, and he was assigned to a supply regiment with headquarters in Vienna, whereto he proceeded forthwith.

Having remained alone, I gave up our room and moved, together with yet another schoolmate, to a much larger room on Rombach Street. That schoolmate's name was Rosenberg but he

changed it later to Rudó when he settled in Szeged as a **building** contractor. As I learned in the year 1902, Pista Rudó [who later became a friend of the family] was a nephew, a brother's son, of my roommate Rosenberg. My roommate appeared to have some means, and he was very helpful to me. He was entrusted with tutoring a seventh-year student of a technical high school in descriptive geometry, in which that boy was failing. However, since my schoolmate Rosenberg had graduated from a gymnasium [a classical-humanist high school], he was not certain enough of being able to teach descriptive geometry at all, to his pupil. So he yielded this job to me, in **payment** for which I was given the rent-free use of a small room at the pupil's home. Now I had at least a roof over my head. My pupil's name was Frommer, later changed to Jámbor; he became an engineer and was the brother of the very active architect Jámbor. That pupil of mine was not a nice boy; he never looked in my eyes, did not address himself to me at all, and even failed to greet me. After a **blackboard, a large wooden** compass, and a straight-edge had been acquired, I began teaching him the way I myself had been taught by my erstwhile school principal Schröder at the technical high school in Kremnitz. I was never certain whether my student followed my lectures and I avoided testing him about that; but I did check the geometrical drawings he made. In the end, he got a "good" mark in that subject. My place was at 15 Váci Körút [a section of the inner ring of boulevards], near my brother-in-law Rotthauser's haberdashery store that was at #1 of the same boulevard. On his request to pinch-hit for him as a cashier at his store at noon-time, so he could join his wife for the mid-day meal at home, I appeared there

every day, precisely at 12:30, and stayed until he reappeared at 2 o'clock. I received 30 kreutzers per day for this service, and that sufficed to pay for the ample portions that I ate **for** my mid-day meals, at the students' eating-hall of the Institute. Now I needed only to find additional income for defraying the cost of my suppers and for other expenses. By sheer chance I met one evening, at the coffee house across the street from the Foncière building, a young man who hailed, like myself, from the County of Árva and was an engineer, employed by the contractor who was engaged in building the rail line Szabadka-Zimony. Upon my inquiry whether they could use an engineering student with good drafting abilities, he said that this should certainly be possible just then, since, with the construction almost completed, they were about to look for a draftsman who would prepare the drawings necessary for the final accounting, showing the completed building structures and bridges. He offered to introduce <sup>me</sup> to his Chief Engineer and to recommend me for that job. These drawings would have to be first done on transparent paper, then mechanically copied over onto drafting paper, and finally checked against the original drawings. The work was offered against payment "in accord", that is for a fixed fee per completed sheet. **I was willing to** prepare the drawings for this form of compensation. Two months working time was set out for this job, which was to be carried out at their office, I devoted my time from 4 to 10 o'clock to this job and completed it by the deadline. I earned with that 300 florins which served to relieve my worries for a long time.

Vilma, my brother-in-law Rotthauser's daughter, came home to her father when she turned fourteen, and was lovingly received [by her stepmother], and continued from then on to be treated in the same manner, as a consequence of which the young girl lived very happily in their midst. She did not attend school but received her further education from private teachers who came to their home. She was musical and played the piano well. She had a lot of girl friends from respectable Jewish families who liked to visit her because of her lively inclinations. Her father had a brother who had numerous daughters and several sons. There was a very nice girl among his daughters, Theresa by name, who had a marvelous talent to become a professional singer. She obtained her musical training from the voice teacher Belovics. She came often to visit her cousin Vilma, on which occasions I was likely to appear there, too. I developed a great interest in that gifted girl, and on one occasion I asked her to lend me, for a short time, her photograph, which she gave me on her next visit, asking me to return it soon. I had the plan to try and draw her portrait from the photograph and to keep the drawing in remembrance of my student years. I succeeded so well that it was well-nigh impossible to distinguish the drawing from the original. It was my first and last attempt of this kind until I, as an eighty-nine year old man, decided to while away the time that lay heavy on my hands, by again making such drawn reproductions, of which I had made one so successfully as a student.

Then my brother-in-law Rotthauser's business turned from bad to worse. The expensive fancy items lacked purchasers and only

the toys sold well at Christmas time, yet the income fell far short of what was needed to cover the considerable overhead. Much of the goods remained unsold and my brother-in-law could pay maturing notes, which he had given to various department stores in Paris and Nurenberg to cover the credits they had extended to him, in no other way but by drawing upon the dowry of his wife; otherwise he would have been compelled to declare himself bankrupt, which he wanted to avoid under all circumstances. His daughter turned eighteen at that time. He contemplated getting her married, and as fast as possible. He thought of my brother Max, who was still working at that time in **Neu-Sohl** as bookkeeper and cashier of an industrial enterprise that made furniture out of bent poles of beechwood, a company of which my brother Arnold had been part owner at one time. As my brother Max pleased **that girl**, which her father could clearly observe, and as, on the other hand, my brother considered the possibility of this marriage a very desirable thing, there was no obstacle to the union between the girl and my brother Max. The girl's inheritance from her grandfather Davidsohn was still deposited in the office of the Public Guardian. It consisted of 75 thousand florins worth of officially approved government securities, whose interest was payable to her father for covering the expenses of her education. Now, by getting married, she attained legal majority and her right to receive her inheritance, deposited with the Public Guardian. My brother-in-law did not intend that the entire sum be given to my brother as a dowry, but wanted to hold back part of it for possible contingencies later on. He thought of a reserve of 25 thousand florins. En-

gagement and wedding followed soon, and the young couple built their nest in a four-room apartment. My brother Max had not yet made up his mind with respect to a particular business activity. Awaiting an opportunity for making such a decision, he speculated at the Produce Exchange, encouraged herein by several of his childhood friends (who had become **commodity** brokers), obviously in their own interest. My brother, inexperienced as he was in such matters, accepted the **advice** of these brokers and dealt in commodity futures on such a large scale as was not in keeping with the size of his, or rather his young wife's, assets. It did not take long before his wife's fortune was sacrificed to his addiction to speculations. He became an insurance agent for an American insurance company at a monthly salary of 150 florins, plus commission on the amount of life insurance that he sold. His father-in-law did not fare any better. After the reserve he had set aside from his daughter's money had fallen victim to his store's poor business, he was compelled to liquidate his enterprise. He became an agent for the same insurance company for which my brother worked. **But** his large circle of acquaintances as well as the fact that he belonged to the **Freemasons**, whose members gave great support to his new business endeavors, made it possible for him to close large insurance deals, so much so that he could soon purchase a small villa [European designation for a high-quality, even though small, detached home, with apartments for one or a few families, located in a garden], in Bulyowsky Street, that was to be held in his wife's name. That building had two apartments, both facing the street. His daughter moved into the ground-floor apartment.

In the meantime I had become a senior, or "engineer-candidate", at the Institute of Technology; and I faced, as so many times before, the problem of finding an opportunity for making some money. And once again it was a chance happening that helped me to achieve it. One morning I had gone to the coffee house across the street from the Foncière Building to have breakfast, when I noticed that the place was full, except for one single seat at a table at which an obviously sick man, whose two **crutches** were leaning against the wall, was sipping his coffee. I asked his permission to take the empty chair at his table and sat down, facing him. He obviously wanted to talk, and so I learned that he was an engineer, graduated from the School of Engineering **in Munich**, and that a very serious illness of the spine **had, at** the age of 30, made him incapable of working. He told me also that he was spending his time mainly in that coffee house, where he would read the foreign papers and other publications available there. Going home and coming back again were difficult for him, since he was reduced to walking with **crutches**. He may have been in his forties but looked much older, and only the liveliness of his way of speaking permitted the conclusion that he could not be much older than forty. He was born in Hungary and spoke the national tongue ~~very~~ well. I had put on the table my "index", which I had brought along for registration, set for that very day at the Institute, for enrolling in the last year of my studies there, from which my companion could see that I was a student, and which was perhaps the reason for his being so communicative. Now I, too, began to talk freely, told him that I was to be a senior at the Institute, and

that I was yearning to be done with the long **years** of studies, that had caused me so much privation, and that, in fact, I was again, at that very moment, facing the necessity of finding gainful employment. He said it was not impossible that he may be able to help me in that. A colleague of his, who had received his engineer's diploma in Munich at the same time as he, now a building contractor, would come to that coffee house every day after lunch, just to keep him company for two hours. He would ask him whether he had use **for the** services of a senior at the Institute. I should come the following day and get the answer. Early next day, he told me to visit, still during that morning, the office of Henry Fischer on Hajós Street, **in** the third building from the corner of Andrassy **Avenue**, Engineer Fischer, after I had answered several of his questions about my studies and my experience in drafting, agreed to hire me for the time from 2 to 6 o'clock every afternoon, at the salary of 50 florins a month, and said that I may start the following day. I was glowing with happiness. Now I was relieved of all my worries and relished the hope of perhaps remaining employed there even after completion of my studies, which was already within sight. Engineer Fischer had bid on equipping Üllői Road with a granite pavement and **had received the award** just a few days before; the preparations for the execution of this job were already underway. Our first task was to draw an accurate map [of that roadway], on the basis of existing city maps showing that section of the City, but using a much larger scale, which would also show all driveways, leading to individual buildings, as well as the **grills** of all the catch **basins**. Based on a very

accurately determined figure for the total surface area to be paved, the total number of granite paving stones, and also the total length of the necessary curb-stones to be ordered was to be figured out, by taking into consideration even the area represented by the gaps between the stones. That was required so as to avoid ordering an excess quantity of that expensive material. The paving work proper, including the spreading of the layers which would support the paving blocks, was subcontracted to the one most reliable paving master **in** the City, who completed the job in a satisfactory manner. While this work was in progress, Engineer Fischer was entrusted by the State Railroad Administration with a very interesting assignment. This was the planned laying of a second track along the existing line between the Josefstadt Terminal [on the Pest side] and the Kelenföld Terminal [on the Buda side]. To that end, all railroad overpasses crossing the streets had to be widened sufficiently to accommodate the second track; and at the same time it was planned to raise the level of the tracks and hence that of the steel bridges, to give higher headrooms in the streets below, **Raising** the bridges required, **furthermore, enlargement and** reinforcement of their existing abutments; and on top of all that, it was prescribed that all work be done without interrupting any of the railroad traffic. Clearly, this was a difficult construction job from the technical point of view, because it involved great responsibilities. However it was completed, using our technical recommendations, without any accidents. The Railroad Administration's engineer in charge of supervising this work was later asked to give

a lecture about this very tricky job before the National Association of Engineers. For that address he used large-scale drawings which we had prepared and furnished him, as illustrations. His presentation was received with great interest and applause.

Now I had finally completed my studies and I made it known to my boss. A few days earlier he had been awarded the construction of two sluice gates near Szeged, but on the opposite bank of the Tisza River, to replace two existing gates there, which had become inadequate, because they could not withstand the pressure of the flood waters, whose high water mark had been observed to increase **lately**. That undertaking led well-nigh to my chief's **undoing**. **But before I report thereon, I will tell about** further events in the lives of my brothers and sisters.

I have already briefly mentioned that a few years earlier my brother Arnold had become part-owner of a factory in Neu-Sohl that produced furniture from hollow rods of beechwood. It came about two years after his marriage that he learned, by happenstance, at the Lumber and Wood Exchange in Budapest which was located in the hotel Frohner on Nádor Street, that the **just-mentioned** company, lacking sufficient working capital, encountered some financial difficulties. Since by that time my brother had accumulated a substantial capital, and as it did not suit him any more to be but a lumber dealer, he decided to contact by letter the management of that industrial enterprise relative to the possibility of a partnership. The company stated that it was willing to accept a part-owner against payment of twenty per cent

of the company's book value, in cash, as his paid-in share, which worked out to the sum of 20000 florins. This enterprise was in competition with the Austrian furniture **factories** that made items 164  
**from** beech rods, and **were owned** by a Mr. Kohn, widely known in the [Austro-Hungarian] Monarchy as "Bent Kohn" ["bent" meaning in German "crooked" as well]. However, while those Austrian factories had the raw material at their disposal from their company-owned forests, the Neu-Sohl enterprise was compelled to purchase the material from lumber dealers, in consequence of which its production costs were much higher than those of its Austrian competitors; and that materially limited its sales **volume**. This situation caused losses that increased from year to year, so that my brother found it advisable to exercise his contractual privilege to cancel his part-ownership. In accordance with his share of 20 percent, he had to be satisfied though with recouping half of the sum he had paid in originally, because the book value of the company, as a result of the accumulated losses, had dropped to just half of what it was worth when my brother had become part-owner. Now he was constrained to provide for the livelihood of his family, which consisted of his wife and three young sons born in the meantime, from what remained from his assets.

He turned again to the merchandising of lumber. He purchased a small tract of land in the County of Ung, with a stand of beech, which he exploited for the cutting of wood, both for fire-wood **and for charcoal burning**, and selling these products to fuel dealers in the capital. For the summer months he rented, in the

village that was closest to the **forest**, an apartment for his family, with a stall for a cow, necessary for these four months. The cow, tended by his wife, found enough food by grazing **in areas** of the forest that had already been cleared. After a few years, the trees of that piece of forest land had all been felled, but my brother was able once more to enjoy being well-off; so now he turned to the business of real estate. About three years after my sister Rosalie had moved from Sillein to Budapest, my brother-in-law Schlesinger changed his domicile to Kremnitz, where the administration of the town gave him a job in which his duties were to collect the market fees imposed according to the value of the produce brought to market. As there was much cheap, unemployed female labor available in town and in its surroundings, my brother, who at that time was a partner in the Neu-Sohl furniture factory, hit upon the idea to have the component parts that were made in Neu-Sohl assembled in Kremnitz [by women workers]; and he entrusted my brother-in-law Schlesinger with the supervision of that **assembly** work, a job that did not require experience. Suitable factory space was soon located; and the girls hired for the job took but a short time to learn the assembling of furniture from its components. Then the finished chairs and arm-chairs were shipped, according to orders of the company office, directly to the customers. My brother-in-law stayed in this job even after my brother had ceased to be a part owner of that company.

My sister Flora, in view of both her sisters having moved away from Sillein, quit her job as a needlework teacher in that

town and returned to the home of our parents [in Kremnitz]. Now there were, besides her, four more sisters there, namely, Jeanette, Hermine, Malvine, and Gisella, the youngest. My younger brother Adolf, after completing his one-year tour of duty with the military, returned from Vienna ~~to~~ Budapest, took up his studies again, but now not in ~~machines~~ engineering anymore, but rather in civil engineering. He managed to get a job as a tutor for the son of a jeweler, a mentally retarded boy.

