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THE ROMANCE OF NEW RUSSIA

by

MAGDELEINE MARX



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THOMAS SELTZER

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PREFACE

YOU arrive in Russia. Though you know that what has been written about it is pure invention, that the truth has deliberately been falsified, besmirched, and bespattered with gore, still you get a sort of shock of surprise.

You find a totally new relationship between man and things, with the majority of people benefiting by the new order. Everywhere not only the signs of resurrection, but resurrection itself. Yet the rest of the world still believes the absurd legends of oppression and disorder that are told about Russia.

The mind refuses to accept this state of affairs. You say to yourself, "I'll bring back the proofs, I'll collect documents, photographs, facts. Figures and statistics shall be my arguments. I will make other people see what I have seen."

It was under the impulse of this indignation, and strong in this resolution, that I spent six months in Soviet Russia.

I entered into the very arcana of life there; I studied methods of stabilizing the ruble, the work of the Institute of Soviet Law; I visited

hospitals, schools, barracks, prisons, museums, universities; I attended sessions of the people's courts, frequented the theaters, acquainted myself with scientific discoveries, spent whole days at a time in factories, familiarized myself with the economic activity of the country in its salient features. From the Baltic to the Black Sea, from the Sea of Azov to the Caspian—through the whole of that vast region I went, asking questions, taking notes, working without cease upon a document that would be concise, accurate, irrefutable. Then I returned.

The day after my return I began to straighten out these reflections of mine on Russia. I wanted to work them into a unified whole. Then I saw that in many details they were no longer quite true—Russia moves quickly!

Within scarcely a month production in the textile industry showed signs of increasing, and transportation showed signs of improving. Ideas but newly promulgated and now launched into practice were to blow a breath of life upon scholarly theory, and soon it would be absolutely necessary to change the figures representing the cost of wheat, rye and coal.

But that wasn't all. There was something else, something deeper. My set of facts made a con-

gealed, mathematical truth, devoid of character, without dynamic force. It lacked something as important as the soul in a body. *Was it a soul that was missing? Or a single voice speaking for the whole of it? Or the throb and pulse of men's blood?*

A force for which I have no name trod on the heels of my work, rapping at the futility of it, telling me it was a mockery, and revealing the absence of an angry, stubborn god. When I drew up the figures showing the number of schools created by the Revolution, little faces softly interposed themselves between me and the written page. The happy, intelligent expression on those children's faces told a truer tale than my sum in arithmetic. When I tried to make a resume of the principal articles of the Bolshevik marriage code, there would rise to my memory the tranquil picture of a husband and wife whom I had met in Russia. The whole marriage code transcribed on to my pages would not have had the superb eloquence of that simple picture.

So I discarded my figures, facts and documents; I let eyes speak, living, pulsating youth, toiling hands, crowds, quivering voices—the whole an image of deliverance larger than an entire nation and assuming the form of a single being.

My figures were correct enough, but life had blotted them out with its pictures. The pictures alone were *true*.

And here are these pictures. They do not pretend to express the Russia of the Revolution. They are simply—tiny, tiny as they are, fleeting as they are, but most carefully collected—they are simply moments of Russia's existence. If they show traces of feeling, that is because one cannot take part in a great human endeavor without a throbbing of one's heart.

MAGDELEINE MARX.

**THE ROMANCE
OF NEW RUSSIA**

CHAPTER I

ARRIVAL

"Russia, you must be the country so universally dreamed of by men through all ages, you who are the only country where giants have room enough for their feet, air enough for their lungs."

GOGOL (*Dead Souls*).

" T N RUSSIA! I am in Russia."

A Every now and then I said it over again to make myself believe it, though a day and two endless nights had passed since we left Riga—a day and two nights in this large, comfortable Russian coach with the proletarian emblem blazoned on the outside: R. S. F. S. R.¹ Twenty hours since we had left Sebezhe, the frontier village, and greeted the first Red soldiers.

I had awaited this moment with such keen anticipation that I felt a vague astonishment at still inhabiting the same body, at still possessing the same skin, and still presenting the same appearance to people who looked at me.

¹ Russian Socialist Federated Soviet Republic.

Monday night we left Riga. Would we reach Moscow on Wednesday, as they had promised? I didn't know. Two hours more—three hours more—even ten, if necessary. What difference did it make?

Seated on the back platform of the last coach, I had, for the past forty hours, been caught and held by a stupendous something that it was beyond me to understand or define. It was not anything you could touch or see. It was a something that hovers over the whole of Russia and is Russia—the infinite, which in this country assumes the form of the land.

I was not the only one to feel it. My traveling companions, who lounged idly in my compartment, were also submerged in that green ocean which we were slowly cleaving. At all the doorways were heavy motionless faces turned to the horizon as if held by an irresistible attraction. And behind me stood the conductor, with his blue, lack-lustre, hypnotized gaze fixed upon the gentle magnetic landscape.

Then I realized that this was not the atmosphere in which I had preconceived my first hours in Soviet Russia. Childishly, stupidly, I had expected a change of scene. At the frontier I had looked hard for a visible line cutting the world

in two. I had hoped to see I don't know what announcement in the shape of trees or colors. And lacking an obvious sacred sign, I wanted to make some great sacrifice that no one would know of.

Instead, the atmosphere crept upon you subtly, insinuatingly; the fascination had a tinge of sadness.

And after all it was an ordinary trip in a well-run train.

Someone touched me on the shoulder.

"A glass of tea?"

I am not fond of the colorless, boiling-hot drink, without a bouquet, that the people in the car gulped with relish. But the touching cordiality with which it was offered made me hasten to pronounce an emphatic "I f you please" to the unknown, flat-nosed visage leaning toward me.

I was wrong to be impatient and to expect to be breathing the breath of the Revolution already. Weren't my surroundings pleasant—everything pleasant that was going on about me? Could I in my own country find the same will to share things, the same taking of fraternity for granted, the same deep-seated simplicity? Or that innate sense of cooperation which I had noticed in the morning when the passengers piled out of the

train and as a matter of course helped to push it along because the way went up and the locomotive—stoked with wood and quickly winded—refused to budge?

No, I was not dreaming. That wilderness of green, those thoughts of mine which floated out into infinity when the horizon widened, those long rails which ran into the misty distance like a curved needle—that was Russia!

Gently, without haste, verst added itself to verst, groves of trees came running towards us and receded, great fields of rough grass followed one another, little clusters of huts looked like sorry toys fallen from the sky, numberless ponds strewn the distance and suggested shields dropped by giants, the outlines of churches were etched against the delicate blue of the sky. The small rural stations succeeded each other, always with the same peasants holding bread up to the train doors—bread, eggs, sausage, bacon—and always with the passengers standing in line at the *kipiatok*, waiting to fill their tin kettles with hot water. Then the bell would ring and the jog-trot of the trip would begin again, through a plain which was blurred in the distance and held up an unfathomable mirror to the sky, a plain at all

points so alike that there was nothing to prove that we were moving.

When, after a lapse of time—it might have been minutes, it might have been days—I heard someone cry "Moscow, there's Moscow!" I was not exactly disillusioned, but somewhat bewildered and incredulous. It seemed impossible that after all this silence and vastness we should come suddenly upon a city—a real city with noise, smoke, congested street-crossings, and perpetual hurry and flurry.

It could not be Moscow! It was too soon! I felt too unprepared—felt like praying for a reprieve.

