MS-4842: Abba Hillel Silver Papers, Series II, 1894-1985, undated.

Box	Folder
1	5

Biographical information, commemorative booklet, Louis Horkheimer, 70th birthday, 1931.

Western Reserve Historical Society
10825 East Boulevard, Cleveland, Ohio 44106
(216) 721-5722
wrhs.org

American Jewish Archives
3101 Clifton Avenue, Cincinnati, Ohio 45220
(513) 487-3000
AmericanJewishArchives.org

TO

LOUIS HORKHEIMER

ON THE OCCASION

OF HIS

SEVENTIETH BIRTHDAY

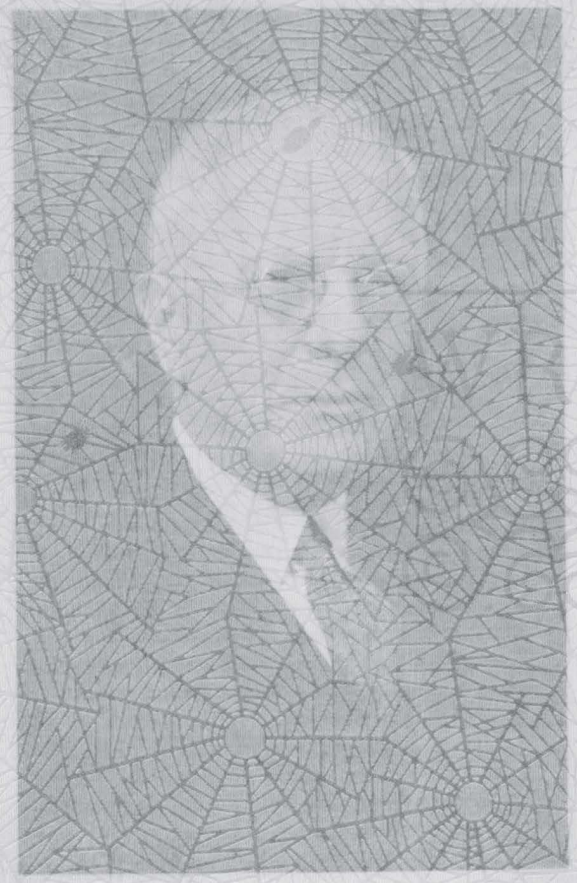
MAY THIRTEENTH

1931

DEAR MORRIS, HAROLD, CLEM, DANIEL
AND RAPHAEL:

Everyone likes to know something about the people he comes from and so we have family trees, and biographies and memoirs telling the stories of interesting and great and near great people. Your mothers make no claim to famous ancestors—we have no family tree—but we are very, very proud of our two wonderful parents: of your dear grandmother, whom only Morris can remember, that rare woman whose fine character and splendid ideals and wonderful apprehension of what is really worth while in life influenced us to try to be our best selves and was also an incentive and inspiration to her devoted husband for the thirty-two years they lived so happily together; and of your wonderful grandfather whose seventieth birthday we celebrate so proudly this 18th day of May, 1931.

Seventy years is a very long time. It must seem terribly long to Morris at fourteen or Harold at eleven and Clem and Dan and Raphael cannot understand at all how long it is. It even sounds long to us grown-ups though we begin to suspect that it speeds away very quickly—and I imagine that to Grandfather himself, while the time has passed quickly enough, that the gap seems wide indeed between the little boy in a crude German village of the '60's and the strong man of today who has had so many rich and useful years.