But now back to my own story. My boss entrusted me, with full responsibility, with the construction of those two sluice gates and I was to travel, on the morning of the very next day, to the site of my new activities. Upon arrival at Szeged, I first equipped myself with warm outer clothing and underwear and then reported, in accordance with my chief's orders, to his brother-in-law who was living there; he was the lumber dealer Leopold whose wife was the sister of my chief's young spouse. A ferry carried the traffic to the opposite ~~bank~~ of the Tisza River. After an hour's travel by carriage, I reached the site of one of the two sluice gates, a village named Porgány, where there were two houses for the flood-guards, employed by the Flood Control Authority. One of the houses was inhabited by the levee guard, the other by a machine operator, who was in charge of the large pumping station, equipped with rotary pumps. This second house was also to be used by the State's official supervisor of construction and, in fact, was already fully prepared for that use. Thus it became necessary to speedily erect, for my own use, a

wooden hut, for which the lumber had already been delivered by the lumber-dealer Leopold. As soon as I had chosen the right location, the hut was quickly erected, according to my instructions; and it was equipped with two bed-stands, fashioned from rough boards. A large table, two wooden chairs, and a chest of drawers completed the furniture. The second bed was intended for my chief for when he would come to the building site. My chief saw to the timely delivery of the materials and other items that would be incorporated in the structures for the two sluice-gates to be built. The site of the second of these gates was at the location of the nearest drainage canal, one hour's ride from the **gate** at Porgany; and there **were again two houses there for the** guards, and a pumping station. For the job of building this second gate, my chief hired an assistant who would report to me, a very capable and reliable Italian named Moscellini. The State's official inspectors, who were engineers employed **by the Hydro-Engineering Authority** at Szentes, consisted of two engineers and one engineering assistant. One of the engineers was assigned to supervise the work on the second gate. I myself had a construction forman at my disposal. The levee guard's wife cooked our meals for a modest consideration. Soon a group of sandhogs arrived from Szeged; and after the quantity of soil to be excavated for the placement of the gate, including all that soil within the coffer-dam, was figured out, and a fixed payment therefore was agreed upon, the sandhogs set up their tents. This coffer-dam, designed for that side of the structure which faced the **river**, to protect the pit after it would be excavated, from flood waters to come, was to

be anchored at its two ends in the huge levee of the Tisza River. The existing sluice gates which were to be replaced by new ones were taken apart and removed, which caused no difficulties, since their sandstone blocks had been laid in, and held in place, only by chalk mortar, yet they were to be lifted out with caution, because some of this material was to be reused in the new structures. After removal of the entire old gate structure, the ground layer that had supported it was meticulously examined in the presence of my boss, and it became plain to see that the removed sluice gates had been built on an oaken grid of piles because the underlying layers were nothing but quicksand that had practically no bearing capacity. This circumstance commanded the application of great precaution, since the new sluice gates had not been designed to be supported by pile grids, but rather simply to rest on concrete blocks seven feet thick and girded by a thick bung-wall. My chief made his representation to the supervising engineers, delegated there by the State, that the nature of the underground layer of soil had not been disclosed to the contractor before he submitted his bid, and that he had no way of getting any information about that before removal of the old gates, wherefore he was constrained and entitled to refuse to carry the responsibility for the stability for the new sluice gates, nor was he willing to undertake the construction of the foundation for it. However, he declared himself willing to furnish the necessary materials, such as gravel, cement, etc., at cost, in which he would include 10% for overhead. This important statement was entered in the log book and acknowledged by the supervising engineer. Such sluice gates are nothing but large, dome-shaped doors, forming a movable

barrier, the purpose of which is to let the waters that have accumulated in the deep-dug drainage canals flow into the river, while the latter is at normal level, and, on the other hand, to block, at times of high levels of the river, its waters to flow out and flood the irrigation areas. Whenever the sluice gates should have to remain closed, the excess water is taken from the drainage canals by the large pumps of the pumping station and emptied over the levees into the river.

After that important declaration of my chief, work on the foundation began. As ground water kept seeping into the pit that had been excavated, in spite of the protection by a rather tight coffer dam enclosing the pit, and even bubbled up through the bottom of the pit, the supervising engineer ordered the water to be kept out by means of continuous pumping by a rotary pump, so that the foundation could be built on a dry layer. However, that continuous pumping caused the fine quicksand at the bottom of the pit to be loosened even more by the ground water surging through it, to such an extent that the layer under the foundation lost its bearing capacity. After the foundation, seven feet deep, had been completed, and the waiting period of four weeks had passed, we accomplished the construction of the superstructure in a short time. During that pause in our work I took the trouble to calculate the pressure that the superstructure, together with the foundation, must have exerted on the ground layer on which they stood, and I also determined the location and direction of the resultant force, which showed two things: 1., that the total load, including one that derived from the weight of a portion of

the earthen levee itself, pressing down on the superstructure, surpassed considerably the maximum allowable pressure on the ground layer, per unit area. 2., that the resultant force traversed that portion of the foundation which had the smallest cross section, justifying the fear that the concrete block would crack, which it actually did later on, the crack showing up exactly where my calculations had predicted. The same happened to the second sluiceway which was constructed according to the same plans and in the same manner.

The group of supervising engineers were greatly scared by this occurrence, without however becoming aware of its possible consequences. Nor did my boss find it expedient to enlighten them in this respect, since such a step could have caused premature difficulties at the final accounting. In the meantime, my chief had secured the contract for the construction of a third, even much larger sluiceway at the flood area of the Danube near Mindszent, which construction was already under way at that time. Now, after the final accounting of the work on the two sluiceways near Szeged had been taken care of, my chief entrusted me with the supervision of the job near Mindszent, to replace his engineer whom he transferred to the job of erecting a building in Győr. The plans for the Mindszent sluiceway were correct and thus there were no difficulties with that job; it was only the ill-will of the old engineer, representing the State Authority, who just did not like us and who vexed me with his continual objections to our work that was in progress, which rendered my stay there rather disagreeable. Finally, the job

was done and I returned to Budapest, to work in my chief's office. He did not have, however, any work for me at that moment and therefore recommended me to the contractor Deutsch, whose niece he had married and who was looking for a reliable engineer to be put in charge of the construction of a river quay in Semlin, for which he had a contract.

On the occasion of my leaving his service, my boss Fischer gave me a very valuable gold watch, engraved on the lid with my initials, as a token of remembrance of our having worked together, which I would carry in my vest pocket for 50 years, until a pick-pocket stole it from me on a trolley car, which I took going home from an evening's visit with my sister-in-law Regine Vidor while she was spending the summer at her brother Emil Toszeghy's villa, that was situated within a large garden on the grounds of his brewery in Steinbruch [Kőbánya, a suburb of Budapest]. That engineer and building contractor Fischer had been my teacher in preparation for my later successful career, both as an engineer and as a builder, and I remained very thankful to him until his tragic death.

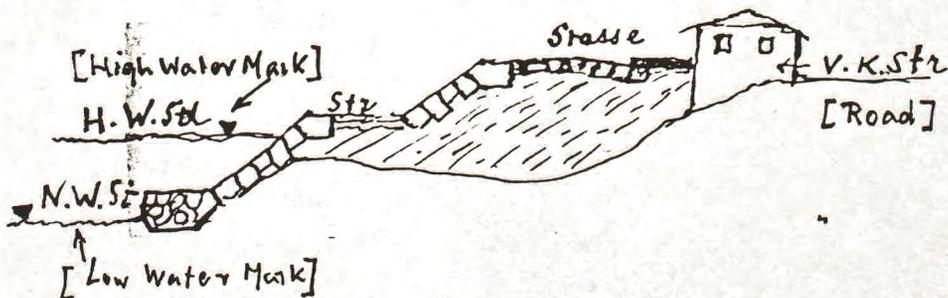
Mr. S. Deutsch, the contractor who later changed his name to Sigmund Dénes, was not a graduate engineer. He was the brother of Louis Deutsch, partner in the largest construction company of that time in the entire Country: Haas and Deutsch. A very smart man he was, still young, with quite some joie de vivre, who but recently had married the daughter of the Danish consul Altschul, a wholesale grain dealer. He was, of course, very pleased to have me, and he entrusted me with a construction job

in Semlin, at a salary of 130 florins per month and free lodging. This construction contract was to be completed in three years. After having lived like a hermit in wooden huts through two cruelly cold winters, now the prospect of enjoying my life in a town, inhabited by intelligent people, filled me with happy expectations.

But before I report on this construction job, I want to tell about an emergency that has almost led to my former chief Fischer's undoing. In the spring that followed, when the snows had thawed, the river Tisza's waters in the area of Szeged rose to a flood level that was three feet higher than ever before, and threatened to break through the levees. The two sluice gates that Fischer had built and whose lack of stability I have already described, were unable to withstand the onslaught of the floodwaters which were whipped by strong winds, and were simply destroyed. The flood waters now poured through those large gaps in the levee and inundated the entire irrigation area, destroying the expected crops on thousands of acres of farmland. The loss sustained by the owners of those lands amounted to many millions [of florins]. This catastrophe caused very great excitement in the Country. The department in charge of hydraulic projects was violently criticized in the Parliament, since it was rumored that the newly built sluice gates had not been properly constructed, and that without these mistakes it would have never come to such a catastrophe. So, now a scapegoat had to be found to spare the authorities that had performed the supervision of the construction, the consequences of their mistake, which was due to

professional ignorance. It was thought that it would be the simplest to blame the contractor for faulty work on the sluice gates as the sole culprit who had caused the disaster; and he was made morally responsible for it. As a consequence, he was excluded from being a contractor, in the future, for any construction work of the State. That situation continued for several years, until Fischer succeeded in proving his innocence in a court proceeding, after which the Department of Public Works withdrew its exclusion order.

Now I will describe the Semlin construction job. It had been awarded to the contractor Deutsch by way of competitive bidding, for a sum which included but a very small profit margin. The necessary materials and other items were acquired by my chief. A narrow-gage engine, with the required number of lorries for transporting soil and other materials to the building site, were purchased at a used equipment yard. A cross-section of the project, sketched below, is intended for a better understanding of my report:



The quay to be built was planned to be one kilometer [2/3 of a mile] long; it would join, at one end, the stone wall of

the Danube Steamship Company's harbor, while at the other end it would be anchored to mounds of clay which the Danube had piled up in the course of hundreds of years. The necessary fill was taken from these mounds, too. It was a very dense, heavy, and clean clay, which, at some places, had to be loosened by blasting with gun powder. The [transportation of the fill and the actual work of] filling was sub-contracted at a fixed total price. It involved the moving of several hundred thousand cubic meters. [One cubic meter is slightly more than a cubic yard]. The excavation of the trench for the stone sill, to serve as the foundation for the stone revetment of the embankment, was sub-contracted to [another] contractor, the well-known engineer and builder Stefan Popper which reduced my burdens considerably. The rough stone blocks were purchased by contractual arrangement with a Mr. Gutmann who was to supply this material from quarries which he owned in the surroundings of Belgrade (Serbia). Following these preparations, the construction work was actually started right after a narrow-gage track had been laid along the entire strip of land to be filled up and covered by the revetment. I had my office adjacent to the building site. It consisted of a large, light room, separated by an entrance hall from the room inhabited by my helper, a married man who supervised the workmen and whose wife cooked breakfast for me. He was a very reliable individual, a Serbian who spoke Hungarian, too, a dutiful employee, very much attached to me. The office was equipped with the necessary furniture, including two beds. The second bed was intended

for my chief for the occasions of his visits to the site.

It was important to push for the start of excavations, so that the construction of the stone sill could begin. In step with the progress of digging the trench, it was filled immediately with blocks of stone brought alongside in barges [quite close to the actual point of use], so that the blocks could be hauled out of the barges and slid down into the trench in one single maneuver, which was done in the presence and under the supervision of a foreman who checked the position of each stone, which had to be exact, both horizontally and vertically. The top surface of the sill in the trench was designed to be level with what was considered "level zero", that is the low water mark of the Danube in that particular area. For the purpose of accounting for the blocks of stone, including labor for their placement, for which we were to be paid a fixed unit price per cubic meter of stone, it was necessary to provide the barges with volumetric markings. That meant that the volumetric capacity up to a [horizontal] red line, painted on the inside of the hold of each barge, was determined, and so would represent the volume of blocks up to that line and delivered to the construction site. These figures were entered for each barge-load in a delivery book. The revetment of the embankment could, of course, not start until the filling was completed along a section of the project, and only when the level of the Danube was at the low water mark. The depth of the stone layer forming the revetment was prescribed to be 60 centimeters [2 feet]. These blocks were called "Hackelstones", which meant blocks of stone, hewn

on four sides within a depth of 15 centimeters [6 inches] from the face, to be at right angles to that face. Thus it was very important for us that we received blocks of a type of stone that could easily be shaped [by stone masons] into such hackel-stones of the prescribed form. However, it turned out right after the arrival of the first shipment of blocks from the quarry, that it was very hard to shape the material furnished, (it was volcanic stone), which circumstance would have doubled the estimated cost of the revetment, and would have surely caused the job to end in a loss. Therefore, it was unavoidable to cancel the purchase agreement for the rough blocks, so as to be able to acquire somewhere else a kind of material that could be hewn much easier. This first supplier was unable to give us such material and thus he did not agree to a cancellation of his supply contract with us, and threatened to sue us for damages. Finally a settlement was reached with him, so that he would remain entitled to furnish us all the other materials. After carefully examining all the quarries in the areas around Belgrade, I found a limestone quarry that contained a weather-proof, white, easy to work stone material, which insured the delivery of a rather substantial quantity of this material before the onset of winter. It was necessary to quarry and to deliver a part of the total required volume of stone blocks before that, so that there would be time to check its assumed weather-proof quality. A material can be considered weather-proof if it can withstand the cold of winter in spite of its still containing the original amount of humidity with which it was quarried; in other words,

if the freezing of its water-content to ice and consequent expansion of its volume will not split the material. The owner of this quarry was a Mr. Frank from the County of Trencsen, and, as it turned out, the son of a some-time bookkeeper of my father's, at the time when my father was still a lumber merchant in Turdossin. His youngest brother, now his deputy, had been, as myself, a student at the technical high school in Kremnitz, and had been a boarder in my parents' home for four years. This circumstance may have helped to make Mr. Frank agree with confidence to sign a supply contract for this stone material which was so difficult to make available. The minimum dimensions for the blocks were prescribed to be 55-75 centimeters [22-30 inches] for their lengths, 35 centimeters [14 inches] for the height, and 52-60 centimeters [22-24 inches] for the depth, to be sufficient for cutting those "Hackelstones" from them. The blocks supplied were to be unloaded on the completed sections of the levee. We ourselves would build there regular-shaped piles of blocks necessary for the evaluation of their volumetric quantity and thereby for the accounting with the supplier. The actual laying of the hewed stones to form the revetment, as well as all other work such as constructing the macadam roads, the brickwork of the drainage channels, and of the end-wall, were sub-contracted to a Croatian named Jordana, a contractor whom I had known before when I had worked for my previous chief. Now that everything was so well arranged, I could look forward with great hopes to all further developments. The supervision by the Croatian Public Works Department had been entrusted to a chief engineer named

Lapain, a man who hailed from France but took Croatian citizenship, and who was assisted by a Serbian engineer and a reliable foreman. The work of filling progressed rapidly after the supervising engineers had determined the profiles of the mounds of soil from which the fill was to be taken. This was necessary to calculate later the total volume of fill used, on which the payment due the contractor was based. Mr. Lapain was a quiet, elderly gentleman who did not cause us any difficulties, in contrast to his assistant who felt the need to shout at the workmen on every occasion of his daily inspections, rather than to communicate his wishes to me, even though I accompanied him on all of those visits. In the course of time, his noisy ways became so annoying to me, that I stopped going along with him. When Mr. Deutsch had again ~~an~~ occasion for coming to the building site, I complained to him about the engineer's way of shouting at the workmen. Mr. Deutsch promised me to put an end to such disturbances. He knew how to handle supervisors, to draw their attention away from the construction job and instead upon himself, by entertaining them, mostly with Jewish jokes. He now employed this method with that noisy engineer. One day it was he who accompanied that gentleman, who was eager as usual to hear some new jokes. That was the opportunity for my chief to fulfill the promise he had made to me. He told the engineer he would report to him on an interesting conversation that had taken place between two Jews who went together to Sicilia on a pleasure trip. The very day they were there was one on which the volcano Vesuvius erupted, belching rocks and flames. One of the Jews was uneducated to the extent that he had never heard of volcanos and their eruptions, and so

was most surprised by the spectacle.. He asked his correlative why that mountain would spew fire; and he was enlightened thus: "It is a mountain, it has nothing to do, so it spews fire". The noisy engineer got the hint; he flushed and stopped asking for more jokes. And from that day on he kept quiet during his inspections.

