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STRAUS, ISIDOR

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL NOTES, FROM 1845-1912.

U.S.A: [1911-1912]

Manuscript Room

[Straus, Isidor

Autobiographical Notes from 1845-1882.]

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I N T R O D U C T I O N

Wednesday
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A few days ago my son Jesse said that he would so much like me to write out my reminiscenses, as it would give him the benefit of my experience by recording in my off-days at Sunnyside during the summer a sketch of my life's history. At first the idea did not appeal to me, as I did not look with favor on making the effort which such a task would impose. On further reflection the thought presented itself that I might pursue the task in a sort of desultory way, jotting down from time to time, as the spirit moved me, such occurrences as happened to present themselves to my mind, without aiming at any consecutive, chronological effort, and if this resulted in anything worthwhile, the purpose might be accomplished without its boring me, as the contemplation of such an undertaking systematically attempted surely would. I therefore leave it to the development of time to decide for me if anything shall come of this plan, of which these lines are the first beginning. As I now view it, it shall be my purpose to make this record for my children only; therefore whatever may be the outcome of the plan, in order that it may not be misconstrued, this central feature should not be lost sight of, otherwise, I fear, my children, or perhaps more likely my grandchildren, for the "I" must necessarily be the predominating pronoun, which under other circumstances would stamp me justly as having an exaggerated sense of my own importance.

1845 - 1863

I was born in Otterberg, Palatinate of Bavaria (Rheinpfalz), February 6th, 1845 - if I mistake not, in the same house where my father was born. The Straus family resided there, or in the immediate vicinity, for several generations. My father, Lazarus Straus, was the eldest son of Jacob Straus, who was the eldest of three brothers, all residing in the same town of Otterberg. My grandfather's two brothers were named Lazarus and Salomon, the latter being the father of my mother and the youngest of the brothers. My father was born in Otterberg, April 25th, 1809. My mother whose maiden name was Sara Straus, was also born in Otterberg, January 14th, 1823.

The three brothers, Jacob, Lazarus and Salomon, all lived in Otterberg. If they were not born there, they were born in close proximity. I have an idea that they may have been born within five miles, at a place called Minchweiller. The name of Straus figured among the prominent Jewish families of that section. The Jews of the Palatinate adopted family names when Napoleon took possession of that part of the country. My great-grandfather, whose name was Jacob Lazar, was one of the members of the great Sanhedrin assembled in Paris in 1807 by Napoleon to aid in making laws so as to harmonize the status of the Jews, who were accorded equal rights with the professors of other religious sects. I assume that his name was Jacob ben Lazar, for up to the time that the Jews adopted family names it was customary for them to be identified in this wise: Jacob, son of Lazarus.

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My great-grandfather had contracts with Napoleon's Army for the delivery of supplies for the horses - my impression is as a sub-contractor, for I have heard my father speak of a lawsuit which he recalls as a boy was being carried on by his father and uncles against a Fould family of Paris growing out of some of those contracts. I never knew my grandfather on my father's side, as he died when my father was a young man, but I well remember the other two brothers, Lazarus and Salomon, the latter being my grandfather on my mother's side. They were both cultured and educated gentlemen. They spoke French as fluently as German. Neither one was engaged in any regular business. They were land owners, and, I believe, when the crops were harvested, they bought the wheat, oats, clover and clover seed, which were the principal crops of that section, from their neighbors and then sent them to the market of Kaiserslautern and Mannheim, the chief commercial towns of the section.

The Jewish burial ground at Mehlingen (about 5 miles from Otterberg) contains the graves of several generations of Strauses, their being no Jewish cemetery at Otterberg.

Up to 1848, Otterberg was a very thriving town, containing perhaps 40 Jewish families. After that they began to emigrate, and at this writing not a single Jewish family remains. They had a nice synagogue and school house which were both yet actively occupied when I visited them in 1863. But after the death of my grandfather about 1873 or 1874, who seems to have been the last prop of the Jewish community, it rapidly disintegrated, so that when I again visited there

in the early eighties, both buildings were demilished and the religious relics which the synagogue contained had been removed to Kaiserslautern.

1852. My father, who was active in the revolution of 1848, finding life burdensome after the collapse of the movement, long contemplated emigrating, but his ties were so many that he found it most difficult to tear himself away, and not until the spring of 1852 could he bring himself to take this decisive step. I believe he landed at Philadelphia and there met a number of former acquaintances who had preceded him to this country, some of whom were established in business in different parts of the country. He was advised to go south to make a start in business, and I believe Ogelthorpe, Georgia, proved to be his destination. There he met some acquaintances from the old country through whom he made a connection with two brothers, Kaufman, who were the owners of a peddler's wagon which circulated with an assortment of dry goods, Yankee notions and the like through several adjoining countries. In those comparatively primitive days, when that state was yet sparsely settled and the rural parts, through the existence of slavery segregated on the large plantations a population equal to, and often greater than, the number the nearest villages contained, the itinerant merchant filled a want, and hence his vocation was looked upon with much favor by the people and he was treated by the owners of the plantations, which he usually visited at regular periods, with a spirit of equality that it is difficult to appreciate at the present day. Another feature which helped to lift the

plane of his vocation in the southern states was the existence of slavery, as this drew a line of demarcation between the white and the black race and was largely instrumental in giving every white man a sort of status of equality which probably did not prevail in sections where slavery did not exist.

Thus, if the peddler proved to be an honest, upright man, who conscientiously treated his customers with fairness and made no misrepresentation as to his wares, he was, during his sojourn at the house, for he slept and took his meals with the family who was his customer, usually one night at a house, treated as an honored guest and his visits were looked forward to with real pleasure. Another feature, which almost sounds like fiction, respecting the relationship between even the wealthiest and most aristocratic families and the comparatively humble peddler, was the chivalrous spirit of hospitality that refused to take any pay for board and lodging of the man and make only a small charge for the feed of the horses, which gives an idea of the view entertained by the southern people as to the proper conduct towards the stranger under your roof. The peddler in return usually reciprocated by making some suitable present, either to the lady or her daughter, and he frequently provided himself with articles for the purpose, with the view of ascertaining at one visit what particular item might prove especially welcome at the next, and thus a bond of friendship sprang up which it is in this part of the country and at this time difficult to understand.

In the course of these journeys my father happened to reach Talbotton, Georgia, which town made such a favorable impression

on him, owing to the air of refinement which its appearance gave evidence of, as compared with all other points he had visited, that the idea struck him that it was a place in which he would like to settle. He was fond of relating that this little town was the first one which made him feel that he had gotten away from the uncouth, primitive and frontier-like conditions which characterized every other settlement he had passed through. The houses looked well kept and neat, attractively painted, Nice gardens, flowers and cultivated shrubbery abounded, and then he found that these external signs were borne out by other conditions; splendid schools, both for boys and for girls, and the people appeared as a whole to be of a finer type than he had met with anywhere else.

Talbotton is the county seat of Talbot County, and while Georgia was termed the Empire State of the South, Talbot was called the Empire County of the state. Father's judgment, therefore, was not astray. It happened to be court week when he reached there, which always brings many people to the town, and it therefore was at its best so far as activity goes. This no doubt also had its influence in impressing my father, for during court week business is active and the town has a comparatively festive appearance.

Another factor must not be lost sight of. Peddlers had to take out a license in each county in order to do business, and this had to be obtained at the county seat. So his first step was to go to the Court House to ascertain the cost of a license. It proved to be very high- so high that my father was in doubt whether the business which he might do would justify the outlay. So in leaving the Court House the idea occurred to him that he

might find a store where he might unpack his goods and take advantage of the opportunity which so many strangers - that is visitors, not permanent residents, were in town, to test the business calibre of the place. He found thatthe only tailor in the village occupied a store which appeared to be too large for his needs, and a short interview developed the fact that he was willing to have my father share its occupancy, at a price which seemed attractiv-, I believe my father said less than a license to ply his trade as an itinerant would have cost. So he promptly accepted, and immediately unpacked and displayed his wares. The results proved so satisfactory that after a few weeks' his stock was so depleted, and the first impression of the town turned out to be so fully justified, that he proposed to his partner, Kaufman, to try to rent a store in the town and settle there. They succeeded in finding one, and my father arranged to leave for Philadelphia to lay in a stock of goods. His partner doubted the wisdom of the move, for he feared that the Oglethorpe merchant who had heretofore supplied them with their merchandise might put his veto on their settling down to store keeping, instead of peddling, and as they were beholden to the Oglethorpe merchant of peddling, and as they were indebted to him for most of the merchandise they possessed, the fear was not entirely unfounded. He further doubted my father's ability to procure sufficient credit in Philadelphia to enable them to make aproper display of merchandise in the comparatively large space (large only in comparison to the wagon which theretofore constituted their place of business) which the rented store required.