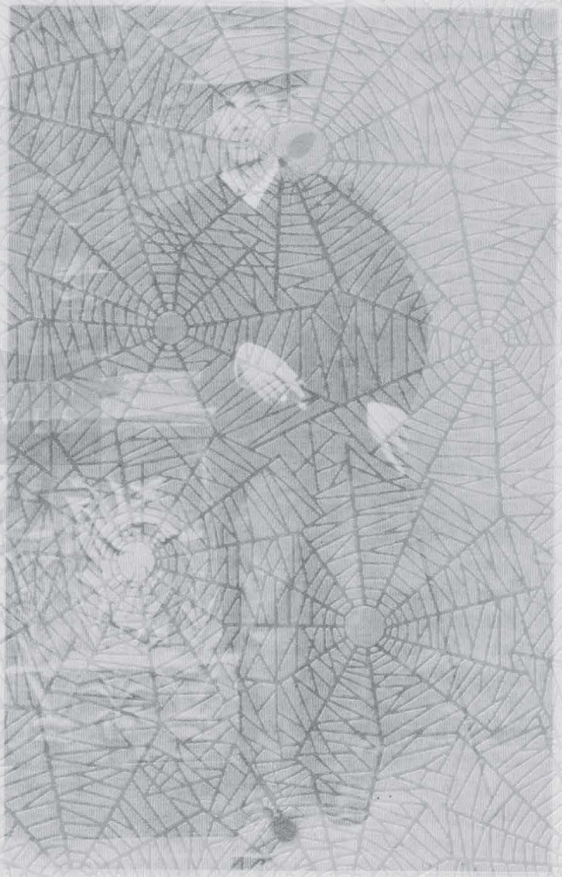
DEAR MORRIS, HAROLD, CLEM, DANIEL
AND RAPHAEL:

¶ Everyone likes to know something about the people he comes from and so we have family trees, and biographies and memoirs telling the stories of interesting and great and near great people. Your mothers make no claim to famous ancestors—we have no family tree—but we are very, very proud of our two wonderful parents: of your dear grandmother, whom only Morris can remember, that rare woman whose fine character and splendid ideals and wonderful apprehension of what is really worth while in life influenced us to try to be our best selves and was also an incentive and inspiration to her devoted husband for the thirty-two years they lived so happily together; and of your wonderful grandfather whose seventieth birthday we celebrate so proudly this 13th day of May, 1931.

¶ Seventy years is a very long time. It must seem terribly long to Morris at fourteen or Harold at eleven and Clem and Dan and Raphael cannot understand at all how long it is. It even sounds long to us grown-ups though we begin to suspect that it speeds away very quickly—and I imagine that to Grandfather himself, while the time has passed quickly enough, that the gap seems wide indeed between the little boy in a crude German village of the '60's and the strong man of today who has had so many rich and useful years.

¶ Grandfather was born in the little German village of Freudenthal in Würtemberg in 1861. His mother's name was Regina Baer and his father, Benjamin Horkheimer, had been married before to a Fraulein Laucheim. By the first marriage there were three children: Henry, Yetta and Morris. By the second there were Bernard, Julius, Nettie, Rose and Louis. Benjamin Horkheimer died at the age of forty-eight. Your grandfather was only a baby when this happened so he does not remember his father at all. He did not even know the older brothers and sisters until he met them in America. In fact, one of his first memories is when his dear brother Bernard left for America in 1866. Bernard was fourteen and Louis was five and he recalls running after the wagon and trying to keep his brother from going away.

¶ The memory of those childhood days seems punctuated with whippings. Now I don't suppose grandfather was whipped more than other children in those days and he says he is sure it was no oftener than he deserved, but these spankings seem to stand out as he tries to recall his boyhood. He remembers going into the Schlossgarten, the castle garden where the children were forbidden to play, and going skating there. When he fell in the pond and got soaked the boys pulled him out and he went home to a whipping. He remembers trying to handle the ax that stood in the corner of the yard and that was used to chop wood for the fire—no oil burners or gas heated houses in Freudenthal. He had been forbidden to



A GAY WESTERNER OF THE EIGHTIES

¶ Grandfather was born in the little German village of Freudenthal in Würtemberg in 1861. His mother's name was Regina Baer and his father, Benjamin Horkheimer, had been married before to a Fraulein Laucheim. By the first marriage there were three children: Henry, Yetta and Morris. By the second there were Bernard, Julius, Nettie, Rose and Louis. Benjamin Horkheimer died at the age of forty-eight. Your grandfather was only a baby when this happened so he does not remember his father at all. He did not even know the older brothers and sisters until he met them in America. In fact, one of his first memories is when his dear brother Bernard left for America in 1866. Bernard was fourteen and Louis was five and he recalls running after the wagon and trying to keep his brother from going away.

