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Our City's Characters

Like every other city and town, Częstochowa also had its fair share of various odd characters and it is my duty to commemorate some of them in the way they have been imprinted in my memory.

1. Little Szaja

He was a Jew, small in stature, born into practically abject poverty, but always content with his lot. His entire "business" was concentrated in a small basket that contained several dozen yo-yos which he made jump up and down on elastic, with little children running after him and calling, "Again! Again!". Despite his slight frame and meagre livelihood, he attained longevity and lived to ninety – [May we live] to one-hundred-and-twenty! He maintained that the "Angel of Death" was short-sighted and, therefore, failed to notice a "little Jew" like him and [always] passed him by unharmed.

2. "Client-Pullers"

As is known, Częstochowa was a city often visited by many Christians and in which they, of course, purchased various commodities. Local traders, eager to sell their merchandise, sent forth various "agents" to meet them in order to pull them to their shops. They paid them a commission for each sale made through their assistance. Elimelech Kutner and Milsztajn, the son of the city's renowned midwife, particularly excelled in this.

3. The Zorski Brothers

It is true that the Zorski brothers were not the owners of a famous, commercial firm in town but, throughout their lives, they were under the illusion that they were the city's greatest cantors, with their pleasant voices and the lovely melodies with which they delighted the congregation when they served as prayer-leaders. But their conduct was indeed amusing. They lived together in a narrow little room and had but one bed. However, they were nevertheless content with their lot.

4. "Piorun¹" the Carter

In our city, there was a beggar whose wagon was always lashed together with ropes and "bandages". For years, he walked behind the cart, urging his horse on with his shouts of "giddy-up", never daring to actually sit in the wagon.

In view of his difficult financial situation, he wished to reduce his costs on the horse's feed and it occurred to him to begin training the horse to eat, progressively, less and less. But his experiment failed. The horse died and "Piorun" was left with a horseless cart²

¹ [TN: פיורון in the original Hebrew, with quotation marks. Although the surname Piorun (Pol.; Thunder) does exist, this seems to be a nickname connected with the way he goaded his horse on. If read "Fiuron", it could be the peasant's mispronunciation of "furen" (Yid.; travel).]

² [TN: This is actually a well-known Jewish joke.]

5) The City's "Celebrities"

Some peculiar characters were notorious in town, such as:

- a) the man nicknamed "*Tzimmes*³", who was destitute and despondent and used to call out to every passer-by, "*Father, give me to eat.*";
- b) "*Riwale*" the dwarf, who went around the busy part of the first Aleja, begging for alms and, whoever did not hasten to offer her his contribution, was sometimes "reminded" with a pinch;
- c) Everyone also knew "*Queen Jadwiga*", who promised she would help the People of Israel attain Independence and Kingship
- d) "*Tiny Little Judis'l*";
- e) "*Godele Riwale*";
- f) "*Mechel*", who had the delusion that "*The river is on fire...and there are no firemen in town!*"

(All these characters, too, were annihilated and murdered by the Nazis!)

³ [TN: Sweet carrot stew.]