1848 - 1863

When my father reached Philadelphia, he immediately began to look around to ascertain what prospects he had towards accomplishing the purpose of his mission. He found several wholesale houses, in different lines of merchandise that he required, who either knew him personally or knew the family reputation, as it happened that there were in Philadelphia many former residents of that part of Germany from which my father came. He had no difficulty in establishing a line of credit solely on the strength of the character and reputation which he bore in the old country, for he had neither capital nor business experience in the new country which justified any basis for the same. There were some branches in which this did not prevail, and to these he was recommended by the ones who knew him. Naturally all the merchants rested their credit on faith in his honesty entirely, but there was one line of merchandise which required more capital than any German immigrant seemed to have been able to accumulate - dry goods and domestics, as it was known. This branch was entirely in the hands of native Americans, and it was therefore the most difficult branch in which an unknown man, without an established credit, could obtain a foothold. It is necessary to add that it must have been about June when my father reached Philadelphia, before fall stocks were ready, so that the moment assortments were complete my father began making his selections and shipping the merchandise forward, and by the time the merchants from the south began to arrive, my father had nearly completed his business. Among these merchants my father found more acquaintances from the old country. One of these, when he learned from my father that he had completed his purchases excepting domestics and dry goods, for which line he had not the courage or facility

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to seek a connection, this newly found friend offered to introduce him, and in this way he succeeded in carrying out the plan he had laid out for himself, for in the country stores, such as Talbotton had, it was necessary to embrace all lines of merchandise, and "dry goods and domestics", as this brand was designated, constituted the most important.

My father was about ready to return to Georgia when there arrived in Philadelphia the merchant from Oglethorpe whose house had supplied the goods theretofore to him. He was astonished and evidently displeased with the discovery that he would lose a customer, and intimated that he would see to it that the necessary credit to enable my father to obtain his supplies would be withheld. When, however, he discovered that it was too late to accomplish his jealous end, he changed his tune, as it seems that he feared that my father's influence might prove sufficient to turn the tables on him, and so he expressed the hope that the heretofore friendly relations would not be disturbed.

The most astonished individuals my father found in his partners on his return to Talbotton. How my father, an utter stranger in Philadelphia, without capital and without any known record, as they supposed, could succeed in stocking a store with a general assortment of merchandise, was beyond their comprehension.

This episode must have occurred in the summer of 1853 and as my father was naturally anxious to have his family join him as soon as he was satisfied that he had found a foothold, he began to make plans to this end, and he wrote to my grandfather, the father of my mother, that he expected to be able

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to take care of them the following summer. The means which my father left behind him in Otterberg were sufficient to keep the family in comfort during the period that he was preparing a home for them in the new country. He therefore was struggling with the problem only of providing the new home, which he succeeded in doing by the following summer.

1854 - 1863

My mother with her children (Isidor, Hermine, Nathan and Oscar) left Otterberg August 24th, 1854, on her journey to join my father. We were accompanied to Havre only by my mother's youngest brother, Jacob (a half-brother). Our grandfather accompanied us from Otterberg - he on horseback and the rest of us, as narrated before, together with a nursemaid, in a carriage, to Kaiserslautern, where we took the railroad train to Forbach, which at that time was the French frontier town, and there we remained one night. In those days, I assume, this was considered a long enough journey for a mother with little children to take in a single day.

On the following morning we left for Paris, where we remained until August 29th, when we started for Havre, where we took the steamer "St. Louis", on her maiden trip, for New York. We arrived in New York on September 12th. Before the steamer had fastened to the dock my mother recognized my father impatiently pacing up and down, and I clearly recall the lengthened minutes, which seemed like hours, that elapsed between his first recognition and the time when we could be embraced in

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his arms.

Our trip to Talbotton was postponed for several weeks, owing to yellow fever raging in Savannah. We remained in New York a few days and then departed for Philadelphia. There we spent several weeks, until it was considered fairly safe to take the steamer for Savannah. To the best of my recollection the steamer arrived at Savannah in the morning, and as it was considered safer not to enter the city, we spent, the day, until evening, when the train started, at the shanty called the station, which I believe was on the outskirts of the town.

On arriving at Talbotton, which was five miles from Geneva, the railway station, which part of the Journey was made by stagecoach, we found a comfortably furnished home. I recall that soon after reaching there I ran around the grounds on an inspecting tour, and coming back to the house to say that our house was built on stilts - the style of construction being no cellar, but open air space, pillars of wood, perhaps twelve feet apart, forming the foundation which supported the building.

After attending a preparatory school, I entered Collingsworth Institute, a sort of high school, which was well known throughout the South and attracted students from many states. There I received practically all the schooling I have enjoyed. My attendance covered the period between 1856 and 1861. In the latter years, owing to the breaking out of the Civil War, and my father's partner having joined the army, I was withdrawn from school to assist in the business. Even prior to this period I was accustomed to help my father in the

evenings, the store being closed to enable my father to go home for the evening meal, then called supper, and opened again after that until about 9:30. There was economy in this program, for the store was lit by kerosene lamps, which was a luxury that the home did not afford, and therefore furnished a better light for the preparation of my lessons, which I always did during these hours. It may sound strange, but economy was practised by my mother, who was a most systematic and circumspect housekeeper, to such an extent that the log fire in the evening was made to do service as light after the evening meal was disposed of, during the winter, while in the summer the outdoor life dispensed largely with the need of light indoors. Candles were in those days the illumination, which were manufactured largely in the household. I can well recall assisting in this industry, the material for which was gathered from the tallow that the cooking material threw off.

My father's partner boarded with us, and this money enabled my mother to defray her outlay for groceries, which was about all of the table necessities that it was necessary to purchase. Vegetables came from our garden. Chickens were also raised, and the principal other meat consisted of smoked bacon, that was laid in for the whole year during the annual hog-killing season, and generally cured or smoked in our own smoke house. Fresh meat was a rare delicacy in that part of the world. Such a thing was a butcher did not exist in our little town. Whenever a farmer of the county saw fit to slaughter an ox or a sheep, he would bring the carcass to town, exhibit it in a building, or rather shanty, on the public square, called a market, which in reality was only a market for that particular occation,

for at other times it was an empty building, ring a bell which was hung there, and thus announce that some fresh meat was for sale. This scarcely happened oftener than once in two or three weeks, during the cold portion of the year. Ice being a very scarce commodity, a great luxury in fact, which had to be shipped from distances of many miles, was, as I recall it, only brought once in a great while by a confectioner when he wanted to offer the townspeople the opportunity of ice cream treats.

I think my father gave my mother a monthly allowance of about twenty dollars. It was my mother's wish always to have an allowance, as this enabled her to manage her affairs like a financier, and I am sure that no matter how small such an allowance might have been, she would manage to save something out of it. That was a pleasure of which she was very fond, and as a matter of fact she saved enough in the course of two or three years to purchase a piano for my sister Hermine to practice on, an extravagance as she thought which only could be justified if it came out of her savings, and without taxing my father's exchequer. My children, for whom only this record is meant, can scarcely realize what the economy of those days meant. A small business in a small town could only enable a man to accumulate the smallest saving by the strictest and most parsimonious management. I can well recall what a sacrifice the schooling tuition of us children entailed; how huge a sum it appeared to be and how thoroughly I appreciated the burden it involved. There were no public or free schools in those days

in that part of the South. When a new text book had to be obtained, a sharp quest after a second-hand one was instituted and seldom failed. This resulted in a saving of at least half. On one occasion, when my studies of Greek had advanced to where a dictionary was essential, my father, in one of his semi-annual trips to the North (Philadelphia and New York) brought along a new copy of Littell's and Scott's Greek lexicons, one of the very few new books, that is not second-hand, that I could boast of possessing. What a feeling of exultation it created, and how proud I was of such an elegant prize.

About 1860, how I cannot recall, I had become possessed of the idea that I would make an effort to secure an appointment for the West Point Military Academy. It possibly was suggested by the fact that a neighbor of ours had a son at West Point who came home during vacation. He was to graduate in 1862, and he suggested, I imagine, but I cannot recall, my taking steps to succeed him, as the positions are apportioned by congressional districts. The appointment was tentatively preempted, but the breaking out of war naturally brought it all to naught.

As I stepped my schooling in 1861, as before stated, on account of my father needing me in the store because his partner had enlisted in the army with the 4th Georgia Regiment, which had been ordered to Norfolk, Va., I was out of school for about 18 months when my father's partner came back discharged owing to physical disability. My father always insisted on giving us all the best possible education, and so he animated me to arrange for beginning my studies. As most of the high schools and colleges had suspended work owing to the depletion of the teaching staff, many of whom, as well as the older students, having joined the army, there were not many opportunities open for con-

tinuing my studies. The Georgia Military Academy at Marietta was, however, in full blast, and it was there I determined to enter. I had engendered the military spirit first when I decided to apply for West Point, and secondly, when the war broke out in 1861 the whole South practically became a military camp, even boys of from 16 to 18 years of age joining in the effort of organizing companies. During this excitement the boys of Talbotton were not behind in their fervor and patriotism, and as soon as the 4th Georgia Regiment, which practically took most of the able-bodied men out the the town, had departed for the front, they organized a company and I was elected first Lieutnant. They offered their services to the Governor of Georgia, but he replied that as there were not arms enough to equip the men, to accept boys as soldiers was out of the question. These two episodes probably induced me to choose the Georgia Military Academy for completing my education. I started for Marietta and in due course presented myself at the Academy to take the entry examinations. When I arrived at the campus I met some acquaintanses and they invited me to their living quarters to spend the intervening hour until I could arrange for an interview with the proper authorities. After spending a short while in the room of one acquaintanee, I was invited to visit that of another. Unsophisticated as I was, I accepted the invitations without the least suspicion, for I don't think that the word "hazing" was in my vocabulary. However, when the gallantry of my friend bade me, when reaching the door of his room, to precede him in entering, I failed to discover until it was too late that the door was a little ajar, enough to

enable a tin pan full of water to be perched over the opening, which came down on me as soon as I pushed it open. I was so thoroughly drenched that I was compelled to return to the hotel and change my attire from head to foot. This disgusted me so utterly that I never returned to the Academy, and to what extent this episode changed the course of my life is speculation.

