

# 'MY ADVENTURES AS AN IDEALIST'

'I want to be Rockefeller!' he cried. 'I want to be Greta Garbo's lover!' And for five hundred dollars, I must make his foolish dreams come true.

BY ISAAC BASHEVIS SINGER

Translated by Aliza Shevrin and Elizabeth Shub

I knocked on Sigmund Seltzer's bachelor-apartment door in the Hotel Warsaw, and a voice called out, "Bitte! Entrez! Come in!" I opened the door and saw a short, heavy-set man wearing a white suit, a Panama hat, yellow shoes, a pink shirt, and a tie with gold threads running through it. It was tacked down by a pearl stickpin. A cigar was clamped between his teeth. It was hard to tell whether he had just come in or was about to leave. A mandolin had been hung on one of the walls. Beneath it, on a table, lay several photograph albums. Placed around the room were numerous snapshots of Sigmund Seltzer with different groups of people. I thought I recognized the faces of several movie stars. He rolled his cigar artfully between thumb and forefinger and inquired: "Are you the Yiddish translator?"

"Yes."

"Well, sit down. Make yourself at home. I can't, as they say, stand formalities. You're either a friend or not, and if not, to hell with you. Would you like something to drink? Whiskey? Cognac? Sherry? Coke?"

"No, thanks."

"Something to eat?"

"I've just had lunch."

"My grandmother used to say, 'The intestine is bottomless!' Food's a necessity, and a glass of schnapps never hurt anyone. Do you know German?"

"I translated *The Magic Mountain* into Yiddish."

"What kind of mountain is that?"

"That's the title of a novel by Thomas Mann."

"I have no time for reading. Here is my book, *My Adventures as an Idealist*. It's my life story. Translate it from the German. It's been published in so many languages that now I want it to appear in my mother tongue, Yiddish. I want my parents to be proud of me. I'll send everyone in my family a copy. And I'll sell a few hundred

books as well. I have a million friends. My grandmother used to say, 'Money is mud, but friends come in handy.'"

"You had a wise grandmother."

"Ninety-eight when she died. She wanted to make it to a hundred. Don't we all! I want to be Rockefeller! I want to be Greta Garbo's lover! But who can tell? If the movie they make from my book is a hit, anything can happen. The fact is I have to fly out to Hollywood this week to talk with the producer about it. How much do you want for the job? Name a figure in round numbers."

"Five hundred dollars."

"Five hundred? Okay, I won't bargain with you. In Paris I could have had it done for less, but I have to go to Hollywood. Turn the book into something worth reading. Put everything into it: a man's life, his thoughts, his soul. A book has to tug at the heartstrings. If it doesn't, it's a waste of time to read it. Do you understand me or not? In our business you can't afford to be a dope."

For a while I leafed through the book, saying nothing. Then I asked him in what language he had written it originally.

Sigmund Seltzer removed his hat. I could see now that he had a wide forehead with a jagged scar across the middle and thick, black, curly hair that glistened with pomade. I examined his features more closely. His cheeks had the blue shadow of men who look unshaven no matter how often they shave. His lips were full, and he had a broad nose with large nostrils. His dark, smiling eyes radiated congeniality. I noticed that he wore two rings on his fingers—one set with a ruby, the other with a diamond. He hesitated before replying.

"What difference does it make what language I wrote it in? I gave you the German version, and you translate from that. I hate long discussions. Either yes or no. A lot has happened in the world since



ILLUSTRATED BY N. M. BODECKER



[illegible]



the book was first published in 1932. That bastard, Hitler, took over Germany. Mussolini, that swine, gobbled up—what's the name of that place again?—oh yes, Ethiopia. Franco, that gangster, forced Fascism on Spain. You'll have to put all of that in the book so the reader will know what it's all about. Bring it up to date. Do you understand? Since the book will be in Yiddish, our struggle in Palestine, with

all our strivings and hopes, should be included. I, Sigmund Seltzer, don't frighten easily. We'll tell the British to get the hell out of there. They made a Balfour Declaration, let them go back to London where they came from and leave the Jews alone. We'll know how to deal with the Arabs! Make it clear, and make it read smoothly, with class. Do you understand me?"

