

Memoirs of Mendel Beilis

Victim of Russian Persecution writes His Own Story for The Bee Readers

PART IV.

But instead of writing this he wrote what he had been told to write by the governor, who had put him in the cell to trap me. Next day I was summoned to the governor and accused of writing a letter to my wife in which I told her to try and poison some of the witnesses who might give damaging evidence against me.

The governor was very fierce and put question after question to me. I denied writing such a letter and tried to explain the whole matter, but he would not let me. He called me names and swore at me, but I would not confess that I had written the letter.

Nevertheless, they made it an excuse to put me by myself in a small cell measuring only twelve feet by nine. Words cannot describe the horrors of this place. It was very high, with an asphalt floor; it had neither mattress, table nor seat of any kind; it was absolutely empty. Exhausted after my interview with the governor, I went to lean against the wall to get some rest. But I jumped back in horror—it was as cold as ice, with water running down, and all kinds of loathsome creatures crawling about. I felt I could not stand this, that it must be the end. I had stood the strain so long, but alone in this awful hole I felt I should either go mad or die.

Night came, and I was nearly dead with cold. I walked about trying to get warm, but could not. Then I thought of the tiny oil lamp hanging high on the wall, whence it gave out a tiny beam of light. I took it in my hands and tried to warm them at the flame and, standing thus, I spent the night.

It was the most dreadful night I had yet endured. I had a strong constitution, but this was too much even for me. I believe God was with me that night, and in His mercy kept me alive. I am sure no human being by himself could have stood that cold and misery. It was the coldest time in our Russian winter.

When the officer came to the cell in the morning and saw the frozen walls—the water had stopped now and turned to ice—he said to me: "It's a little cold here, is it not, Beilis?"

This was the last straw. I became hysterical. I shrieked and screamed, "Kill me!" I cried.

"Why should I kill you?" he asked. "Why?" I replied, "because I see from the way you are treating me that you want my death. Why don't you kill me at once? Why torture me like this? If you want my death put me out of my misery now."

As a result of this appeal, made in a heart-broken voice, with the tears falling from my eyes, they at last transferred me to another cell. This was bad enough, but it was heaven compared to the last. During this time the prosecuting attorney came to see me again. He told me that black hair had been discovered on Yushchinsky's clothes. No sooner had he said the words than one of the wardens tore a handful of hair out of my head. It was very painful.

"Look," he exclaimed, "black, too."

"Yes," said the prosecutor, "we will send it and have them examined by the experts."

I again protested at their keeping an innocent man in prison all this time. They thought it was a great joke, and laughed loudly.

Soon after this I received a visit from Mr. Margolin, who afterward defended me so wholeheartedly and energetically. It has been the great shadow on my life since my release that he should have suffered so greatly on my behalf.

At this visit he informed me for the first time the real nature of the charge against me. Up to then I thought that I was simply accused of killing the boy, but now I learned of the "ritual" part of the charge. I had never heard the word "ritual" before, but he told me what it meant, and explained that my enemies were saying that I had killed the boy in such a way as to produce the largest possible amount of blood, which was supposed to be used for the purpose of making the Passover cakes.

Now I understand the question previously put to me by the prosecuting attorney. To my surprise I heard also that the Jews were accused of using Christian blood in all kinds of ceremonies.

Just before Christmas, another prisoner, in chains, was brought to share the cell with me. I was very glad of this. The loneliness had been terrible. For months I had not spoken to a soul except the wardens, and from them I only received a volley of curses and blows. After that day I heard nothing but the noise of them opening and shutting doors, and the clank of prisoners outside.

Although this man, Pavlichenko, was in a very dangerous condition himself, yet he tried to comfort me, telling me that justice must prevail and that I must be set free. When his own trial came along, he was found guilty of political offenses against the government, and sentenced to be hanged. This was afterward changed to deportation to Siberia for life. Despite this he was very cheerful all the time he was with me, and he did his best to keep up my spirits. I heard he died before my trial was ended.