The following morning I hired a buggy with a driver, and visited a mill which was situated a few miles away and made a contract for the delivery to me of some of the mill's product, on which I made a very good turn, and thus became embarked on a mercantile career, which has been my occupation ever since. To the best of my recollection, I went to Atlanta the following day, sold for future delivery what I had contracted for at the factory the previous day, and embarked in other transactions, so that when I returned to Talbotton, after an absence of probably two weeks, and related my experiences, the surprising turn of events, with their successful results, in a measure appeased the disappointment which an utter failure of the purpose of my trip would have caused.

The blockading of all southern ports, which cut off the supplies that the southern merchants had theretofore procured from the norther markets, made all the better grades of dry goods, clothing, etc., very scarce, and as the smaller inland cities, towns and villages were slow in becoming apprized of conditions, the seaport cities and towns sent agents throughout the country and bought up stocks of merchandise which commander higher prices than ordinary retail values which these country dealers had placed thereon when first put on sale. In other words, the enhancement

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of values through scarcity, and the depreciation of the currency from ged values, which made themselves felt in the more important centers, had not penetrated the interior. This in a few months resulted in the merchandise stocks finding their way to the larger from the smaller towns, and in due course the rural communities awakened to the realization of what had happened, too late, of course to check or remedy conditions. Perhaps the Jewish merchants were represented in these foraging expeditions througout the country to their full proportion, and there begun a tirade in the newspapers against this practice. The men who were engaged in this perfectly legitimate business enterprise were denounced as extortionists, speculating on the necessities of the people while many of their bread-winners were at the front, risking their lives on the alter of their country, and the Jews were singled out as if they alone were the perpetrators of what was termed iniquitous practices. It is so easy when once a wave of denunciation has been started, for people, without reflection of examination of facts, feeling that the complaint of one community find echo in its own, to join in attributing deplorable conditions to one and the same cause, and thus a prejudice against the Jewish merchants was inaugurated that found utterance in official and semi-official quarters. So it occurred that a grand jury of Talbot County, in winding up its session and making its presentments to the court, as was the custom, referred to the evil and unpatriotic conduct of the representatives of the Jewish houses who had engaged in this nefarious business. When my father became aware of the the action of the Grand Jury, he immediately let it be known that he would move away from a community which had cast

such a reflection on him as the only Jew living in their midst, and promptly took steps to carry his determination, insisting, notwithstanding all protests to the contrary, that he was justified in construing the jury's action as a personal affront to him. Father's action caused such a sensation in the whole county that he was waited upon by every member of the grand jury, also by all the ministers of the different denominations, who assured him that nothing was further from the minds of those who drew the presentment than to reflect on father, and that had anyone had the least suspicion that their action could be construed, as they now saw clearly it might be construed, it never would have been permitted to be so worded.

Father, nevertheless, would not be persuaded to change khe plans he had determined upon, and consequently removed his business and family to Columbus, Ga. The loyalty and good will of the people towards him was made manifest to him as he often stated, by the customers from Talbotton who visited his store in Columbus, not a few of them never having traded with him while in Talbotton, but who became regular clients in Columbus.

In 1863 a commercial company was formed in Columbus for the purpose of sending an agent to Europe to endeavor to purchase steamers fro running the blockade and loading them with such necessities as were not procurable in the South. The capital of this company was to consist of cotton stored in warehouses to be used as collateral for procuring the necessary funds in England to carry out the scheme. Cotton,

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Through the ports of the South being blockaded, being the most desirable commodity which England needed, and hence the prospect of any money which might be advanced to the company being used to purchase steamships with which cargoes of much needed merchandise could be taken inward and cotton taken outward, with enormous profits both ways, was supposed to offer such very tempting inducements that it was generally believed that the plan would prove irresistible, particularly to the more enterprising ship owners and merchants who understood the importance to the cotton-hungry spinners and manufacturers, of rushing the abundant supplied awaiting transportation within the blockaded ports.

Lloyd G. Bowers, of Columbus, was appointed agent to go abroad to carry out those plans, and I was selected as his secretary to accompany him. So we left Columbus on June 16th, 1863, for Charleston, S. C. We arrived in Charleston on the 17th and placed ourselves in communication with General Ripley, who was commander of the post, the authorities being favorably disposed to all enterprises which were likely to offer relief for well known wants and needs. Blockade-running was of course a very hazardous piece of business and boats only made efforts to pass out of or into a harbor when weather conditions looked propitious. They therefore chose as a rule nights when there was no moon and when misty or cloudy conditions rendered detection by the blockading squadron difficult. On consultation with Gen. Ripley it was learned that he had counted 21 blockading steamers, armored, of course, that afternoon, lying outside of the harbor.

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So, Mr. Bowers, who had been joined by Charley Lamar, of Savannah, bent on a similar errand, concluded that they, too, had better not run the risk of being captured by the enemy, and they decided trying to run out of the harbor of Wilmington, N. C., believing that port not to be so heavily guarded. They, however, gave me the advice that I should embark by a steamer that was booked to leave Charleston the following day, adding if the boat was captured the Yankees would not harm me, a mere boy, while they would likely be taken as prisoners to a fort, from which they stood in danger of not being released until the war came to an end. I therefore took passage by steamer "Alice" for Nassau, N. P., which left on the night of June 18th. I paid $160 gold for my ticket, a pretty steep figure for a voyage of not exceeding, I should guess, 500 miles. And I would add that I had to pay seven dollars Confederate money for one dollar gold, although three days before, in Columbus, I was able to buy one dollar gold for five dollars. Confederate money. There were only two other passengers besides, one of which was Elias Haiman of Columbus, whose family had been well acquainted with ours for several years. The excitement attending the journey until we reached safely a neutral harbor was incessant. Until we had run sufficiently past the blockaders, so as to render their pursuing us improbable, the three passengers had to store themselves away in appointed bunks, so that in case the boat was fired at, we would be away from the danger line and probability of becoming panic stricken. All precautions of detection by the blockading squadron were actually observed by blockade-running

boats; they were painted as near the natural color color of water as possible, all lights were extinguished and the strictest quiet in all movements had to be maintained. It was for this reason that the passengers were compelled to lie prostrate in a temporary bunk below the water line, out of sight, and possibly out of sound, of everything that might be going on on deck. I had in my possession twelve hundred dollars gold, which my mother had sewed in such a way in a garment that I wore, like an undershirt, that this pressing on my body in close quarters, with the heat of southern summer weather, made me feel, and probably look, at about one o'clock that night, which was approximately the hour when we were released from our confinement, like we had been in a Russian bath with our clothes on. There were a large number of other vessels, sailers as well as steamers, who tried to run out of Charleston harbor that night. Ours was the fastest craft of the lot and therefore we were the first to run the gauntlet of danger. I was afterwards advised that we were the only ones to escape past the blockaders. All the rest had to put back into Charleston harbor. It was in all likelihood that the effort to head off the others prevented them from pursuing us.

We reached Nassau on June 21st, without any further excitement. There I saw quite a number of sea craft of different sorts which were lying in wait to enter some southern port. It was a most risky venture, but the returns to the successful ones were considered commensurate. A successful landing of cargo in one of the southern ports, with a successful return cargo of cotton, netted to the ship owner, for they only carried their own property - that is, they took no freight for

others - five to ten fold the original investment. In other words, one successful round trip reimbursed the owners for the entire cost of the ship and cargo, if the ship was an expensive steamer; a schooner could easily return the large profit, even if she was captured after the first successful round trip.

My destination when leaving Charleston was London, and how to reach it had to be left to future developments. I was to meet Mr. Bowers, my chief, there, and it was planned that I should try to reach London, if possible, without passing through any part of the United States, as it was considered dangerous for any southerner to be discovered sojourning there. I found some acquaintances at Nassau who advised me to take the steamer "Corsica" for Havana, which was expected in a few days on her regular voyage from New York via Nassau for that port. I followed that advice, and after spending a few days in Havana, I was persuaded that the quickest way for me to reach England would be via New York. As no other opportunity appeared in view, I finally chose this route, arriving in New York July 5th or 6th. On board of the steamer from Havana to New York was Admiral Wilkes, who had been cruising, we had been informed, in search of the Confederate privateer "Alabama", which had been playing such havoc with the merchant marine of the U. S. A southerner by the name of A. H. Powel, of Macon, Ga., was also a passenger, and as we were the only ones aboard in all probability who sympathized with the Southern cause, we naturally drifted together and amused ourselves in watching the movements of Admiral Wilkes, who we imagined from the frequent use of his marine glasses, was still

on the lookout for the "Alabama".

On arriving at New York the first news which reached us on board was the report that a great battle was being fought at Gettysburg between Gen. Lee on the Confederate side and Gen Meade on the Federal. The first reports indicated a victory for the Confederate cause, which produced such elation on the part of the two rebels on board that we had great difficulty in restraining ourselves from jubilation. All around us everything was gloom, and that seemed to make the suppression of our joy all the more difficult. But the danger of our position made us realize finally that discretion was the better part of valor. Of course our joy was (fortunately) short lived, for the newspaper boys were thereafter soon on the streets with extras announcing Lee's retreat and the complete victory of the Federal forces.