"Yes, I understand."

"Good. I'll give you an advance of

one hundred dollars. Where is my checkbook?"

He set his cigar down on an ashtray and took a checkbook and gold fountain pen out of his breast pocket. Then he said, "Don't worry—my check is good. I've only been in America four weeks, but all the publishers are after me. *My Adventures* was sold in hundreds of thousands of copies in Europe. This pen here was presented to me in Paris at a banquet in my honor. You can't get another pen like it anywhere. The factory that made it went out of business. It's pure gold. Just take a look at the jeweler's mark. Fourteen carats! Have you ever been to Paris?"

"For a few days."

"A lively town. There's no city like it in the whole world. Once Bucharest was worth something. They called it the second Paris. But the war changed all that. Two things I love about Paris: the little rolls they bake there—brioches—and the women."

"Do you speak French?" I asked, just to make conversation.

"What language don't I speak! How much does one really have to know? A wink is enough language between a man and a woman. Just one look, and she knows exactly what you want. You call a cab and, before you know it, she's sitting next to you. Look, when you have a pocket full of francs, you can be deaf and dumb. You give the driver a little something, and he's your best friend. It's the same way in hotels and wherever you go. Here in America they say, 'Money talks.' It's true. When I come to a strange country, the first thing I do is learn how to count. Then I go into a restaurant and study the menu, because if your belly is empty, nothing else is important. The rest, my friend, comes with time. In Paris, I got to know the top writers. They gave me letters of recommendation and anything else I asked for. They posed for pictures with me. Look at this album—with the greatest! That's me, there. If someone is my friend, it's all the way. We eat together; we drink together. Money is no object. I meet their wives; they meet my relatives. I have relatives in France, too. One is a professor at the Sorbonne—the top man! All the other professors hang around him and drink in his words as if he were holy. What he says goes, and no one argues with him. A cousin of mine opened a small store in Paris a few years ago, and today he has a business that caters to the wealthiest people. He sells everything from diapers to automobiles. Rothschild is a steady customer of his. The President's wife shops there. When my family heard that I had written a book, they were really proud of me. Actually, this pen was given to me by my cousin."

Seltzer carefully drew a chair up to the table. He tested the pen point with the manicured fingernail of his left thumb, and said, "When Sigmund Seltzer gives someone a check, everything has to be perfect." He stuck out the tip of his tongue while slowly forming the letters and numbers. The script looked like hen tracks. As soon as I saw his signature, I knew the truth: This man could not have written any book in any language. It was the signature of one who barely knew the alphabet.

There was no sense in sticking to the German text. The real author of this fictitious autobiography, whom Seltzer

had hired as a ghost writer, had thought up a life story that might have appealed to a German reader but never to a Yiddish one. The sentences were long, and the style turgid and full of the clichés and banalities characteristic of certain types of European hack writers when they write about Jews. All the men in the book had high foreheads and long earlocks. The fathers all had white beards and were victims of pogroms. All that they required was that their children recite Kaddish and light memorial candles after their death. The young women were all dark beauties pursued by gentile millionaires. They, however, were really in love with Yeshiva boys or young Zionists.

I had to make up some other kind of drivel. I questioned Sigmund Seltzer about his origins and his youth, but for some reason he was reluctant to tell me anything. His answer to every question was the same: Just make it interesting, so that it can be turned into a radio sketch or a play. With that in mind, I gave the hero a father who was a lumber dealer in Lithuania, made the hero himself a musical prodigy, later drew him into the revolutionary movement, deposited him in a Warsaw prison, and then allowed him to escape with the aid of the jailkeeper's daughter. I didn't like this kind of work, but as a Yiddish free-lancer I had little choice. Months passed and not a word of mine appeared in the Yiddish press. My four dollars a week rent were a constant source of worry to me.

