



למען חוברו ועשה אתם אתם
כל מצותי והייתם קדשים
לאלהיכם

TRANSLATION
Wear it that
ye may
remember
and do all
my
command-
ments
and be holy
unto your
God

THE FUGITIVE

by EZRA S. BRUDNO
NEW NOVEL of JEWISH LIFE IN RUSSIA and AMERICA

ILLUSTRATED BY BERT LEVY
WORLD FAMOUS HEBREW SKETCH ARTIST

THIS is the first installment of "The Fugitive," a new novel by Ezra S. Brudno, which has been completed less than three months, but which has already become one of the most talked of books in both Europe and America because of the masterful way it depicts the life of the Jews both in Russia and New York, and which Mr. Somers, the head of the book department at the Emporium, declares will be one of the biggest selling books of the year.

Jewish character, while for the last four years he has been on the staff of The Age, published by the multi-millionaire, David Symes, in Melbourne, where he gained even greater prominence for his cartoons of famous men in general, as well as for the able articles from his pen which accompanied all his drawings. At the same time he is known professionally as a pupil of one of the best scenic artists that has ever painted for the big theaters in Australia.

CHAPTER I
I LOSE MY FATHER.
As I dip my pen to begin the narrative of my life, the heavy curtain of time rises and scenes of early childhood crowd my memory. I am back again in far-away Lithuania; and I see, as clearly as the paper before me, my native town with all its moral squalor. It is one of the commonplace, insignificant Lithuanian towns; with thatched log houses set along unpaved muddy streets and stenchy alleys; with a weather-worn brick synagogue and a high-peaked old Greek church; with a ruinous public bath-house and a well-fortified jail; with a pond in which boys and cows alternately bathe in summer and on which the former skate in winter; with a tall black cross standing somberly in the center of the market-place; with a hissing water-mill (which is regularly flooded every spring) at one end of the town, and a long-armed windmill (which almost as regularly burns down every winter) at the other end; with encompassing bluish-green forests, waving wheat-fields, and blossoming orchards—in

short, but for the last, old, dirty, lethargic, typically Lithuanian. However, as a hint to lovers of chronological research, I state that in the place where I first saw light, the famous Corsican, in his escape from cold Russia, is said to have changed horses. So, after all, my native town deserves a place in the world's history almost as important as that accorded to Austerlitz. For if chance had ordained otherwise and the great conqueror had not found speedy trotters in my birthplace, think what a change in the nineteenth century! But enough of the Corsican. Let me return to the Lithuanian, however disparaging to the warrior. As the reader will presently learn, my name, Yisroel (the Hebrew for Israel), had many variations. Its diminutive was Ischroel, which for convenience sake was shortened to Shroike. This my schoolmates thought still too long, so my name among them was Shroll. Frequently I was endearingly called Yisroelchikie, Isroelchick or Isroelkie. Recalling this little old town and the names by which I was known there, the past bursts before me like a shell, and my mind fills with memorable events of my early life. Some of these events are

vague and fragmentary, like half-forgotten dreams, and others stand out most vividly, as if they had occurred yesterday. How I remember the passover of my fifth year. It appears to me like a cloud with a silvery seam. The day before this passover was the happiest of my childhood. I see myself standing on the long, balustraded porch, watching a bird that skipped from popular to popular in front of my father's house. The thick loe that had covered the earth for more than five months had almost entirely melted, and was flowing in broad crystal streams and bubbling beneath a fine glacial sheet which was not as yet washed away. Here and there the bits of bare earth, like so many tiny islands, looked black and spongy, and were slowly drying under the piercing glances of the sun. But I was soon lured into the house; the rattling of dishes fell on my ears like sweet music. I ran into the kitchen. All the dishes and cooking utensils that had been used during the year were carried to the attic, and new plates, pots and pans, which had laid packed in hay since the preceding passover, were cleaned and polished. While these preparations were being made I was running about the house in boisterous mirth, and in my repeated efforts to make myself useful I broke sundry articles. My mother scolded softly, and, smiling all the while, gently removed me from the servants' way. To hide my embarrassment I dipped

the new tumbler into the "passover tank" and swallowed a mouthful of the delicious "passover water." Then my father appeared in the doorway and said: "Come, my child; I have something nice for you." I followed him to the adjoining room, where I was presented with an Arba-Kanfas, the fringes of which my father had taken great delight in tying in the traditional knots and twists. As he handed me this "four-corner" garment he said in Hebrew: "Wear it that ye may remember, and do all my commandments and be holy unto your God."