I stopped in New York at the Astor House. Powel and I intended to take the steamship "Great Eastern" for England. She was to sail on about July 22nd, as I recall. We chose this boat as she was the wonder of the age - the largest boat ever launched. She had been especially built to lay ocean cables. Powel, who had been cashier of a bank in Macon, called on the bank's former correspondent, and there he learned that it was dangerous, in the then excited state of the public mind, for any southern sojourners to be in the city, as the reinforcement of the army was ordered through drafts, and riots were anticipated in consequence. He advised our leaving for England on the first available steamer, and we therefore changed our plans sailed by steamer "City of Baltimore" for Liverpool about July 11th (all the dates from memory, hence I say about).

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The advice for us to leave New York on account of expected draft riots was based on correct prognosis, as it proved true, for the riots did take place and were of a most serious character, resulting in the murder of hundreds of negroes as a manifestation of hatred against the causes of the war. Hence I had every reason to conclude that our leaving New York was a prudent step.

The sympathy in England at the beginning and at this period of the war was entirely with the Southern cause, based undoubtedly on the selfish reason that the cut-off of the cotton supply was most detrimental to Great Britain's manufacturing interests. The commander of the "City of Baltimore" finding out that Pewel and I were from the Southern States sought us out and told us that we were now under the protection of the Union Jack and that we need not be bashful or reticent about giving vent to our feelings.

On arriving at Liverpool we lost very little time in proceeding to London, where I found lodging at 40 Albermarle Street, the address given me by Bowers, where he and Lamar intended going. It seems that L. Q. C. Lamar of Mississippi, who afterwards became U. S. Senator and a justice of the U. S. Supreme Court, a cousin of Charley Lamar, and who had been accredited by the Confederacy as its Minister to Russia, not being received by Russia, had occupied lodgings in the Building and it was in this wise that it became our meeting place as agreed upon before leaving Charleston, when Bowers and Lamar had become separated from me, as explained in the forepart of this narrative.

After spending a few weeks in London together, Bowers and Lamar concluded, for reasons I cannot recall, to return home

and as they knew that I had a grandfather living in Germany, advised me to go there until such time as they would get back to England and resume negotiations. I am inclined to think that cotton, the collateral on which it was believed money could be raised to purchase steamers and the merchandise with which to load them, was not found to be so desirable when scattered over the states as when stored at some port along the coast ready to be placed on shipboard, and the reason for his return was to arrange accordingly.

I left for Otterberg, where my grandfather was living, the end of August, by way of Paris. I only remained in Paris for a day or two, as I was not in a frame of mind to waste much money on pleasure. In the first place I could not forget that I had paid seven dollars Confederate money for one gold dollar, and therefore realized the value of a dollar in full. Secondly, the $1200 or there-abouts which I took with me on leaving Columbus, was my own earned money, which I determined was all I could conscientiously count upon for my support for an indefinite time. I had with me besides some bills of exchange on England, the property of my father's firm possibly $1500. certainly not exceeding $2000, which I considered a trust too sacred to be made use of for personal expenses. The therefore I weighed every penny before spending it. I had been brought up most frugally, learned in my earliest boyhood that saving was the basis of providing against want. This habit, together with the before-mentioned considerations, placed me in a frame of mind that looked upon any expenditures except absolutely necessitous ones as unpardonable extravagance.

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Through the difficulties of mail communication, owing to the Southern states being isolated from the outer world, correspondence between my parents and my grandparents had been interrupted and I doubt whether any letters had been exchanged for many months. I therefore arrived at Otterberg unannounced. To the coachman who drove me from Kaiserslautern, the nearest railway station, I could point out the house at which I desire to stop, and when I alighted and entered the same I found my grandfather siting at a spot which it required no stretch of the imagination to think, although it was nine years since I last crossed that threshold, that I had left him there an hour before. I recognized him instantly, but it was quite a time before I could make him understand or possibly realise who I was. I shall not attempteto picture the scene, but it certainly was one of the most thrilling incidents I ever experienced. It was several days before he got over the excitement, and even then he would again and again come up to me and say, in a sort of self-inquiring way, "Are you really my daughter Sara's son Isidor!"

I found, besides by grandfather, my step-grandmother and their daughter Augusta, an unmarried daughter about 23 years of age. I spend about two months in Otterberg most pleasantly, and then matters took a shape which rendered my return to England desirable. My grandfather's youngest son, Jacob, the one whom I referrrd to before as having accompanied us to Havre when we embarked for the United States, was established in business in London, and so I

stopped there for a while. I cannot recall what particular business took me to Liverpool, but there I met Elias Haiman, with whom I ran the blockade out of Charleston, and H. L. Daughtry, of Wetumpka, Alabama, and we three took lodgings at Birkenhead, a suburb across the river Mersey, where we resided together for some months. How it was brought about I cannot recall, but at the Southern Club of Liverpool I met a gentleman from New Orleans by the name of Ashbridge who had opened an office in that town and who offered me a clerkship, which I accepted, paying me either 12 or 15 pounds per month. His business was chiefly dealing in Southern Securities. As, however, I found in the course of a few months very little to do in the position, and as another opening presented itself, my connection with Mr. Ashbridge did not cover more than six months at the outside. The head office man and I became quite chummy and I learned from him a very practical insight into double entry bookkeeping, and he therefore made for himself a lasting impression on my mind.

I think it must have been in the beginning of 1864 that there arrived in Liverpool one David Rosenberg, who with the aid of the Haiman firm of Columbus, of which Elias Haiman before mentioned, was a member, succeeded in procuring from the Confederate Government a contract for certain supplies for the army. The payment for these supplies when delivered at one of the southern ports was to be made in cotton delivered at the ship's side. As the railroads of the south were all practically under the control of the government for military operations, the right to use them for cotton shipments to seaports was a valuable one and not easily obtained. That, together with the favorable

other features of the contract, high prices for the merchandise delivered, low prices for the cotton in payment, made the contract a very attractive one for those who were of a speculative nature. This contract was owned partly by Rosenberg, partly by Haiman, and they aimed to give an interest to the English firm which would undertake to furnish the cash with which to utilize the same.

Mr. Henry Lafone, of 13 Tempest Hey, Liverpool, was induced to undertake the financing, and he gave to Rosenberg a letter of credit for twenty thousand pounds sterling, with which he was to proceed to the continent to purchase principally cloths for the making of army uniforms.

Other purchased to fulfill the contract were made in England, and for this purpose Mr. Lafone offered me a position at fifteen pounds per month, which I accepted.

Rosenberg proceeded on his mission, but before any merchandise which purported to have been purchased under the twenty thousand pounds letter of credit had been delivered, Rosenberg, having practically exhausted the credit by drafts in favor of bankers with whom he did business at Cologne, made demands on Lafone for a further credit of like amount, which Lafone declined to grant.

This led to sharp correspondence, and finally Rosenberg disappeared and I was asked to go to the continent to ascertain what had become of him. I discovered that he had left a balance with the bankers Sol. Oppenheim, Jr. & Co. of Dologne, one of the highest class bankers in Germany. I also discovered, how I cannot recall, that Rosenberg had friends in Dusseldorf with whom he had spent a great deal of

his time between the date that he first came to Germany and his disappearance. From them I learned in justification of Rosenberg's conduct, at least they informed me that the line of Rosenberg's reasoning, that the contract which Lafone undertook to finance amounted to many times twenty thousand pounds, and as Lafone refused to furnish Rosenberg further funds, he, Rosenberg, considered himself justified in retaining the twenty thousand pounds as damages for failure to carry out the undertaking.

Elias Haiman, who as a partner with Rosenberg in the contract, was very much distressed with Rosenberg's action and had proceeded to the continent to face Rosenberg and prevail upon him to change his point of view. He in fact got into litigation with Rosenberg in his effort to make Rosenberg apply the funds in his possession to the purposes for which they were intended, and after prolonged contests, which alternately resulted in one having caused the arrest of the other, that Rosenberg disappeared.

Since penning the foregoing I discover that I should not have mentioned my being sent to look after Lafone's interest until this point, for I was only drawn into it after Haiman's contest, and when Haiman reported Rosenberg's disappearance. I am now inclined to think that it was through Haiman that I became apprised of Rosenberg's relations with his Dusseldorf friends and the name of the bankers in Cologne before referred to.

My first step was to ascertain from the bankers with what manufacturers Rosenberg had dealings, so that I might

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save what could be saved out of the wreck. At first the bankers were loath to give me any information, treating me with contempt as a fresh boy (I was only 19). But after I made the threat to garnishee the balance in their hands, they gave me more respectful attention, and as well as I can recall, between what balance was in their hands and what small payments had been made to manufacturers, I succeeded in reclaiming a few thousand pounds sterling for Mr. Lafone.

It must have been several months later that I accidentally learned from a letter that I received from someone in New York that Rosenberg had been in the streets of that city.