Sigmund Seltzer requested that I read him each chapter as I finished it. I was always astounded by his reaction: He seemed actually to believe the lies I was concocting about him. He would shake his head and become serious, even sad. Lost in thought, he would twist his cigar between his lips and blow smoke rings. Sometimes he would even ask me to add a few words, or elaborate on a description.

It often seemed to me that in some mysterious way I was reminding him of things he had partially forgotten. At times his round face took on the eager, yet pouting, expression of a mischievous child who was being told a story before bedtime. He would yawn, smile, rub his eyes.

Occasionally he would doze off, but only briefly, for the telephone was constantly ringing. It might be his New York agent, Seymour Katz, or someone calling from Hollywood. Once it was a woman named Sylvia, asking him where he had spent the previous night. Sigmund Seltzer reproached her, "Sylvia, darling, it's all business, business. You know you're dearest to my heart. I have one God and one Sylvia."

And he would press his middle finger into his breast as if Sylvia could see him. He hung up and said, "Cheats, every single one of them." And he relit his cigar.

Events developed rapidly and dramatically. There were times when I suspected that Sigmund Seltzer was acting out the imagined adventures of my Yiddish hero. He had given me another hundred-dollar check, but it was returned uncashed by the bank. This was bad news for me, because I was counting on the money to pay my rent. I telephoned him at his hotel and was told that he had moved out. A few weeks later I received a telegram inviting me to his wedding. He was marry-



We just placed  
a man in Utopia.  
Where would you  
like to work?

It's easier to find your own Utopia when you let Snelling and Snelling help you find a better job.

We have over 3000 Professional Employment Counsellors in more than 300 offices coast to coast. That means we can find you a good job either nearby or in almost any state. Or in a particular climate. Or in a city you have always enjoyed visiting.

If you want to go where the sun is . . . or where the fish are . . . or where the skiing, hunting, sailing and camping are great . . . just mention it. Our national exposure of jobs and employees makes it practical and fast.

Are you looking for Utopia? It might be right in your own backyard. Look us up in the white pages and call today.

**Snelling Snelling**  
Headquarters Radnor, Pa.   
World's Largest Professional Employment Service

If you'd like to look into becoming a Snelling and Snelling franchise owner, contact our nearest office for full details.



ing that same Sylvia. Her last name was Moscowitz.

I arrived downtown at the Hotel Delancy, a place where Orthodox weddings, bar mitzvahs, and rabbinical meetings were often held. I met the bride, her mother, her brother, and several friends. Seymour Katz, Sigmund Seltzer's agent, a tiny man holding a long cigar, was deeply engrossed in a whispered conversation with a huge rabbi who looked like a professional boxer. Sylvia, the bride, had a crooked nose like a broken beak. Her hair was dyed a carrot color and was elaborately combed in curls and ringlets. She smiled at me, and the smile was both friendly and derisive. Her yellow eyes were heavily made up. A set of porcelain teeth gleamed between bright-red lips. It was impossible to tell whether she was thirty or fifty. Her hands were wrinkled, the fingernails long, crimson, and sharp. As soon as I approached her, I was seized by a fit of sneezing.

Her mother's head was narrow at the top and ended in a broad chin. Her bosom protruded like a balcony. On her swollen, sick feet, she wore a pair of misshapen shoes trimmed with rhinestone buckles. Her stockinged legs looked like two overstuffed sausages. She apparently suffered from asthma because, as she accepted congratulations from well-wishers and thanked them, she would gulp pills and wheeze. Sigmund Seltzer, wearing a set of tails with a white boutonniere in his lapel, shouted in her ear as if she were deaf: "Mama, this is my Yiddish translator!"

It was a hot day, but Sigmund Seltzer insisted that I eat everything served at the banquet after the marriage ceremony: the chopped liver, the soup with dumplings, the roast beef with stuffed derma, and, for dessert, the egg cookies and honeycake his mother-in-law had baked herself.