¶ The memory of these childhood days seems punctuated with whippings. Now I don't suppose grandfather was whipped more than other children in those days and he says he is sure it was no oftener than he deserved, but these spankings seem to stand out as he tries to recall his boyhood. He remembers going into the Schlossgarten, the castle garden where the children were forbidden to play, and going skating there. When he fell in the pond and got soaked the boys pulled him out and he went home to a whipping. He remembers trying to handle the ax that stood in the corner of the yard and that was used to chop wood for the fire—no oil burners or gas heated houses in Freudenthal. He had been forbidden to

A GAY WESTERNER OF THE EIGHTIES

touch the ax, so when he disobeyed and cut his foot he was whipped and put to bed. The next day he went to school with his foot tied up. He propped it up on a bench because it hurt. The teacher came along and knocked it off. How it hurt then! His mother came and took him home and he was laid up for two weeks with that cut foot. There was no iodine or mercurochrome to prevent infection. We are fortunate that there's a story to tell.

¶ Louis remembers some of the childhood sports—coasting down the steep, glassy Bennigheim hill on his sled and the breathless moment when he screamed "ich kann nicht mehr halten" as the sled got beyond control, hit against a pile of stones and he was thrown off and his leg cut wide open by the ice. He remembers the big plum tree in the yard and how he climbed the tree to throw the fruit down into his mother's apron and then fell himself—the plump-est fruit of all. He remembers the first money he ever earned—a groschen, about three pennies—received from a Mrs. Marx for cleaning her stable. He ruined his clean clothes doing the job and went home to another licking.

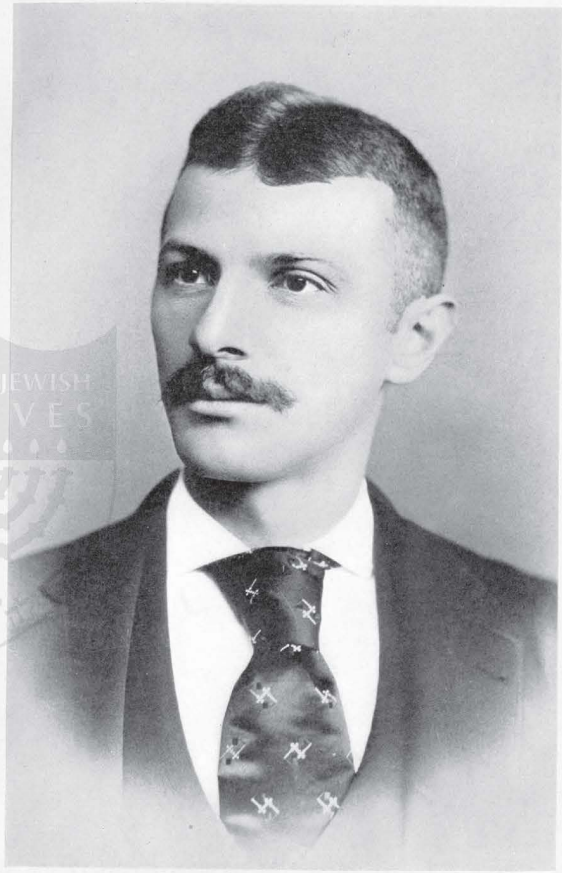
¶ The school of his memory sounds very strange to our modern ears. It was supported by the government but it was divided into two rooms—the Christian teacher on one side, the Jewish teacher on the other. The rabbi supervised the Jewish school. The methods and the subject matter seem queer to us. Louis did not know the difference between Ionic and Corinthian pillars as you children do, but he learned

A DECORATE YOUNG HUSBAND

touch the ax, so when he disobeyed and cut his foot he was whipped and sent to bed. The next day he went to school with his foot tied up. He propped it up on a bench because it hurt. The teacher came along and knocked it off. How it hurt then! His mother came and took him home and he was laid up for two weeks with that cut foot. There was no iodine or mercurochrome to prevent infection. We are fortunate that there's a story to tell.