But that far-reaching mass of low houses and green roofs, pierced here and there by great flashes of light, was Moscow and nothing else. There it was. The countryside looked more and more city-like: the confused aspect of things became more precise; buildings emerged from the line of the mass and assumed edges and angles, the flashes of light turned into belfries set a-top the churches like drops of sunlight about to melt. Now I was able to make out the facades of sang-de-boeuf, the pointing spires. Then came the suburbs! Dachas with carved window frames, fields, and mangy gardens.

The train, gasping and with a painful creaking of joints, leaped forward in a final effort, then slowed down and stopped. I was in Moscow!

This was no time for indulging in sentimental reflections over the emotions occasioned by leave-takings, the divine yearning to be in a state of grace. The important thing now was the lost ticket, miraculously found again, the strapping of luggage.

Porters in white aprons approached lackadaisically—*a la Russe*—nonchalantly, as though surprised and half asleep.

"How much for taking two valises to the carriages outside the station?"

"Two million."

A bearded cabby beckoned to me with his whip and shamelessly asked six million to take me to my hotel. I was in no state of mind to take part in the shrill haggling that was going on around me; I did not know that a scant half of the sum he so insolently demanded was enough⁵ and I was in such a hurry to leave the station that I was happy to let him rob me.

"Very well, six million if you say so, but lose no time and don't change your mind. Put the valises on and start!"

Rusty and dusty, ready to collapse at each turn

of the wheels, the carriage started with a frightful din of rasping iron, and jolted through the streets of Moscow.

The streets of Moscow! Had it been six or seven years ago, I should have thought of them as an imitation, a slavish imitation, of the Russia of literature.

"All very Russian," I should have thought, "this profusion of churches, these vermilion houses, the half-hoops over the carriage-horses, the long red shawls and pistach-colored kerchiefs, the blouses embroidered down the side making all these tall people seem to be of the same sex, the very curve of their shoulders, the way they swarm on the streets like vermin—this semi-European, semi-Asiatic crowd. Yes," I should have thought, "all very Russian; the novels did not lie."

Picturesque? Yes. But what of it?

What I was thinking of was that I was in the country of the Revolution, that the Revolution had been here, the Revolution had lived in this atmosphere, had made its conquest at this very spot, and that I could not, try as I might, evoke a picture of either what it had been or now was. At that very moment, I thought, the people at home were unfolding their "*Le Temps* or *Le Matin* and reading: "Unfortunate country!" fol-

lowed by descriptions of hangings and killings, of rivers of blood flowing over these very streets where the beat of horses' hoofs made such a gentle, pleasant, harmless sound in one's ears.

The carriage, which was really hanging back and only pretending to hurry, seemed to be going at an infernal speed.

"Please, cabby, don't go so fast; give me a chance to look about ; let me get something for my six million. I want to absorb it all, remember it all. I want to make a snap-shot inventory of the things in the shop-fronts and find out what is going on behind the steam-covered window-panes of the *chainayas*. I can make out people's forms gathered around a samovar. Oh, for a chance to explore the interior of that church in which I caught a glimpse of a cascade of gold! And to look again at the bronzed face of that old Georgian in a square bonnet, who wore a *barka* on his shoulders like a knapsack, with the fur hanging down to the ground. I suppose I won't even be able to read the bills posted on the fence, and I'll never know what those two girls in Ukrainian costume are talking about in the rise and fall of their turtle-dove voices."

If that devil of a cabby had only stopped a moment to let me hear the battalion of Red

soldiers, as they swung into the boulevard, sing their ringing chorus! Splendid-looking young fellows they were, in brand-new accoutrement, with figures like drum-majors and the elastic tread of gymnasts. I had hardly had time to see them when the carriage turned into another street—the cabby did that on purpose, I am sure—and the last phrase of the chorus was abruptly cut off.

Every twenty yards something else made me turn half around in my seat. First a building, magnificently inscribed "Children's Playground," from which shrill bird-like cries issued ; then another, farther on, with the sign "People's Court." And no end of shops! Shops over which presided the portraits of Lenin, Marx, and Trotzky set in red frames and decked with a profusion of red ribbons.

"Tuda, tuda," said the cabby, turning toward me and pointing his whip at a great entrance flanked by grey columns.

There it was, true enough. I was at my hotel and at the end of my journey.

The modest room to which I was taken, after a few formalities, contained nothing but absolute necessities: a bed, a table, a chair and a wash-stand. But no room ever looked so beautiful to me.

Through the open double window I saw a field of green roofs stretching as far as the eye could reach, some, freshly painted, of the vivid green of young shoots, others of the yellowish tones of an unripe lemon. And here and there and there, set into the green mosaic like fiery studs, the bulbous domes of the city of forty times forty churches.

I wanted to stay there the rest of the day, but it was five o'clock, the usual hour for lunch in Russia.

The nearest restaurant was a place fantastically decorated with cubist frescoes—very badly done, by the way,—pretentiously furnished with benches of worn red velvet, and as dark and smoky as a German *rathskeller*. Except for the monument of earthenware tiles extending from floor to ceiling and the prevailing note of confusion, there was nothing to stamp the place as peculiarly Russian.

Coquettish young women, their hair dressed Parisian style, circled about the place waiting on people. One of them brought me a plate of *borshch* (creamy Little-Russian soup), a minced cutlet with potatoes, a great dish of stewed fruit, and the traditional glass of tea. Four millions that cost me—about fifty cents.

"At last," I thought, "I can stroll to my heart's content with no cabby to keep me."

The Tverskaya stretched ahead of me, rising in a long slope, a noisy thoroughfare of shops crowded close together—the result of the NEP (New Economic Policy).

There was a surprising number of food-shops, but an even greater number of bookshops. **The** brains of Moscow are more exigent than its stomach. Every twenty steps I was confronted by a display of books clamoring for attention, with wrappers inscribed *Novost* ("Just Out"). Books and books, poems, technical works, all sorts of books. And magazines. All large, in excellent print, on good paper, with illustrated covers of bold design—literary reviews, economic reviews, political, philosophic, juridical, scientific. I assumed there must be readers for all of them.

I noticed a moving-picture theater, the entrance to which was adorned with a poster showing Douglas Fairbanks in cowboy costume, over the announcement of a none-too attractive program. Close by was an enormous shop, nearly as large as the largest grocery stores of Paris, its window dressed with glowing piles of fruits, pyramids of bonbons, great heaps of reddish-brown fish, platters of caviar, beautiful pale pink hams. I en-

tered and priced some of them. The prices of dressed pork, confectionery and vegetables varied but slightly from those in France. Sometimes they were a trifle higher, but not often. And the assortment was as great.

A little further on I entered a Soviet bakery. In front of the door stood two ragged beggars holding out their hands. The customers, on their way out, threw them hundred thousand or five hundred thousand-ruble notes or a bit of bread.

Once inside, I found myself in a crush of arms, heads, and breasts that smelt of human sweat, acrid yeast and heated ovens. People jostled each other in front of the counters. Long lines stood patient and resigned in front of the cases into which attendants were dumping enormous flat baskets full of crusty rolls, flour-sprinkled *kalachiks*, and cakes made with meat—all in a profusion that suggested the legendary horns of plenty.

"Wait on me! Me!" cried the women, shaking their tickets in the faces of the phlegmatic salesmen. A backwash in the human stream swept me into the arms of a housewife with Kalmuk cheekbones. I asked her the reason for the extraordinary siege of the bakery.

"This is a State bakery, and bread is much

cheaper here than in the privately owned bakeries." She pointed to the scale of prices posted up on the wall. "That's why everybody comes here. Oh, but if you could see it in the morning! There's a line more than two hundred yards long in front of the door. And in front of the State dairies—mercy!"