He was a true, loyal friend to me. Two days before they took him away he was sent by the governor. He found the office full of high officials. When he returned I saw that he was shaking like a leaf. I asked what was the matter.

"I don't want to frighten you," he replied, but I must tell you what happened. The first thing that the governor asked me was, "Are you confined in Beilis' cell?"

"Yes, your excellency," I answered.

"You are a Christian, are you not?"

"I said I was."

"Then, being a Christian," said the governor, "you must act as one, and help us solve the mystery of the murder of the boy Yushchinsky, the poor child who was murdered by some fiend that drinks Christian blood."

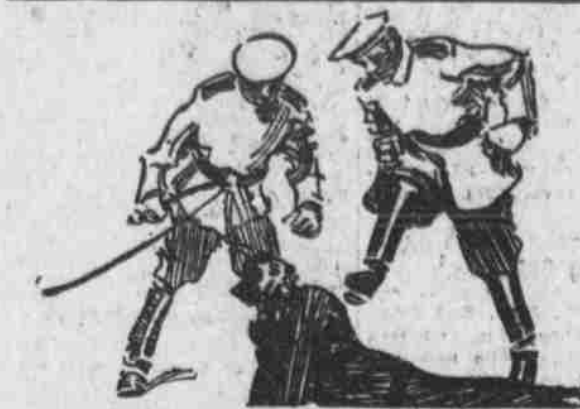
"I said that I would be only too pleased, but could not see how I could assist."

"Has Beilis told you that he committed the murder?" went on the governor. "You are with him day and night. Has his conscience pricked him? Have you heard him talk in his sleep? Is there anything at all that you have heard him say that would help to prove him the murderer? You listen to him carefully."

"Your excellency," I answered, I have listened to him very carefully, and the only thing that I have noticed at all has been his bitter weeping at nights. I am convinced that the man in my cell is innocent."

"When I said this, the governor nearly jumped up in the air. 'Stop!' he yelled. 'You were not asked about that.'"

"The wardens took hold of me and



The Top Picture Shows Mendel Beilis as He Appeared During His Trial. The Bottom Picture—They kicked and trod on me, saying, "Get up, you dog!"



The Wife and the Children of Beilis, from a Photograph Taken Before Mendel Beilis' Arrest. Mrs. Beilis in This Picture is Young Looking and Not Unattractive.



Mrs. Beilis, Changed by the Horrors of Her Husband's Accusation and Trial Into an Old Woman—All in Two Years.

threw me out of the room, but I had a final word to say to them yet. As I got to the door I called out:

"You want evidence from a sleeping man, as you cannot get it from a single living soul awake."

When my friend had finished his story I was very grateful to him, but at the same time I was very frightened, because it showed me the length to which they were prepared to get evidence against me. This conversation took place just before my trial, and it made me very despondent.

But to return to my story. On the 4th of January, 1912, I was brought before the prosecuting attorney again. My boots were worn out, and it being a bitterly cold winter, the ground was deep in snow. I asked for another pair. But they refused, saying that I was too comfortable already. I told them that my feet were in a terrible condition through exposure to the icy floor, and that I must have boots. They only laughed.

I hobbled to the office and saw the attorney. He said to me:

"Beilis, I have arranged an interview for you with your wife."

I could not understand his taking the trouble. Then I learned that it was to gain my confidence. He had been examining my wife, and he was using her answers to try to catch me. But he did not succeed. I answered his questions, but I could not tell him anything but what I had said before—that I was innocent, and knew nothing about the crime. When I got back to the prison something happened to my feet. They seemed to give way, and I fell to the ground. When the wardens saw me lying there they thought I was shamming, and kicked and trod on me, saying, "Get up, you dog!"

"You may kick me to death," I replied, "but I cannot get up."

At last they believed that there was something the matter with me, and called a doctor. He ordered me to the hospital at once.