Sylvia's brother, Sidney Breitman, informed me that he was in the real-estate business. At dinner he regaled us with tales of the 1929 Wall Street crash. He described the suicides and how cheap it had been to buy houses and property if one had any cash at all. He advised Sigmund not to save the money he would make in Hollywood with the sale of his book but to invest it in the construction business. He said, "Build a bungalow somewhere. The rest will take care of itself."

"My talent is in writing books," Sigmund Seltzer answered. "You can't do that in your spare time."

I was too embarrassed to tell the groom that his last check had bounced. In fact, I had even bought him a gift. He told me he and Sylvia were going away on their honeymoon. He mentioned a town and a hotel in the Catskill Mountains and said he would call me as soon as he returned to New York.

Two months passed, and I heard nothing from him. Then one day someone knocked at the door of my furnished room. Even before I had a chance to answer, Sigmund Seltzer entered, unshaven, wearing a soiled suit and a crumpled shirt, and holding in his mouth a cigar stub that was so short it was hard to see how he didn't burn his lips. The scar on his forehead looked more prominent than usual. Without rising to greet him, I asked, "What's happened to you?"

With his right hand, he brushed off his left sleeve. "It's all over."

"It didn't work out?"

"A bloodsucker."

"What did she want?"

"What do they all want? Your money."

He sat down heavily in an armchair from which the stuffing and springs protruded and said, "I came to her with an open heart, but all she cared about was my money. When we arrived at our hotel in the Catskills, I wanted to do right by her, but she sat on a chair, her legs crossed, smoking one cigarette after the other, and just wanted to stick her nose into my business. She insisted that I put all my money in her name. A bankbook is a person's best friend, she said. I met a cousin of hers in the casino the next day, and he told me the whole story. She'd already had three husbands and ruined them all. Lovers, too—a butcher and a sewing-machine salesman. She sold her body, that's all. The mother was no better. The brother was a fake. That's the long and short of it. I told her: Look, sister, this time you've got the wrong party. If you don't like it, you know what you can do."

"You're getting a divorce?"

"If she wants a divorce, let *her* get it. You have to go to Reno for a divorce here."

Not long after his marriage failed, the film deal fell through, too. The contract had been drawn up and was ready to be signed. Without warning, the producers backed out.

After Sigmund's first check had bounced, I stopped "translating" his book, and I was relieved that the agreement between us was over. But Sigmund Seltzer hadn't given up. He found a job as an insurance agent and started paying me in five- and ten-dollar bills, or whatever he could scrape together. No matter how many times I moved from one furnished room to another, he ferreted me out. Each time I would ask him how things were, and he would tell me everything. He had gone into partnership with a peddler who had a route in Staten Island. He had become part owner of a factory that manufactured women's hair nets. I don't know how, but he managed to strike up friendships with rabbis, writers, and Yiddish actors. Every time he visited me, he offered me tickets to some affair to which I didn't want to go. His clothes became more and more bedraggled, but, nevertheless, he still wore a broad-brimmed hat and fancy ties. From his overstuffed briefcase he would bring forth catalogues, photographs of famous people, letters of recommendation to publishers, rejection slips from editors. Several times he showed me pictures of women.

He would sit in my only chair—the kind always to be found in furnished rooms—smoking a cigar and listening to the new chapters I had written. I had long ago thrown away the German "original" and had half forgotten the episodes of previous chapters I had written and had given to Seltzer. All I had now was a list of names of imaginary relatives and friends from his past, which I had jotted down in a notebook.

I hoped that even Sigmund Seltzer would see how contrived and disjointed the plot was and would leave me in peace. But he found no fault with my writing. He listened eagerly to all my stories about him—his heroic deeds, his romantic adventures. He



nodded his head in agreement to the many ideas I attributed to him, to the words I put in his mouth. In one episode I described him as a revolutionary leader in Kharkov; in another, as a pacifist who would rather die than fight at the front; then, in turn, as a Palestine pioneer building the Jewish homeland, and as a fighter in the defense against the Ukrainian pogroms. I had already written over two hundred pages for him, but still had received only part of the amount he had promised me. The whole affair had become a nuisance to me, but somehow my efforts to make an end to it were halfhearted. I felt I could not let this pathetic creature down. Each time he saw me he would heft the manuscript in his hand and say, "Wait, you'll see, the two of us will make a lot of money. Sigmund Seltzer isn't dead yet!"