I left the bakery and continued my walk along the Tverskaya, passing bookshops, hairdresser's shops with their everlasting wax busts, and even a "State Perfumery Shop," where rouge and rice-powder were for sale. At the end of the Tverskaya, I came to a great square from which two tree-lined boulevards branched.

A charming monastery faced the square, its rose-colored facade and three filigreed crosses gilded and pierced by the last rays of the sun. In front of the monastery stood a gigantic bronze statue of Pushkin, bending over from its pedestal as if to challenge passers-by.

I mingled with the happy crowd that strolled back and forth under the trees. Even at the first glance, how different it was from European crowds, if only for the unbelievably out-of-date dresses the women wore. Little bonnets that looked as if they had come from a second-hand shop, full sleeves, pointed waists, boleros and

flounces, blouses with lace berthas in a style our mothers wore when we were little tots. It was as if animated photographs of twenty years ago rubbed shoulders in passing with figures out of a romantic novel: men's paletots, traveling skirts cut so as to use a minimum of cloth, American-made slippers spread out by the heavy tread of tall, bob-haired women.

I looked at them, I followed them, I walked close beside them. What was so fascinating about them? Was it the surprising multiplicity of types, or simply the impression they gave of beautiful health, of young vigor pulsating under the delicate skin? Or was it not a certain something which their foreheads, their keen eyes, their free-and-easy movements revealed—the intellectual gymnastics in which they were so constantly engaged? A few moments before I had been impressed a little disagreeably by the strange combination of carelessness with the elegance of the Second Empire. Now, studying the women one by one, I could not keep from thinking almost all of them beautiful. Frank, sturdy, well-set-up, each had a history and a character of her own. These women were different from the women of all other races, and yet epitomized them all.

I was struck, too, by the almost complete ab-

sence of couples. There were scarcely any. From my first walk, of course, I should not be able to tell the true character of the relations between men and women; yet surely the young women who walked soberly alongside of those big, good-natured, serious fellows did not show signs of being occupied with love affairs.

One little Russian girl with ragged shoes and a profile like a Florentine angel, was a medical student. Or so I gathered from the conversation she was holding with her partner, a young man with bristly hair. In front of them, a hulking, beardless youngster was commenting with ardor on Bukharin's last lecture course, and the girlish listeners on either side of him paid rapturous attention as he swiftly sketched the principles of historic materialism. A little further on, another group was discussing politics. I, a Frenchwoman, could see from the ease, the freedom, the real fraternity and earnestness among these young people, that the hypocritical pursuit of the female by the male as we know it in the Latin countries was in Russia to be forever discredited.

Gradually the evening settled down.

At the cafe halfway along the Tverskoy Boulevard, on the roof of the only eight-story building in Moscow, all the tables were occupied. A res-

taurant, a movie and an orchestra were in full swing. From below you could see the potted fir-trees which screened the diners. The heavily laden waiters darted in and out among the tables like skaters in a rink, while the strains of a tango, faintly heard through the foliage, hovered on the breeze.

Some picturesque results of the freedom of commerce: at the foot of each tree, peddlers were stationed ; one chap, a mere youngster, was selling cigarettes, shrieking, "Papirosi! Papirosi!" Clutched between the legs of another boy I saw an enormous glass bowl in which five or six cucumbers floated in a greyish juice. Some little girls planted themselves in my path offering me fresh hot rolls. "*Gariachi! Gariachi!*" they cried in piercing voices. A lean youth had his hands thrust into a pair of thread socks that he was selling for three millions.

But what was most curious was that each peddler kept sampling his own merchandise—doubtless to demonstrate its excellence to the prospective purchaser. The cigarette-seller smoked some of his own cigarettes. Another ragamuffin munched some of his stock of caramels ; a third plunged his hand into his bowl to fish for a cucumber ; a little girl bit into her rolls with beau-

tiful gold-filled teeth; and an old woman seated on the ground picked over her bagful of sunflower seeds with mournful tenacity, until empty husks littered the ground like shells strewn over a beach,

The boulevard, which was one of **three** encircling the city, ran past a square further on. Here were still fresh traces of the Revolution, bleeding and palpable. They made me dream of those heroic days and of the workers who fell as these stones had fallen. I could hardly tear myself away from the spot. The front of each house, so numerous were the bullet-holes that scarred it, looked like a pock-marked face. Some houses bore the scars of bruises or gashes. In other houses, the windows gaped wide open, hanging on their hinges. They looked like eyes that, in watching the conflict, had been blinded. One solitary empty cottage, in the midst of the ruins, gave an impression of dreary stupefaction. On one side of the square a building several stories high with its roof torn off and its front caved in, displayed twisted iron staircases running from top to bottom, blackened plaster, scorched walls.

But the life spirit teemed among these ruins and had lost no time putting forth shoots again. You could see it animate the children at play; you

could hear it in the conversations of the merchants in their little shops tucked in the bottom of the wooden buildings which have been dauntlessly built over the ruins. You could behold it moving like a meteor through the dizzy confusion of the tramways crowded with idlers.

From the open space in front of the Basilica of the Holy Saviour I saw the Kremlin for the first time. The green towers built on its ramparts are so barbaric, so appallingly beautiful, that one cannot look at them, I think, without a choking sensation.

In spite of myself I found my eyes wandering to follow the windings of the slow-flowing Moskova, inlaid with tarnished silver reflections. Then I turned to the far bank to see the irregularly scattered roofs, among which blue or gold domes of churches sprouted thickly amid clusters of crosses. I do not exaggerate, for in the space of a hundred yards there were four almost touching each other, not even counting the chapel that jostled a fruit-seller's shop, nor the gleaming ikons at each street corner, before which lamps burned ceaselessly.

I crossed Red Square, so named because it was the place where for centuries torment had been inflicted. I walked over the grass plot, dotted

here and there with lounging figures, along the length of the sinister wall of the Kremlin, which slashed the sky with its regular dominos. How much blood had flowed down the stone steps that descended from the pillory in the middle of the square! After I recognized it, I could not tear my eyes from this place, so small in proportion to all the sufferings inflicted within its limits. Here spikes had been driven into human flesh; human feet had been seared with red-hot fire-brands, throbbing human temples beaten into pulp, human legs and arms quartered, human bodies skinned; eyes that saw too clearly had been blinded, soft breasts had been torn off; boiling pitch had been poured down throats that screamed for mercy, necks had been slit and allowed to remain gaping and smoking in the sun, like ghastly, dripping jaws.

It seemed to me that I could see those condemned men and women filing into the square in the pitiless dawn. It was along this narrow path that they had walked, carrying candles whose wavering flames marked them for torture. I also seemed to see the Czar himself in his tawdry gorgeous tunic, close to the executioner, in the middle of the enclosure, near the gibbet; and the executioner's block and the reddened brands; on

his right, the nobles clad in their long, jewel-embroidered robes with girdles of pearls; and the numerous guards, in double-breasted coats of white velvet and white fur caps, with heavy golden chains across their chests.

Yes, this was the place where human flesh had crackled, where entrails had oozed upon the ground, where bones had been splintered into bits, and bodiless heads had rolled.

But now this fountain, which had never been dry of human blood for whole centuries, was only an innocent greyish knoll covered with worn-down stones on which little boys sat dangling their legs.

I seated myself near them. Although the darkness had come on suddenly, you could still see the color and line harmonies of that architectural wonder, the St. Basil. It seemed an "immense crouching dragon," with its domes like many-colored turbans, its Italian staircase, its variegated columns, its Cambodian turrets and its Chinese Tower.