I immediately apprised Mr. Lafone of what I had learned. He urged me to proceed to New York and see what I could accomplish. I think this was in December, 1864. On reaching New York, I called on Mr. Nathan Blum, as I had when I left Columbus taken a letter of introduction to him from his daughter, Mrs. Frank Rothschild, who was a friend of our family and a close neighbor. I informed Mr. Blum of what mission brought me across the Atlantic, and as luck would have it, he knew Rosenberg's whereabouts and directed me to his address in Philadelphia. I lost no time in reaching him, and of all men that he expected to see when I presented myself at his residence, I certainly was for a few moments the most unwelcome. He told me in the most friendly tone after I explained the purpose of my mission that if he would expose me to the authorities it would surely result in my arrest and imprisonment, as the business which I repre-

sented was against the interest of the U. S., as its purpose was to give aid and assistance to the enemy of the U. S. However, after parleying with him on his situation, and the inconvenience, if nothing worse, that must follow my exposing the manner in which he gained possession of the means with which he was making his display of wealth, we reached an understanding of each other's respective positions, and this finally resulted in his offering to give me two thousand pounds in full settlement. This I accepted, under the following conditions, which were agreed to: That I would give him a receipt in full of all demands, but if my principal was dissatisfied with the settlement, I should have the right to return the amount paid and to demand the surrender of my receipt. This ended the matter. Mr. Lafone gladly accepted the settlement as under the circumstances the best course to pursue.

I lost no time in returning to Europe, and as there was nothing further to occupy me in Liverpool, I removed to London and made my headquarters at 20 St. Dunstan's Hill, the office of Uncle Jacob. There had been some considerable speculation in Confederate bonds, known as the three million Sterling Erlanger loan, which was regularly dealt in on the London and on the Liverpool Stock Exchanges, when I learned that in some city in Europe there were also dealings in Confederate bonds which were of the domestic sort, - that is, those that were not intended for foreign countries. This naturally interested me, and I began to make all sorts of inquiries for ascertaining where such a market existed, for there were large quantities of these bonds in England, brought over and sent over

by Southerners who ran the blockade. In England there had been no dealings in such, and it therefore offered, or at least seemed to offer, a profitable field to anyone who could find or make a market therefor.

Uncle Jacob finally ascertained for me that Amsterdam was dealing in Confederate Domestic 8% bonds, and so I immediately set to work to ascertain the sources of supply. I recall buying one day in London and selling by telegraph on the same day a lot of these bonds, netting me a profit in the neighborhood of one thousand sterling.

For a while I had a practical monopoly, as no one appeared to be able to find out where the customers for these bonds could be discovered, and so I did quite a lucrative business. I think I made in the course of these months three thousand pounds sterling, and when I in my mind converted this sum into what its equivalent would be in confederate money, my patriotism forbidding me from construing a Confederate dollar as any other than a dollar, I began to feel like a nabob.

It must have been about the middle of March 1865, when I received one morning in London a telegram from Mr. Lafone, of Liverpool, requesting me to take a steamer which was to sail the following day for Halifax, Nova Scotia, as the swiftest route for reaching Havana. I recall that I was then in the midst of some bond transactions, and it took me that entire day, until late in the evening, to finish up. To reach Liverpool early the next morning, there was no time remaining to go to my lodgings to pack up my belongings, so I was compelled to fit myself in Liverpool with the necessary

clothing, etc. The receiving of the necessary instructions for this hurried trip consumed the whole day, so that I could not take the steamer at Liverpool, but had to catch it at Queenstown by joining with the so-called Irish Mail Train.

This could be done by leaving Liverpool at 8:00 in the evening. The steamer was the Cunarder "Canada", and we met with such terrific gales that we were, if I recall correctly, four or five days beyond the usual time in reaching Halifax. The purpose of my trip was to arrange for the best disposition that could be made of some steamships which had been engaged in blockade-running to Southern ports and were lying in Havana, as the danger of the business had become so great that it ceased to compensate for the risk of capture. At Halifax I caught a steamer that ran to Bermuda. I can't recall whether I changed steamers there for Havana or whether I continued the voyage on the same steamer. What I well recall, however, was that I embarked from Halivax with wounded hands from frost bite, while a few days later I experienced such excessive heat in Havana that I was compelled to dress in the lightest possible propical garments. To the best of my recollection I returned to England via New York, after spending but a few days in Havana, as I found the situation such that I advised my principals that I saw no other solution but the selling of the steamers where they lay, there being no prospects that the traffic in which they had been engaged would be renewed.

It would have been about April 10th when I arrived in England. By the next steamer, or at any rate a few thereafter,

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The news of Lincoln's death came. In those days there was no cable or telegraph to flash the news. It was customary when weather conditions permitted, for steamers out of New York getting the latest news for Europe by telegram sent to Cape Race, there placed in pouches and sent out to catch the steamers while passing. And steamers going to the United States would likewise throw pouches overboard near Cape Race, containing the Associated Press dispatches, which were from there telegraphed to New York. This connection, however, not infrequently failed through weather conditions.

Immediately on reaching England I began my bond dealings again, matters in the Southern states having become so unfavorable that holders of Confederate bonds, who had theretofore refused to part with their holdings, were desirous of disposing of same, although their value had materially declined. When I was so suddenly called to take the trip to Cuba which necessitated so much haste, I failed to sell out some Confederate bons (Erlanger Loan) which I had purchased, and when I returned the decline in their value, owing to the continued defeat of its armies, was very great, so that I sold out at a big loss.

I made numerous trips to Amsterdam and kept in close touch with the Market. During one of these visits, which probably lasted several weeks, the gentleman who was the banker through whom my dealings for the sale of bonds were transacted, induced me to make an investment. He was Chef de Bureaux of the principal financial and commercial company of the city (its name was Societe General de Commerce & d'Industrie"), with a capital of forty million gulden. He also was private secretary of the president of the institution and as such was familiar with the inmost

information of respecting its transactions. He had prepared the annual balance sheet which was to be made public at some early day, and he knew it to be of such a favorable and highly profitable nature that he felt sure its shares would sour to unprecedented heights. He said to me in substance:

"You have been such a good friend of mine, have furnished me with such profitable business, that I feel I should do something for you in turn." "Let me buy some of the shares of our company--I know what I am talking about--and invest some of the money which you have lying idle here, and you will never regret it." That certainly was correct inside information, and I consented. But lo and behold! Between this date and the time when the balance sheet was to be published, it developed that the president had been speculating on the Paris Bourse with the funds of the institution which were deposited in Paris, with such disastrous results that he absconded. The shares naturally suffered correspondingly, and I sold out with a considerable loss. My friend lost all he had, as he was so confident,-for he was dealing as he thought with a certainty,-that he bought all the shares which his savings as manager enabled him to secure.

The two losses I sustained as narrated, viz., these shares and the Confederate Erlanger bonds, particularly the former, proved a blessing in disguise for me; they cured me of all speculative tendency, and I profited thereby afterwards. During the subsequent course of my career I was many times approached with "sure propositions," none of which had any charms for me and never even interested me enough to give them the least consideration. I learned to say "No" on the spot, and I have therefore ever since looked upon my experience with the Amsterdam shares as

cheaply bought, though at the time it was a serious inroad on my savings. There was a tip which was honest and correct, and yet it showed that there is many a slip between the cup and the lip.

The surrender of General Lee and the close of the war caused me to begin to look forward to wending my steps homeward. The two years which had elapsed since leaving home were full of many anxious hours. It was at times months that I was without tidings from home. Possibly not one letter out of five reached their destination either way. I was not cognizant of conditions at home, but had no idea that my father had any other intentions than remaining in Columbus. So my return was undertaken with the view that after visiting my family I would see about establishing myself in business in New York, as I had tentative offers of European capitalists who were ready to entertain propositions from me to this end, after I had looked into the opportunities which the restoration of peace was expected to provide. On arriving in New York, however, I incidentally learned that my father and family had arrived in Philadelphia, and so I immediately left for there and found them comfortably located at the Merchants' Hotel. My mother had gone a few days before to a small town in the interior of Pennsylvania to visit some friends, but in looking over the Philadelphia newspapers a morning or two thereafter she immediately returned to Philadelphia. My arrival was as much a surprise to them as their being in Philadelphia was to me. I expected to find them in Columbus, and they had no idea that I had left Europe. That may seem strange, but mail communication was still imperfect, and possibly both our

conceptions of the possibility of communicating with each other were still made under the impression of conditions which had prevailed for so long a period under interruptions incident to war. My father explained to me what prompted him to break up the home in Columbus, and determine to start life afresh in this part of the country. Columbus, Georgia, fell into the hands of the Union forces after Lee had surrendered and the war was considered practically at an end, but the news, owing again to the difficulty of communication, had not reached General Wilson, who captured the City. The depredations of the soldiers, the fires incident to cannonading, and the general confusion which reigned, so disheartened and discouraged my father that he made up his mind that he did not care to waste away the time which he feared would be consumed before normal conditions could be established. And it was on this account that he took the family north, with the determination to try and establish himself there. Further than this he had formed no plans when I met him. Practically most of his means on which he depended were tied up in cotton, and until this could be brought to a market he could do nothing but wait.

When I found that my father had no intention of returning south and that he therefore had to start life anew, I saw that my duty was to stay with him and add my mite to his efforts. But one thing I made up my mind to, without long hisitation; that was,- if we were to establish ourselves it would be better to start in the chief market, rather than a secondary one, and so I had very little difficulty in persuading father that New York was preferable to Philadelphia.