At about this time I got a job with a newspaper and could do without the few dollars Sigmund Seltzer contributed in curled-up bills and sometimes even in change. The story of his life had become so intricate, so melodramatic and contradictory, that I began to feel that I was swindling him and betraying his confidence. Again and again I decided to end this nonsense, but Sigmund Seltzer kept after me. No matter where I hid from him, he found me. Sometimes months would pass, and I would think he had disappeared for good. Then suddenly I would receive a telephone call or a telegram from him.

Years passed. I had published a few books and made somewhat of a name for myself. Nevertheless, Sigmund Seltzer still introduced me as his translator.

Sylvia had divorced Seltzer, and he had married again. He invited me to his new apartment one evening and introduced me to his wife. She looked astoundingly like the first one: the same crooked nose, the same oily smile, the same yellow eyes. She even dyed her hair the same carrot color. Other than that, she was a bit shorter and had broader hips and heavier legs. She owned a ladies'-wear shop and had raised a son from a former marriage. The second Mrs. Seltzer clasped my hand in hers and cried, "Any friend of Sigmund's is a friend of mine!"

And she made me swear a holy vow that I would come again some Friday evening for gefüllte fish and soup with dumplings, the likes of which were not to be found anywhere else in the United States.

After many excuses and broken dates, I finally did visit them one Friday evening. She kissed me and called me by my first name. She had also invited a calendar publisher, a Yiddish actor who was looking for a play, a cantor who was also a songwriter, and an owner of a kosher delicatessen store, in addition to a full household of uncles, aunts, and cousins, including a relative who was a doctor at Montefiore Hospital. They all requested that I read an excerpt from Sigmund Seltzer's manuscript, which he had had bound in leather. On the cover, engraved in gold letters, was the title, *My Adventures as an Idealist*. Below were the words, "The Autobiography of My Own Life by Sigmund Seltzer," and, underneath, the translator's by-line.

The group crowded around me as I looked for an appropriate passage. After I finished the reading, there was applause. Sigmund Seltzer embraced me and kissed me on both cheeks in the French manner. The aunts pressed me to their bosoms. One laughed enthusiastically, a second wiped away tears. The cantor put on a skullcap, which sat like a potlid on his thick head of hair, and sang Rosh Hashana prayers, and arias from operas. Sigmund accompanied him on the mandolin.

As I stood on the lonely subway platform at a quarter to two in the morning, half frozen, with a heavy stomach and an ache in my temples, I vowed that the very next day I would send Sigmund Seltzer a check for the money I had received from him and a letter telling him to stop plaguing me with our ridiculous opus. But somehow, as always, I didn't quite have the courage to shatter Sigmund Seltzer's grand illusion. I found myself again at work on the unbelievable manuscript.

When I reached page five hundred, I notified Sigmund Seltzer that his autobiography was completed. He still owed me money but explained that he was a little hard pressed at the present. I assured him that as long as he had no publisher I could wait.

I thought that everything between us was finished at last. However, his family and friends—rabbis, cantors, and insurance agents—arranged a banquet in his honor, and I was requested to say a few words. Sigmund Seltzer also asked me for a letter of introduction to a book publisher.

One day he informed me that he had found a publisher. The editor had corrected the manuscript and had arranged for it to be retyped. When I looked through it, I was stunned. Sigmund Seltzer had fallen into Communist hands. But the editor, after having filled the book with Communist propaganda, for some reason changed his mind in the end about publishing it.

More years passed, but Sigmund Seltzer neither succeeded in getting the book published nor would he give it up. I don't know to this day why the Communists lost interest in it. Perhaps some higher-up in the Party found traces of Trotskyism in it, or some other deviation. It was the time of the purges and what was kosher one day became counterrevolutionary the next day.