At that time my work consisted mainly in checking the delivered blocks of stone whose total volume had to be entered in the journal day after day, serving as the basis for our weekly accounting with the supplier.

It was towards the end of that year that I got the sad message about my father's death. There could be no thought of a trip home, as that would have required several days, and as I had no deputy who could have supervised the receipt of the materials which were continually delivered, as well as the construction work itself.

The excavation of the trench and the laying of the footing were planned to go on until the first appearance of ice-flows on the Danube. The excavated soil was filled directly into barges [pulled up alongside] that had been marked for their exactly determined volumetric capacity for the purpose of our accounting not only with our sub-contractor but also with the State Authority with which the job was contracted for. The fully laden barges were guided down the Danube by a steam powered tugboat that was the sub-contractor's property, and were emptied through a trap door at the bottom of each barge at locations in the Danube approved by the authorities.

There [in Semlin] I found, soon after my arrival, pleasant company with which - and with a glass of good wine - to spend joyous evenings in the only coffee house of the town. Those people were officers and employees of the Danube Steamship Company; a circuit judge, a particularly nice gentleman, was also part of that group. I took my noontime and evening meals in a small German restaurant that was patronized mainly by officials of the various governmental authorities, and was offering good-tasting dishes at moderate prices. At the beginning of the following year, my sister Jeanette married Mr. Max Reis who was recommended to my parents by my sister Ring. Mr. Reis was the owner of a grocery store in Liptó-Szent-Miklós. His younger brother was house physician at the Karlsbad Spa; later, as a widower with two daughters, he married a widow who owned the Hotel Adlon in Berlin. My sister Jeanette took care of his two daughters and brought them up; they stayed with her until they got married.

A substantial volume of stone blocks were delivered in the first two months of the following year, and now their hewing into "Hackelstones" for the revetment had to begin, so that a sufficient number of the latter would be available for the lowest rows of the wall by the time when the water level of the Danube would be at the low water mark in the summer. It was very important to utilize that period of low water level for completing at least the bottom 75 centimeters [3 feet] of the revetment, so as not to be hindered later when the level of the Danube was bound to rise. Jordana worked with his countrymen,

most of whom came from his native village. These were efficient, diligent, quiet workmen, whose work satisfied even that formerly noisy supervising engineer.

One day I received, to my understandable surprise, a letter that was immediately recognizable as having been written in a girl's hand, and it said that the writer had chosen this "improper" way to start a correspondence with me, in spite of her good upbringing. She wrote that she had occasions to observe me as I was carrying out my duties and that she would like to continue this correspondence without disclosing her name, and that I should not try to find it out. I should send my answers, provided I was ready to continue (which she wished very much), addressed "To the girl without a name" by way of general delivery. First of all, she would like to hear whether I was inclined to carry on such a correspondence. I answered, stating, for the start, my expression of willingness, which I sent by the route she wanted me to use. Her next letter referred to the company I kept of which she was aware; and she wanted to enlighten me about the mentality of the Serbian and Croatian young people, so different from that of young people in the West. "While the latter generally profited from a thorough education and thus were able to use their knowledge of languages to enjoy the literary products of the high Western culture, to gain valuable entertainment therefrom, the young people of the Balkans, on the other hand, because of their very undeveloped social situation, had no interest in entertainment other than too much drinking, playing cards, and other excesses. Bad company makes for bad morals; a wise adage." And since she

was ignorant of the magnitude of my resistance [to such influences], she would recommend, for safety's sake, that I withdraw from that company before I, too, begin to enjoy that kind of [lowly] entertainment. Then, in her subsequent letters she wrote about her life which was without a purpose and which left her unsatisfied in every respect. She had wished to become active in something that would have social usefulness, and perhaps to create an independent life for herself as a teacher; but even for this there would be no opportunity for her in that small town, nor did the financial situation of her family permit the transformation of such desires into reality, which would take her away from her parents' home. Her further letters revealed both spirit and wisdom, and they became a source of stimulation for me. That correspondence lasted until I left Semlin without having found a clue to the identity of that letter writer. True, I at least suspected her to be a particular girl who caught my attention by being the one I most often encountered during evening walks on the esplanade.

My brother Adolf completed his studies [at the Institute] at that time and found an engineering job with the firm of Mandel, Hoffmann and Quittner in connection with the construction of a branch railroad line; but he did not show much eagerness, was not zealous, nor diligent, which caused his chiefs to let him go even before that construction job was completed. He decided to apply for employment with the Hungarian State Railways, not as an engineer but in the division of operations where a more rapid advancement was the rule for those employees who had a high

school education. He was hired for the section of Debrecen where he worked in the administrative offices. For a while after my father's death nothing particular occurred in my parents' home.

Now the work at Semlin approached its end, and all that was still to be done was the construction of the end-wall which we were instructed to do, disregarding the high water level of the Danube, and in face of the fact that the foundation of the wall was to reach down one meter, [about 6 feet] below the low water mark of the river, and was to be of concrete laid down under the protection of a coffer dam. It was clear to me that the continuous seepage of water under the pressure of the high level of the Danube would certainly destroy the binding capacity of the cement used in the concrete mixture. Thus, to avoid being made responsible for the adequacy of the foundation which would prove to have no satisfactory bearing capacity, I refused to accept those instructions. Instead, I offered to the supervising engineers, that, should they insist on their way of arranging the work, they could do that themselves. I would be willing to obtain for them the necessary materials and manpower as well as the foremen, against payment of 10% of their cost. I said, however, that I would still consider it better to wait for the time of low water levels, to build the foundation on a grid of pilings, and to keep the water out of the pit by continuous pumping [while the work was going on]. The supervisors still insisted on doing the job underwater and accepted my offer that we limit ourselves to supplying the materials and the men. I had those engineers agree

to testing the cement we supplied for its binding capacity, so as to forestall any later claim that weakness of the foundation was due to the use of cement of inferior quality. My presentation was entered in the log book. I designed a platform on wheels for moving on rails lengthwise, and carrying another smaller platform, also with wheels, moving crosswise. A box holding up to 1 cubic meter [30 cubic feet] of concrete, mounted on the smaller platform and having a trap door on the bottom, could thus be emptied over any desired point within the area of the foundation, was constructed. After a setting time of 4 weeks, the water covering the foundation was pumped out and the concrete was tested for its strength. And now it was revealed that the concrete had not hardened, showing that the cement must have been leached out by the waters of the Danube. The concrete, having lost its bearing capacity, had to be removed. At that point, the supervisors decided to revert to my recommendation for them to build the foundation on a grid of oak pilings. Such pilings were obtained immediately and they were driven into the ground every meter [3 feet]. Meanwhile, the level of the Danube had fallen sufficiently to permit keeping the pit free of water by continuous pumping and to place oaken beams 10 centimeters [4 inches thick] across the tops of the piles, after which the foundation was rapidly built up on top of that grid. The remaining work on the wall did not offer any difficulties, since all the necessary materials had been prepared.

So, the quay was completed, and as I had time in the last few weeks to prepare the final accounting to be submitted to the

authorities, I was preparing to leave Semlin. Our equipment was shipped to Budapest by way of boats of the Danube Steamship Company. And now I was back in Budapest where my next job awaited me: the construction of a large bridge near the Franzstadt Railroad Station, to span the tracks ~~emanating~~ from that station and leading first to the vicinity of a gasometer, and from there to be extended later-on to the great cattle market. With the exception of the actual laying of the rails, the construction of these tracks was also our job. The level of the land of the cattle market was way below that of the gasometer's foundation and therefore the grade of the tracks had to be as much as 10 in a thousand between those two points; in addition, it required a deep cut all along that stretch. The area was at one time or another a garbage dump, the fill having turned in the meantime into manure. Thus the excavation of that cut spread a very disagreeable stench in the neighborhood. Aside from that, the construction job was carried out without any difficulties. After its completion, my chief, who in the meantime had formed a partnership with an engineer named Fleischmann, was entrusted with the construction of Hajcsár Street in the suburb that went by the name of Kőbánya [meaning "Quarries"]; or, more correctly, the construction of two by-passes that were to run parallel to that street [one on each side of it, apparently to be used for traffic that would avoid a level crossing of the existing street], for a distance of 1000 feet, sloping down altogether 20 feet and ducking under the numerous tracks of the rail line carried by an overpass, and then climbing again to rejoin the existing street. The cuts for the bypasses required supporting walls in the form of embankments of the existing street. A wooden hut was built for my field office and night

shelter, since I often stayed overnight at the building site during the work week. There was an inn across the street from my hut, where I took my meals. Breakfast was brought over to me by the pretty young daughter of the innkeeper. I will mention her later again in the course of my report.

This construction job, too, was accomplished without any special difficulties, notwithstanding the severe way of checking our work by the supervising railroad engineer Kádár and his unreasonable demands. He was a man who put great store by the outer finish of a job to be pleasing to the eye, and who later advanced to a high position in the Department of Transportation. My chief's partner, Mr. Fleischmann, was the owner of the central tobacco wholesale store [in Budapest] on Balvány Street. A very quiet, restrained, and passive man, he limited himself in his contacts with me to the minimum necessary exchanges. In no shape or manner did he help me to enrich my technical knowledge. At 9 o'clock sharp, he appeared at the office, read the incoming letters but left it to his partner to answer them; then he talked for a while to Mrs. Deutsch, who left her household to be taken care of by her servants, and appeared at the office, whenever Mr. Fleischmann was there.

After several weeks, my chief got the contract for building the strategically important standard-gage rail line from Mitrovicz to Vincovce in Croatia. That was a line 60 kilometers [40 miles] long, and was to be built against payment of unit prices. The contractors' main field office was in Mitrovicz where the Railroad Administration's supervising engineers also had their main office.

The entire job was divided in two sections of 30 kilometers each, and these sections were split again in three subsections of 10 kilometers each. I was put in charge of the second section that ended in Vinkovce; I had at my disposal three engineers, three foremen, and a bookkeeper who doubled as paymaster. Each of the engineers and foremen was to be assigned to one of my three subsections, all of them to take up residence in their subsections. Each of the two section chiefs and each of the six subsection chiefs had, as his counterpart, a supervising engineer employed by the Railroad Administration. I had a chief engineer by the name of Kusevicz as my opposite number. He was a Croatian whose family enjoyed great political influence in Zagreb. He was an arrogant man, his mind filled with suspicion of any Jewish contractor; yet, in his personal contact with me, he made an effort to observe the customary social amenities. This railroad line was to join, at its terminal in Minkovce, the existing rail line from there to Bosnia which crossed the River Sava on a steam-propelled railroad ferry. With the exception of the construction of the railroad dam, we subcontracted all other work, such as erecting the buildings, providing the gravel for the ballast, laying of the latter, and the laying of the rails. The water filling station [for the steam engines] was within my section, more than 10 kilometers from Vinkovce. For the train traffic on a main line like that, the water filling station was of great importance. All the brick needed by the subcontractor for building that station was to be supplied by us. However, unfortunately, there were no suitable bricks to be had in that part of the Country. Therefore, it was decided that we shall make our own

bricks in field brick-kilns. We purchased a piece of land that had clay as its soil, which had been used before for excavating the material needed for bricks, and which now was lying unused. There was also a well there. A brickmaker foreman was hired, the necessary equipment obtained, and the forming of bricks by gypsies began. We hired them because they were experienced in this kind of work. However, the material dug from pits on that piece of land was not pure clay; rather, small pieces of chalk were enclosed in it. After forming raw bricks, they were fired in field ovens whose walls were built of those same raw bricks. As many as several hundreds of thousands of such bricks had been fired when it turned out that after each rainfall a large number of finished bricks that had become soaked, would fall apart, because during firing the chalk particles turned into quicklime and reacted chemically as such when they came in contact with rain water: the carbon dioxide that was set free in the process pressed against the mass of fired clay within the bricks and broke up the latter. So, this clay could not be used and we had to bring the required bricks from a source far away. They came from the large kilns at Eszék, and this made the job of constructing those buildings considerably more expensive. The work of excavating and filling-in the third subsection was entrusted to a subcontractor with whom I had quite some difficulties. Part of that stretch of the line to be built led through woods whose trees had been felled earlier, but the right-of-way for the line and the narrow strip of land needed for storing materials alongside had to be completely cleared of stumps and roots, which was again expensive and time-consuming. The

excess cost, according to the contract, was to be the burden of the subcontractor, much as he would have wished it to be otherwise. As matters stood, he hoped that we, the prime contractors, would cancel the subcontract for non-feasance on his part, and then he could sue us for damages. Since the subcontract was made in Mitrovicz, the Croatian courts had competence for such a law - suit. That was a situation undesirable for us, since we could only entrust our representation to an attorney in Budapest, as a matter of convenience in supplying him with the necessary information. Such an attorney would have to master the Croatian language, because the briefs would have had to be written in Croatian. Also, he would have to be personally present at any oral proceeding before the court, which would take several days of his time. The plaintiff's attorney was a Croatian, domiciled at Sid, the seat of the competent circuit court of that part of Croatia. Therefore, we arranged with our attorney that the litigation should be dragged out by causing, with all sorts of excuses, continuations of the court sessions, and thereby <sup>having</sup> forcing the plaintiff into an out-of-court settlement of the case, in which we finally succeeded. With the subcontractor out of the picture, our engineer in charge of that subsection now had to continue the interrupted jobs of excavation and filling on his own, [with his own labor force and equipment]. He was still a very young man with little experience, which induced my chief - just so as not to put any extra burden on me - to appear in that young engineer's office from time to time and to give him advice. That young man was recently married and he had a very beautiful young wife. They were a Christian family.