The legend goes that on the completion of the basilica, Ivan the Terrible caused the architect who had made the plans to be blinded, to keep him from ever again constructing anything like it. The legend is false. But it is true that during

the Red days, when the news was circulated in Petrograd that the St. Basil was being demolished, Lunacharsky resigned as Commissioner of the People. Twenty-four hours later he withdrew his resignation on learning that the masterpiece of architecture was still intact.

How many times I have paused there to look at the garden of cupolas overshadowing the Cathedral of the Annunciation above the wall of the Kremlin ; the dome of the church where Boris Godunov was annointed Czar ; the square of the palace which in the times of the Chancellor was still called "The Palace of Gold"; the tower of Ivan Veliky, that commandment embodied in stone; and the whole length of the wall, from one end of the square to the other, a line of flower-decked graves where the heroes of the Revolution sleep.

How many times have I tried to picture the oriental life of the Czarinas in the old days when Moscow was still the village of Kushkovo. They were cloistered in the heart of luxurious "terems," *"seated behind seven-and-twenty locks, locked with seven-and-twenty keys, so that the wind might not blow upon them, so that their bold consorts might not see them"*; and then in the days of the modern emperors, guarded from view by

their officials, spied upon by their own police, confined in the midst of the Court in that sumptuous barracks over which the passionate Red flag now floats.

I do not know how long I stayed there. All I know is that suddenly in the darkness an unexpected chime played the first notes of the *International* and that the great bronze clock which makes a rose-window above the Spaskaya gate struck twelve. . . . Where were the coaches of the Czars that used to fill the feudal arch with their clatter? There were only the figures of the humble folk, swallowed up in the vast blackness, as they held out their passports to a sentinel on guard.

I had a long walk before me. I wanted to go straight back into the city and not loiter on the way. I did not so much as glance at the Museum of Peasant Art or the Museum of Antiquities near which I passed. No stopping in front of the poetical chapel of the Spanish Virgin, with its golden stars against an old-blue background. It stands against the drawbridge that shuts off Red Square. In the old times, it used to be the rule for the Czar to kneel there before entering the Kremlin.

There is not a traveler in Soviet Russia who has

not been struck by the ironic inscription placed opposite the chapel filled with praying women: "Religion is the opium of the people." I saw it as I passed.

Suddenly I became afraid of being lost in the maze of streets and crossroads. I had to ask twice for the way back to the Tverskaya, from which I had set out.

The man, who wore a flat odd Mongolian hat, answered in the purest French the question that I had phrased in detestable Russian: "Cross the next street, then straight ahead to the right." In the time it took to walk the two blocks, I learned that he was a professor of the Russian language and of Russian literature on the faculty of a labor school, where twelve hundred proletarians of both sexes received secondary and collegiate instruction and might prepare themselves to be doctors, engineers, lawyers and teachers.

"May I visit the school and study the organization?"

"With the greatest of pleasure!"

We set a date, and Professor Soboliev left me in front of the magnificent Theatre Plaza, with its well-kept squares, its blossoming garden plots and its benches veiled in shadow, where belated

strollers still lounged enjoying the sweet night air.

I approached the bulky building surmounted by a quadriga of bronze that seemed to cleave the night. It was the hour when the shows were over, and a swarm of human ants came thronging out of every door, through each colonnade. What an odd crowd! Women who looked like peasants, bare-headed girl students jostled doubled-chinned stout women in middle-class dress: diamonds, pearls, furs and all.

Would you like to see the general program according to the posters on the wall? In the old Imperial Opera House of Moscow, the theatre in front of which I was standing, *Sadko* had just been given. The next night *Prince Igor* was to be given, while the following night at the Little Theatre, Gogol's *The Inspector General* was to be presented; at the Art Theatre, *Mme. Angot's Daughter*; at the Gittis Theatre, a play by Cromelynck; at the second studio of the Art Theatre *The Cricket on The Hearth*; at the Theatre of the Revolution, a German play; at the New Theatre *Manon*; at the Jewish Gabina Theatre, a play in Hebrew *Ha-Dibuk*. Two very modern theatres were presenting respectively the *Salome* of Oscar Wilde and *Princess Tourandot*. And the

concerts! Beethoven, Mozart, Chaikovsky, Rimsky, Borodin, Grieg. What delightful evenings in prospect!

The crowd had disappeared, slowly, some in cabs, others walking leisurely along the cross-streets. I realized I was almost alone.

I have several times had the experience of looking out from a high place down upon a city far below me that had sprung up from a vast expanse of land like a flower of stone. Dominating that fraction of space, I liked to pretend that I was dominating time also; I had the feeling of being an ephemeral watcher beholding a moment in the destiny of man, mysteriously thrust into the universe: "Man has attained this point in his evolution, so far and no further has he gone; behold him at just this point of his power." And when I went away, my spirit seemed to re-enter my body and an elusive sense of human continuity was established by my contact with trivial, incomprehensible things in the present.

That evening in front of the Soviet of Moscow, a red and white building opposite which stands **the** monument erected to those who had died in **the** Revolution, I again experienced this **sensation**. Lifted up out of my body, I seemed to be **a** spectator from out of the depths of time, arrested **for**

a second in my wanderings through eternity to look down and perceive in the swiftness of a lightning flash, first the Kremlin of the Czars drowned in the shadow; then, across the street, the light that burns in the stronghold of the proletarians.

But I had reached the door of my hotel. My room at last! Outside the window, a blue square pricked by lights, lay the deep night of Moscow. I knew I must sleep. "Tomorrow," I thought, "I will descend from these heights; tomorrow I shall be swept into and be carried along by the deathless march of progress!"

As soon as I had closed my eyes, I heard the notes of a duet through the open window—a man and a woman singing together, their footsteps keeping time. Their voices rose so high that there seemed to be nothing left in the world but the sound of them. Everything was hushed, the very continents were silenced, and from the depths of the East there seemed to come an answering echo. . . . Or did I dream it?

CHAPTER II

RED SQUARE

VAST, and seeming vaster because of its emptiness, Red Square lay spread out like an African desert drenched in sunlight. It was the anniversary of the death of a great fighter for the cause, and the day had been set aside for a last melancholy tribute to his memory.

It was three o'clock. The close-packed but patient crowd had been assembling since noon on the approaches to the Kremlin. It required some boldness on our part to cleave through diagonally and get by the cordon of horsemen who encircled the Square. But finally we arrived at the foot of the red-draped reviewing stand built in front of a mound covered with flowers.

Before us lay the blinding emptiness of the Square; behind us descended the wall of the Kremlin. It looked much more like a rampart of hell than a palace wall—a wall said to be dyed with the blood of centuries—a wall made higher by tall forked battlements projecting heavenward

—an inexorable and secret wall, bordered with gilded towers, and supporting small green turrets like little Cambodian temples.

But what difference did the wall make then? No one had eyes for it, or'for the gleaming disks of the round turrets, or for the crosses which hung suspended in space by a divinely beautiful corbel. No one even dreamed of noticing the red flag that floated triumphantly over the Palace of the Czars. For out of the distance came the subdued tramping of a huge invisible host. It was so near that you could almost hear its breathing. Before long it came in sight. Bukharin and Radek, Kamenev, Krylenko and Piatakov had barely time to take their seats on the reviewing stand when a scarlet cloud of moving banners appeared across the blue slope that descends to the Moskova. Standing on tiptoe I could see them. Some fluttered on the wind; others, rectangular in shape, were held fast on either side by wooden uprights; others were inscribed in gold letters which glittered in the sun.

The banners grew larger. They came nearer the Square. How striking they were against the blue!—a seething red torrent flowing over a river-bed of heads and shoulders.