I had spent two years abroad, but no sooner had I returned home than I received a telephone call from Sigmund Seltzer. He had found an editor who had deleted the Communist propaganda and translated the book from Yiddish into English. He asked me to add an epilogue in which I was to describe the founding of the Jewish state and the war with the Arabs, as well as the effect on the world of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's death. Sigmund Seltzer had sent copies of the manuscript to Mrs. Roosevelt, Governor Lehman of New York, Eddie Cantor, and many other personalities and had received thank-you notes from them, which to him was a sign of high recognition.

I raised my voice at him and swore that I wouldn't so much as touch the book, but he won me over again. We were sitting in a restaurant. He tugged at my sleeve, offered me the salt shaker,

pushed the sugar bowl and ashtray toward me. He summoned the waiter to refill my glass of water and reminded me of the time when I didn't have a cent and his hundred dollars had kept me from starvation. He told me how proud his relatives were of me and how they read everything I wrote. His wife, Florence, had had a photograph of me standing with her husband enlarged. The picture hung in their bedroom. She had pasted other snapshots of me, as well as clippings, into a scrapbook. He had brought me a cigar holder as a gift.

I noticed that he was graying at the temples. He bemoaned the fact that his partner had swindled him, and complained of a kidney ailment. He mopped the perspiration from his brow with a soiled handkerchief and insisted, "What else do I have but this book? As long as I have any life in me, I'll work to see it in print."

I put aside my own work and began writing about the founding of the Israeli state, the war with the Arabs, Roosevelt's death, and even the Korean war. Sigmund Seltzer again found a publisher—one of those vanity presses that publish for a fee—to bring out the book in English. The editorial changes had been so extensive that I hardly recognized my own creation. Many pages were altogether new. Even the names of the protagonists had been changed.

The manuscript had been collecting dust in my place for some time, when one day I received a call from Sigmund Seltzer. "Is everything written up?" he wanted to know.

"More or less."

"Put in something about how women can't be trusted."

"The whole book is full of it."

"Put down that women are egotistical. A woman doesn't give a damn what happens to her husband. He works his head off for her, but as soon as he leaves the house, in comes a parasite —"

"What is this all about?"

"I'm not making it up, I assure you."

"Are you having trouble with your wife?"

Sigmund Seltzer started to cough, and his voice became hoarse and choked. "How did you know? Are people talking about it already?"

"No, I just asked."

"Let's have lunch. I have to talk to you."

We ate blintzes at a vegetarian restaurant downtown. Sigmund Seltzer swore me to secrecy. He was so disturbed that he kept sprinkling sugar on his blintzes. A coughing fit, so severe that he could barely catch his breath, brought tears to his eyes. He wiped them away with his napkin. Perspiration ran down his forehead and chin and into his plate.

Yes, he, Sigmund Seltzer, had been deceived. This wolf in sheep's clothing had been coming to his home for three years—eating, drinking, pretending to be a friend—but behind his back ridiculing him, turning Florence against him. This imposter had left a wife and five children in Havana and was living here in New York with a Puerto Rican woman. He had borrowed fifty dollars from Florence and hadn't repayed so much as a penny of it. How much money the man had actually wheedled out of her, Seltzer would never know. He had discovered the truth when his so-called friend had returned to Cuba,



and Florence had had a nervous breakdown. The doctors had cost him eight hundred dollars. She had had to go to a psychoanalyst, but that charlatan had not helped her. It was all wasted money.

Sigmund Seltzer began to cry. The diners at the other booths all stared at us. The waiter removed Seltzer's plate with the half-eaten blintzes.

Seltzer went to the washroom, where he remained for a long time. I stared angrily at the female patrons, having become infected with Seltzer's bitterness toward women. When he finally returned, his eyes shone with a child-like freshness. He had used the time in the washroom not only to wash his face and comb his hair, but to come to grips with himself. Apparently he had come to the conclusion that all was for the best. "Put that all down. Let the world know," he said.

"You can't put everything in one book!"

"Let it be a few pages longer. I'll pay."