¶ Louis remembers some of the childhood sports—coasting down the steep, glassy Bennigheim hill on his sled and the breathless moment when he screamed "Ich kann nicht mehr halten" as the sled got beyond control, hit against a pile of stones and he was thrown off and his leg cut wide open by the ice. He remembers the big plum tree in the yard and how he climbed the tree to throw the fruit down into his mother's apron and then fell himself—the plumpest fruit of all. He remembers the first money he ever earned—a groschen, about three pennies—received from a Mrs. Marx for cleaning her stable. He ruined his clean clothes doing the job and went home to another licking.

¶ The school of his memory sounds very strange to our modern ears. It was supported by the government but it was divided into two rooms—the Christian teacher on one side, the Jewish teacher on the other. The rabbi supervised the Jewish school. The methods and the subject matter seem queer to us. Louis did not know the difference between Ionic and Corinthian pillars as you children do, but he learned



A DEBONAIR YOUNG HUSBAND

arithmetic more thoroughly than any of his descendants. Just ask him to add six numbers of five or six digits each and you'll be surprised.

¶ The good Jewish spirit penetrated that boyhood home. Grandfather remembers his grandmother Bertha Lehman Baer, who had had a good Jewish education. He remembers carrying water in a little round tub for the Friday afternoon bath, the meals cooked on Friday and kept warm in a charcoal oven over Shabbos, and how a schnorrer—beggar—often came for Shabbos dinner. Of course, he remembers his Bar Mitzvah and the first new suit he ever had with the paper collar on which the boys all wrote their names in the afternoon. This wound up with a fight in the gutter and when he came home all dirty and mussed, you can guess what happened once again.

¶ At fourteen—just your age, Morris,—he left school and went to work. When we consider that meagre school education and the grandfather of today it makes us think. Can we who have had so much more done for us prove our worth as he has done? I don't mean in material success, but in human usefulness. I wonder! I hope and I pray!

¶ Louis went to work at Heilbrun, a town of 30,000 people, apprenticed out to the Gebrüder Dambacher in the dry goods business. He was "ausgebunden" —apprenticed for four years. The first year he received no pay. His mother paid his board and for nothing a week he was engaged to open boxes, scrub floors and deliver packages. He lived in a very orthodox household where he was scolded for blowing out his candle on Friday night. He remembers the way he settled that by saying: "Heilige Geist, komm herein und blass das Licht aus." The second year he received a small salary and had graver duties. He was allowed to put the stock in order and to wait on occasional customers. At the end of sixteen months his mercantile career had a serio-comic finish. Louis was alone in the store when a dressmaker came in and bought some velvet. The master returned and Louis went for his lunch. He came back to a stormy scene, vivid after fifty-five years. "Will you drive all my customers away!" Herr Dambacher screamed. "I didn't." "But don't you know a seamstress gets a discount?" "How should I know; you never told me." A slap. I slapped back and indignantly got my hat. He held me. I kicked over a pile of flannels in the struggle and we went over onto the floor together. I stayed until evening and then borrowed money to go home. My mother thought I had stolen and sent my sister Rose to find out. When she heard the truth she said I did not have to go back. The master threatened to sue her. She said thrashing was not in the contract and that was the end of the dry goods business.

¶ Not long after that Louis' uncle Simon Horkheimer returned to Germany from the United States on a visit and came to Freudenthal, his old home. Louis wanted to come to America with him and his family but was told there was no room. "On a Friday Uncle Simon wired if I wanted to go I should join them in

Frankfort on Monday. Two hectic days of preparation followed. On Saturday I had to go to Bössigham for a passport. As the official signed it he said: 'There goes the last of the five Horkheimer boys. They would all have made good German soldiers.' " Of course the realization that her boys would have had to do military duty partly explained why that brave great-grandmother of yours let them all, even this last baby, go so far away.