All of a sudden a blaze of fire burst through

the air, followed by a *boom!* that made one's entrails quiver. A regiment of Red soldiers approached to the music of the Funeral March of the Revolution, and passed on the right of the reviewing stand. Young fellows they were, proudly erect, with studded helmets and coat-fronts decorated with frogs of wine-colored braid. They marched slowly, almost sullenly, as if affected by the music. But there was no grief in the hymn which they seemed to bear on their shoulders as if it were an imponderable body, an expansive, dominating force that hovered and dissolved in the sunny air. Behind them in very close formation came the army of marchers—the workers of Moscow. How many were there? Some said 400,000, some 500,000. At the edge of the crowd cheers rose, curving inward toward the reviewing stand! What guttural Russian hurrahs! What dazzling ecstasy in the faces! They seemed all aglow, even the teeth. The reviewing stand responded with the same enthusiasm. There was almost a visible bond of sympathy between it and the crowd, a strong and pre-established current which prompted the ovation and gave it a certain loftiness. It was not as if one group of people was passing in review before

another. It was not even as if two human beings saluted each other, thrilling ; it was rather as if the dual halves of a single person recognized each other, smiling and elated.

There were women marchers wearing red bands about their heads. Their faces were suffused with lovej and they sang a Russian hymn, a melancholy chant that might have been intoned by a grief-torn muezzin from the top of a minaret. Other groups followed with different insignia, then still more regiments, more women, and more thousands of people. The mass flowed and vibrated—a great ever-moving throng.

Little by little, without anyone's being conscious of it, the songs blended into each other, the faces became confused, the groups of people lost their individuality and sank into the mass. The ubiquitous red smote your eyes, an odd rhythm throbbed in your temples, and the murmur of the innumerable tramping feet seemed only the roar of the ocean in a giant sea-shell. You seemed to be caught in an invisible mounting tide, blinded, swept away. You were no longer sure of your own body, your eyes, your voice. The abrupt speech of Krylenko, punctuated with many gestures, the stormy words of Bukharin, the tremen-

dous refrain of the *International*, sung thunderingly by the crowd, a man marching by in the column, his long hair waving in the breeze like a prophet's, an unusually beautiful woman passing—gestures—flags—were only moments in the overwhelming cyclone, only parts of the warm body of which you were no more than an infinitesimal cell.

What had happened? Had the heavens burst? Had there been a clap of thunder? If so, no one had heard it. Suddenly an avalanche of rain poured down upon the Square. We had not even noticed that the sky had become overcast, when the storm broke. And what a storm! In a single moment faces were dripping with rain, people's clothes stuck to their bodies, rain trickled off the banners. Below the lowering grey skies that veiled the lightning, shone the red-and-green domes and the Apocalyptic towers of the Basilica of Blessed St. Basil, lacquered with new tones by the rain. Some bare-footed women scurried through puddles j street urchins waved their long arms like drowning people. Little groups from the crowd took shelter under the great gate of the

Kremlin from beneath which a muddy network of noisy little rivulets escaped. But through the middle of the Square, impassive, heroic, with aureoles of raindrops, the vast solemn marching column moved on.

CHAPTER III

THE OLD AND THE NEW

"At every step life reveals, in nature and in society, traces of the old persisting¹ in the new."

LENIN (*Revolution and the State*).

SEEN from a distance, the enormous white enclosure of the Convent of the Virgins lay so heavily upon the level countryside that the weight of it seemed to have hollowed out the pool, which reflected, from the olive green lacquer of its surface, the white towers and battlements of the cloister.

I went in expecting to cross an austere, fragrant court—a world within a world—when instead I beheld a strange forest of marble columns, rusty crosses, granite pedestals, kneeling angels and small monuments, jammed together in front of a red-towered church. From the depths of a side passage came, like a moving cypress tree, the dark figure of a nun approaching with short measured steps.

The day was drawing to a beautiful close. The

foliage made a fret-work against a background of dark gold, the air seemed dusted with dancing motes, and the pink and tawny tones of the sky delicately tinted the fronts of the mausoleums. How good it was to breathe the soft perfume of the summer! But in spite of all this, and improbable as it seems, I was overcome by a sort of apprehension as I ascended the ten or twelve steps that led to the entrance of the church. Not apprehension. It was only that when I looked back, the outer wall seemed suddenly to interpose a barrier between Russia and me. I felt driven away from the place where the world's fever raged. Outside that wall was a whirlwind with which you couldn't keep pace; inside the wall time stood still, eternity smiled, and the future lay buried under flowering graves.

I had no desire to go on. Nevertheless I crossed the vestry and came to the threshold of the chapel, where a rush of voices assailed me, a rush of flickering lights, and perfumes rising from strangely garbed figures. If the wall that served as an altar had not irresistibly drawn my attention, I should have been rooted to the spot in astonishment, I should have been unable to decide which way to go, or whom to follow, or what to look at.

I went on, toward a great canopy of light that

really came from ikons in heavy gold frames. The frames, which were as wide as the pictures themselves, made a gigantic checkerboard, behind which enhaloed saints had meekly passed the centuries. The sunlight crashed through the windows and spattered the doorposts, pried into the copper grape vine that twined about them, burnished the figured friezes, tipped them with flakes of fire. It was overwhelming. It was blinding.

Fascinated, I risked a backward glance. Against the rear wall, evenly ranged on little braided rugs, the Dark Virgins stood like indifferent, dejected "extras" in a theatre. More of them were lined in similar fashion along both sides of the chapel. What a strange costume! Perched on their heads were black conical hoods rounded on top and edged at the bottom with a band of otter ; from the tip of this cone fell a pleated veil that concealed their foreheads, eyelids, temples, and ears. It was snugly clasped under the chin and hung halfway down from their shoulders. Their robes, which had very full sleeves, bagged at the waist, and were spread out over the flagstones like the petals of a morning-glory to hide their feet.

The most curious thing about the Dark Virgins was that they all had the same face. Only

one face for all of them—mournful, sallow, with a slit to let the prayers out.

Why did they stand so stiff and still? Why didn't they imitate the earnest congregation huddled to the left, in one of the lower wings of the chapel? Their whole hearts were in the service, even though they were but ragged beggars—poor old men in fustian, which must have been soaked through and through by the slush ; ragged brats and women with sleeping babies in their arms. They scarcely dared to glance at the golden wallj they took it in bit by bit, with furtive glances. They knelt, bending very low. When the time came to kiss the ikon, they ranged themselves like children one behind the other and followed resignedly. Bending over the sacred image they kissed it. Their full fleshy lips smacked the tea-rose cheeks of the Virgin and the chubby feet of the infant Jesus.

I joined this moving line of people and was able to reach the middle of the chapel behind the priest with curls of silver and chasuble of silver. He chanted breathlessly in a monotonous sing-song.

Set in the sparkling wall was a low door that opened on the Holy of Holies. It was like the

wings of a theatre, I thought. Perhaps I could approach and watch the drama from backstage.

I could see nothing, however. Or, rather, I could see so many things that I could distinguish none of them. In a very small space, all the objects that I had seen in the chapel were concentrated and multiplied. Outside they had been widely scattered and veiled by the dim light.

There was a conglomeration of jewelry, embroideries and enamels. Here and there was a candlestick or the armature of an ikon. And everywhere were flowers, flowers, flowers, and lights. Gold was incrustated with gold, and gilt was added to gilt and against this crowded background a painted, perfumed and bespangled priest in a violet robe paced back and forth, like an actor impatient for his cue.

At the same moment, sweetly, gradually, unseen nuns began to intone a chant for several voices.