Then came the Seder—the ceremony of the first evening of passover. Our dining-room was illuminated by scores of candles stuck in antique chandeliers hung from the ceiling. At the head of the table sat my father, robed in a white shroud-like garment, leaning on his left arm and reading from a book. An embroidered skull cap was tilted on the back of his head, leaving bare his high and broad, smooth forehead; and his genial countenance was beaming with good humor and happiness as he glanced at his small family. As I now think of it, it seems to me that I could read his very thoughts as he passed his fingers through his black beard: "Behold, thus shall man be blessed that feareth the Lord." My mother, with diamonds twinkling in her ears, read the Hagode (the tale of Israel's bondage and exodus) as fast as she could in order to catch up with

father, pausing only now and then to point out to me the illustrations of the ten plagues and that of Pharaoh sinking into the sea. At the sight of these pictures I clapped my hands in gleeful satisfaction over the punishment this tyrant, the oppressor of my forefathers, had received from the mighty hand of Jehovah. But the happiness we felt was not unminged; with it there was some hidden sorrow. My brother Joseph, who was about twelve years my senior, was absent from the table. There had always been some differences between my father and him, and of late the breach widened on account of my brother's intimacy with the sivelevat (a Russian officer filling the position of our Grand Jury and that of the Coroner) against whom my father held a number of overdue promissory notes. However, despite the rupture, my mother entertained an unspoken hope that he come home this night to join in the passover feast; and when, later in the evening, there came a sound of steps without, she rose eagerly and whispered: "Joseph is coming." "It is not Joseph's step," my father answered gloomily. A moment later the door opened and two officers entered. My father rose and saluted them in a courteous though hesitating manner. "What brings you to my house at this hour, Feodor Ivanovitch?" my father asked of the superior officer.

My mother trembled perceptibly, and said to my father in an undertone: "Something must have happened to Joseph." "I am on a bad errand this evening," was the short reply of the gendarme, given with a look which made plain that it was not my brother who was the occasion of the visit. My father paled at the glance. Now as I write I can see him before me, robed in a loose white shroud, a fearful stare in his shrewd blue eyes, his right hand clutching the girdle around his loins as he staggered back a step or two. I clung to my mother's skirt and looked at the gendarmes in trembling fright. "Really, Yudel Abramowitch," said the superior of the two gendarmes, "it is the most unpleasant duty of my life to be compelled to read an indictment to you." And he turned his eyes away from my father's. "An indictment! Against me?" my father cried. My mother burst into tears and wrung her hands hysterically; and I, though comprehending no real cause for grief, joined in her wailing. The officer drew a writ from his up-turned sleeve, and after reading the caption and legal rigmorole he recited in a firm voice: "You Yudel Abramowitch, are hereby accused and must answer to the charge of being implicated in the ritual murder of Andrew, a Christian child." My father did not say a word; he raised his hand to his forehead and emitted a deep groan. A minute or more of silence ensued, during which my father looked as if he were struggling to regain his wits. He cast a dazed, helpless glance at mother, then at me. The gendarmes interchanged communicative signs; then one of them said gruffly: "Come, you'll have to hurry!" My father fell on my mother's neck and wept bitterly, and after pressing me to his breast and wetting my cheeks with his tearful kisses, he raised his hands heavenward and cried: "My enemies have set a trap for me, but the Infallible Judge knows my heart—knows my innocence. He will not see justice perverted." The officers made no reply, but led him away bowed and sobbing. And all that night, I remember, we sat there beside the richly spread table, I holding closely in my mother's arms and she moaning convulsively all the while. My father was not the only one arrested that night. Nine of the oldest and most prominent members of the Jewish community were also thrown

CHAPTER II
I AM LEFT ALONE IN THE WORLD.
After this tragic end of my father a great and rapid change took place in my mother. Her noble Semitic face became shrunken and sallow and wrinkled, and her soft bright eyes, dimmed with weeping, lost their gentle luster.