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This was in the fall of 1865. Father's chief reliance for the means with which to pay his indebtedness for merchandise purchased in the spring of 1861, and capital with which to start in business, was the cotton he had stored in the south. The difficulty in bringing the cotton to New York, owing to the confusion of conditions everwhere throughout the south, and the interruption to transportation facilities, compelled him to postpone taking steps for going into business until he could realize on his cotton. I think it was the early months of 1866 before that was accomplished. In the meantime the price of the staple had fallen to about half what he could have realized in the fall of 1865. Pending this interval father used the time, as far as his available means permitted, in calling on his creditors and paying what he owed. The large amounts he had to postpone paying until the cotton reached New York. I recall one incident in connection with his calling on his creditors which is worth recording. There was a dry goods house of George Bliss & Co. to whom he was indebted to the amount of four to five thousand dollars. When my father called to pay his indebtedness, Mr. Bliss talked with him on various topics, and the following conversation ensued. Mr. Bliss asked my father how old he was and what he intended doing. My father replied that his age was fifty-seven and that he hoped to start life afresh, by going into the wholesale crockery business. Mr. Bliss then said, "Mr. Straus, I don't think you are fair to yourself to deprive yourself of the slender means you tell me you possess by paying out your available resources. Wait until you are in a fair way of being established, and I don't propose to take your money. Pay me one-third cash and I can well wait on you one or

two years for the other two-thirds". It was certainly a most kindly concern, evidently engendered by appreciation of the honorable purpose of a man well advanced in years who would not consider his self-interest before discharging what he considered to be his first duty,-- the payment of his debts.

Mr. Bliss appeared to be particularly moved to such unusual generosity towards a comparative stranger, as he saw in my father a demonstration of the keen sense of integrity which I infer was the reverse of what his experience, or perhaps better expressed, his prejudice, had led him to expect, for I recall his saying that he had seldom found a southern merchant who was willing to sell his negroes to pay his debts, from which I drew the conclusion that in considering a merchant of the south, as to his worthiness for credit, the Jew or the new comer, which were interchangeable terms, was always viewed with that suspicion which did not attach to the native-born. It made a great impression on me to observe during this interview how a feeling of compunction seemed to have overtaken a fair minded man by a proof of the highest integrity which he found where he least expected it, while it had been absent, probably, in cases which came to his mind, in many southern merchants whose pedigree and apparently chivalrous exterior caused him to look for it as a matter of course. I could see unmistakable signs how in Mr. Bliss's mind there came a realization of the erroneous basis which had theretofore governed the average estimate of the moral element that entered into the consideration when extending credit, and therefore an irresistible desire to make amends for a blind

prejudice which evidently had possessed him. That I was correct in this diagnosis of the mental change, if not remorse, on the part of Mr. Bliss, an event which occurred 28 years later clearly proved, and even if I narrate it so out of chronological order, I deem it proper to do so here. It was in January, 1893, that we had to make ~~x~~ financial preparations to purchase the interest of Mr. Wechsler in the firm of Wechsler & Abraham, in case certain contingencies developed. To this end I called on the United States Trust Co., and my friend Mr. John A. Stewart, the president, offered instantly to take five hundred thousand dollars of our firm's paper on six months, with three renewals at 5%. A few days later I asked him what his directors said to this transaction. He answered that only one of the directors, Mr. George Bliss, spoke up and asked whether the firm was in the crockery business, and on receiving an affirmative reply, Mr. Bliss said: "Well, If the old man is still in the firm, he is good for anything to which he will put his name."

It was the fore part of 1866, before the proceeds of the cotton, which was the capital on which father depended for starting in business, became available. But the intervening time between the fall of 1865 and then, was made use of in looking around for opportunities. That we finally embarked in the crockery business is perhaps owing largely to the following incident.

When father came north in 1861 to purchase his spring stock, he found Philadelphia stocks in several lines incomplete.

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Owing to threatening outlook for war, houses whose trade was chiefly with the south having hesitated to prepare themselves with their normal supplies, and Philadelphia always having been the city in which father made his principal purchases, he therefore was compelled to come to New York to complete his assortment. Very few southern merchants came to the northern markets that spring, and I remember my father saying that most houses he visited were surprised at his presence. During his stay in New York Fort Sumter fell, and he concluded it was high time to hurry home. He still had his crockery order unfilled, and as he knew no house to send it to, and had no time to look around, he handed the list to a salesman in a dry goods house and asked him to place the order for execution with any firm he chose.

One day in 1865 my father was leaving the wholesale dry goods firm of Joseph E. Tripple & Sons in Warren St., the senior member of which and my father had struck up a warm friendship, and as he was about bidding good-bye to Mr. Tripple, who had accompanied him to the front door, father espied a sign across the street which struck him as the firm from whom his crockery had been purchased, so he went there and inquired whether they had an account against L. Straus & Co., of Talbotton Georgia,-goods bought in the spring of 1861. The gentleman said he believed he had a faint recollection of such an account, but said that they had given up hopes of collecting anything from their southern outstandings; that he would have to look over the old books, which were packed away, and that if my father would call again he would have the matter looked up.. My father's

books were in Georgia, and the circumstances, as before narrated, under which the purchases from this house were made, accounts for father's unfamiliarity with the firm's name. When father called a few days later, the statement of the account was handed to him and he paid it. Mr. Cauldwell then said to him that this was the first penny he had received from all his southern outstandings, and this resulted in a friendly intercourse between them, which led to father, who had plenty of leisure, calling there occasionally, and in one of these visits it developed that they would gladly sell out their premises. The proposition appealed to father, chiefly because he found that of all lines of merchandise, this one probably called for less capital than most others. Besides, the Cauldwells, whose business dated from 1812, persuaded father that while the business was one that did not offer opportunities for the accumulation of great wealth, it was of such a conservative nature that it afforded modest returns to all who attended to it conscientiously.

Negotiations for purchasing the business were only relinquished when after most details had been practically agreed upon, a demand was made for an allowance for good-will. Shortly after that we rented a store, with basement, first and top loft, at 161 Chambers Street, at a rental of, I believe, three thousand dollars per annum. I think the lease was closed on May 1st, 1866 fir three years. The owner, by the name of Coles, had a carpenter shop in a rear building on West Broadway. Just as I was giving him our references, Mr. Cauldwell (the son of Mr. Cauldwell of the crockery firm) stepped into the shop, and as he greeted me by name, Mr. Coles said there was no need of giving him any

further reference if Mr. Cauldwell knew us. I replied that I did not feel that we had any right to refer to him, to which Mr. Cauldwell promptly replied that any man who had paid him a debt from before the war, like father had, he had no hesitancy in giving satisfactory references, and Mr. Coles said that he required nothing more. This and the Bliss incident related before are two co-incidences which almost illustrate the adage that truth is stronger than fiction.

Our business was opened and the first sale recorded on June 1st, 1866. It was an order left with us by one Meyer Becker, who had a successful country store in Indiana (I think the town was Plymouth). He was the son of a man who had been employed in some capacity by my father in Otterberg, and the man himself had enjoyed some sort of kindness at my mother's hands also in the old country. So he prided himself on becoming our first customer, and for this and left his order to be executed as soon as we opened for business. The capital with which we started was about $6,000. This was all that my father had left after paying his ante-bellum debts. The heavy decline in cotton before it could be brought to Market reduced father's means. I had brought about ten thousand dollars gold with me from England, my own earnings, but that had been used up in buying the residence 136 West 49th street (later the number was changed to 220) and furnishing the same, before we knew how much my father's means would shrink, otherwise we would most likely have added my savings to the working capital of the business.

1863 - 1871

Many times we were contemplating selling our house in order to be able to use the proceeds in business, but somehow my father felt that this should not be done, no matter how sorely we were pressed for the need of funds. Our credit was good for all wants, but with such very limited capital we hesitated about stocking up for fear that the returns could not be realized with the rapidity necessary to meet obligations. It was a great struggle, which kept me awake many nights planning and calculating, so that my dreams often turned to all sorts of impossible combinations that were to yield the needful resources. But our mother provided us with a comfortable home and managed with such frugal and circumspect economy, working together in such complete harmony, that each year we added, without a single exception, something to our capital, so that encouragement prodded us to ever renewed efforts. We started under the lowest possible expenses, employing one packer and helper, one selector, who got out the orders; I kept the books, bought the goods, sold goods, opened and closed the store, while brother Nathan spent most of his time traveling to sell goods, and a splendid salesman he was. I think that our first year's business footed up about $60,000, and we figured that as soon as we could bring our annual turn-over to one hundred thousand dollars, we could see a net profit in sight of twenty thousand dollars. Our business and living expenses were not in excess of twelve to fourteen thousand dollars, and sellinggoods, chiefly to small country towns throughout the South (western trade we developed in later years) we figured that one third of our sales were profits.