Was there then after all something winged and flexible in these women's bodies that looked so like mummies in their nun's dresses? But even beneath a nun's habit, the ineradicable feminine need to be loved exists ; for in this song it dared to express itself very loudly, to cry and demand, to lift its face shamelessly to the face of God.

No, it was not my imagination. I went as far as the blue pillar and saw for myself. It was true, these pure crystal notes that trembled and soared did surely come from the mouths of those four wooden, unindividual figures swathed in the habiliments of grief. It was from those colorless lips that the palpitant appeal came like a long-drawn-out confession.

It was beautiful, the song of challenge they flung up to the All Powerful. At times it was no longer a song, but a lingering caress. The unseen audience was speech-bound, not a breath, not a movement.

A marble Virgin, set in a massive frame of carved stone, seemed to be saying to her babe, "Do you hear them?" Her halo was almost hidden by a diadem of sapphires, opals and rubies. Her robe, of real cloth-of-silver, was edged with two rows of pearls. Great uncut emeralds glittered upon her shoulders, and her throat was encircled with diamonds like a necklace of stars. Her fingers, her arms and her bosom were likewise laden with jewels. It was a wonder they had not be jeweled her face, too. It was fattish, and had the expression of a sheep.

After the hymn a cold, dead silence fell. A great cloud of incense spread out under the arches.

There was not a ray of daylight, but on the right wall the ikonostasis cast little gleams of light upon the frames of the pictures of the Annunciation, the birth of Christ, and the life of St. Nicholas.

Where was I? To what age of history had I gone back? Would I see Boris Godunov, who had been crowned here? Or the angry face of Sophia Alexeyevska, whom Peter the Great had sequestered in this convent? Would I see her appear in the doorway at the back? Would I suddenly stumble over the corpses of the three hundred who had been hung in front of the little cell of Sister Suzanne, Grand Duchess and Regent?

The shadowiness, the chanting, the odor of iris, and the smell of fresh linen that emanated from the large white altar cloths, the incense, and the last dying echoes of the prayer-bell, all made a strange hypnotic commixture, which did not deaden the soul, but benumbed it.

I decided to leave. Outside, the same calmness reigned. A scattered flight of many crows peppered the sky. They turned and wheeled, drew into a close flock, alighted abruptly, and settled on the fir-trees, like black fruit.

Behind me the door opened. A woman came out, closed it carefully and departed, tiptoeing

along on dirty feet, a beatific smile flickering on her lips, as if she were following a procession of angels. Her head was covered with a red-flowered kerchief. Her old cloth petticoat was almost stiff with dirt. But on her face was an expression of satisfied ecstasy that covered her features like a nebulous mask. Her confused, slightly wild glance wandered toward the gravestones, humbled itself before the glow of the magnificent sunset, transcended the horizons of earth, and approached the infinite.

How many years yet will be necessary to give her, and others like her, the equivalent of the gilded spectacle—the splendor, the poetry, the music, the hope—that she carried away as she stumbled down the stone steps and clutched so hungrily to her breast, beneath the faded folds of her ragged neckerchief?

CHAPTER IV

MASHA

" . . . the misery of the peasants at that time assumed such proportions that the presence of bugs and of moths in the cottages was considered an eloquent indication of prosperity."

TROTZKY.

IT WAS the last day of a week in the village that had glided past only too swiftly. In fact, it was the last hour. Soon I should have to leave all these things: the fragrant green plain which had become so dear to me; the monastery wall, baked, cracked, reddened by the sun; the bulbous monastery roofs, exposed to the sky like great golden eggs in a green cup; the pool in which urchins and geese paddled about together; the little grove of birch trees.

And Masha! Ah, Masha above all. And little Veruchka, who came so timidly to hide in my skirts; and the ikon of St. Nicholas, and the picture of Rakovsky, cut out of the *Izvestia*, and the great earthenware stove, and the sharp odor of

cabbage, and the little bare room where I had slept on a bed of dried herbs.

In order to spend the last minutes with me, Masha had let everything else go—her Saturday bath, the basket of linen which she had to lay out, even the meeting of the village Soviet, of which she was a member. And that was no small sacrifice. She could not understand why I did not do justice to the gala feast she had prepared for me: apples, a jug of fresh milk, a saucepan of potatoes, and a whole pullet, plump and yellow-skinned. It was a pity I wasn't hungry.

"Tonight," said Masha, as she brought me, like an offering, a napkin edged with crocheted lace, "I've got to make a trip to the library. You know, our library is filling up. We've just had a big box of books from Moscow. I'm curious to see what they have sent. Poor Dasha will never get them classified if I don't lend a hand."

"Yes, you're right, Masha."

She must have noticed I was scarcely listening, for she left the room.

How hard it was to tear myself away from the place. What good talks Masha and I had had at night, sitting on the wooden steps. She was past forty, but how young her spirit, how alive her heart. As we talked, she always had the air

of a sleeper awakening who takes in a situation in its entirety at the very first glance.

What a curious creature she was. Her droll face looked as if it had not been completely finished. Her eyes, lively as two squirrels, did not harmonize at all with her stolid features. The various aspects of her character constantly and astonishingly alternated on her face, like day and night: passivity, animation; passivity, animation. She had a serious gentleness of expression, like a child puzzling over the world. One of her mannerisms was to stop in the middle of her work, as if to look within and demand of herself, "Am I really I, Masha? Isn't it somebody else in my body, instead of me?"

It took many a conversation before I got to disentangle the secret thread of her inward logic. Then I was suddenly quite out of my depth, and I would wait, letting her talk, as I knew she loved to do. What she especially enjoyed was telling me about "before."

Night lay on the fields, the air was sweet. Seated close together, we watched the darkness flow in front of us, as one watches the ocean.

"You cannot understand," she would say, leaning her forehead on her clenched hands. "To you, everything you see seems a matter of course."

I confessed she was right. I found it a matter of course that this woman should come and go at her will, should eat her supper of soup after having drudged all day like a man, should, in short, lead the same life as a French peasant, only with less comfort and convenience.

I did not respond, and she began to tell her story. The dog stopped barking. The light in the cottage across the way was extinguished. And in the bottomless, ageless night that effaced the landscape, the life of the days "before" was re-created for me.

It used to be at this time of night, she said, that Dmitry Profomovich came home, staggering and swearing, with God knows how many cups of vodka inside of him. On the very steps where we were seated, he had beaten Masha unmercifully, hundreds and hundreds of times. Once he gave her such a kick on the forehead that the scar of the long gash was still visible.

In the cottage opposite, there were three who used to come home drunk: the father and two boys. And everywhere, in the adjoining cottages, there had lived miserable, feeble, slaver-ing, ill-natured, quarrelsome people. On Sunday, everyone had got drunk. Even the women. So drunk that when they tried to walk they would

stumble and roll in the ditch where a thin stream of water flowed. Even Masha had got drunk. What good was living, if you couldn't get drunk? For then all your cares melted away like fat in a saucepan. You could forget the face of the *ispravnik*, the face of the *barin*, the face of the priest. You could forget that they would whip you until the blood ran, until your skin was in tatters—over there in the great stable—there, you could see it, near Maria's house. And you could also forget the taxes, and the fact that if you didn't pay you would be seized and all your possessions taken away—your cow, your baby's cradle, your samovar, even your high felt boots. It also helped you bear the winters.

Can you imagine those winters, Masha said, six whole months during which they never left their holes-in-the-ground? Six whole months with nothing in their heads to think about but old Slavic prayers! They used to stuff the windows of the hut with putty and rags to keep out the cold. A blue-black smoke, hissing dismally, kept continuously escaping through the chinks in the stove, and irritated their eyes, throats, nostrils. They got used to it eventually, because one gets used to anything. At night they slept huddled together in a heap, like animals.