But I could not walk there. The wardens refused to carry me, saying that I could walk if I liked. I don't know how long I should have been lying there, if another warden, more kindhearted than the rest, had not suggested that my shirt should be torn into rags and my feet wrapped in them. I managed somehow to hobble to the hospital—how, God only knows. My suffering was terrible.

What a change the hospital was for me! I thought it a heaven! The atmosphere, after the terrible air of the cell, seemed too good to be true. I thought it must be a dream.

In the hospital wardens undressed me, and found blood all over my body where my clothes had scratched me. They were very angry, and frightened. One said to me:

"Beilis, Beilis, why did you not tell us that the shirt was too rough for you? You are to be blamed for this. We would have changed it had we known."

I told them that I had complained time after time, but that they had only laughed. They went very red in the face, and left at once.

The doctors gave me a very hot bath, and then operated on my feet at once. I shrieked with pain during the operation, and begged them to put an end to my misery. I fainted half way, and remember nothing until I found myself in bed.

My pain had entirely ceased now, and I was quite happy. It was the first time I had been in bed since my arrest. I slept for thirty-six hours without a break.

Some days afterward a very important man arrived from St. Petersburg. He was making an inspection of all the prisons. He asked about the case of every prisoner, and the nature of the illness of those in hospital. But the governor took very good care that he did not come near my bed. I supposed he was afraid of the fact that he did not know anything about my trial.

In spite of the fact that the nature of the operation to my feet required that I should stay in the hospital for at least a month, after twelve days I was ordered to be taken back to my cell, although my feet were still terribly swollen and I could not walk.

I cannot describe how I felt when I was taken back and placed on the icy asphalt of that cell; the pain was agonizing. I fainted. Some stuff was put on my feet, and then they again left me alone. I shrieked until I became delirious

with pain. Next day more stuff was again hoping to get some evidence against me.

Early in the spring Mr. Margolin came to see me. He told me that there was much talk in Kiev that they were going to poison me, and that the poison would be put in the meals which were occasionally allowed to be brought me by my wife. Because of these rumors, he said that in future I had better not eat any food except the ordinary prison food. This was a great disappointment, but he urged me to bear this patiently, as well as the rest of my treatment.

"If you die before the trial," he said, "this black spot of ritual murder will still rest on Jewry. At all costs you must live and vindicate us all."

I swore to endure everything, and after that I fought hardship as never before. If the authorities wanted my death I made up my mind to accept it. The first of June, 1912, was a great day for me. Maehkevitch, the special attorney, came to me and told me that he had brought my wife and children to see me. I suppose he thought by kindness to induce me to make a false confession. But I did not worry about his reason. I was so happy. I had not seen my family since my arrest, except when the two boys were at the police station.

When they came in I just grabbed the baby in my arms and covered her with kisses. We clung around one another and I could have held them in my arms forever. But then the gruff voice of the prison officer broke in:

"You must give back the child, Beilis."

"For a moment I could not, but I had to obey. It was like tearing out my own flesh. We were in a room filled with wire cages, and there was not a great deal of light. When I took my wife in my arms I could scarcely distinguish her face. It gave me a shock. She had changed entirely. She was deathly pale, thin, haggard, delicate looking, and seemed quite ten years older.

Neither of us could speak a word. The tears rolled down my face and I almost fainted. I felt that my heart would break when I looked at her. Then I heard the voice of the prison governor saying:

"Go on, Beilis. Don't lose the precious moments."

And I forced myself to talk to her, and tell her all the news of my life in prison, and my hopes about the trial coming on.

Three weeks after this they allowed me to see them again. I had been counting the hours. But the joy each time was almost wiped out by the hour of parting. I was glad that the wardens dragged me away. My own feet could never have taken me.

About six weeks after this I was again taken before the same prosecutor. He had the indictment with him, and I was amazed to find that it took up eight volumes. It took him several days to read it to me. Then for the first time I heard the words "Zadik," "Chasid" and "Ritual."

