

A Little Psychology Cured This Man of His Ailment

Continuing the Interesting Series of Letters
"Back Home"

By ELLA CLINE

Hilanlake, New York.

Dear Parents:

If I were not definitely convinced that my Irving was certain to have a successful career in mechanical engineering, although at present only in the drafting department of the Inland Dam and Bridge Corporation of America, I would insist on his dropping everything else and giving his entire time to the study of psychology, and kindred sciences. Soon his name would rank with that of Freud, Yung and Watson for he is a natural *lang sal er leben*, as Grandma would say.

Not a day has passed of all the happy days of the six months since we married but I have discovered new and delightful traits and talents in my dear Irving. So I am not at all surprised that he should have been able to unite Mr. Leder's split personality—or whatever it was—and not only make him a happier man, but also a more useful member of our small Jewish community where before he had been looked upon askance and considered somewhat of a menace. Ian McGorum helped. Even I helped a little. But Irving accomplished the delicate, personal, work of healing.

Waves the Red Flag

Albert Leder is nearly middle aged, tall, thin, and until recently, seldom looked happy or contented. Yet he owns a profitable business, several parcels of real estate from which he receives rent, and his son is doing well in college. He talks well and easily. At every opportunity during casual conversation, at a Jewish discussion group of one kind or another, or the much larger community group that meets fortnightly in the high school and which consists mostly of Gentiles, Mr. Leder was bound to make an impassioned speech in praise of the U. S. S. R. He would also bring to light what he considered grave faults in the government of our dear land, insist that we had neither free speech nor a free press, giving phantastic examples to prove his claims, and invariably conclude with a plea for the starving working man—physically and mentally starving—in the far off cotton belt or in equally distant coal mines.

People were apt to whisper, "I think he would go back to Russia . . ." These times, when understanding and sympathy is of utmost importance to help ward off the flood of anti-Semitism, Mr. Leder's frequent, mostly uncalled for, orations began to cause grave anxiety among the more conservative Jews.

His incredible attitude was mentioned even in the drafting rooms of the Inland Dam and Bridge Corporation. One of the engineers, Ian McGorum, whose hobby is the study of personality, twisted preferred gave his opinion that Mr.

talked of this and that. She told me that Diane had written how very sorry she was to have to give up her trip to Boston and miss the dance with Horace. Her mother needed a change and rest and was going to Warm Springs, taking Diane with her. So you see, dear Grace and Arthur, parents mine, that there is little danger of your losing your only son to the lovely Diane—He may suffer a bit, but poetry wells from a broken heart—So it may all be for the best, as Grandma might say. Yet they looked so well together at the dance here, and seemed genuinely attracted to each other. . . . But Diane's ritzy mamma seems to have more ambitious plans for her daughter. Still, since Deborah's youthful black eyes sparked with fun as she read me Diane's letter, shining like jewels out of her pale, finely lined face crowned with snow-white hair, I claim the right to reserve decision on the case.

A Clue

Casually I brought Mr. Leder in to our talk and asked, "If Mr. Leder is a Communist, than what would a capitalist be like"

"Bless you, my dear," she said, "how would I know?" He is a superior man in many ways, self-made, self-educated, and a good job on the whole, too. Yet he does not give the impression of being a happy man. . . ." she became thoughtful and absent-mindedly urged me to eat more of the cookies although I had eaten more than my share already.

I said, "It does seem odd that an immigrant from Czarist Russia who has prospered here, even if the going was hard at first, who can see a fair future for his children, should speak ungraciously of his adopted country. It does not make sense."

"I have often thought so myself," said my hostess. "I have heard tales of a dreadful experience he had just before he left his village, a terrible pogrom. His mind may still contain traces of the awful poison . . . It is just too bad. For, as always, each Jew represents every other in all he says or does," she ended with a sigh.

I made a mental note to tell this to the boys while Mrs. Feuerflam told Bridget to give me a box of cookies to take home.

Irving and Ian praised my detecting ability, said I may have discovered the crux of the matter, and went into a huddle to formulate plans. A few days later Mr. Leder was sitting by himself, brooding, at a Brotherhood meeting. Irving came up to him and asked in a young-man-admiring-older-man sort of voice if Mr. Leder would tell him some of his experiences in Russia during the Czarist regime. Mr. Leder was naturally surprised since conservative folk here are anything but interested in what

ferred in recalling his past, so he thanked him and asked if they could continue the conversation some other time soon. Ian was enthusiastic when Irving made his report and insisted that all that was necessary from now on was to make Mr. Leder repeat the story of that pogrom and of his journey to America to unite his thought reflexes. He would emerge a happier man and accept reality. I am quoting the boys so do not blame me, parents dear, if my words do not make sense.