And now! To be sober, to have two fields of one's very own, and a husband who no longer drank! Not to be beaten any more, or whipped! To be able to bring up your children and have enough to eat every day, to be able to plan a little for the future! To read books, to express one's opinion, to go to lectures in the evening and be able to understand what the lecturer was talking about! To co-operate with the neighbors in administering the affairs of the village for the interest of all!

"Perhaps that's not anything ; I don't know myself whether it is anything; but still, there are days when I can't believe it."

Her slow, exalted voice and her face, intense as a sleepwalker's, conveyed so strong an impression of the miraculous that I peered into the darkness expecting to see the magic wand that had transformed the village one October day.

I was recalled to the present by Masha's voice ; she was saying as she came in carrying the samovar stoked with glowing embers:

"Then you really will go to see her?"

She set the samovar down beside me, then seated herself, holding her glass of tea, with her head and shoulders drooping forward a little.

Why was there still that shy, fluttering look in

her eyes, that elfin fire which rose and fell and seemed to lie in wait like black quicksilver in the depths of her grey-agate eyes?

Certainly I would go, as I had promised, to see her eldest daughter, who was studying at the Sverdlov University in Moscow, and who in two years would complete her work and devote her learning to the furtherance of the Cause.

Masha left, and returned in a moment, running, a dark figure with a white kerchief on her head and *laptis* on her feet.

"It's here. The *telega* is ready. Ossip's on the seat. Since you don't want to eat anything, give me your things. I'll put them in the bottom of the *telega*"

I knew they were by no means well-to-do, that a pair of shoes, a new teapot, a cloak and a bit of linen represented a small fortune to them.

"No, keep everything, Masha. I shall not take any of my things along."

A quiver ran through her large body. Her eyes widened, her lips tried to frame an incredulous whisper that wouldn't come.

"*Dushenka!* It isn't possible! Why, you've already paid us too much!" She broke down; she grasped my hands and kissed them, she clasped

my knees, she bowed low—more than bowed—she grovelled like a squaw!

The magic wand? October? Had all that really been true? Wasn't this thing at my feet one of those cringing worms who reared themselves upright at their master's whistle? Surely this must be one of the *kholopi*!¹ Perhaps, on the road, I should find a long convoy of peasants of the Crown. Perhaps they would be setting out for Siberia—more than a month's march away—on the governor's order, because famine had swept through the province. Would this crouching back raise itself presently and go to rejoin the convoy? Could this be Masha? No. It was one of the slaves who worked at the Tsarskoye Seio, whose feet cut by the sharp stones bled so profusely that Czar Alexander was able to follow their progress by the red trail they left on the ground. Or was this the figure of a mother about to part from her son, a young recruit who had been drafted—not into the army—but into the Government coal mines, where he would be forced to spend his whole life? Or was she going to set out with other serfs to the Czar's iron-works? Perhaps she was, by order, going to follow her husband, who had already had the order to go. But she

¹ Domestic servants of the lord.

would leave behind all her children who were the property of the master. She would never see them again—she who had borne them in her womb. Perhaps she was the wife of one of those peasants attached to the postal service who lived at a rural postoffice, browbeaten by the travelers, thrashed by the commissioner, abused by everyone. / "The only ones who don't beat us are the lazy-bones," had been a saying of theirs.

Was I the *barishnia* that she should bless me and my descendants forever in her shrill voice? This woman abasing herself wasn't Masha. She was Masha's grandmother, who had been sold at auction for two and a half rubles in front of the Palace of Justice in St. Petersburg. Perhaps this was the way she had begged to be sold away from her master's estate. No doubt she had done something to displease her master and was "blameless, but guilty." That was how the laws had treated the poor.

My delusion lasted no more than the fraction of a minute, and yet when Masha rose to her feet, I had the impression that we had both traversed a century. While I was settling myself in the carriage, she came up slowly, plucking at her sleeves, her eyes fixed on her roughly swathed feet. She realized she had done something un-

seemly. She couldn't have explained it. It was like an order, drilled into her spinal column for so long—for so very, very long—that she had had to obey it.

Ossip was restless on his seat. It was high time to be setting off.

"Until we meet again, Masha. Until we meet again!"

I felt her rough, wrinkled hands between my fingers j I looked straight into her face. Her eyes were animated with the old elfin fire again, and they were begging me for a word, just a single word. This was the Masha I knew, with her strong face and her downy cheeks, her flat nose, her big, straight body, her wrinkled forehead.

The carriage started and jerked our clasped hands apart. Alas, I had not been able to find the word!

At the entrance to the little grove was a group of children. One of them held up a basket of red berries -, I could not reach it.

"*Dosvidania! svida-nia!*" was the message their lifted arms telegraphed. The birch-trees were frantically shaking their white satin tongues faced with almond-green. Masha still stood in front of her little earth-colored hut. Her eyes, accustomed to fathom distances, seemed to be harpoon-

ing a thought in the depths of the liquid horizon. She stood stiffly erect, propped up—petrified, it seemed—inside her blue dress, like a wooden toy. Suddenly she gesticulated.

" I f it is to call me back," I thought, " M l tell Ossip to stop and I ' ll run back to her."

But no, she turned away, with a heavy, swinging step like a wood-pigeon's. I saw her shrug her shoulders hastily, as if to throw off a useless burden. Gone was that moment of humiliation ; the rhythm had changed. She hurried to the cistern to get her linen. She ran in the sun like a happy child, or like an animal let off its chain.

Was it her fault if, for a few seconds, the other Masha had come back, the Masha who for centuries had lived crouching on her knees?

CHAPTER V

LUNCH IN A FACTORY

"We, the workers, our children, and our wives have come to you, our Sovereign, to demand justice and protection. We are reduced to misery, we are oppressed, we are crushed down with work beyond our strength, we are abused ; we are not recognized as men, but are treated as slaves who should endure their lot and be silent. We are stifling. Our strength is failing. Lord, the limit of patience has been reached. This is, for us, that terrible moment when death is better than the prolongation of insupportable torments."

Petition of the workers of Petersburg to the Czar (January, 1905).

TWO women were busy sweeping away the snow that choked the courtyard and entrances to the Guzhon factory, which for the last five years had been operated under the aegis of the Sickie and the Hammer. Today, the winter had roofed the factory with glossy opaque porcelain, under a vast sky, grey as pumice-stone.

The two women were shod in high boots of undyed felt, which made their tread, seen from a

distance, seem curiously fiat and broad. They wore sheepskin jackets with the fleece turned inside, and caps of white rabbit-skin with earlaps hanging down to their hips.

These women did not know the visitor who, in order to get there, had traveled through the bare and melancholy suburbs of Moscow, and who approached, lurching and slipping on the gleaming path. Yet the moment they spied her, they smiled—Warm heart of Russia, frank eyes, caressing voices!

Guided by these two women, I easily found the comrade who was to show me over the factory. From the top of the iron staircase we had a view of the entire shop. It was a titanic cavern, illuminated at regular intervals by fireworks every five minutes, the warm, shapeless, heavy shadows were lifted as if on two wings lined with pink. To the left, at the upper end of the shop, was the pit for the metal let out of the dam of the furnace. Around it were human shadows—naked torsos, brick-colored arms, tawny skin dripping with sweat, browned faces, blue goggles instead of eyes.

