

1945

C H A P T E R 45
T H I N G S G E T T I N G B E T T E R .

Now back to New York, after that long excursion to Rumania. We got used to the new life in the new apartment at 99 Ocean Avenue in Brooklyn. Finally, after wandering about from one country to another, from one apartment to another one, we had our own apartment and I an office to practice medicine, having had no office for 7 years. We were a happy family. When I had started with the office, I still had some income from the hos-

pital and also from my work at the laboratory of Hoffman-LaRoche. In the meantime, gradually, the number of my office patients and with it the income from it grew. The children were happy. The schools were not far, there was a piano, the Prospect Park across the street, movie theatres nearby, and friends coming and going. Francis went, as I already mentioned, in the summer of 1944, when we still lived on Garfield Place, to a camp in Pennsylvania for about two months, and in the next year, after he had joined the Boy Scouts, to a Boy Scout camp somewhere in upstate New York. We had become members of the Brooklyn Ethical Culture Society, and we met there many interesting people, some of whom became our friends and were very interested in us and very helpful too. I should mention David and Selma Freudenthal and their two sons Hugo and Peter, Dan and Janet Samuels, Dr. and Mrs. Rubin, Michael and Amelia Rosen, Murray and Eva Cohen, Henry and Etta Mergel, Richard and Paula Miller, Charles and Frieda Waters, Mrs. Grete Mannheim, Mrs. Selly Winkler, Harold and Rose Walker, and many others. Some of them became my patients. We went almost every Sunday to the meetings, and loved to listen to the interesting lectures of Dr. Neumann and other leaders, Jerome Nathanson, Algernon Black, Dr. Muzzey, Dr. Mason, Mr. Odell, to name a few of the older generation, and Walter Lawton, Lester Mondale, Dr. Ies Spetter of the younger generation. We had in Brooklyn for the last 15 years Mr. Howard Box as a very fine leader, who returned last year to what he had been before, a minister of the Unitarian Church. For children the Ethical Society had Sunday school meetings, and Johanna went there for a few years. Francis was the pianist for these meetings, a job, for which he was paid a small salary for years.

Hedy was for the last few years president of the Women's Club, later called Women's Conference of the Brooklyn Ethical Culture Society. It was a nice group of ladies, which gathered twice a month. It required much work to keep the group together, and her efforts were always greatly appreciated by the members, who loved to come to the meetings, which she tried to make interesting and stimulating. They had often important speakers at their gatherings, often shows of pictures, movies, and slides from excursions, to which I also contributed with showings of slides from trips to far-away countries.

Our apartment served us for a few years very well. It was a little bit too small, so that Johanna had to share the bedroom with us. There was also not enough closet space. When a patient had to go to the bathroom, he had to pass the door of the bedroom and of the kitchen. The apartment was on the ground floor so that people could look in from the street, especially when the lights were on in the evening. But these were minor things and did not bother us too much. To increase my income, I registered with the Welfare Department and treated patients who were on Welfare. The fees were low and required much paper work, also many telephone calls. The Welfare Department paid for a house call \$ 5.- only. Since I did not have a car, it meant making house calls by bus. Most of the patients lived in the Williamsburgh section, and I could make a number of house calls on each trip, since most of the patients lived in the same area, where I could walk on foot from one street to the next one, making often up to ten house calls on a forenoon and that gave me a nice income.

My friend David Freudenthal saw the difficulties of making

the trips by bus and was all the time after me, trying to convince me that I needed a car. I finally gave in and bought a car, taking a loan from a bank. It was a Nash car and was not expensive at that time. I had taken driving lessons long before and had already a license, but I was a poor driver when I got the car. I had to take somebody with me to pick the car up and bring it to the curb near my house. The super in the house, where we lived, a Mr. Drolle, gave me a few lessons, but that was not enough. Next, Mr. Michael Rosen gave me a really good lesson. I had to go to Manhattan, and I had hoped that he would do most of the driving. But he insisted that I do it, and I drove all the way to Manhattan, somewhere on the East-side, and then back through Canal Street and over the Manhattan bridge in very heavy traffic. He did not talk much while I was driving, made only signs with his hand or with one finger, pointing either to the left or to the right and that was really sufficient. It was amazing that nothing happened and that I came back to Brooklyn without a scratch on my car. It did not take long and I could go alone and came home alive. On Sundays we soon made trips, always with the children, sometimes with Paul and Lisa, once to the Croton River bridge, and the next time to New Jersey to visit somebody, perhaps the Forsters. Minor accidents sometimes happened, but not often. It was now, of course, easy to make house calls in the Williamsburgh area and I could make more calls.

Francis took the piano playing seriously and made good progress. He practiced usually for hours, 4 to 5 hours in a row, but, of course, only when I had no patients in my office. For the lessons he had to travel to Manhattan, where "uncle

Leon" had a studio room rented. I paid him, not in the beginning, but later on, when I could afford it, \$ 10.- for each lesson. Once Francis participated in a Music Student Contest in the Brooklyn Museum, which was recorded over the radio. It was on Saturday, May 8th, 1948. There were 4 contestants, one boy 15 years old, two girls, 16 and 17, and Francis was 17 years old. He was the last one to play, and he played the Fantasie-Impromptu in C-sharp minor by Chopin and the Scherzo in E-flat minor by Brahms. My heart was beating heavily, when I heard him play, while sitting in my car. He did not make a single mistake, but he did not win the contest. He had considered for a long time, whether he should become a concert pianist. But uncle Leon told him that that would require sitting for the rest of his life 8 hours daily on his behind at the piano, practicing. That was reason enough for him to let it go. And the same with painting as a profession. He gave it up too. But he continued to paint with great zest and also piano playing. He was also very good in school and brought home very good report cards. His teachers seemed to like him very much. Once I went for some reason to his class room in Erasmus High School. There were lists of pupils pasted on the wall next to each class room door, with grade numbers next to the names. I did not believe my eyes: Francis' name was at the top of the list and next to it the number 98. I knew that he was good in school, since his report cards were good and he also got often "honor cards". We had a bunch full of such cards, also great numbers of "cards de merit", which he had brought from France to Cuba. So, we had much reason to be proud of him.

Johanna also brought home good report cards, had only some

difficulties with mathematics, the same as her father, years back, when he was a school boy. She also entered Erasmus High School, in 1950. I had noticed for quite some time that she had a great talent for art, bringing home from school some nice drawings and paintings and also some interesting works of ceramics. I was the first one to notice it, and tried to inspire her by showing my admiration. In the second year she majored in art.