1863 - 1871

In 1869, when our lease at 161 Chambers Street expired, we removed to 44 Warren Street, where we rented the entire building. I think the rent was $6000, our business having grown so as to justify this increase in expenditure. It must have been about this time, that Nathan extended his territory to the western states, or possibly a year previous. We had now grown to such proportions as to have engaged an outside salesman. It was in 1871, after the great Chicago conflagration, that Nathan opened a selling office in Chicago and made occasional trips in the contiguous territory. He saw no future in continuing to depend on traveling to develope the business, as most of it would fall away the moment he would stop going after it. The Chicago sample room was continued about a year, but not with encouraging success, and as Nathan was growing tired of traveling, more particularly as he could see no permanent good or promising future in it, he looked around for ways to make good the loss which his ceasing to do so would entail. It was in this search that he made connection with R. H. Macy & Co., which at first consisted only in selling them a few casks of china, but soon resulted in our opening a department devoted to a full line of crockery, china, bric-a-brac and glassware. This occurred in March 1874, in a basement about 25 x 100, but the department developed so rapidly that additional space was soon added, until it developed into one of the most important departments in the house. At that period the firm consisted of R. H. Macy and A. J. La Forge. Mr. Macy died in Paris in 1877, when Mr. La Forge took into copartnership R. H. Valentine, a nephew of Macy, who had been employed in the business. La Forge died

in 1878, and Valentine took into copartnership C. B. Webster, also a nephew of Macy, who had been in the business for several years. Valentine died in 1879, then Webster took into copartnership J. B. Wheeler, who had not been connected with the business in any way, but whose wife was a sister of Valentine. Wheeler's successful accumulations from the profits of the business caused him to go into outside undertakings - mining in Colorado - which assumed such proportions that Webster, whose health had compelled him to be away from New York a great deal, became alarmed as to the safety of his own, through Wheeler's western enterprises causing him to become a heavier borrower. This led to controversies, which culminated in Webster buying Wheeler out, and Nathan and I purchasing from Webster the interest which he had obtained from Wheeler. This occurred at the end of 1887, and we became members of the firm of R. H. Macy & Co., on January 1st, 1888.

In the last four pages of my narrative, in order to have a continuous history of what led to our becoming copartners in the firm of R. H. Macy & Co., I have in part jumped over about sixteen years of intervening time, and I must now retrace my steps. Our business progressed by steady growth, and through continuing to practice the strictest frugality, our capital grew so that the means for supplying the needs of an enlarging business did not necessitate a greater strain on the credit. That is to say, our credit never showed any evidence of strain. We enjoyed the unbounded confidence of all with whom we dealt. The strain

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was on our apprehensions - not based on any lack of self-confidence, but rather of caution, influenced perhaps by an unnecessarily keen nervousness to maintain the unquestioned credit which under all circumstances was ours. In other words, to avoid any possibility of ever arousing the remotest suspicion of overtrading or calling our conservatism in question. To be enterprising and avoid creating any apprehension as to overstepping the limits of caution, that was the reason that possibly at times I was subjected to an acute sensitiveness, and caused, I confess, many nervous anxieties. But on the other hand I cannot but feel that it saved us from all setbacks. To take things calmly, always to be optimistic and not forebode troubles, which in many cases I admit prove imaginary, is a happy faculty, but I am not ready to say that such a disposition is likely to lead to success. It does prosper at times, no doubt, but on the other hand one losses sight of those who are overtaken by disaster, for only such as survive this "happy go lucky" disposition are left to tell the tale. Most of the others sink into oblivion and are lost to view. Of course the man who can possess himself of the fortunate middle way - free from worry, calm and resolute, may reach the goal of success, not infrequently, as well as the nervously tempermental worker. But that is a problem which is always open to discussion. As a general proposition I would say that in the race for success in a business in which from its nature it can only be reached through steady, successive and intelligent effort, a success which develops and grows progressively, and which takes years to reach a stage when it ranks among the achievements that are

recognised, the man who is less apprehensive, more easy going, and anticipates no obstacles, but only trys to meet them when so confronted, may accomplish the same end. But I am persuaded to believe that the chances are against him. Of course this conclusion is based on personal observations, and it rests on such business experience as was always coupled with great detail. In undertakings that are of a different character, possibly a more phlegmatic activity may prove equally successful.

In looking back and recalling those who started life about the same time, I find that the vast majority of those who acquired a comfortable competency for their declining years achieved such by living circumspectly, by economy and slow accumulation. Those who reach this goal in violation of this rule, prove the rule to the exception. Brilliant successes are rare, and by brilliant I mean rapid as well as extraordinary - such as are occassionally attained by those who seem to fly in the face of all rules that common sense and reason suggest as the road to prosperity. But when those rare exceptions are investigated, I venture to believe they do not differ greatly from the prize winner in a lottery, and hence are apt to swamp the imitator who expects to succeed in following the same path. There are plodders and there are prodigies, and their propor tion is probably no greater than one in a thousand. In all walks of life they must constitute the rare exceptions and cannot be taken as guides. They may be called freaks of nature, and are a law unto themselves. When they are successful they are called geniuses, and when not they pass as cranks, or more kindly expressed, brilliant and eccentric.

It was about 1869 that the local representative in New

1871.

York of Helbing & Straus (the latter father's brother Emanuel) of San Francisco, resigned his position, that they asked us to attend to their purchases in the eastern market, and as they were in the crockery and glassware business, we gladly accepted, for by combining the needs of the two firms, which in many respects were the same, we became a more important factor as purchasers, to the advantage of both houses. This led to my visiting San Francisco in January, 1871, in order to familiarize myself better with their wants, which a study of their market conditions on the spot I thought would greatly facilitate. I was back in New York in about five weeks, In those days the railroad trip occupied about seven days. I think I left New York a Saturday and arrived in San Francisco a Saturday night following. I had intended reaching home again on my birthday, but Uncle Nathan was very anxious for me to stop over in Fort Wayne, Indiana, on my return trip, and on this account I did not get back until about February 8th. If I had not stopped at Fort Wayne, I venture to believe Aunt Lina would not have been his wife. And I confess I was a little anxious to be in New York on February 6th, for I had lately learned that there was another person in whom I took some interest at that time who also had the same birthday. However this did not prevent my becoming engaged on April 24th following, and married on July 12th. Both of these important and happy events took place on 28 West 38th St. That day became an epoch in the history of New York City, not by reason of its being <u>the</u> important and happy event of my life, but because the Orange riots made a battlefield of some of the streets, which also prevented some of the guests from arriving

1871

at the wedding until very late. We resided at the same house until the summer of 1876, when we moved to 26 East 55th Street.

Jesse and Clarence were born at 28 West 38th St. All the other children were born at 26 East 55th St., excepting Vivian. She was born at 220 West 49th St., where my wife and I temporarily resided. At that time our home was at 2745 Broadway, corner of 105th St., but some of the children had developed whooping cough, and hence it was necessary to remove the whoopers or my wife. So my sister, Mrs. Hermine Kohns, changed residences with us for the time being and she took care of the children who remained there with her.

We removed to Broadway, corner of 105th St., from 26 East 55th St., July 24th, 1884, because our neighbors in 55th St. and on Madison Ave. corner, one by one, extended their homes, and our yard was hemmed in so completely by high walls that we felt that not enough sunshine was admitted into the rooms for health. Our children seemed to require medical attendance incessantly, and so when opportunity presented itself we concluded that the fresh air and sunshine which the 105th St. property offered, beyond the power of any neighbor to interfere with, should not be lost. The move proved the wisdom of the diagnosis, for from then on we had very little trouble with the children's health.

From the time that we opened a china department at Macy's our wholesale crockery business gradually changed its character, and from dealing as we had been principally in articles which catered to the general country store, we drifted into china, imported glassware and bric-a-brac, and

this enabled us to reach out for business with the larger towns and cities and with the exclusive crockery dealers, who gradually, instead of having been competitors, became customers.

Previous to this period we purchased our imported merchandise from foreign agents in New York, but from 1875 on, we found it advisable to visit the European markets, and brother Nathan, who had charge of Macy department, became our foreign buyer.

By gradual development we in a few years built up our business in this new line, until we became not only competitors of the houses whose large customers we had been, but competitors of such importance that some of the narrow-minded, jealous ones, finding themselves often outstripped in competition, were ready to ascribe our success to other than legitimate causes, unwilling to recognize that there could be only skill or enterprise of which they were not peers. Of two of these houses we had not only ceased being large purchasers, but had became such rivals that the jealousies awakened knew no bounds. So they resorted to the despicable expedient of trying to block our success through insinuations to the Customs authorities that we were not paying duties on actual purchase costs. These tactics began about 1884. When the Cleveland administration came into power in 1885, the special treasury agents persuaded the authorities that great frauds were being perpetrated, which if given an opportunity they would succeed in unearthing. They were invited to make reports to the Secretary of the Treasury, with the assurance that all information would be treated confidentially. This seemed to be an incentive, as there was no

danger of being contradicted, since their reports were to be a sort of star chamber proceeding, for the special agents not to be very scrupulous about their charges, and led them in many instances to treat the reputations of honorable houses in a most reprehensible manner. Besides they were, from selfish interests, as hold-over appointees of the Republican administration, prompted to try to perpetuate their positions with the new Democratic administrations, by an effort to demonstrate their usefulness, and hence their activities were redoubled in the hope that their victims would be proof of the necessity of their being retained. The Democratic administration, being new and inexperienced, took their accusations at face value, for it harmonized with one of the slogans during the campaign, made use of by the Democrates against the Republicans who had been in power uninterruptedly for twenty-five years, which echoed and reechoed the sentiment - "Turn the rascals out and get a look at the books".

Hence it was an easy matter for an evil-disposed merchant to enlist the sympathetic cooperation of the special agents, who were but too willing to listen to all sorts of insinuations and act on them if they were well attested evidence. We were one of the houses whom they attempted to ensnarl by these combined machinations, and in the effort to accomplish their nefarious end, no trick was too mean no action too low for them to pursue. It was a hard and bitter fight, which lasted for about 18 months, but in the end "right is might", and while the road to establish it might have been long and tortuous, our victory was as complete

and satisfactory as the attack had been vicious and unscrupulous.