It was becoming clear that the book would never be finished. Despite my reluctance to continue with it, I added a chapter about feminine treachery going back to Eve and the Garden of Eden. When I read it to Seltzer he said, "Just as if you had been in my shoes."

With the exception of the Rosh Hashana cards which he always sent, I didn't hear from Seltzer again for years. The cards were signed Florence and Sigmund Seltzer, so I knew that the couple had made up. Then one day a woman telephoned. The voice sounded vaguely familiar. She said, "This is Florence speaking."

For a moment, I didn't remember who Florence was. The woman seemed surprised. "Have you forgotten me? I'm Mrs. Seltzer."

"Oh, yes, Mrs. Seltzer."

"Sigmund is ill. He's been in the hospital three weeks. He asked me to get in touch with you."

"What's the matter with him?"

She told me that one of his kidneys had been removed, and bladder complications had developed. His heart was weakened. She was worried. "Sigmund is very sick."

I took a cab to the hospital. He was lying in a large ward in which the beds were separated from each other by linen partitions. I went up to his bed. One look at his swollen face, and I knew that he was dying. His gown was spotted with blood; from the bed hung a rubber tube leading to a urinal. For a few seconds I could hardly recognize him, but soon his face took on a familiar expression. He said to me, "Well, it will be easier to die."

"Don't talk such nonsense. You'll get well."

"What? No, my friend. I wanted you to come. First, because I wanted to say good-bye to you. After all, we've been friends all these years. You know my life backwards and forwards. You know what I've been through. Second, I want to ask you to help get my book published after my death. That's all I ask. It's all I hold dear. As for the rest of it—well, I'd better not talk."

"Where is the manuscript?"

"Right here. I didn't want to go to the hospital without my book. Florence would probably have thrown it into the garbage. I want you to promise and shake hands on it that this book will be published. I've written a will and made

you—what do they call it?—yes, the executor. I want the world to know the truth."

The manuscript was lying on the night table. It had a new binding and was twice as thick now because Sigmund Seltzer had had the English translation bound in with the Yiddish original. I glanced through it. Some sentences were still familiar. I read the part where Sigmund Seltzer escaped from prison with the help of the jail-keeper's daughter. Sigmund stretched

out his hand. "Give me your promise. Shake hands!"

I clasped his hand. It was cool and moist. "Do you swear?"

"Yes, I swear."

"Take the manuscript with you now. Someone's already trying to take it away."

Our eyes met in silence. His hair had become white and sparse, his forehead higher. An expression of gentleness and wisdom I had never seen before shone in his eyes. He half winked, half smiled,

as if to say, I know everything that you know, and a little more in addition. He was no longer the Sigmund Seltzer I had known all these years, but a sage purified by suffering. He stared at me with a look of fatherly affection and murmured, "In the end what remains after us writers? Nothing but a bundle of paper." □

*Isaac Bashevis Singer's latest novel, The Manor, has just been published by Farrar, Straus & Giroux, Inc.*