¶ On Sunday, with Rose as escort, Louis left for Frankfort. There he bade his sister good-bye. He remembers that he was most homesick on the way from Frankfort to Bremen where they embarked. "If I could have backed out, I would have gone home then," he declared. In the party were Uncle Simon, his wife Babette, two children—Meyer, Louis' own age, and Hattie, twelve years old, both American born—and Estelle Sinn about seventeen years old, who later married his brother Bernard. The trip took two weeks and on Yom Kippur, 1876, they landed in Baltimore. There is a funny story of how the women had put some kid gloves and other articles among Louis' simple belongings in his goats' hair trunk. He was so busy beholding the sights in this strange new world that he did not watch his baggage and when the custom inspector approached Uncle Simon gave him a slap to call his attention in that gentle German way. The next day in Wheeling at the long dinner table where the family gathered to welcome the travelers, Meyer said, "My father gave Louis a slap in Baltimore yesterday." Uncle Simon replied, "I did not! I'll give you one!"—and another cuff.

¶ But these emphatic accents were not significant in those days when a slap came so naturally as it were —off hand. They only punctuate a pleasanter story. Louis remembers how he drove out in the country with his brother Morris a day or two later and how he met Bernard who was taking up wool and who did not know he had left Germany. He remembers how kind his brother Henry was and his wife Ella, taking him into their home in Marietta, Ohio. There he went to school for a few months but it was hard for him as he had to be graded low in reading and writing and spelling English and high in other things. I don't know how long he went to school but at least it was long enough to learn to write a beautiful English script and to read anything that his desire or interest dictate.

¶ I am hazy about the next years. Grandfather has not told me this part of the story and I don't remember his talking very much of it. Part of the time was spent in Marietta and Wheeling, for he had brothers in both places. His mother and sister came to America and Rose married Jacob Fleischer and lived in Denver, Colorado. Louis went west and spent a number of years out there. He did not discover any gold mines, though he has some stock in worthless ones. At any rate, by the end of the '80's Louis was back in Wheeling where Horkheimer Brothers were dealing in hides and wools. He was sent out in the country buying wool from the farmers

and his tales of those journeys, sometimes on horseback, sometimes in a buggy, are interesting. The countryman in the outlying districts of Ohio and West Virginia knew nothing of banks and checks, so he had to travel with large sums of money in his wallet to pay for the wool. He slept in strange farm houses or crude wayside inns and he used to put his money and a pistol, never loaded, under his pillow.

¶ And the roads of those days — heavy rutted and rough with "thank you ma'ams," great bumps deliberately built into them, slimy with mud in the spring, thick with dust in the summer. No wonder grandfather enjoys traveling over this same country in the Cadillac now to discover that places which used to be days apart are now separated only by a couple of hours as he goes bowling over these good macadam roads.

¶ 1890 brought romance and the glimpse of a new life. If there had been other girls he liked, grandfather never told about them. There are stories of the courtship and the engagement but after all they were more grandmother's stories than grandfather's. Women have a way of hugging these things to their hearts. At any rate, on March 25th, 1891, grandfather married Clementine Rosenburg, the oldest daughter of Victor Rosenburg. She was twenty-one and he was nearly thirty. The only condition her father made was that the young couple should live in his home as his wife was dead and there were two young daughters, Rose and Linda—the latter only fifteen. Aunt Dora was already married and living in Baltimore.

¶ For most bridegrooms living in a father-in-law's home might be a hardship, but for Louis there was something of anchorage in stepping into this established household. He had had no real home for fifteen years and here were permanence and security. There existed the most beautiful relation between son-in-law and father and Victor Rosenburg, who had never had a son, learned to lean upon this stalwart one who was so devoted to him. He died in 1895 and Louis was executor of his estate and the guardian of his daughter Linda.