One day the young lady complained to her husband about my chief Deutsch, a man who was not accustomed to restraining himself, that he had behaved towards her with importunity. The young engineer became extremely angry and called the chief to account the very same day. There ensued a very sharp altercation which resulted in the young man leaving his job and departing with his wife the following morning. The tale of this occurrence spread rapidly and reached the main office of the construction company, too, which affected Mr. Deutsch in a very disagreeable manner. Now a new engineer had to be hired, who would first have to become familiar with the work yet to be done, before the latter could be restarted. Consequently, Mr. Deutsch stayed on the site for a while until the new engineer was ready to take over his duties in an efficient way. The place had no tavern, so he was constrained to cook his meals himself on an alcohol burner, but he had his fun with that. He was not spoiled in this respect. The big trouble with that job came with the need to supply water for the water filling station. The deep well which we dug did not furnish enough. It had been sunk in to soil rich in clay, through which only scarce amounts of water would filter. So it became unavoidable to dig several deep collector trenches leading to the bottom of the well, and that was possible only by securing the walls of the trenches by means of planks, a very difficult job. These trenches had to be filled to a certain level with stones, which in turn were to be well covered with fascines of fagots before the trenches could be refilled with soil. Although these trenches added sufficient water to that of the well, and thus we had remedied the lack of its quantity, its quality fell short of the requirements. The water contained carbonate of lime

and was therefore unsuitable for use in the boilers of steam locomotives, because of the danger of formation of scale in them. But since there was no possibility for securing better water, it became necessary to pump the water from the well into a reservoir where it was chemically purified. The securing of gravel for, and laying down of, the ballast was subcontracted to the firm of Gfrerer. The gravel was to be dredged from the River Sava and heaped up on its bank at a place where rails were to be laid for a temporary siding later on, originating at the Mitrovice railroad station. On that occasion I became acquainted with Mr. Gfrerer who later founded, in partnership with Mr. Grossmann, a well-known and very active construction company, which in due time, and for years to come, entrusted me with much engineering work.

Not long before completion of that railroad construction, a very disagreeable controversy developed between the Hungarian State Railroads' supervising engineer Lázár for the first subsection of my section and myself. His home was in Transylvania, and he was a nice man with good manners, who later occupied the high position in the Department of Transportation, and finally became President of the Hungarian State Railroads, in Budapest. It was spring time, and the construction of the last bridge at the Vinkovce end of the line, a structure four meters [15 feet] long, was in progress. We still had plenty of cement at our disposal, stored for the winter months in the freight shed of the Vinkovce depot. Because the cement bags were piled rather high, the pressure formed loose lumps in the material, which

could be sorted out by sifting the cement. I had this done. The Station-Master observed what we were doing, and in spite of the fact that we were paying him a monthly sum to secure his co-operation and good will, he found it necessary to draw engineer Lázár's attention to these doings. The engineer thought, albeit erroneously, that we were using cement which had lost its binding capacity due to the procedure which we performed. Therefore, he stopped further work on the bridge and ordered the demolition of the portion already built, without first checking whether the cement mortar between the hewn stones had properly hardened. Out of sheer caution, I had previously ordered that this sifted cement should be used with sand in a mixture ratio of 1:2 instead of the usual ratio of 1:4. The cement mortar had therefore perfectly hardened within twenty-four hours; and based on this fact, I refused to have the by then completed portion of the structure taken down again. However, to avoid further consequences of that refusal, I decided to yield to his demand and I gave orders for that demolition, which was done with difficulties, given the fact that the cement mortar had set completely, so that the material could be taken down only in large chunks. I had the men leave those chunks right there at the building site for later examination. The controversy continued to rankle both sides. But the supervisor of my section did not want to find fault with his engineer and so the suspicion of my having tried to cheat by using inferior cement continued to be a burden on me, until one day when the chief engineer Rudolf, head of the Hungarian State Railways' office in Mitrovicz, on a tour of inspection, stopped

at Vinkovce, and examined those chunks left over from the demolished portions of the bridge, and tested the cement mortar with his pen-knife. My boss Fleischmann as well as myself were present but we both avoided asking any questions about what the chief engineer may have found. Nor did he make any remark, and we left that spot together. A short time thereafter Mr. Lazar asked his superiors to transfer him back to his former job in the construction division of the Department of Public Works, which was granted him, and so he left Vincovce. He was replaced by his former assistant. Before the completion of that railroad job, I had the opportunity to meet the chief engineer Baján who worked in the main office of the chief inspector, and with whom, several years later, after he retired, I formed a partnership for taking on engineering design jobs.

I would like to revert now to the inn-keeper's daughter in Kőbánya [whom I have mentioned before]. When Mr. Deutsch visited Vinkovce at the very beginning of the construction work there, he told me about an interesting meeting which he had with that inn-keeper. Soon after I had set out from Budapest [to go to Mitrovicz and Vinkovce], Mr. Deutsch visited the construction site at Hajcsár Street in Kőbánya, for the purpose of handing over the equipment, left there after completion of that job, to a teamster for hauling it away. Suddenly, the inn-keeper was standing there; he inquired after me and explained that he held me responsible for his daughter's pregnancy. Mr. Deutsch did not take the matter too seriously and said that the inn-keeper should turn directly to me. Thereupon, the latter answered that

he would forget about the whole thing if Mr. Deutsch would be willing to let him have the railroad ties that had been left there and had become by then half rotten. Of course, Mr. Deutsch had no objection, and they parted on friendly terms. It goes without saying that the inn-keeper's insinuation with respect to my person was entirely groundless, which was shown by the fact that his daughter married a street-car conductor very soon thereafter.

I stayed in Mitrovicz for several more weeks after completion of the job, in order to help with the final accounting. I had my meals in the large restaurant there, together with my colleagues, one of whom was my colleague Weil whom I had brought to the job at the construction company. We would stay on there after our evening meals to enjoy some glasses of red Karlovicz wine, usually until after midnight. One evening, around midnight, we suddenly saw a strange gentleman take a seat at our table. I asked him who he was and why he took the liberty to sit down at our table without our permission. He answered that he, too, was one of the class of those men who cheat others, so he thought he belonged to our company. That impertinent offense so enraged my colleague Weil that he immediately turned off all the lights and then, grabbing the intruder by the collar, dragged him to the entrance door, and simply threw him out. That man was looking for us, gun in hand, in front of the restaurant for several subsequent evenings, with the intention to eliminate his attacker. But he did not know which one of our company was his assailant and he dawdled in carrying out his revenge. We notified the police, and they re-

strained him.

Finally, I left Mitrovicz and traveled home to Budapest where I stayed on with that construction company. Another large rail project was in the offing. The Hungarian State Railways had already started to stake out the right-of-way for a strategically important line from Nagy-Berezna to Körösmező at the border [in the northeast of Hungary]. The preparatory jobs to be done before actual construction, and intended to speed up the beginning of the latter, were put out for competitive bids. My chiefs submitted the lowest bid and were thus entrusted with these works. They consisted of blasting through the mountains and opening up an initial smaller cross-section of the tunnels, which would be widened later to their full intended profile. Three of such preliminary tunnels were to be prepared. I was put in charge of that job. I set up my abode in Rahó where I could put my office, too, in a small house. The work on each of the tunnels was let to a different subcontractor well-versed in such work, to whom we made available the dynamite for blasting, the logs for timbering, and the necessary equipment of all kinds. The mountainsides were wooded, and an agreement with the forest administration entitled us to cut the logs which we needed from both fir and beech stands, against payment of a fixed price per cubic meter. The trees felled by our workers were hauled to the work sites and were there estimated for their cubic volume by the chief forester. Planks and boards, also needed for the timbering, had to be brought from Nagy-Berezna. We had secured the permit necessary for the use of dynamite, with

which we would purchase it in Marmarossziget. For the storage of this dangerous explosive, a small cave was blasted into the mountain, at an appropriate distance from the work-site, equipped with a door that could be locked, and the key left with the respective subcontractor. The supervision of this job on the part of the authorities was in the hands of inspector Kovacsevics who had his main office in Kőrösmező. His engineers had the duty to check, from time to time, the correctness of the direction in which the blasting proceeded, by referring to their detailed drawings and by using their instruments for placing the marker stakes with precision. It was also part of their duties to determine the cross-sections of the slopes' embankments in the deep cuts at the entrances to the tunnels. The preliminary tunnelings were blasted out from both ends in order to have the breakthroughs done by the set deadline. The inspector entrusted the checking of this portion of our job to his young assistant Árpád Szél who, years later, owned the villa next door to that of Vincent Erdelyi [uncle of my wife Elizabeth. She herself grew up there]. He was still very inexperienced in engineering work but, the more arrogant, and to me unlikable.

Two of the tunnels were blasted through solid rock and thus could be completed without difficulties. The third led through a mountain slope that consisted of a great mass of blue clay that was not fully settled and involved considerable dangers. That part of the mountain sloped directly down to the edge of a roaring brook which, in its lower course, became the River Tisza. Only by crossing the brook was it possible to get to that portion of the

work site. Although I had high rubber boots for such purposes, I was often carried across on the back of one of the workmen. In winter the brook was partly frozen which made crossing it very dangerous. Upon the suggestion of inspector Kovassevics, the work on this section was halted by order of the Hungarian State Railways even though the preliminary breakthrough had already been blasted out to a depth of 200 meters [700 feet]; and the line was redesigned to run, in this section, on the other bank of the brook where the mountainside was solid rock. Inspector Kovacsevics, a Serbian national, was a very friendly gentleman who treated me, whenever I went to Kőrösmező to confer with him, as a guest. At meals he made me sit at his right and partake of the wine which he ordered. The engineers on his staff, however, showed, as traditionally required, antagonism towards the contractors' engineers. But the Inspector, aware of that custom, required those gentlemen to behave in a friendly way on all occasions. That included young Árpád Szél. Inspector Kovacsevics could not speak Hungarian. He had previously served with the Austrian State Railroad Administration as an inspector of final line-tracing but was now employed by the Hungarian State Railways and assigned to work out the plans and final line-tracing for this difficult, strategically important rail line. He was the ablest engineer in the Monarchy, specialized in these techniques; and he was given only such engineering tasks. Later, in the year 1902, he joined me as a partner in similar technical engineering jobs which were assigned to me.

I would add that I met in Rahó the brother of Steve László's mother. [My wife Bözsi and myself have known Steve Laszlo in

Europe and have remained friends here with him, his mother, sister and brother, too.] He worked in Ra<sup>h</sup>ó for the firm of Gregersen, in charge of setting up living quarters for the supervising engineers of the Hungarian State Railways who were assigned to that project [for which we were the contractors]. A new railroad project for a line [name missing in the MS] was to be carried out by Gregersen, the lowest bidder. Our firm also bid on that, and my chief Fleischmann introduced me, at the bid-opening session, to old man Gregersen, recommending me to him for employment at that great railroad building job [which they just acquired]. A was actually invited to an interview at Gregersen's but I declined their offer to head a subsection, rather than an entire section, as the latter would have been more in line with my earlier responsibilities. Now Mr. Fleischmann, for reasons unknown to me, parted company with his partner Deutsch (who now changed his name to Dénes). I was let go but hired again very soon by Mr. Fleischmann who had acquired the contract for widening the bridges on the Szob-Párkányána Line so as to permit the adding of a second track. This was a very pleasant job for me. I rented a one-room apartment on the grounds of the Párkányána depot from a railroad employee working there. I had my noon and evening meals at the station restaurant and spent my evenings there in the company of the station-master and his wife. The station-master was a very nice gentleman of about 55; his wife was relatively much younger. They had two children, a boy and a girl of about 8-10. That was an Austrian family. The stones for that construction came in open freight cars from Kalász and Süt<sup>t</sup>ő to the Párkányána depot

and, by permission of the Hungarian State Railways, these freight cars were hauled by a spare engine to the various bridges whenever the traffic permitted. There the workmen quickly unloaded the stones. The foundations for the widened bridges were built of concrete. I obtained the river gravel needed herefore from a gravel pit near the mid-point of the line-section which was entrusted to me, and had it transported in carts to the bridges. In order to insure the good-will of the station-master and thereby achieve that the arriving freight cars with the stone blocks would be brought to the bridges without delay, he was accorded a regular monthly compensation. So, everything was arranged to the best and the job was progressing quickly. The work was subcontracted to Jordana with whom I had usually cooperated before. Both the foundations made of concrete and the superstructure, consisting of stone masonry, to support the additional track, were just butted against, but not anchored to, the existing structure for the first track, in order to avoid the formation of cracks in the new structure, if it should tend to settle. This design, proposed by myself, facilitated the job of widening those bridges quite considerably. I had only one large item in my own section, widening of the bridge across the River Ipoly, which had two piers in mid-river. The foundations of those piers stood in loamy soil, and it was easy to construct the concrete additions to those piers while the level of the Ipoly was near its low-water mark. I got the "hackelstones" and the stones intended to support the steel structure, hewn into final shape. The City of Esztergom lies just across the Danube from that point and the Danube is crossed there

by a bridge. On some Saturdays I would take the station-master and his wife to that city where some entertainment could always be found. At midnight we would be back again. An intimate relationship with that family ensued. But one night as we sat together once more in the restaurant, this is what happened: I sat across the table from the lady, the place next to her was free, and she called to me: "Come closer, do, you little Jew". Her husband, terribly shocked by his wife's mischievous remark, which he considered most improper, or perhaps due to an impermissible intimacy, got up suddenly and left us. His wife followed him soon. I did not take the matter too seriously as I, knowing her attitude very well, did not consider her remark an insult. But it was just the same the end of that pleasant daily company. The station-master did not seek to join me in the evenings anymore, although his wife continued to come with her children to excursions which I would propose.

I was still at Parkányána when I had a letter from my brother Adolf with the news that he had become engaged to a Miss Leontine Kohn. She was the daughter of a physician, who lived in Nagy-Bicske, from his second marriage. My brother had met her on a train trip from Debrecen to Nyiregyháza. She was on her way to visit her sister in Nyiregyháza. The sister was married to an officer, a Christian, who was assigned to the garrison there; they had no children. The girl had suggested to my brother to visit her there; she intended to stay in that town for a few months. He did visit her several times, and since she pleased him, and since her sister encouraged him, they got engaged. Of course, I congratulated him on his decision, but I suggested that he give heed to the beautiful passage in the poem "The Bell" by Schiller:

"But let those who are eager  
To tie the knot for ever  
Be certain that their hearts  
In love will fit together."

A few weeks later I had another letter from him saying that he had in the meantime gained an impression that his fiancée tended to be stubborn and domineering, so that he was thinking of breaking off the engagement, which I found to be the right thing to do, and I so advised him. To my great surprise, I received yet another letter a few weeks later in which he urged me to appear at his wedding in Nagy-Bicse, since otherwise no one of our family would be present. I bought a beautiful diamond ring for his bride and went to his wedding, which was celebrated with a great display of food and drink and ended with dancing.

