

[Bits of Yiddish Folk-Stuff]

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FOLKLORE

NEW YORK

FORM C Text of Interview (Unedited)

STATE New York

NAME OF WORKER Emanuel Verschleiser

ADDRESS 1419 Jessup Ave., Bronx.

DATE September 13, 1938

SUBJECT BITS OF YIDDISH FOLK-STUFF

From an interview with Mr. Tenenbaum, over seventy years old, 499 Riverdale Avenue, Brooklyn:

“GOD’S DAY”

“God's Day” (Gots Tog) - to work from sunrise to sundown. This saying was common among the immigrant workers whose hours of work were fourteen and sixteen a day. A TALE ABOUT ROTHSCHILD

A poor man went once to Rothschild to ask for alms. He managed to pass all the secretaries and servants and came into Rothschild's living rooms. He came into a great hall and saw two girls sitting at a piano and playing. He was surprised but didn't say a

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thing. He has his own troubles. Well, Rothschild came out and asked: My dear Jew, what in your desire, The Jew answered: I came to ask for alms.

Rothschild said angrily: You had to bother me with it. You couldn't ask my secretary for it? The Jew answered: Listen to me, Mr. Rothschild — don't teach me how to beg (shnoren).

Then the Jew was asked by his colleagues: [?] , how is it there in such a rich man's house? Well, the Jew answered - Rich man... it's nothing ... two girls sit and play at one piano ...

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ANOTHER STORY ABOUT ROTHSCHILD

(Heard from an old man in the park)

Rothschild heard two Jews talking. One said: It's luck to be rich. Not cleverness or sense. Take me. I have no luck. I have more brains than Rothschild but what does it get me? Rothschild said: Come with me. He took the Jew with him into his treasury full of gold and diamonds. I'll leave you for five minutes, and what you take is yours. But the Jew was so flabbergasted that when Rothschild returned, the Jew still stood with empty hands.

You see, said Rothschild, that you have no sense (brains) either ...

ANOTHER VERSION heard by the interviewer before:

Rothschild heard a poor man saying: "Oh, if I could only get in for one minute into Rothschild's treasury," Rothschild told the man: "Come with me." He took the man with him into his cellars stuffed with gold and diamonds and told the man: "I leave you here for one minute as you wished and what you take is yours." When Rothschild returned after one minute the man stood with empty hands. He was so amazed he didn't know what to take first.

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*** Heard from an old tramp living now on a barge in Jamaica Bay. Sixty years old. -

When I went to school, we lived in Essex Street, downtown New York .. there were no Jews, only one Jew named Levy, who worked for Goodman's Matsos .. there were some Swedes and "Guineas" who worked for ninety cents a day ... when the immigrants began coming, lots of them, they went through the city tagged with tags of the places where they were going to, led by men from societies who took care of them. During Harrison's presidency there were good times. The bosses 3 would beg you to come to work. "Won't you close, Mr. Miller, on Monday?" He remembers two popular songs, "White Wings" and "Little Annie Rooney" but can't sing them. He is not a singing man ...

A TALE ABOUT A TREASURE

(Told by Mrs. Israel 70 years old) in Park.)

There were many stories told in our village about hidden treasures and how people lost their lives, some got lost in the forest and never came out alive. It was believed that the treasures are watched over by spirits and there are only rare occasions when they can be gotten with impunity. In our village was a woman with a crooked neck. How she got it the following story was told: The woman's father-in-law, an old peasant, found a treasure in the woods but was afraid of the bad spirits to remove it. He argued with his son he should send his wife to fetch it. The son answered: Why don't you send your wife for it? To this his father answered: You can get another wife but you can't get another mother. The son saw that his father is right. He made his wife go for the treasure. When she has gotten the treasure out without mishap and was on the way home she turned her neck to look if anybody is following her but she could not straighten it again. That was the revenge of the bad spirits. That's the way they told it in our village.

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A TALE ABOUT A RABBI

(Told by an old Jew.)

The Austrian Kaiser decreed that a Jew who wants to give his daughter in marriage should pay a sum of money, a few hundred "Gilden", to the imperial treasury. This was a big sum of money and many a poor Jew could not afford it and 4 many girls had to remain old maids and Jews were in despair.

In a village lived a pious Jew and a very poor one. He had a marriageable daughter and a very good match came her way, the bridegroom did not demand any dowry but the father didn't have the few hundred "Gilden" to pay to the imperial treasury and the match came to naught. The Jew was in great sorrow and he went to the rabbi of Lizenak. When he came before the rabbi in his great sorrow he cried out: "I want to call God to Justice." After he said that he got frightened and repented it and wanted to run away but the rabbi said: "Wait, my son. You said you want to call God to Justice (Din Torah)... You know one judge is not sufficient for that ... go and call two other judges. The Jew was astonished but he obeyed. He went and called two other judges. They came and sat near the rabbi and the rabbi said to the Jew: "Say what you accuse God of ... we are listening"... The Jew said: "I have a daughter and she found her mate who is ready to marry her without a dowry and now I am poor and do not possess the few hundred dollars to pay to the emperor's treasury and she cannot marry ... God should not permit such things.." When the Jew finished the rabbi and the other two judges sat silently concentrated in thought. The rabbi's face became red. He lifted his eyes to the sky then he told the Jew: "Go home. The Kaiser cancelled the decree." The Jew went home. On the way people told him the news that the Kaiser cancelled the decree.

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