¶ In December, 1891 Pauline was born and May 24, 1895 Virginia arrived. Louis and Clem continued to live in the old house at 1107 Chapline Street, but after the third child, Harold, was born in 1898 the house was sold and the family rented a smaller but more modern dwelling. I say more modern and yet I can remember when the electric lights were installed and the hardwood floors laid.

¶ Meantime Louis was working very hard and finding it hard to get ahead. The firm was called Horkheimer Brothers but Morris and Bernard really had the bulk of it and Louis had a bitter fight to get what he and his wife thought a fair share for his hard, hard labor. He was often out in the country from Monday to Saturday and then out again on Monday. There came a day when the new contracts were being drawn and he refused to start out unless he

and Julius were given better shares. There probably was a lot of talking and "Donnerwettering" but his terms were finally met. Morris, the senior member of the firm, was active in state politics but the business prospered fairly well in those days.

¶ Time slipped by! The Spanish-American War was fought. A new century began. Louis shaved his handsome auburn mustache to go as the Baker's chocolate woman to an advertisement ball at the Mercantile Club. He and Clemmie had a pleasant life. There was a congenial group of what I suppose they called young marrieds although they did not seem so young to their children. The children grew up healthily enough. Pauline and Harold were inclined to get croup but tonsilectomy was not stylish in those days, so they coughed their way through childhood.

¶ 1905 brought tragedy in the sudden death of Bernard Horkheimer, beloved and admirable older brother. Then Morris' health broke and the burden of responsibility for Horkheimer Brothers fell upon Louis, the youngest. Up to now he had only handled the rural end of the business, the simple barter with the farmer. Now he had to cope with more sophisticated minds and shrewder customers when he entered the eastern market and sold the wool to the big manufacturers around Boston. Morris didn't think he could do it. Perhaps it is hard for anyone to think that another can handle his job, but Louis did it and did it so well that the business grew and enlarged. It required vaster financing than in the early days and he had no great capital but he managed that. His honest methods and dependability in situations where men often think they are smart if they can put something across won confidence everywhere. Those to whom he sold knew that he would not misrepresent his wares. The bankers knew they could trust his statements. The men of the organization which he slowly developed to gather the wool knew they would get a square deal and more if business justified.

¶ Meantime he was winning a place for himself in the community. From the early days of his marriage he was identified with the synagogue. As long as I can remember he served on the board of directors. He was president for a great many years and has been on the board ever since, always vitally concerned with the welfare of this institution. He served for a long time on the board of the Ohio Valley Hospital and is one of the trustees of the Oglebay Institute, which is to foster educational and cultural activities in Wheeling. No charity has gone without his contribution and in the foreign relief campaigns he has set a standard to which his fellow citizens have often failed to measure up. This despite the fact that he is not a rich man as wealth is counted these days.

¶ But I am getting ahead of my story. Perhaps that is because though there are a few happy events there are some that I'd pass over. In 1909 Pauline graduated from Wheeling High School and went away to college. In the spring of 1910 she returned to a

beautiful new home, dear Kenwood Place, where our youth was so happily set. 1913 saw Pauline home and Virginia off to college, though grandfather amusingly says he never gave his consent to any of his children going. However, tuition bills were always paid and dormitory charges and there was money for nice clothes and extra for pleasant times. Not an extravagant amount, but always plenty.

¶ May 1, 1916, the first bird took wing when Pauline married Rabbi Morris Lazaron and went to Baltimore to live. Then Harold went to Pennsylvania University and from there into Student Reserve Corps for these were war days. In February, 1917 a little grandson was born, Morris Lazaron, Jr. How happy everyone was. Then in 1918 the armistice was signed and the fear of danger seemed over.