Notwithstanding that the Treasury Department had promised absojute secrecy to all who would furnish information, there was published in 1886 by the government a volume of reports - and by the merest accident our attention was called thereto, laying bare one of the tricks which had been practiced on us. This resulted in our addressing a letter to the Treasury Department, of which the following is a copy, together with the reply of the Secretary of the Treasury to the same, which is self-explanatory.

1884 - 1885

Peter H. Leonard and J. M. Young, the two firms referred to heretofore, as the friends who engineered and hatched the conspiracy against us, have both met their deserts; the former, a few years later I learn, died in the insane asylum, and the latter finally made an ignominious end, for his creditors a most disastrous failure, while it was generally known that he was possessed of ample means, but placed beyond the reach of those that had trusted him.

Both led lives which labeled them as deeply religious; Leonard was high in the councils of the Catholics, and Young was a prominent and active member of the Scotch-Irish Presbyterian Church. Each brought the simulance of his faith to the front in a way which left no one who came into contact with them ignorant of their Godly pretense.

1876.

The year 1876 was a sorrowful one for us; on July 21st, our mother breathed her last, a few days after a precipitated operation for strangulated hernia. She had been a great sufferer, but a most patient and cheerful one, for many years. She became paralyzed on her right side in 1850 or 1851, which lamed her right arm to such an extent that she was unable to ever afterwards comb her own hair. That she lived for 25 years longer was surprising. She was of such a bouyant, sprightly and joyous disposition that she got more pleasure out of life, in spite of her great disability, than the majority.

On August 16th, we lost our second son, Clarence, who was born August 27th, 1874. I believe that his ailment was appendicitis, but that ailment was not known at that ime and the doctor called it inflammation of the colon.

1878.------

Mamma's father, Nathan Blun, who had been a wholesale clothing merchant and manufacturer for many years in New York City, to which he had emigrated from Worms, Germany, in 1848 or 1849, had been ailing for several years, when, in November 1878, he was advised to take a sea voyage to Nassau. As his son Abraham had just been married, he and his wife took their bridal tour in company with him. The ailing took a turn for the worse just before the steamer reached her destination, and he expired on board, Nov. 29th. His body was immediately brough back and he was buried in his family plot. Mama's mother died on Nov. 11th 1866.

In 1887, Senator Gorman of Maryland, with whom brother Oscar had been associated during the Cleveland campaign of 1884, asked Oscar whether he would like an appointment as U. S. Minister to Turkey, which had become vacant through the resignation of S. S. Cox. On receiving an affirmative answer, he took steps to bring about the result. Mr. Cleveland, it appears, hesitated on account of his doubt whether a Jew would be acceptable to the Christian missionaries which he thought were the principal interests the U. S. Government had in that country. On learning this, I enlisted the cooperation of my friend O. A. Gager, who, I knew, was a parishioner and friend of Henry Ward Beecher, and Beecher had been such a potent influence in the election of Mr. Cleveland that I felt that a favorable word from Beecher would carry great weight. Beecher at once expressed himself warmly interested, and wrote the letter which became famous. The matter still hung in suspense for some time,

1878.

and in the interval I chanced to meet Mr. A. S. Barnes on a trip from Washington to New York. Mr. Barnes and I were associates on the Board of the Hanover National Bank, and in the course of conversation I happened to mention that Oscar was being considered for the Turkish mission, and that the only question regarding the fitness of the appointment was the Cristian missionary's point of view on our being represented by a Jew. Mr. Barnes immediately volunteered to have the Board of Foreign Missions, of which he was a member and whose headquarters were in Boston, write a strong letter to the President, expressing not only their approval, but their desire to see the appointment made. It leaked out through the newspapers that the President would likely make the appointment, when some of the same friends who had engineered the customs charges began to busy themselves at the old game, and succeeded in getting some of the newspapers to propound the question whether it would not be well before making such an appointment to consult the files of the Treasury department and ascertain the relationship of L. Straus & Sons with the Custom House. These miscreants were not aware how completely their machinations had miscarried and how gloriously the Government had put the stamp of its disapproval of our accusers,- and the what completeness we had been vindicated, for we had never given any publicity to the correspondence through which the vindication had been achieved.

The appointment actually followed within two or three days and it was possibly hastened by the steps taken to defeat it. The letters of the Board of Foreign Missions and of Mr.

1878.

Beecher were published broadcast and created a great deal of flattering comment, so that if anything further was needed to lay at rest all doubts of our firm's spotless record in quarters that may have known of the accusations without having learned of the complete vindication, Oscar's appointment conspicuously did it.

1882

Beginning the year 1882 I took an active interest in public questions, chiefly such as related to tariff, crrrency reform and banking. About that time I was elected a director of the Hanover National Bank, and also became one of the founders and went on the Board of Directors of the Reform Club. Up to then I was so engrossed in the daily duties of business that I never felt that I could spare any time for outside matters. In fact, I was so completely accupied, our business was developing so rapidly, that I was overwhelmed to such an extent that I was detained at business until all hours, frquently not reaching home until 11 or 12 o'clock at night. We were slow to indulge in employing additional people in the performance of duties which are embraced under the head of unproductive help, and this necessitated my long hours. Economy is a great factor in determining the success of all business enterprises, but particularly important is it when that success is in what may be termed the formative period, when a profitable period does not justify a conservative management to organize as if that result should be counted on as safe a basis for the year to follow. We therefore went through several years of extra heavy burdens of labor, long hours and close application, during which the extent of the business outgrew its organiza-

tion, and during which I felt that there were twenty-seven hours of work for every twenty-four hours of time. We kept down our business as well as our personal expenditures, and while I at no time felt that I was depriving myself of anything, or in other words that I was harboring any longings that bordered on self-denial, I cannot help but think that success without any setbacks, - and we certainly never had any in our whole career, is in no small degree attributable to such management. The growth of the business steadily demanded larger capital or greater borrowing, and while I never hesitated to go into debt, -- that is to say, was never deterred from the legitimate enterprises that presented themselves in the line of development of the business for fear of debt, -- it was, nevertheless, an ever present desire on my part to strive to get out of debt, and for that reason we avoided outside investments. I venture to say that few mercantile houses ever grew up in New York which, compared to their capital, indulged so little in interesting themselves in opportunities which presented themselves for embarking in so-called promising undertakings, aside from their immediate business, as we did. While this conduct and plan of action may have resulted in depriving us of profits which might have been ours, I am satisfied that it placed us in a position of credit that no other course could have commanded, and the development of our business demonstrated that we had occasion to avail ourselves thereof. I have reason to believe that very few, If any, mercantile houses commanded the use of such large loans of borrowed capital as we, conspicuously on two occasions, made use of, and

1882.

these were placed at our disposal in a way that was out of the ordinary, both in manner and in favorable terms. I refer to the occasion of the purchase by us of Whechsler's interest in the Brooklyn business, when one and a half million dollars was placed at our disposal and use through the president of our bank in two financial institutions in which he was a factor, at 5%, with fixed renewals covering three years' time, the periods so fixed that they could be and were liquidated by our own resources from profits; and the second instance, when we built our store at Broadway and 34th St., when we borrowed four and one-half million dollars through the same channel, on like terms and conditions.

I venture to believe that our financing these two transactions without intermediary, and simply on our "promise" to pay, without any mortgage or security of any other sort, was within the power of very few houses, and our method of conducting business as outlined was in a large measure answerable for our ability to do so. And I would never have had the courage to make use of so large a credit excepting through a single channel which was thoroughly conversant with every phase of the transaction, and on an understanding that left nothing to contingencies that might develope during the period "from start to finish". To do otherwise, no matter how undoubted the credit of a firm may be, the unscientific basis on which our currency and banking laws rest, which have several times brought us to a crisis, the lates in 1907, when all credits came to a practical standstill, might jeopardize the standing of the staunchest house, and hence would be a hazardous undertaking, which a careful, prudent and conservative merchant should shun. Our archaic banking laws, which at this writing

have a fair prospect of being revised at no distant day, will, I trust, remedy an evil which no other modern commercial nation has to cope with, for no civilized country excepting ours ever faced a currency famine. And it is this condition which causes a complete suspension of exchanges between our commercial centers, and converts what would otherwise be a temporary crisis, confined to a particular field, where over-trading may have caused it, to a general panic affecting the sound as well as the unsound, and so interrupts and disorganizes industries, commerce and finances that it usually takes years to restore normal conditions.

When this crying evil is eliminated, ours, the rishest nation of the world, will be in line to come into its own, and New York will be able to assume the position to which its importance entitles it, of becoming one of the chief international exchange contres of commerce and finance. But this is impossible until our banking facilities are such that there can be no question of an open discount market, where commercial bills can at all times be turned into bankable funds at a reasonable rate. With conditions which create a money market where day to day rates jump to such crazy heights as 90% to 160% (¼% to ½% per day), it can readily be seen that commercial discounts are almost out of the question, unless in such a limited sense as results from the objection existing between a bank and its own clients, but this is not an open discount market, which London, Paris and Berlin always have at their command, where under the most trying circumstances a rate above 5% to 7% is practically unknown.

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