

Tombstone On The Grave Of Mera Shulman's Mother Haya Shulman



This photograph was taken in Riga in winter of 1993. It was taken by my husband. In 1993 we went to say good-bye to the family of my sister, who were going to emigrate to the USA altogether. Certainly we went to the old Jewish cemetery to give the last glance at the family graves. This photograph shows the tombstone on the grave of my mother.

My Mum Shulman, nee Kravets Haya Hirsh-Leybovna was born on March 24th, 1902 in a small settlement Glazmanka in Latvia. I remember her always bustling about the house. She both cooked, and washed, and did the rooms. Only Mum helped us in our studies, we had neither nurses, nor governesses. When my brother was a little boy (do not forget that he was already the third child in our family!), we hired a parlourmaid for a short period of time to help Mum about the house.

My parents differed greatly in their educational level. Mother was much better educated than father. She finished a high school, therefore she knew Russian well. She brought me up in Russian language. I really imbibed it with my mother milk. Mum made an agreement with my father that he would not spoil me with his Yiddish. That was why while I was a little girl, my Daddy was almost silent. Father's relatives told him 'Oh, why did you marry an educated girl - will she count grains before putting them into the copper?' And Daddy answered 'No, she will not count grains, she will train the child and help him to do lessons.'

My parents' attitude to books and reading was very different. Daddy never read anything. Mum liked to read very much and Daddy always became angry with her. When he came home, he wanted my Mum to meet him on tiptoe. And Mum liked to read a book lying in bed. And there it began! 'Books again!' He understood and encouraged Mum, if she read books to children, but reading for her own pleasure was naughtiness!

My father was very clever and purposeful man. He always looked only forward and was very enterprising. But he was hard to get on with. Being offended by his relatives, he could have kept silence for half a year.

My mother was much easier to get on with. She suffered much, because her husband was a difficult man, but he gave her his full support.

Our parents rarely punished children. I mean corporal punishments. I already told you that Daddy stopped talking with us, when he was angry. But there were some exceptions, and one case I remember very well. I was 7 years old, and my sister was 2 years old. We lived on a high first floor. Below our window there was an abat-jour above the entrance door to the semi-basement. Together with my sister we climbed out to that abat-jour and were sitting there, kicking legs up and down. Our neighbors saw us, got very frightened and told everything to Mum. She complained to Daddy about us. He whipped me strongly, but I consider it to be fair.