As time went on my treatment became no better. Sometimes I used to feel as though I could not endure imprisonment and the rough treatment any longer, and that I must die before the trial came on. But God kept me up, and when I was most depressed my comfort was to think of my wife and children.

Then a little sunshine came into my life. I was given permission to see one member of my family every Sunday, and they took it in turn to come. But alas! after a couple of months this privilege was withdrawn. I implored the governor of the prison to let them come again, and after the next visit of the special prosecutor from St. Petersburg, to my delight, leave was given.

This happened in September, 1912. He came to my cell, and the first thing he did was to offer me a cigarette, saying, "Here, Beilis, is a cigarette. Take it and smoke it. But—tell me, are you not afraid that I shall poison you?"

"What harm have I done you that I should think you want to poison me?" I inquired.

He was evidently ashamed of the question, for he was too confused to make any reply. But his next words surprised me. "Look here, Beilis," he said, "I have brought your wife with me, so that you can have a nice talk together, but you must talk Russian."

He went out and brought her in. We talked for quite a time, but I noticed

that the prosecutor listened very carefully to all we said. I supposed he was again hoping to get some evidence against me.

I asked my wife how things were going on at home. She said that she was now getting my usual salary from Mr. Zaitzeff, and that they were fairly comfortable. But she seemed very uncertain whether she ought to accept the money. We had never before had any money for which we had not worked.

I inquired about the boy's education. She told me that the money was not sufficient for this, and that Pinka had been taken away from the gymnasium. She felt this blow as much as I. When the prosecutor heard her tell me this, he said:

"Ha, ha, Beilis, you see the Jews will not help you now. Your work for them was finished when you killed the poor unfortunate boy. You were a good, honest Mendel before that, and now the job is done and you in prison, everybody turns away from you, and nobody wants to know you."

I made no reply to his words. It does not do for a prisoner to answer back a high official.

About two months after, just before Christmas, 1912, I was told that the evidence was closed, and that the trial would take place shortly. On the advice of my brother, I then asked for a copy of the indictment, in order to study it. I was informed that if given a copy

it would mean my remaining another six months in prison. I thought it best to do without it.

But, as it happened, I did see it. On his next visit the prosecutor left a copy with me. I read it through and through, but understood very little of it. I wanted to find out what they had against me. But although there were many names mentioned, I did not find mine until the last page, and then only once. The document was full of untruths from start to finish, and I began to wonder how men could be so wicked as to invent such lies.

But I now realized the strength of the forces against me, and for the first time began to fear the truth would not win. These were very dark days for me. The Bible became my only consolation. I began to read it and to understand it. Without its aid I should have gone mad. It seemed as though I, alone in that dark cell, had all the rest of the world against me.

Mr. Margolin was the man who gave me new hope. He told me that my lawyers had been carefully through the indictment and could not find a jot of evidence against me. He was confident that if I were given a fair trial I would be acquitted. My spirits rose rapidly at this.

They quickly sank when he told me some days afterward that the trial had been postponed, because one of the experts who was to give evidence had been

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THE OMAHA BEE—THE HOME PAPER.

taken ill. I had never heard the word "expert" before, and now I saw how complicated the trial would be. He tried to explain the history of the religious question involved, but they were too hard for me to understand. I could only see it would be a great battle before my freedom could be won.

The postponement was a heavy blow. I felt as though I could not stand the prison life any longer. And my treatment began to get worse and worse. My health was very bad, and I expected every day to be my last.

I told Mr. Margolin about it, but he again advised me to endure it, and not give them the satisfaction of my death. Once more he impressed on me the importance that this thing should be stamped out once and for all, and I made up my mind that whatever happened I would live for the trial.

At last the news came that the trial had been definitely fixed for September 25, 1912. For one month I was placed in solitary confinement. This was pretty well the last straw. My Polish friend had been a great comfort to me, but now my nerves got in such a state that I had to fight to keep my sanity. But I held on with might and main. I read the Bible, and through the Bible, and I tried to keep my thoughts on that alone.