After my return to Budapest, I decided to work from then on as an independent civil engineer. Mr. Fleischmann entrusted me with the work of preparing the final drawings of the widened bridges and with the calculations of the sums payable to him for those jobs that were carried out at unit prices: all this to be done in duplicate; and he set out a fee per bridge. I did all this in four weeks and earned several hundred florins. I rented a large room in a building behind the Opera House. My first assignment came from Mr. Gfrerer. It was the determination of the final line-tracing for a short rail-line to connect the end of the existing line to ~~Bosnia~~ at Briczka, and a projected line to Sabácz which was to cross the River Sava on a wooden bridge still to be built, a job that Mr. Gfrerer had contracted for. As he

was not a graduate engineer but rather a master-carpenter, he went into partnership with the engineer Grossmann so as to <sup>be</sup> ready [as a firm] for large construction jobs, for which there were abundant opportunities. Upon his recommendation I was soon thereafter given, by the firm of Gregersen, the job of final-tracing of the secondary rail line to be built from Baja to Báltaszék, which I took care of with the aid of an engineer I had hired before. On the heels of that job followed another, the completion the plans for the secondary rail-line from Szentes to Hódmező, to be built by the firm Gfrerer-Grossmann, including the calculations of the profile cross-sections. To be able to cope with the assignments which now followed one another in rapid succession, I went into partnership with a retired Chief Engineer of the Hungarian State Railways, Mr. Baján, who was looking for such an association with me. Very soon we were flooded with work which compelled us to hire more personnel, which in turn required a larger office. We moved to the building at 19 Isabella Street, next door to where Mr. Baján lived with his wife and two children. A short while later we could count almost <sup>all</sup> large railroad construction companies among our clients, and from then on there was hardly any secondary rail-line built for which we did not do the final line-tracing. Not long after I had established myself as an independent civil engineer, the firm of Gfrerer-Grossmann recommended me to a Mr. Urban who was looking for opportunities for acquisitions of railroads [obviously smaller secondary railroads, some of which at that time were privately owned, rather than parts of the State system] in

which his chief was interested; and he was also charged with the responsibility of searching for a reliable civil engineer who would be able to become his chief's technical advisor. That chief was a Viennese, Baron von Lindheim, who was, as I learned later, in partnership with a half-senile Jewish baron. I was invited [to Vienna] through Mr. Urban, where Baron von Lindheim received me in a friendly manner; he asked me about the jobs I had done, and he noted with pleasure that I would be willing to advise him, or his deputy, at any time. No fees were mentioned. From that point forward any new enterprise of that firm was first discussed with me, and their technical jobs were entrusted to us. There was no change in this arrangement after Mr. Urban took over the firm's projects that had not yet been actually entered into, and formed around these his own company under the name of Hungarian Railroad Management Corporation, of which he became President. [That company grew into a very large, rich, and respected corporation at the time I myself had my last job in Europe with them, as chief engineer, from 1931 to 1938, just before we emigrated. Old man Adolf Urban was by then retired and his son Tibor, who now lives in Australia, was one of my colleagues.] The cooperation between us did not end until after my marriage. [That was in 1897.]

At about that time, many tragic things happened in my family. - My brother-in-law Ring died of heart disease. He was mourned by two sons and three daughters of whom the oldest was married to a Mr. Glasner, general manager of a large leather factory in Budapest. One of my brother-in-law's sons, Izsó, was station-master in Ács near Komorn and had married a daughter [Theresa (Tercsi by

pet name), a pet "aunt" of mine even though she was a cousin's wife] of Efraim Milch, owner of a woodworking factory in Komorn - My sister Ring continued living, even after the death of her husband, in their house in Liptó-Szent Miklós. Their various enterprises were liquidated, because her husband's brother, who by that time was a sick man, too, could not continue managing those common ventures. Out of the assets that resulted from the liquidation, my sister chose to take over for herself her brother-in-law's 50% ownership of the house; and he moved away, after the accounting with my sister was completed, to join his own sister, Mrs. Tröstler, who lived in Turócz-Szent-Márton. The income from the rental from the apartment on the second floor plus that from the produce of her gardens sufficed for my sister's needs. - My brother-in-law Rotthausser, now called Rutkai, became mentally ill and had to be confined in a hospital where he died of his illness within the year. He had left brief instructions for the distribution of his estate. He left half to his wife and the other half to his daughter. My sister made an agreement with her stepdaughter Vilma, according to which my sister received the liquid assets, about 25000 florins and free use of the apartment in the villa, while the latter became Vilma's property. - My brother Max quit his job as a life insurance agent and went into partnership with an ex-textile merchant named Barber, who had transferred his business to his brother with whom he had previously shared that enterprise. [Max and his new partner] started a company selling sacks both for grain and for flour. This Mr. Barber had married the oldest daughter of Vilma's late mother's sister who was also

a sister of Horace Davidson [of my mother's maternal family]. She was a very plain and excitable lady. Mr. Barber was a rather incapable and very childish man, but otherwise quite companionable. - Two very tragic events took place in my mother's home just at that time. Two of my sisters, Hermine, and Malvine died almost at the same time of a rapidly developing tuberculosis of the lung, which at that time was called "galloping consumption". They became contaminated with that disease through a young Jewish teacher who was tuberculous and who came often to my mother's home to enjoy the company of my smart sisters, as they were full of vitality and spirit. One day when he was visiting, he was suddenly vomiting blood and had to be taken immediately to the hospital where he died within a few weeks. My sisters cleaned up the floor themselves right after that incident. At that time nobody knew about the possibility of infection; thus that cleaning-up was done without any precautions whatsoever. Its consequences did not fail to follow. Both fell ill and it took the disease less than a year to make them its victims. - Now my mother was left with her youngest daughter, Gisella, who was sixteen years old and secretly engaged to my mother's step-brother Adolf Klopstock who, in his time, had attended the technical high school there [in Kremnitz]; they had fallen in love as children. Since then her secret fiancé had become an engineer and worked for the Hungarian State Railways, at the office for the Dombóvár section. At the age of eighteen, my sister Gisella married this step-uncle of hers; but none of us liked it. Now my mother, urged by my sister Rosalie, joined

her, together with her granddaughter Erna, moving into a one-room apartment next door to hers.

My business partner Bajan who, thanks to our numerous technical assignments, mostly due to my connections, had accumulated a small fortune, and in addition was rather sickly (the latter circumstance having been the reason for his retirement from the Hungarian State Railways), often shied away from field work, and thus became an undesirable partner for me. I resolved to part with him soon. Our personal relations also left much to be desired for which his Swiss wife was to be blamed, as she did not care for Jews. This was at the end of the year 1895.

Since there were so many secondary railroad lines to be built at that time, there was a lively demand for young engineers that induced them to shun government employment and to take jobs with construction companies instead. I hit upon the idea to enlist those engineers who were working with the building industry in an association, and to assure for them a greater influence in the business world. I conferred on this matter with several of my colleagues, who came to share my opinion, and we decided to invite a larger group of our best known colleagues for a discussion on setting up an "Association of Civil Engineers". The idea met with general approval and so we instructed a lawyer, who was working for the construction company Freund & Sons, to prepare the necessary by-laws. When he had finished, we invited all engineers in Budapest, except those in government service, to an organizational meeting of the "Hungarian Association of Civil Engineers" and

for enrolling them as members on the same occasion. Even before that meeting we made contact with Dr. Zylinsky, the best known civil engineer who was also an assistant to the professor teaching railroad construction at the Institute of Technicology; we furnished him with all information, and he agreed to be President of the Association, provided he were to be elected unanimously. In addition to myself, eleven colleagues declared that they were ready to pay 2000 Kronen each as an initial fee. The vote for Dr. Zylinsky to be President was unanimous. The by-laws were approved, and the Association came into being. For its headquarters we rented a three-room apartment at the corner of Váci Ring and Nagymező Street and we equipped it appropriately. The only paid employee was our bookkeeper, a young lawyer. The administrative work was taken care of by the elected Secretary. I derived great satisfaction from the success of my action. I felt very well at that time. I took my meals regularly at the Restaurant Petanovics, across the avenue [Andrassy Avenue] from the Opera House, in the company of several colleagues who were my friends and were about my age. After supper we would stay together night after night, to spend the rest of the time until midnight in one of the night-spots. Most of the time this was the Orfeum on Nagymező Street where we, as regular customers, had our habitués' seats. We had little interest in the performances, but quite a bit in the girls ["Animierdamen," meaning girls joining the guests at their tables and coaxing them to order more drinks]. My colleague Preisics, the oldest among us, a good looking, witty gentleman who loved to have fun, ruled the roost there.

Day after day, after the mid-day meal, I would drop in at the Café Abbazia, where I had, together with a few colleagues, our regular patrons' table, right next to the large, round table regularly used by Dr. Karl Eötvös [the opposition leader in Parliament] and his companions. He appeared, always accompanied by his office manager, "Brother Perl" as he called him, whom he took along with him wherever he went. Count Michael Károlyi [head of the short-lived government of Hungary in 1918-1919], Vazsonyi [Minister of Justice in that same government], one of the Counts Zichy, the limping Paul Tánzer, editor of the newspaper "German Peoples' Daily", were all some of his companions there. The guests at nearby tables would follow with great interest the discussions of those men, carried on in loud voices and with great emotion. István Tisza was Prime Minister at that time, and he would not go along with the opposition, headed by Eötvös, which demanded franchise for all by secret ballot, the Prime Minister claiming that the people were not yet mature enough for such a change in the voting law. The vehement speeches in Parliament on this subject, pro and con, were the topic of that group of men [in the coffee house]. - In the winter of 1895-1896 my colleague Kiss wanted to do something nice for his colleagues, but outside his home in which there was no room for a large number of guests. He rented instead the bowling alley of the large restaurant across the avenue from the Opera House, for all Saturdays until springtime. Here we met, upon his friendly invitations, at cozy Saturday gatherings, bowled, and drank lemonade and black coffee. Young folks, eager to dance, also had an opportunity now and then to enjoy that activity. We were

soon to become a large company. I might quote here a verse from the ballad "The Cranes of Ibius" [by Schiller] which goes:

"Of any of us, he alone  
Who all the nations knows,  
Can name each single guest  
Who to such gatherings goes."

I should not miss to mention some of the participants. In addition to our host Kiss, his wife, and his younger sister, there were present, among others, Dr. Márton Fejér [my wife Elizabeth's paternal grandfather, a lawyer], with his wife [that is, his first wife, mother of my father-in-law], his son László [my father-in-law], who at that time was still a student at the University, and his daughter Ella. Also the present Mrs. Zelma Ungar with her parents and her younger sister, and many other nice young girls. At closing time I would accompany the Fejér and Kiss family members along Nagymező Street, all the way to the house, on that street, where Dr. Fejér was living. Kiss was living on the Buda side where, a few years later, he built his own villa, according to his own designs, across the street from the Császár Baths; he called it "Villa Lidi" after the name of his little daughter. The house sat on the top of a hill and it was not easy to reach it. When it was completed, Kiss organized a housewarming party to which he invited all his friends, including myself and my wife. (I was already married at that time.) His parents and one of his sisters were there, too. My wife recognized with great joy the host's sister as one who had been a governness for many years in her parents' home when my wife was still a child, and whom she had loved very much.

At noontime I often met Mr. Urban on his way home on Andrassy Avenue. On those occasions he would ask me to accompany him until we would reach his house. He was always eager to learn about any new secondary railroad project, in order to explore whether he [that means his company] could perhaps play a role in connection with such a project. He also appeared to take an interest in me personally; he asked about my family relationships and that, of course, caught my attention. One day he mentioned that his wife would like to make my acquaintance and she would be pleased if I would come to dine with them the following Saturday at the Hotel Hungaria, an invitation which I, naturally, was pleased to accept. I attributed such unusual friendliness to some specific intention on their part, since Mr. Urban, as I knew him, would not undertake anything without a premeditated purpose. I appeared at the appointed time at the dining room of the hotel where Mr. & Mrs. Urban, in the company of a young girl, were seated at the table. Now I knew! Our conversation was the usual social talk and offered nothing of interest. The girl was the daughter of Mrs. Urban's sister, who was living in Nagy-Várad; thus she was her niece. After supper I accompanied the family, for the sake of courtesy, to their home, and we parted in a friendly manner after Mrs. Urban had invited me to come and see them sometime. Of course, that visit never took place.

Our office was in an apartment of three rooms, kitchen, and bath. The kitchen was our office boy's abode. I had taken the smallest room, next to the kitchen, for my living room, which

also served for conversations between our clients and ourselves. I contributed 400 florins to the yearly rent. The third room was adjacent to Mr. Bajan's apartment. One day he notified me that he was compelled to join that third room of our office to his apartment, because he needed more space for his family. He did not give heed to the fact that by no means could our office spare that room. But the lease with the landlord was in his name and so my opposition to his intentions was of no avail. No later than the following day that room was walled off from the center room of our office. That action of my partner was the last straw, and our contacts became reduced to the necessary minimum.

In the winter of 1896-1897, I met my future wife when she visited, together with her mother, who was the wife of Dr. Vidor, my sister-in-law Vilma. Mrs. Vidor, born Davidson, was an aunt of my sister-in-law Vilma, the fourth youngest sister of Vilma's late mother [who was the youngest of all the sisters]. I had known all of the many members of that family, excepting only the Vidor family. That which ensued from that meeting, which came about not entirely by sheer chance, has already been reported by my dear Tekla in her "Diary"; therefore, it is not necessary for me to describe it.

That winter I became a Freemason. A colleague who had worked, same as myself, for my erstwhile chief, Fischer, at the sluice-gate project near Mindszent, recommended that I be accepted in his own lodge, the Masonic Reform Lodge, whose Master

Mason was József Vészi, one of the most outstanding journalists in the Country. I was accepted, together with eleven other novices, according to a strict observance of the ritual, after having responded to the questions presented to me, to which I had to write out the answers in a black-lined cell. The questions read as follows: "Why do you desire to be accepted into this great, old, worldwide association? And what do you expect to accomplish thereby? Have you resolved to work for the aims of this Society even if that would require to sacrifice your life?" My response satisfied the Lodge-Brothers and there was no obstacle to my joining them. I was deeply impressed by the beautiful speech of investiture made by Master Mason Vészi, after which I was handed the utensils of a Freemason.

Our wedding was set for April 27, 1987, which was a Sunday. The marriage before the County Registrar took place one day earlier. That was the first year that all marriages were required to be performed by a Registrar; thus, it was still a very festive performance. It was called a "civil wedding". After that, we were handed the official Certificate of Marriage. Later that day, at 3 o'clock in the afternoon, we appeared before a certain "Royal Notary" who read to us the marriage contract which he had drawn up on the basis of information that was given to him, and which we both had to sign. That was the occasion on which I learned for the first time that my bride had a considerable fortune; and it had been deposited the very same morning in my account with the Kommerzialbank, and the receipt was handed to me in the presence of that Royal Notary.

My father-in-law Dr. Vidor thought it indispensable that his daughter be married according to the Jewish religious ritual, too, since he was a member of the governing body of the Jews [of Budapest]. Thus our religious wedding was solemnized one day after our civil wedding. It took place in the presence of my bride's large family, none of whose members failing to be present, as well as some colleagues of my father-in-law who was President of the Association of Physicians. Out of consideration for my mother and those of my brothers and sisters who were living in Budapest and who had no command of the Hungarian language, we were married by the German Chief Rabbi Kaiserling. We had not planned a honeymoon, because my father-in-law had the wish that such a trip be postponed until a more suitable time, and that we should rather stay first under the protection of my bride's family. For her that wish was a welcome command. So we limited ourselves to the satisfaction we derived from a coach ride in City Park. That night the family gathered once more, and all the girl friends of my bride were also invited. There was dancing, too, but neither I nor my bride participated therein. Our apartment at 30 Bajza Street had been completely prepared by my wife's mother, down to the last tooth pick. When we arrived there at about midnight, we were heartily congratulated by the servants, a cook and a maid, who had been waiting up for us.

