

Isaac Rotman's Uncle Alter Tush



This photograph was taken somewhere in Siberia in 1920s. It shows my mother's brother. I know not much about him, but here I'd like to tell you about our life at that time.

Our family was well-to-do. But it was true only for the time of my early childhood. And then Revolution happened. When they arrested father, we almost died from starvation. All of us, except my elder sister were sent to a village. There lived a milkwoman, who used to bring us milk when we lived better. There we ate potatoes and drank milk: that was the way they saved our lives. So you see now that our family managed to get through different financial situations: from prosperity to poverty.

In 1922 father was discharged. He started working as an expert-appraiser, got quite good salary. And it was a real relief to us.

We lived in a four-room apartment. There was a big pantry with a window. We had nurseries for boys and girls, parents' bedroom and a sitting-room. We used pantry as a room for visitors. The kitchen was very large. There was water supply and stove heating. Near the house there were beautiful old trees. When a sister got married, parents put a room at her disposal. As a result (after my 3 sisters got married), all the rest of the family crowded in the last room. When my brother married, he could not remain at home and left somewhere together with his wife.

As I told you already, my father was an antiquarian, therefore we had a lot of ancient furniture in our apartment. Mahogany suite of furniture was in the sitting-room. I remember a small cupboard with porcelain-figures, and a bureau. Our furniture was beautiful. In the nurseries furniture was not

so beautiful: it was intended for studies (comfortable desks, bookcases, and a wardrobe).

At our place there always lived cats and dogs. We (children) were always together with them and loved each other.

When children were little, parents hired a nurse, an ordinary Russian woman. Most time of her was devoted to children, but sometimes she helped Mum about the house. As for me, I felt hurt when my younger sister was born: the nurse began to take care of her, instead of me. I loved my nurse very much.

At our place we had few books. I do not know whether there were religious books among them (I did not see them). I grew up reading books of secular contents. I read in Russian, knowing no other language. I liked to read fairy tales very much. It is strange, but I do not remember my parents reading. I guess they had no time for it. They never gave us advice regarding reading. Father read newspapers regularly. He was very much interested in politics. Shortly before his death he was going to become a member of some party. Nobody from our family was a library reader.

Parents celebrated all holidays and observed traditions. We had a special trunk with plates and dishes for Pesach (it was always locked). Till my father's death we ate only kosher food at home. When father was alive, all members of our family visited synagogue on holidays. After his death, all traditions and customs were forgotten. Children lived separately, mother lived in the family of her daughter, and I was a lonely student. Father united all of us: he died and our family fell apart.