Soon afterwards Irving confided to Mr. Leder, reluctantly, that he and a friend were attempting an article on Russia during the Czarist reign and would Mr. Leder cooperate by telling them the details of the pogrom and of the adventurous trip to America? Mr. Leder would and did. Thereupon Irving typed what might pass for a first draft of a magazine article and submitted it to Mr. Leder for criticism and suggestion. Mr. Leder found plenty to criticize and to suggest.

He went into minute detail of the six in the cellar, how one woman kept tearing at her gray hair and repeating the prayers for the dying; how the dying man moaned and begged for water while shrieks and blows and a horrid, terrifying din penetrated from outside. Two middleaged men were in that cellar, stunned, incapable of action. Leder and another boy decided to get help for the dying man or perish in the attempt. They left the cellar, prepared to do or die. They were whirled away by a surging mob and could not locate that cellar afterwards although they kept trying till flames drove them off. . . . Mr. Leder talked easily and did not show the agony of spirit he did when he first began to describe the pogrom.

More Details

Irving typed a much longer article and took Ian along to hear Mr. Leder's criticism and suggestions. With Scotch thoroughness, Ian asked many questions and Mr. Leder practically repeated the entire story and still further amplified the details. He told of his first contacts on the East Side in New York, the help he received from immigrants little better off than himself; his few successes, his many disappointments; his joy when he was able to help another less fortunate than himself.

Ian commented in an awed voice, "What grand adventuring; every one who reads our article will envy you!" News that the three were collaborating became known. Mr. Leder had a carbon copy of the article on Russia which he showed to any interested person, discussing each paragraph and telling much that had to be omitted to keep it within reasonable length. He was certainly a happier man; had made no mention of the U. S. S. R. for some time, and had apparently abandoned the American laborer to the many alphabetical combinations. He sat through entire discussion group meetings without once rising to pick flaws in a government that had so lavishly befriended him. Moreover he claimed that a persistent nervous indigestion that had bothered him ever since that pogrom—caused possibly by the lack of or insult

from a psychic hurt. Irving invited him to our home for dinner so that they could talk more freely on the subject and not on Company time.

Ian is a lanky Scot with a decided burr in his words when he gets the least bit excited, about Irving's age, and also an honor man, of the University of Edinburgh. He liked my dinner immensely, insisted on helping with the dishes, told us amusing tales of Scotland and promised to get me the recipe for haggis, a Scotch delicacy. Most of the evening we spent in adding up what we had heard about Albert Leder. Ian thought he was on the right track, but that we must have more information on Mr. Leder's past to form a successful working plan for his personality transformation. I became interested in the good work and offered to do some sleuthing for the cause.

The very next afternoon I called on old Mrs. Feurflam. Over a delicious tea served by Bridget we

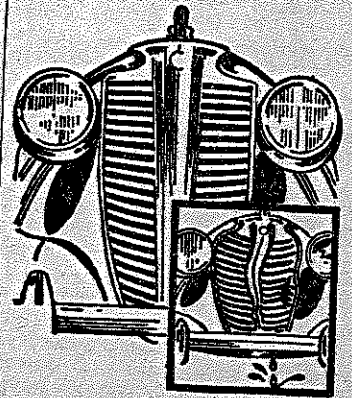
possibly by the lack of, or unsuit- able, food—had not bothered him

ject. He talked long to Irving on the glories of the Soviet, what eventually will be accomplished there for the common man, if only the jealous capitalistic nations left Russia alone. Irving listened with respectful attention, but remained unimpressed, saying finally that little can be known accurately of what is going on in the Soviet at present and the future is unpredictable. He was a technical man who dealt in facts only. Irving managed to seem embarrassed as he added, "I would very much like to know your personal experience under the old order, please."

The Story Comes Out

It was an irresistible request. Mr. Leder's face became even paler and more unhappy, he spoke jerkily, as he began to tell Irving of the horrors of a pogrom that decended on his native village. "I was just sixteen years old—starving, crazed with fear—six of us lay hidden in a cellar—one man fatally wounded—

COMMONW



CORNER OF BROOK

ed
ox-
ety
ial
el,
xt
at
w-
he
ed
us
on.
of
in-
n-
its
dy

ro-
pu-
ho
se-
ig.
rs.
st-
sh-
ial
re-

ted
ent
ed-
the
ted
he
ted

nd
w-
ad

pp.
as
eir
in-
e:

plig
he
mo
the

Wa
Sal
nor
r

HOSPITAL