We picked Alt-Aussee [in Austria] for our first summer vacation, where we went at the beginning of July. My wife was pregnant and was most happy about it; myself not a bit less so.

But she had a hard time of it. It would happen that she had to leave the restaurant during a meal to bring up again all that she had eaten. I was very worried about that, as I did not know that it was the usual consequence of her condition. One evening when she again felt unwell during the meal, she was observed by an elderly lady who sat at a nearby table; she guessed my wife's condition, got up, held her closely, and took her outside. Then we introduced ourselves, and I learned to my surprise that she was Mrs. Urban's mother. From that evening on she joined us often. The following day she visited us to inquire how my wife was feeling. - My wife who preferred to stay in our apartment most of the days, found that it was time to start making things for her so joyfully expected child. She bought linen for diapers, things for crocheting, and material for bibs and panties; and she started working on all this indefatigably. I helped her in her work by cutting out patterns from paper and by doing the basting for her to make the hems. Mrs. Urban's mother also came to help from time to time. It struck us that she would try in various ways to learn my wife's age, until I suddenly remembered that, at one time, I had answered Mr. Urban's direct question whether a union between his niece and myself would not be possible, that although I would feel most honored by being closely connected to his family, and even though I liked the young lady, I yet considered the age difference between the two of us to be much too great for permitting me making her happy. That was the end of that.

My father-in-law [an eye specialist] was Medical Director

of Stefania Children's Hospital, located in City Park, when on his way home at noontimes, would drop in almost daily at our apartment where his daughter awaited him with a cup of good beef broth.

Soon my wife felt much better; the nausea stopped. It was the beginning of February, and all preparations had been made for the reception of the newborn. The midwife who had delivered all the children of the Vidor family was alerted; and on the morning of February 11, 1898, I became the happy father of a well-developed albeit not too heavy son. I had spent the night in the adjacent room in great excitement. My wife received me, glowing with happiness, later in the morning, with a hearty kiss. She left her bed four weeks later. She nursed her child herself and got all the information on how to handle him from the medical consultant Dr. Karman. He had written a book for young mothers about handling and feeding of babies, and he presented my wife with a copy.

Right after our wedding and after my separation from my associate Bajan, I installed my office in our nice apartment and went into partnership with Inspector Kovacsevics, with whom I had met and whom I had come to respect on occasion of building the Nagy-Berezna-Korosmezö rail line, and who had retired since then, with the purpose of continuing together to accept purely technical engineering jobs only, for which Mr. Kovacsevics was highly qualified. Our partnership covered only this type of work, but not my own field of activity as a building contractor, which I planned to enter. The first opportunity for

the latter came soon after my marriage. Together with two colleagues we succeeded in obtaining subcontracts from the firm of Gfrerer-Grossmann for the construction of the rail lines Ujvidék-Óbecse and Ujvidék-Titel. A few years earlier I had completed myself the final tracing of this secondary line, about 100 kilometers long, for the same firm. Consequently, I was very well acquainted with the details of the right-of-way and with the character of the land in the area, both of which were important from the angle of the construction job. We contracted for the job at a fixed price of slightly more than one million florins. That price did not include the posts of the rails, ties, the steel bridges proper, nor the gravel for ballast. The prime contractor undertook to furnish all these items. The same was agreed with respect to the stone revetment of that section of the rail dam which until then had been crossing, without any protection, the flood area of the Danube and was only very recently protected by levees. It was the section of the line that crossed the [famous] Ecsed Swamp. The contract between the government and the prime contractor had been written by a very knowledgeable lawyer, specializing in this field, and did not contain any pitfalls for us, since it was based on [my own, above-mentioned] final tracing maps. Progress payments were provided for, according to the overall percentage of completion, at certain specified dates. As early as May 1897, we started work at the site; it was supposed to be completed on October 1st of the following year. We were obligated to deposit with the prime contractor a security, from our own funds, in the amount of

50,000 florins. My partners, even though they had enough for their shares of the security, had no more capital than just about that much; in other words, they did not have enough for the working capital needed for the time until the first progress payment could be collected. So, we had to assure ourselves of sufficient working capital from a bank-loan, which imposed on us not only the burden of interest payments, but also a lump sum as a commission to the bank, all of which we had not figured on in our original cost calculations. Therefore, it appeared to us best to speed up the work of excavation and transportation of soil as much as possible and thereby to make the first progress payment correspondingly large; a thing in which we actually succeeded, so much so that the first progress payment covered not only the bank loan but even left us with sufficient working capital until the time of the second progress payment. It was customary to relieve the contractor of the obligation to actually construct those of the planned overpasses and underpasses which the clerk of the municipality as well as the owner of the property [which the right-of-way was to bisect] would certify in writing as not being necessary. There was hardly a ditch there that would be known to have ever carried water, since the soil there was almost all sand. Thus we did not have to install more than a few concrete culverts and the two bridges over the Franz Josef Canal, each having a length of 25 meters [80 feet]. As a consequence, we realized a saving of almost 50% on the total of these items. Difficulties arose only with one of the pair/<sup>of</sup> supports of the bridge nearer Obecse. The foundation,

rested on loamy soil. The horizontal component of the pressure on the foundation was greater than the resistance, so the foundation tended to start slipping on the loam. We did not discover this condition until later, because of a delay in the arrival of the steel structure of the bridge, pending which we had placed a temporary wooden structure on the foundations, so as not to hinder the progress of all the other work to be done. Then we found that the rather tall rail dam was leaning against the foundation and pressed against the end of the bridge. We could get rid of that trouble only by replacing the end-portion of the earthen dam by a solid stone dam which had no tendency to lean against the foundation; and that forestalled the slippage. All remaining work was done in the normal manner.

In order for me to be able to spend the summer months after the birth of our son Leo with my family, my wife decided to stay in Ujvidek. To that purpose I rented a two-room apartment with kitchen, the latter to double as a sleeping accommodation for the nursemaid. We took our meals in the large restaurant nearby, where we were taken by horse-drawn carriage, rented by the month. My young sister-in-law Juli [my mother's youngest sister] came along to Ujvidek so that my Tekla should not have to be alone during the day. The landlord lived in the rear apartment of that house. Juli slept in our second room. One evening, when Juli wanted to go to bed, she found the landlord's daughter sleeping in it, and refusing to leave it, so that Juli had to sleep on the hard sofa. Now we came to realize that our Serbian landlord intended to cause us difficulties. In my anger

over his impertinence, I used offensive epithets, whereupon, he lodged a complaint in court, for defamation. In order to avoid further untoward actions, Tekla made a decision to go home with the child and Juli, a decision which was carried out the very next day. In September 1898, the construction job was completed and accepted as adequate by the prime contractor. ~~after the~~ approval by the Chief Inspector of the Ministry [of Transportation] as well as by the Hungarian State Railways. That Chief Inspector was the same Engineer Lazar with whom I had had earlier those controversies in connection with the Mitrovicz-Vinkovce rail line construction. Now he did not even as much as allude to that conflict; he was friendly and accommodating towards me. We found to our surprise that the completed construction job had paid us a profit of 300,000 kronen which we shared evenly. This was my first great success as a contractor. From then on I left all technical engineering assignments [as opposed to construction jobs] to Mr. Kovacsevics alone.

We intended to spend the summer of 1891 [I believe that this was actually 1900, as I was born in September of 1900] on the Schwabenberg [one of the hills on the Buda side of the capital], as Tekla was pregnant again. Thus I rented a villa close to and just below the upper terminal [of the cog-railway]. The house was in the shade of the woods above it so that all of its rooms were damp. Within a few weeks Tekla came down with an inflammation of the joints of her right arm, accompanied by high fever and causing acute pain. Now we quickly returned to our own home. One of my father-in-law's colleagues ( a special-

ist in such diseases), prescribed ice compresses which, however, did not bring any relief. He came every day and lifted her arm, but that made her pains even more unbearable. She suffered most during the nights. I did not know how to help her and her suffering drove me to desperation. One day her father brought his friend, Dr. Schächter, to see her. He inquired about the treatment by her physician and was most surprised to hear that he would move her arm. He now gave orders that in the future she should not permit anyone to do that, and that her arm must stay absolutely without any movement whatsoever. From that day on she suffered much less pain, and her condition improved as the day for her delivery approached.

Four weeks before that date Leo came down with whooping cough and for fear of contagion of the child to be born, he could not stay home but went to live with his [maternal] grandmother. He was told to spend much time outdoors, so I would take him out every morning. [Leo was then two and one-half years old.] Thus, we would take the boat [on the Danube] to the [Margaret] Island day after day. His thirst for information evoked great interest on the part of the boat passengers. In the Fonciere Building where his grandparents lived, there was no elevator, and Juli had to carry him up stairs in her arms, no other way being possible because of his resistance to walking up, combined with yelling. He wanted to stay with me in the worst way. Béla was born on September 6th. According to the wishes of my mother-in-law, I stayed away that night from our apartment; she was afraid that there might be complica-

tions. Fortunately, everything went smoothly. The obstetrician had stayed in our apartment the entire night, in order to help if necessary. The child was well-developed but weighed only 2.8 kilograms [six pounds and three ounces], and could not be nursed satisfactorily because he was too weak to properly draw his mother's milk. As early as a few months later it became necessary to give him other nourishment. That did not go well with him and he developed intestinal troubles. Several pediatricians whom we consulted were unsuccessful in their attempts to cure him of that illness which afflicted him up to the age of three.

My colleague Weil had become a building contractor and proposed to me in the year 1890 [perhaps this should be 1900] that I go into partnership with him, which I considered advisable in view of the substantial reduction in the number of construction projects for secondary railroads at that time. Very soon we received the contract to build a large general hospital in Baja, even though at a very low price. It was my intention to learn everything pertaining to such building construction and that was the reason for my taking on that job.

Towards the end of that year Moritz Davidson, brother of my mother-in-law, died in Vienna where he had been living. He had remained a bachelor and left his large estate to his four sisters who survived him. After payment of inheritance taxes and all other expenses, each of those sisters of his inherited 525,000 kronen. In addition, he left Juli a legacy of 50,000

kronen, because he had given each of his other ~~nieces~~ a like sum as a dowry, and Juli was his last unmarried niece whom he did not intend to short-change. To Vilma, the only daughter of his youngest sister who had died, he bequeathed only 100,000 kronen, although she should have received the same share as her aunts. This circumstance caused undesirable tensions in that family, as Vilma felt that she had been denied her valid claim. Her attorney advised her to contest her uncle's will and to have the distributions from the estate blocked; but it did not come to that, because Vilma did not want to make a break with her large family and preferred to agree to a modest settlement; which then did not fail to come about. In the same year the uncle of my second sister-in-law, Horace Landau of Paris, also died. He left his two brothers in Vienna and to his sisters altogether 8 million Swiss francs, of which total Martha's [my uncle Arnold's wife's] mother received 2 million. She, in turn, bequeathed that money in equal shares to her five daughters and one son.

Now I want to report briefly about the hospital construction in Baja. I had the idea not to obtain the bricks from the brick ovens in Baja. Those ovens were not efficient, the material was bad and relatively expensive. The dimensions of standard bricks had been changed shortly before, but the differences were not substantial. The new standard brick was 30 x 15 x 7.5 centimeters; the old one was 31 x 15.5 x 8 centimeters. As a consequence of the change, the old stock of the huge ring-ovens had remained unsalable and could be obtained for less than they had

cost to produce. Now they were available for purchase by the million, ready to be delivered immediately. There was no bar to their use for that particular construction job. The ship owners Jacob & Moritz Weiss were ready to furnish us with such excellent bricks from Nyerges-Ujfalu, unloaded on the bank of the Danube at Baja, at half the price of bricks from the Baja ovens. The barges of that shipping company usually came down the Danube empty and returned upstream with grain from the Bácska, intended for the large flour mills near the capital. It was therefore worthwhile for the shipping company to undertake the transport of those bricks [from that upstream source to Baja]. By using this source of supply, we realized a saving of 10,000 kronen;. A further saving resulted from transferring all plumbing and heating work to a specialized supplier, for which the Baja city administration and the architect in charge, who supervised the project, gave their approval the more readily as their original plans for that work had been drawn by the architect with little expertise. We were thus freed from carrying out those items of the contract and instead received a very nice sum of money, as a commission, from the newly appointed supplier, for all items of plumbing and heating. That assured us some profit for that job, which we would otherwise have gone without. The project was completed to our satisfaction at the beginning of 1902.

We spent the summer of 1901 at the Wörthersee [a large lake in Carinthia, Austria]. My Tekla's parents and Juli came along, as well as Aranka [Aranka Spitz, my uncle Max's daughter]

as our guest. I did not intend to stay with my family for the entire summer, and as my Tekla was at that time in the third month of pregnancy [with my sister Rózsi], her parents wanted to be near her. They stayed in the large Grand Hotel, while we had rented a small house with lawn and garden, where little Béla, then 9 months old, could lie in his perambulator, watched over by his trusted nursemaid Zsuzsa [Susan, a peasant woman of sterling character, who remained, serving various branches of our family, for decades thereafter]. One day we were invited by the wife of a leather manufacturer named Riess, who had become part of our daily company there, and her two sons who were still students at the Institute of Technology, to a boat ride across the lake, to a much favored outdoor coffee house on the other side. Tekla preferred to stay and keep her parents company. But upon my urging she changed her mind and came along. The boat was ready. The two students attended to the oars, their mother to the rudder; we others, Tekla, myself with Leo in my lap, and Aranka facing us, took our seats in the mid-section of the boat. We reached the opposite shore which was rocky, and steep to be almost vertical. There the lake was several meters deep. The boat was pulled quite close to the dock and we got out cautiously. After a pleasant two hours there, we started on our trip home, which would almost have turned into a disaster for my family, if I had lost my presence of mind at the moment of danger. It was Tekla who first stepped into the boat cautiously, then myself with Leo in my arms, and then Aranka who, with reckless and

mindless movements, simply jumped in from the dock. The boat started to rock and Tekla fell from her seat on my right, and over the edge of the boat, into the deep water. With my left arm I held Leo, who yelled, tight to myself, and with my right I immediately grabbed Tekla's small bustle made of horse hair, the kind that all ladies wore under their skirts, according to the style of that time; and I held her above water until the students, pale with fright, returned with a rope and with borrowed warm blankets. The rope was thrown to Tekla, she grabbed it, and with it she was hauled to the shore. Now she was wrapped in the blankets and carefully set down in the boat next to me, and our return trip went off without further difficulties, albeit under the lasting impression of our frightening experience. Our apartment was no more than 50 steps away from the landing, and my Tekla, who had not yet uttered a single word, was taken inside by Mrs. Riess and put to bed that had been warmed by means of hot bricks wrapped in pieces of linen. Her parents and Juli did not return from an excursion until late in the evening and thus did not learn about our terrible adventure. The following morning Tekla got up from her bed, chipper and healthy. Never in her life did she talk of this accident. I, however, remained under the painful impressions from this experience for many years. On December 15 [1901] she made me happy by the birth of our daughter Rozsi. At that time my mother-in-law decided to use a part of the fortune that she had inherited, for building a villa [that would be large enough] for the

entire family, so as to have her daughters [my aunt Margit Scheiber, my mother, and my aunt Juli, still unmarried], as well as her grandchildren, live close to her. That building was to serve also to show the capabilities, as an architect, of her son Emil. It was to be his first independently created project. For this purpose a building lot of 600 Klafters [about half an acre] was bought on the Esplanade, [called at that time in Hungarian "Fasor", or "Allee" in German, later renamed "City Park Esplanade," still later, during the First World War "Queen Vilma Street", then once more "City Park Esplanade", and finally, since after the Second World War "Stalin Esplanade". It is a very wide esplanade, with two malls for pedestrians and sidewalks on both sides, lined with altogether six rows of old horse-chestnut trees, that has elegant and fairly large villas with very large gardens on both sides. The family home described here, now a dormitory for students of the Academy of Music of Budapest, is at number 33.] Beginning with my marriage, my brother-in-law Emil had his architect's office in one room of my own office at our apartment, but he was without any assignment and therefore had spent little time there. With the help of his one employee, an elderly German architect from Munich, the preliminary drawings that were necessary for obtaining the building permit, were now prepared on a scale of 1:100 and after approval of the layout by his mother and by his sisters, those drawings were filed. The villa was to have three floors, each one with one large apartment, a small attic apartment, and a number of nice semi-basement rooms for an office. The

detailed drawings were started soon, to make it possible to begin the work that same fall of 1901 and to have the building ready for occupancy for November of the following year. All masonry and brickwork was contracted for by a well-known, reliable builder who, based on his knowledge, helped the young architect who was without experience in actual building. My brother-in-law was instructed [by his parents] to create the best and most beautiful that he could, without regard to cost. Many a feature that was already installed, was removed again if it did not completely satisfy Emil's sense of beauty, which delayed completion of the job. From time to time I visited the building as it was going up, and on one such occasion I criticized the plan to construct the ceiling of the third floor, which was to be our apartment, out of a double layer of wooden beams, in contrast to steel beams provided for the ceilings of the lower floors. I considered that a great mistake, because that design was not used anymore at that time, in view of the fact that the wooden beams available were not, as they had been earlier, sufficiently dried out and were thus subject to rotting, particularly if exposed to further wetting by rain. There was a disagreeable discussion on that with my brother-in-law who resented my criticism and did not change the design. He never tolerated any critique of his work. The mutual ill-feeling over this controversy never disappeared entirely.