## Two things you can get from Romilar®

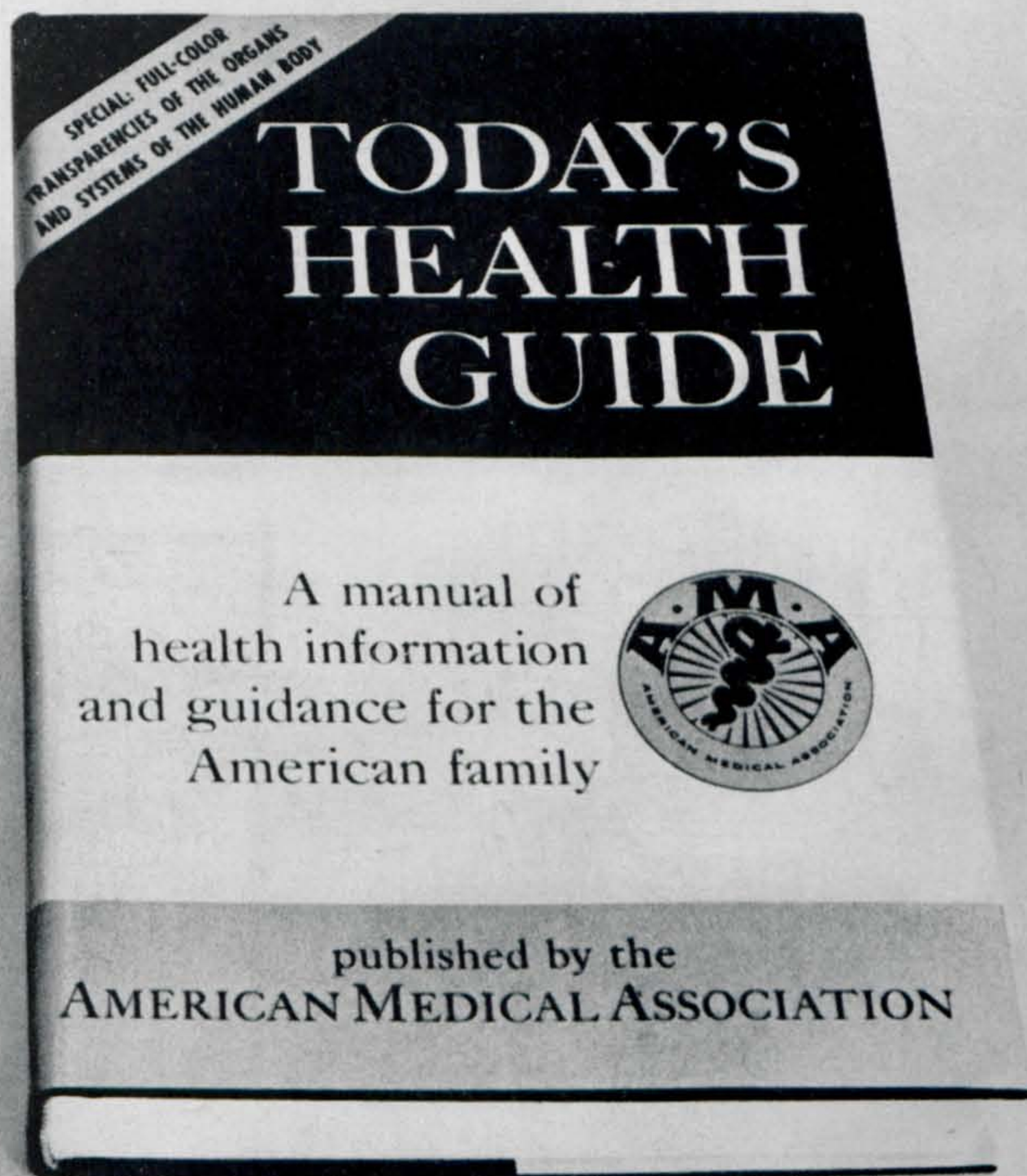


**Romilar CF  
for up to eight-hour  
cough relief.**

This 640-page home health reference, written by 200 of the world's best medical minds, can be at your fingertips anytime you need it for just \$3.00 and any Romilar box top or facsimile.

TODAY'S HEALTH GUIDE offers you authoritative information written in easy-to-understand language. It includes such vital topics as When You Need A Doctor, Proper Use Of Drugs, Safeguarding Your Health, Surgery Today and many more.

Also included are a complete First Aid Manual, over 300 illustrations and an eight-page Trans-Vision of muscles, organs and bones of the human body.



**Today's Health Guide,  
a \$5.95 value for only \$3.00.**

Here's all you do to get TODAY'S HEALTH GUIDE.

Please send me TODAY'S HEALTH GUIDE, worth \$5.95, for which I enclose one box top or the name Romilar written on a 3 x 5 card and my check or money order for only \$3.00, payable to Romilar, P.O. Box 138, New York, New York 10046.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Offer good only in U.S.A. and its territories. Void in states or localities where prohibited by law. Offer expires March 30, 1968.