One day I found myself on the point of hysteria. I asked to see the governor, and implored him to put me in a cell with the rest of the prisoners. He refused, but afterward allowed another prisoner to share with me. He remained until two days before the trial, when again I found myself alone.

An extra lock was now placed on my door. Instead of one watchman, two were placed on guard outside and every two or three minutes I could see the lanterns flashing through the opening in the door. The light came full on my face each time, and I could not sleep.

At last the day of the trial came—my happiest day for over two years. About 6 o'clock the superintendent of the prison came to my cell. From his face I could see that he had great news for me. "The hour is approaching," he said. "Get up. Your trial will take place today."

(To Be Continued Next Sunday.)

The DOCTOR'S ADVICE

by Dr. Lewis Baker

The questions answered below are general in character, and the answers should apply to any case of similar nature. These answers are given in plain, easy-to-understand English, and are not intended to be a substitute for a full and complete medical examination. Full name and address must be given, but only initials or fictitious name will be used in the answers. The questions can be filled at any well-stocked drug store. Any druggist can order of wholesaler.

prescribe for one who is too fleshy so that about 30 pounds can be taken off.

Answer: Obtain any well-stocked druggist a box of Dr. Baker's Tablets and take regularly as per directions accompanying same. Many of my patients have gained 20 to 30 pounds in a month and a day without any ill results.

"Unhappy May" writes: "I suffer constantly with headaches, indigestion and kidney trouble. My skin is pimply and oily."

Answer: Three-grain sulphur tablets (not salicylic) will give the best remedy for the blood. They are made from sulphur, cream of tartar and herb medicine, which act directly on the blood, purifying it, thus causing the pimples to disappear and the skin to become fresh and healthy looking. These sulphur tablets are packed in sealed tubes and can be bought at any drug store. They will also relieve your kidney trouble and indigestion.

"Mrs. O."—The best remedy for bed-wetting in children is to give them 10 to 15 drops in water before meals of the following: Tincture cubeba, 1 dram; tincture rhubarb aromatic, 3 drams, and comp. fluid balsam, 1 oz.

"Audrey" writes: "For the past year I have suffered greatly with catarrh. It has affected my blood, stomach and bowels to such an extent that I suffer constantly. Can you tell me a cure?"

Answer: I heartily recommend the use of antiseptic violine powder for the relief of catarrh. First ask your druggist for a 2 oz. package of violine powder; then thoroughly cleanse the nostrils with the following wash: One-half teaspoonful of the powder to a pint of warm water. Use this several times a day by snuffing the wash into the nostrils with the hand through the nostrils; after which make a bath by mixing a teaspoonful of violine powder with one ounce of lard or vasoline and apply to the nostrils daily. Internal treatment for the stomach, bowels and blood should be used: Bryon sarsaparilla, comp. 4 oz.; comp. fluid balsam, 1 oz.; comp. fluid buchu, 1 oz. Mix and shake well and take a teaspoonful four times a day.

"Sorrowful May" says: "My scalp is covered with dandruff, my hair is oily and straggling. Please help me so that I may look like other girls."

Answer: You can very easily "look like other girls" if you get at the drug store a 2 oz. jar of plain yellow vasoline and use it regularly according to the directions given. It will stop your dandruff and make your hair soft, shiny and make it grow. This treatment differs from all others and I have actually seen the most wonderful transformations when people have used this only two or three times.

"Ann" writes: "Could you prescribe something to increase my weight? I am tall and thin to such an embarrassing degree that I am frequently subjected to snickering remarks."

Answer: Hypo-Nuclene tablets have been prescribed with great success as indicated by gratifying letters from hundreds of girls who suffer as you do. These tablets can be purchased in sealed packages from any well-stocked drug store and full directions are given inside. These should be taken regularly for about two months, and you will be surprised to note the color in your cheeks and lips and your weight should increase from 15 to 30 pounds.—Advertisement.