As the villa was not ready for occupancy on November 1st, and as we had given up our apartment as of that date, we moved for three months into the apartment of our brother-in-law

Scheiber's parents, which had been offered to us for the time they were planning to be at Keszthely, where they owned a home in which they used to live. Then, in December, we did move to the villa, into our second [actually third] floor apartment. My brother-in-law Emil transferred his office to the semi-basement rooms there, which were connected to his small apartment right on top of his office, on the mezzanine floor, by an inside staircase. My own office, forming part of our apartment, opened from a small ante-room, which also led to the large living room of our apartment.

Inspector Kovacsevics died before our move to the villa, in September 1902. During our five years of collaboration he had been a diligent, conscientious business partner of mine, to whom I had left all the technical engineering assignments. His exaggerated degree of precision and meticulousness delayed though quite often the completion of the work beyond the set deadline and thereby caused us losses. In one instance it even came to pass that our clients (the firm of Lindzer & Brown) refused to accept the belatedly completed drawings, claiming that the delay beyond the deadline caused the cancellation of the entire railroad construction project. It had been a difficult assignment for us to do the final location of the right-of-way and tracing the line, requiring many measurements on the topography of the land to be used for the line. In spite of a later settlement with the firm of Lindzer & Brown, this job represented for us a loss of 5,000 kronen. Then a large firewood supply company offered Mr. Kovacsevics directly the assignment to design and construct a narrow-gage line for servicing their forest lands, against payment of 10% of the

construction costs. That forest was at Csaglin. The agreement was concluded with him alone. As he needed an assistant, Engineer Vince Erdélyi [who later married my mother-in-law's cousin Ilka, and owned the villa on the Buda side, where the Fejér family then came to live until the Second World War, and where Elizabeth grew up] was hired. Mr. Kovacsevics's and his assistant's salaries substantially exceeded those agreed 10%. Inspector Kovacsevics's last job was to make the final plans and tracing for the line to Uzsok, an assignment that he, once more, took directly from the client, the firm of "Secondary Rail Lines Corporation." That was the most difficult work of final tracing of a rail-line ever carried out in the Country. It was necessary to establish the niveau maps for the entire length of the line which ran on thickly wooded mountain slopes. He needed eight months for the job and we exceeded our calculated costs by 100%. His request for a retroactive increase of the originally agreed unit charge per kilometer was apparently settled favorable after his death, but as the contract was in his name, his widow touched the granted bonus, without even letting me know. Nor was I concerned about it. Altogether, my association with Inspector Kovacsevics had, as its net result, a loss of 20,000 kronen which I alone had to shoulder. Upon his widow's request I even paid his funeral expenses. From then on we quoted on every building project that was put out for bids, which required a great amount of office work. It was necessary for us to include in our calculations no more than a modest percentage of profit, to try to become the lowest bidders,

since there was stiff competition in this field at that time. We did in fact manage to be awarded many of these jobs, mostly in provincial cities. We hired a licensed master builder as a supervisor, and Mr. Weil was in overall charge. I took care of the administrative work, correspondence with the authorities, and the preparation of contracts with craftsmen. For distributing the weekly cash pay of the workers we had a gentleman suitable for such a job, whom we paid, for his part-time services up to three days a week, a small percentage of our profits. He was living in Komorn. In the office, we had only a typist and a part-time bookkeeper who came to the office only on Sundays to do the books. He was a very reliable, specialized bookkeeper, an elderly gentleman who also worked part time for the firm of Henry Freund & Sons (the name Freund was later changed to Tószeghy).

When my father-in-law moved to the villa, he quit his practice and resigned also from his post of Director of the Stefanie Children's Hospital. He donated his large medical library to the Medical Association whose President he had been and continued to be. He gave the Jewish community 15,000 kronen to create a department of ophthalmology, which until then had not been established, at the Jewish Hospital. Mornings he would visit his daughters [now all three living in his house], played with his grandchildren, and spent his afternoons at the Chess Club whose President he was at that time. The families living in the villa would gather every evening, with the exception of Emil, who spent the evening with his numerous friends,

in the apartment of the [Vidor] parents, where ~~we were served~~ good black coffee. My father-in-law was a wise and lively old gentleman of 72 years of age. He led the conversation and was a great patriot, having been, as early as the Revolution of 1842 when he was a maturing young boy, a partisan of Kossuth. [Kossuth was the leader of the Revolution, an uprising and war of independence of the Hungarians against Austrian rule, crushed rather soon by Austria which had the help of Russian troops.] He was for the introduction of general franchise, therefore he did not like Tisza who opposed that innovation. I myself did not take part in those conversations, since I was so tired out by my daily office work that, in spite of those lively discussions, I would fall asleep in my comfortable rocking chair, a thing that was not resented by the others. My brother-in-law Emil, whose first work was well received, was now entrusted with the building of a villa for his aunt Egger [my great aunt Sophie, my maternal grandmother's sister], also on the "Esplanade"; and when this was accomplished, he went on to build a beautiful four-story apartment house for his aunt Davidson [Vilma, wife of his mother's brother Horace Davidson] near Freedom Square, into which all her children moved. My brother-in-law Emil became a much sought-after architect. He married the daughter [Regine] of Villmos Freund, owner of the Kőbánya Brewery. She was a very wise and modest girl who became a very close friend of her husband's family. Alfred, Tekla's younger brother, was at that time working at the saw mills of the firm of Polacsek and Scheiber at Csimpa (in Rumania). It was his parents' intention

to keep him away from Budapest so as to frustrate his plan to become an actor. Also it was necessary to have him prepare for an occupation, and that was another reason for his brother-in-law Scheiber [the husband of my mother's older sister Margit] to employ him in his lumber business. Alfred acquiesced in his parents' wishes without, however, any enthusiasm for ever becoming a businessman. He was a good-looking young man with pleasant manners and very gifted in music, same as his older brother Emil who played the violin, while Alfred was a pianist. After a few years he was transferred to the main office [in Budapest] of his employers, which was next door to Mr. Max Polacsek's apartment, where he often played music with the latter's daughter Lincsi. They fell in love and Lincsi wanted to marry him, which then did come about.

Juli was now 24 years old and it was time for her to get married. A matchmaker recommended a Mr. [Vilmos] Quastler who was a manager of the steamship company Hoffmann, and later became President of Levante Corporation. That was another steamship company, owned by the Allgemeine Kreditbank [in Vienna], which had bought the ships of the Hoffmann firm. Emil, after having built for his father-in-law Freund, a four-story apartment house on Franz Liszt Square [at number 2 on that square, where Emil's sons Pali and Antal, as well as Rose Scheiber, widow of Károly Scheiber, our closest friend and contact in Budapest, still live]; and Emil moved his apartment and office to that building, vacating both his office and apartment in his parents' villa and making the latter available for Juli after her marriage. In

fact, two rooms were detached from her parents' adjacent large apartment and added to hers. Thus, she could continue to live in the villa [even after her marriage to Quastler].

Up to the year 1906 I took care in our office only of the administrative work, connected with the building contracts that we obtained, and that was quite a bit. There were still opportunities for the construction of rail lines, but I wanted to cooperate only with first-class construction companies, and these did not have any rail projects at that time. I could hardly list all the numerous buildings which we constructed in those years, but I do remember several, e.g.: military buildings in Miskolc (cavalry barracks and stables), city hall and gymnasium in Nagy-Szalonta, a school in Nagy-Tapolcsány, a large penitentiary in Székes-Fehérvár, and as the last: the Court House and a large jail in Zalaegerszeg, a job to which I will revert later. In 1906 we were entrusted by the firm of Gregersen with the construction of the secondary rail line Nagykaroly-Csap, at a fixed price, and right after that, of the rail line Szatmár-Máteszalka. The former line was to be 90, the latter 40 kilometers long. For these two jobs we associated ourselves with engineer Michael Scheiber [no relation to Endre Scheiber who had married my mother's sister Margit], a specialist in this field. As practiced on occasion of the Ujvidék-Óbecse job, we pushed the excavation and soil transportation works as much as possible, because the progress payment, stipulated for their completion, was set rather high. However, our contract entitled us to the first progress pay-

ment not before the end of the third month. Up to that date we could get though promissory notes paying interest at 6% per annum. As that firm enjoyed an excellent reputation, there was no difficulty to get those notes, endorsed by us, discounted by my bank. Thus it became possible for us to do this job without the need for working capital. There were no difficulties in the entire course of construction. We completed it within the deadline and cleared a profit of 150,000 kronen for the Nagykaroly-Csap line and of 90,000 kronen for the Szatmar-Mateszalka line, of which amounts Engineer Scheiber received 1/3.

In the year 1907, my father-in-law fell gravely ill. He was treated by his friend Dr. Schächter. He did not suffer long but died soon. After his death we moved in with my mother-in-law and ran a common household. The Quastlers took our apartment, out of which three rooms had earlier been detached to form a separate small apartment that was rented out. With the exception of the summer of 1909, which I spent at the Sanatorium Lehmann near Dresden, to have my chronic stomach trouble cured, in which I succeeded, I spent all summers with my family, up until the beginning of the First World War in 1914, partly at Austrian lakes, twice with Regine Vidor and her family, in Velden [on Lake Wörthersee], again with Regine in the Tatra Mountains [near the northernmost point of the Carpathians which encircled Hungary as it was constituted at that time], twice in Kolberg [a seaside resort at the then German shore of the Baltic Sea], combined with short trips to Berlin, Munich, and the Bavarian royal castles, twice in Dr. Szegő's children's sana-

torium in Abbazia [on the Adriatic Sea] when Béla and Rózi were still very little, once in Gossensass [at the Brenner Pass in Western Austria], and once in Ischl [in Austria]. One summer we took our somewhat belated honeymoon trip to Venice with Emil and Regine, and thereafter stayed for four weeks on Lake Garda [in northernmost Italy] near Verona which we visited for two days on our way home. Our children stayed that summer in the villa in the care of their [maternal] grandmother.

At this point I want to tell about the occurrences in my family in those years. In 1901 my nephew Izsó Ring brought his younger brother Marci to Budapest and apprenticed him to a grain merchant. This man was a passionate speculator in stocks, who in the end fell victim to his gambling. He was an uncle of Klara Thein [who, in her first marriage, was the wife of Richard Salgó, my uncle Arnold's oldest son, and married Dr. Thein after her first husband's rather early death]. The young, inexperienced Marci Ring observed his boss's speculations and saw in them an opportunity to get rich quick. However, since he had no other money than his salary of 100 kronen per month, he proposed to his mother and to his uncle Reiss, Jeanette's husband, all of whom lived in Liptó-Szent-Miklós, to let him trade in commodity futures at the Budapest Commodity Exchange, and also in common stocks at the Stock Exchange, duplicating the deals in which his boss, whom he considered an experienced trader, would engage. He hoped, as he wrote to his mother, at least to double her money and that of his uncle Reiss. Both went along with his proposal and sent him 5,000 kronen each,

for which he had asked them. A short time later he reported to his mother that, there being a down-trend of grain prices, he would be unable to close out his commitments, except at a loss, so that he would rather wait for higher grain prices, which in turn required the commitment of again 5,000 kronen each. Although he did get these sums, his mother and his uncle did not get to the point of desperation. Another four months later Marci would have needed further monies to be able to continue his commitments, because a good harvest was expected and that depressed the prices further. But neither his mother nor his uncle had any money left by then. Marci's commitments were called. What he had paid down did not suffice to cover his losses, and in his desperation about having engaged in such unfortunate gambling which made both his mother and his uncle to become paupers, he jumped to his death from the fourth floor of a building on Andrásy Boulevard. His mother's desperation about the death of her youngest child was indescribable. She sold everything she still had and moved to Kaschau where she joined her married daughter Margit Sándor.

My brother Arnold, using part of his wife's inheritance of 500,000 kronen from her mother, who had died in the meantime, decided to build a villa across the street from us, that had two large apartments on its two floors, and one smaller apartment on the attic floor. The building was registered in his wife's name. At that time he owned a very lucrative enterprise, a plant making beech plywood and also thin beech lattices for fruit crates, which sold well in southern Italy. He had become quite

wealthy and had three apartment houses in the outer Leopoldstadt section [a northern suburb of Budapest] which he intended to leave to his three sons.

