

H. Klein, Montreal

I Shall not Forget You, My Shtetl

*No more is my shtetl,
Which I still remember;
No more is my home,
For which I do yearn.*

*Immersed in the memories
Of such a beautiful past,
When I was with my parents
Living in my shtetl.*

*Thus run my thoughts
To those bygone surroundings;
Yearning for the past,
Every minute, everywhere.*

*Here, I see my mother,
With her radiant figure,
Who, with her smile,
My childhood years did brighten.*

*And my father at the table,
In a seifer¹ engrossed,
Who would often embrace me,
Laughing with love.*

*How my soul aches
For that beautiful past,
With its sweet dreams
For the People of Israel.*

*In the bright days
I knew you, my home;
Like a dream, you have vanished,
At the bloodied hands of the Nazis.*

*But with me, my shtetl,
You have remained as you were;
I shall always remember you,
So blooming and fine.*

*And, deep in my heart,
You are missed all the more;
I shall never forget you –
But the remembrance is tough.*

¹ [TN: Heb., "book"; term used in Yiddish in ref. to a religious book, such as the Talmud etc.]

[TN: Although poetry is notoriously quite impossible to translate verbatim, we have endeavoured in our rendition above to stay as close as possible to the original Yiddish. For the benefit of the readers, we reproduce here p. 87 of the English section of this book, which is the English-language version of this poem as written by the author, Harry Klein, himself. Please note that Mr Klein's version is by no means a translation of the Yiddish original, but an English-language poem based on said original.]

MY HOMETOWN . . . I WILL NEVER FORGET YOU

*Destroyed is my Home-Town
the one I do remember,
and wiped-out is my family
with all of its splendor.*

*Deep in my thoughts
of the past so fruitful,
when I was together with my parents
I saw everything so rosy and beautiful.*

*As I am now dreaming of the
once upon a time,
oh! how I do miss you
each time and all the time.*

*And you my dear mother
I remember you — lovable and bright,
always with a smile — when
she kissed and hugged me so tight.*

*And my father my idol
who seemed always in learning to be,
has never failed to show
his care and love for me.*

*Now is my heart so bleeding
and bitter with pain,
because destroyed is my past — and
it will never, never more be the same.*

*But in my memory my home-town
you will always stay with me,
the way I have known you
so beautiful and great I wanted you to be.*

*And in my heart
you will remain forever more,
and I will see you always
no other — but the way as before.*

by HARRY KLEIN
Nov. 11/84