¶ But our sense of security did not last long. In June, 1919 Harold, our darling twenty year old brother, was killed in an automobile accident. I have not spoken of him nor his noble character because this is grandfather's story, but we all cherish the memory of that life, thus cut off, which offered such possibilities of splendid manhood. Grandfather was hurt in the accident, too, but the few broken ribs were so unimportant compared with the terrible heart blow that he deliberately ignored them. However, he was brave enough to pick up the reins of business again and carry on. But grandmother could not and did not resume her old life. She never recovered from this catastrophe. Not the arrival of another Lazaron grandson, who was called Harold in memory of our dear one, not a delightful trip to Europe in 1922 with grandfather and Virginia, hardly even the joy of seeing this daughter betrothed to Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver with the prospect of happiness equal to the other rabbinical mating—none of these things could heal the wound. The doctors made a diagnosis of her illness but we knew life had lost its savor for her. She died August 26, 1922.

¶ Virginia became Mrs. Abba Hillel Silver in January, 1923 and went to live in Cleveland. Grandfather took a wonderful trip to Egypt and Palestine with the Nathan Millers, his sister-in-law Linda and her husband. But he had to hurry back to business when spring and the wool season were at hand. He sold Kenwood and tried hotel living and then an apartment and then a small house, but he had no home any more. He would not, we could not urge him to live in Baltimore or Cleveland for Wheeling was where his roots were planted deep, but it hurt to see him so lonely. In 1928 he married Aunt Sadie, a lifetime friend and the widow of a lifetime friend, and we are very grateful that her sunny personality and devoted care make life pleasanter again.

¶ Before this, two happy events occurred which must be told. In May, 1924, the first and only granddaughter was born—little Clementine Lazaron, and in 1928, after five years of marriage when we had all begun to fear the Silvers would have no children, darling Daniel Jeremy arrived—more loved and welcome because he was so longed for. Now with Raphael David Silver, who was born in January,

1930, grandfather has five grandchildren—four boys and one girl.

¶ How the little German boy of 1876 had developed! His business had developed from the modest pursuit he took over from his brothers to a big organization. In 1918 he foresaw the rapidly changing methods of doing business and helped to form the Ohio Wool Growers Association. Ever since then he has handled their wool on a commission basis. This entailed opening a warehouse in Columbus and an office in Boston to cope with the vaster business.

¶ However, business is the least. Grandfather understood the responsibility of success. One of the most beautiful things he has done is to help young people get through college as a memorial to his own boy. There are more than a dozen young men and women who have benefited by his generosity. He does not want to be repaid but he tries to make clear that his loan is to be passed on to someone else if the recipient is ever able to do so.

¶ Let me quote from one letter from the mother of two boys whom grandfather is helping through college now:

> "I sometimes wonder, Mr. Horkheimer, if you can know just what this opportunity means to all of us. Unfortunately, our greatest assets since my husband died have been debts and a very great desire for education. It would have been impossible to have sent both boys to college this year without your help. I want you to know we thank you from the very bottom of our hearts. I sometimes think appreciation is a lost art. But in this case we hope you know we do appreciate your goodness and somewhere in life I hope both boys may be able to make you see that they do appreciate everything you have done for them."

¶ And so the record of our loved one's life is brought up to date. I have said nothing of his marvelous generosity to his children whose lives he has made so pleasant by his constant kindness. I have said nothing of the devotion of his sons-in-law, those two rabbis who were wished on him because when he was once asked if he'd like his son to be a rabbi he answered "God forbid."

¶ Today he attains his three score years and ten. And yet he is young. For after all, it is not birthdays that make a man old. It is a man's attitude toward life; a man's habits, his self-indulgence or self-restraint; a man's behavior to his fellow men, a man's sense of what counts. Louis Horkheimer—young at seventy years, your temperance in your appetites; your liberality to your fellows; your open mindedness; your comprehension of things of eternal value; the bravery with which you met life's hardest blows; the modesty with which you receive life's most precious tributes—these things mark you the man of maturity, of ripe fulfillment—a man in his prime.

¶ God keep you so for us who love you!

¶ Isn't this a grandfather of whom to be proud, Raphael, Dan, Clem, Harold, Morris?

PAULINE H. LAZARON.