In 1906 my sister Rosalie fell very ill. Her doctor suspected a malignant tumor in the womb and recommended that she let herself be examined at the Rothchild Women's Hospital in Vienna and that, if the Medical Chief there, one of the best known Viennese surgeons, should find it indicated, she be operated-on right away. Accompanied by my sister Flóra, who happened to be on a visit to Budapest, they travelled to Vienna, reported to the Bettina Hospital (that was the name the hospital actually used), and after both of them were examined (because Flora did not feel well either), they were admitted there. The following morning they were both examined once more, and on the basis of those findings it was recommended to my sister Rosalie that she undergo the operation then and there. However, the Chief Surgeon, who was to do the operation, considered it his duty to bring to my sister's attention that, because of her weak heart, he could not guarantee a successful outcome; thus she would have to decide herself whether she wanted to undergo the operation just the same. My sister, a resolute woman, agreed to the surgery, in spite of what she was told, was operated on the same day, and died that evening. My sister Flóra, deeply saddened, immediately communicated with me and with my brother-in-law Schlesinger [my aunt Ernestine's husband] in Kremnitz, giving us that mournful news. I arrived there [in Vienna] the following day, Schlesinger one day later, and we brought my

sister's body back to her home from where she, deeply mourned by her mother and by her brothers and sisters, was taken to her grave and buried alongside her husband. She had bequeathed by her last will, which she made before leaving for Vienna, all her property to her mother. My brother Max moved into the apartment of my sister, so as to be quite near our mother. But he resolved to have that villa sold as soon as possible, whereafter he would have one built for them on the "Esplanade." To this end he soon acquired the empty lot next door to our villa. However, before long, he changed his mind and preferred a four-story apartment house to be built, into which he planned to move together with his sales office. So he sold the empty lot, next-door to us, as well as the villa owned by his wife on Bulyovsky Street [where they were living], and acquired a suitable lot on Visegrád Street, near the Comedy Theater, and he entrusted the designing of the building to the architects Ney and Róna. However, after having sold the villa on Bulyovsky Street, he had to rent an apartment in the interim, until he could move into the new building. This took some time, since first he had to secure a mortgage before the construction could be started. They moved to an apartment on Váci-Ring, taking with them our mother and her granddaughter Erna. My mother, in deep sorrow because of the sudden death of her beloved daughter, soon fell gravely ill. A very serious heart ailment befell her shortly after moving; she became bedridden and died entirely unexpectedly.

Max could move to his new house fully two years after our mother's death. His sales office was in the basement there. He

had always had an inclination to gamble, and now he was at it again. Perhaps he had been urged-on by a friend; the fact is that he bought up all available supplies of green pepper that was offered for sale, had it stored in silos, and hoped to make green peppers, by his having cornered the market, a scarce item, to be sold at high prices. At the very same time he acquired a controlling interest in the St. Laurence Parquet Company which had been idled by its lack of working capital. The only suitable parquet material was Slovenian oak. Same as with the green peppers, he embarked on cornering this market, too, by buying up all of that material that was offered for sale in order to deny these supplies to the other competing parquet factories that were still in operation, and thereby turning parquets also into a scarce item. To accomplish all this he had to get bank loans which required all his property and the stored scarce goods as collateral. But the green peppers, for lack of expert handling and insufficient ventilation in the silos, turned moldy and thus became unsalable; they had to be removed from the silos and ended on the garbage heap, whereupon the bank called the loan, and since it could not be repaid, took all the collateral. My brother Max was now penniless and had to give up his apartment and his sales office. His business partner, who had not taken part in these speculations, had become deranged several months earlier. His family had placed him in an institution in Austria where he died soon thereafter. Max moved with his wife and Aranka to a small apartment in Buda. They had married Lenke, before those speculations started, to a stock broker [Lajos Markó]. Aranka

got a job, and myself and Arnold supported Max by regular monthly sums. All that he still owned was a life insurance policy for 40,000 k~~o~~nnen against which, however, he had taken a loan.

In the year 1908, my sister Gisella's husband died of cancer of the throat, an ailment from which he had suffered for a number of years. She came to live in Budapest, together with her two sons, Hugo and Robert, in a three-room apartment near the Institute of Technology, subletting one room to students. Another room was used by her sons and Adolf's son Laci [László Segoe] who at that time was already a student at the Institute. She drew a widow's pension of 100 kronen per month from the Hungarian State Railways.

The construction job at Zalaegerszeg did not proceed smoothly at all. The supervisor of the Building Authority was Chief Engineer Sándor, a Jewish man who caused us many difficulties with his groundless criticisms, to the point where we were greatly disgusted with that job, and my colleague Weil, who was in charge of it, stopped entirely to go to the site, which in turn caused Mr. Sándor to find fault even more with whatever we were doing. Finally, the building was completed, but the final adjustments were made in Weil's absence, supervised only by the foreman. Several shortcomings were noted, among them some lath which was touched by rot under the roof tiles, representing a value of 100 kronen. For lack of understanding of the matter, it was overlooked that the lath could not have been replaced without first partially removing the roof tiles. The total sum

representing the value of the shortcomings was set at 2,400 kronen. We offered that we would agree to a deduction of that sum from the last payment due us, provided the latter were forthcoming soon, but we were told that we would have to actually remove the shortcomings first, and also that the security we had given would be returned to us only after that was done. Now we had to go to court for the return of the security which consisted of 28,000 kronen worth of government bonds. That litigation, because of the First World War having broken out just at that time, produced, 15 years later, a favorable judgement, ordering the return of the bonds to us against our payment of 2,400 kronen on account of the shortcomings. However, those government bonds had in the meantime been declared to be of no value. [15 years after 1914 puts this event in the year 1929, i.e. years after the devastating inflation that followed the First World War.] It was in the year 1925 when I learned that Chief Engineer Sándor was a brother-in-law of Géza Eppinger. [We have known the Eppingers, who lived across the street from us, since 1916, and we are still close friends with the two daughters who are about our age, particularly with the older daughter Alice Dános.]

After completion of that job, I gave up my business partnership with Weil since I did not intend to continue as a building contractor. I did not want an active part in such enterprises anymore, also I felt very tired, and I resolved to devote myself to my children, for which I had lacked the time before. That decision, however, did not keep me from occasionally participating, together with some colleague, in bid competitions, more or less

as a formality, just so as to be still taken seriously as a potential contractor, and thereby to make it possible for me to return to such activity later-on, if I so desired. Such an opportunity did arise in the year 1910. The firm of Heinrich Freund [no relation to the Friends who later called themselves Tószeghy] was in charge of building a secondary rail line at Nagy-Kikinda, for which that firm had asked my erstwhile business partner Scheiber to do the calculation of the fixed contract price, promising him to let him have the job as a subcontractor. My colleague Scheiber had proposed to me that we should do the calculation together, and then, should Heinrich Freund be the successful bidder, we should form a partnership for fulfilling the expected subcontract. Heinrich Freund's bid was successful and they asked us for a proposal. Freund wanted a rebate of 50,000 kronen to which I would not agree. Scheiber, who was willing to accept it, obtained the subcontract, and I gave up my planned participation in it for a small compensation for the work I had already done. Scheiber, by a change of the line's final tracing, succeeded in making a profit of 200,000 kronen. He invested 400,000 kronen, which was all he had, into a group of three small buildings of two stories near City Park. After the First World War, he sold them for 3 million kronen which sum, however, was then reduced by inflation to zero.

In 1909, my Tekla's mother fell ill. She had been in poor health for many years; she was very anaemic, and now she suffered, in addition, from a heart ailment. She bore her suf-

ferings with great patience. Dr. Lévy [who was also my parents' doctor, and was a brother-in-law of my aunt Regine Vidor] made all possible efforts to strengthen her heart, but to no avail. She died in the spring of 1910. She was a wise and refined woman of a noble character whom I greatly admired.

My connection with the firm of Gregersen continued. I prepared their bids for a fee for each project, plus a bonus, payable for each project that led to a contract.

My brother Arnold became very ill in 1913. His doctor suspected an already advanced intestinal cancer and recommended an immediate operation which then was done by Dr. (later Baron) Herczl, the owner of Fisor Sanatorium who was considered the best surgeon in Hungary. The surgery did not alleviate Arnold's sufferings. He became bedridden, underwent more surgery, but his condition went visibly from bad to worse. Every afternoon he asked for me. He wanted me to read the newspaper to him. Although his three sons were around, they were very much tied up in their businesses. [They were lumber merchants.] He died towards the end of 1913. To my deep regret I could not attend his funeral, because on the evening of the day of his death I had to leave with Mr. Nils Gregersen for Sarajevo so as to appear there with him at a bid opening. The construction of a main rail line from Sarajevo to the Serbian frontier was at stake. But all the bids were much higher than the government's own estimate, so no award was made at that time, and the work was later given peacemeal to Croatian contractors.

The Austrian Crown Prince Franz Ferdinand had the plan to form, after his accession to the throne, a unified, autonomous state within the Monarchy out of the three Slavic crown-lands, Bosnia, Croatia, and Dalmatia, which idea, however, caused great excitement in Serbia, since Serbia claimed Bosnia for itself. Thus that plan of the presumptive heir of the Austro-Hungarian dynasty had to be forestalled [by Serbia] by all possible means. Serbia used the opportunity of an inspection trip of the Crown Prince to Sarajevo to have him and his wife assassinated by hired murderers. This shameful act became the trigger for the great war of 1914, which was wanted by both Russia and France. When war was declared we were on vacation in Velden [in Austria]. Leo brought us the news the very moment it became known, pale with excitement, running to us from the post office, where he had heard about it. Everybody wanted to get home in a hurry. We managed to get on the train to Vienna even though it was already overcrowded. In Vienna, the demand for room on the trains was so great that we could get to Budapest only by boat [on the Danube]. We arrived there on the morning of the second day and, back in our apartment, we were happy to have that trip behind us. I hastened to my bank in order to have all my securities sold on that very day and so to avoid even greater losses; 25% of my assets were already lost by then.

The further developments brought about by that war are only too well known to my children and therefore it is unnecessary to report about them. The wise thoughts of the great poet [I believe it might be Goethe] which I will quote here certainly found

their justification in these events.

"The curse upon all evil,  
And on their evil deed  
Is that they beget  
But evil with their seed."

At this point I will end my report on my life and that of my family, and in closing will add only this: That my declining years were made happy by destiny that permitted me in 1939, after the death of my beloved Tekla, mother of my dear children, to join them in a country that granted them the opportunities for developing their capabilities with which they were born, and to apply their great talents. With further paternal gratitude for their loving care, I will now close this report, not forgetting to note my sincerest thanks also to Mariska Fejér, my dear daughter-in-law's mother, for having typed these pages so willingly and diligently, notwithstanding the fatigue which this has caused her.

Written in August - October 1953, in my 93rd year.

*Louis Szulard.*

### Notes to the translation

My father was born December 23, 1860 in a rather remote part of Slovakia, a few miles south of the headwaters of the River Arva, below the crest of the Carpathian Mountains, which is the northern border of Slovakia. That chain of mountains encloses what was Hungary, until 1919, on the north, east, and south-east.

My father's first, handwritten manuscript of his Recollections is lost, but I have in my possession the original text typed by my mother-in-law late in 1953 which my father hand-corrected and signed soon thereafter. I have taken that signature and the two sketches from there. He died on July 3, 1955 in Yonkers.

I have used all first names in the form as I found them in the German manuscript, that is in their German form for family members of my father's generation and also the one before his; and in the Hungarian form which he used for Hungarian-speaking members of the younger generations. I have used pet-names also without change, both in in the translation and in the family tree.

I have left all geographical names also in the forms used by my father, which are German, Slovak, and Hungarian. Since many places and rivers have names in two or all three of these languages, I have attached a list of correlation. "The Country" means Hungary.

The change of the name Spitz, by three of the four brothers, to Salgo, Szego, and Szilard occurred around the turn of the century when there was a "magyarization movement"

The florin (Gulden in German) was the unit of currency in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy until just before the end of the last century. It was a large silver coin with a purchasing power of perhaps 2 to 4 present-day dollars. A Silberling was a small silver coin worth 1/10 of a florin; a Groschen a large copper coin worth 1/25; a Kreuzer a small copper coin worth 1/100 of a florin. In 1892 a new unit, the crown (Krone in German) was introduced at half the value of the florin which it replaced as the official unit of currency.

The schools in the last third of the 19th century had first 6, and later 4 elementary or primary grades, and first 6, and later 8 secondary or high school grades. Graduation from the latter, (called "middle school"), usually at age 18, entitled the student to enter directly the 4-year higher education program of the University or that of the Institute of Technology. There was, and still is, no equivalent to our American undergraduate college studies in most of Europe.

I followed the original text very closely, did not shorten the sentences, and left out nothing. My notes appear in [ ] brackets, where the first person singular means myself, not my father

## Notes to the family tree

In drawing up the family tree, I used a list of my paternal uncles and aunts with notes on their descendents, given to me by my father sometime in the forties, then the specific information in the Recollections on some members, and also some information that I had myself. Thus my father's paternal cousins, children of his two oldest aunts, are indicated, although I do not have their names. These seven and the fourteen children of my grandparents form the total of twentyone members of my fathers generation of the Spitzes.

All my 22 cousins are completely identified. However, I do not have the names of more than half of their altogether 17 children, that is the generation after mine.

My great-grandfather Spitz was born about the end of the 18th century and lived with his wife in Nagyfalú on the Arva River, Slovakia, where they died sometime between 1870 and 1880. All his children were born there.

My grandfather Samuel Spitz was born around 1825. His wife Leontine Klopstock was born around 1830 in Malatína, also in the Arva valley. They lived in Slovakia until my grandfather died about 1885 in Kremnitz. My grandmother died about 1895 in Budapest.

My father and his brothers and sisters were born between about 1845 and 1870, the first ten of them in Turdossin, and the last four apparently in Kremnitz. All four of the brothers and five of the sisters moved at various times to Budapest, while the other five stayed in Slovakia.

However, my cousins, without exception, moved to Budapest, from where, first Hugo Klopstock went to live in Turkey, and Michi Salgo went to England. Then Emil Schlesinger, and Laci Segoe emigrated to America soon after the end of the First World War. Robert Klopstock, my brother, myself with my family, my father, and finally my sister came here just before the Second World War. Out of my entire generation of 22 cousins now only Laci Segoe (a retired city planner who lives with his wife in Cincinnati, and with whom I have kept in touch) and myself are left.

I have never met, nor have I heard from any of my cousins' children whose total number is only 17, (except Laci Ring, who was about my age and with whom I was on friendly terms in Hungary in the thirties). However, I believe that several of Richard and Emil Salgo's children may be living in England, and Hugo Klopstock's two sons in Turkey.

Leo was born in 1898, came to America 1936, and died in 1964 in California. Rozsi was born in 1901, came here in 1948, and died in 1967 in Denver. I was born in 1900, Elizabeth in 1907; John was born in 1929 in Vienna. Andy was born in 1938 in Budapest, and died in 1974 in California. We came to America in 1938.



<u>Hungarian</u>	<u>German</u>	<u>Slovak</u>	<u>Note</u>
Alsó Kubin		Dolný Kubin	
Árva		Orava	County and River
Besztercebánya	Neu-Sohl	Banska Bystrica	
Brünn	Brünn	Brno	Czech
Buda	Ofen		
Kassa	Kaschau	Košice	
Komárom	Komorn	Komarno	
Körmöcbánya	Kremnitz	Kremnica	
Losonc		Lučenec	
Óbuda	Altofen		
Pöstyén	Pistian	Pystian	
Szliács		Sliáč	
Trencsén	Trentschin	Trenčín	
Vág		Vah	River
Zágráb	Agram	Zagreb	Serbian
Zimony	Semlin	Zemun	Croatian
Zólyom	Alt-Sohl	Zvolen	Town
Zólyom	Sohl	Zvolen	County
Zsolna	Sillein	Žilina	

Liptó-egyház Miklós  
Nagyberek  
Turdó-egyház Martin

Liptovský Svätý Mikuláš  
Petrovograd Serbian  
Turčiansky Svätý Martin