They drove shovels with handles over five yards long into a hearth where a little blue-white lake seethed tumultuously. Suddenly the lake

burst into foam. From the other end of the furnace a mad torrent flowed with an infernal splutter into a long gutter hung in the darkness. A furious stalactite of flame dripped into an enormous copper cooler and was surrounded in an instant by a glory of sizzling comets.

If it hadn't been for the murmur as of thousands of bees and the obstinate pounding of the steam-hammer, I might have thought I was in the interior of an organ. Below, under the glass-stand, several trap-doors vomited serpentine fire that striped the dark ground and tapered and twisted. The tangled coils traced intricate patterns in the light. They changed color, from yellow to the red of live coals. They were cut into fragments of deep red from which spouted arches of gold, writhing, intertwined worm-shapes, and showers of stars. A little farther on, these became thin blue wands which were steel rails. A truck came up, carried them away, and was engulfed in an enormous funnel of light.

We passed through a workshop where, in the coal-dark shadows, workmen tossed glowing cubes of iron from one machine to the other, with the tranquil ease of prestidigitators and the energy of tennis-players. Then we came to the corner where the women worked.

The atmosphere was damp and smelt sharply of oil. Overhead hung leather belting ; below were greasy turning-boxes and smoked glass. Amidst the tireless chugging of the machines the women worked. Their faces were coated with grease, like coffee-colored masks. On their foreheads and cheeks were dirty thumb-prints. Sitting on a greasy, dirty bench, they were engaged in filing bolts smooth, cutting up sheet-iron, finishing studs and rivets.

I had not been among them for five minutes when a sudden silence fell. Already I was so accustomed to the fluctuating shadows, to the whirling of the iron, to the humidity and the slight shocks, to the suffocating half-light, to the clanging of metal, that when instantaneous calm fell on the workroom it seemed like a cataclysm. What had happened? Had there been an explosion?

"It's eleven o'clock and the factory lays off till noon for the lunch hour," explained the foreman who was accompanying me.

The twenty women who worked in this room—all told there were three hundred in the factory—straightened themselves up. Each produced from a drawer somewhere a tin mug or a cracked cup, and began to undo her little package, or unpack her lunch-basket or hamper. A refectory was in

process of construction, but was not yet finished, and so they ate in the factory, on a corner of one of the benches.

One woman laid out a red herring on the greasy lead, a sandwich made of two great slices of black bread with potatoes between, and a juicy cucumber. Her neighbor arranged on her knees a sumptuous lunch composed of meat-balls, a bit of cheese and a raw apple.

I knew I ought to go away; I should embarrass them if I stayed; and yet I wanted so very, very much to stay.

"Wouldn't you like to eat with us?" a young girl in a black smock timidly suggested. She had come in carrying a pan of boiling water, with which she deftly filled the cups they held out to her.

Stammering my thanks, I sat down on a stool which was miraculously produced and handed to me. They were enchanted to have a guest. Spontaneously they made a circle around me, holding their hunks of bread in one hand and their steaming cups in the other. And when my first sentence betrayed my scanty Russian and my terrible French accent, they began to clap their hands, laughing and nudging like little girls.

In no other country can one feel so at ease, so

happy and confident among people one doesn't know. I first asked them technical questions. But I knew they would, if I wished, tell me of their inner life, and I would tell them of mine. We should understand one another—they would have that same starry, liquid, watchful look, that complete absorption.

The hiring of workers? But all workers were hired in only one way, through the Labor Exchange, by collective contract. Hours of work? Eight hours, as everywhere. They began at eight o'clock, stopped at five, with an hour off for lunch, as I could see. Girl workers from sixteen to eighteen had to work only six hours, but in that particular workroom there were none under eighteen.

And the wages? They cited figures, each in turn, adding a detail. In general, a committee composed of an equal number of representatives of the State trust and of workers had established the division of rates into categories. This was modified every month by a previously established sliding scale, which followed the rise of commodities as closely as possible. It goes without saying that wages were calculated on the same basis for women as for men. Their earnings averaged between 250 and 350 millions a month.

It was little. In view of the actual cost of living, barely enough to get along on.

"Yes, it's close figuring, sure enough, but somehow you live just the same," said Natasha gendy. She was a Venus of a woman, whose neck was stained with coomj but under her long yellowish work-apron, you could see the pure full line of her head and shoulders.

"Have you any children?" I asked.

"Yes, I have three of my own, and another, a little boy from the Volga whom we adopted last year. Oh! If you'd seen him when he first came! The poor little fellow: arms like *that*; and a neck like *that*. Now he's well and goes to school with our two eldest. The third is near here, in the factory nursery. That's an idea. Suppose we go to see him. Would you like to?"

I pointed to her untouched bowl of soup and to her cup, still full.

"Come!" she cried gaily, dragging me along.

We went through the rear court, which was littered with skeins of wire and rusty scrap heaps sprinkled with snow. Natasha preceded me into a little cottage, and on into a well-heated room, where about thirty chubby-faced babies were sleeping, squalling or gurgling in snowy cribs.

"There he is; that's my Petya!" Her arms

went out to a big, dark boy-baby who was beating the air with his tiny arms. "I bring him here in the morning, and come three times a day to nurse him." -

"Will you clear out? It's not time yet!" stormed a woman in a white blouse, coming out of the next room whence floated an odor of boiled milk, babies' skin and unguents. Natasha, who was about to lift her baby out of the crib, whispering "Galubchik,"¹ laid him down again abruptly; and we ran off like two urchins caught in mischief. Natasha closed the door behind us to the accompaniment of the nasal howls of Petya.

When we re-entered the workroom, the young girl who had been busy before making tea was now reading a newspaper aloud.

"Our paper!" she exclaimed proudly, showing me the title: "The Woman Worker: A Paper Written by and for Working-Women."

As I sipped the boiling water that some unknown hand had colored and sweetened with the cut-up shreds of a raw apple—sugar is dear!—I listened to them. And their rude life took form before me.

Natasha was not unhappy. She was married to a stoker. By working overtime he earned 500

¹ Little pigeon, darling.

millions a month. They lived nearby, in one of the brick tenements in the neighborhood of the factory. The six of them occupied one big room.

Every night when Natasha got home, she cooked supper on the Primus.¹ A tureen of soup, a bit of bread and cheese, and as much tea as they wanted -, that was their meal.

One thing puzzled me. How could they afford to buy the clothes they needed? I had been about enough in the shops of Moscow and inquired prices to know that it was almost impossible for them to clothe themselves on the money they earned.

All talking at once, the women explained to me that they got their clothing at the Cooperative of the Syndicate, whose prices were . . . Natasha, whose voice rose above the others, strove to be scrupulously exact.

"Let's see, is it half the price? No, just two-thirds what you pay in the shops."

"Very easy for me," smilingly added the tall girl with reddish hair and light-blue eyes. "I don't buy any clothes."

The threadbare caftan which gave her the appearance of a girl Cossack had, as a matter of fact, already done fifteen years' service!

¹ Small stove much used in Russia.

"And the evenings?" I asked. "And Sundays? And what do you do for recreation?"

"I'm going to the Grand Theatre tonight. They're playing *The Tales of Czar Saltan*. It's lovely! Oh, how lovely it is! Have you ever been?" This from a young girl who until then had been silent.

"Yes," broke in Natasha, "every month the Syndicate disposes of a certain number of theater tickets. Anyone who wants can have them. Fancy! Then in summer we all go on excursions together. And we visit the museums, with someone to explain them to us. And lectures! And especially the night classes where you're so happy, so happy to learn a little something!"

I recognized the feverish thirst for knowledge that burns and devours and consumes the whole of Russia. And the learning is there for everybody—workmen, peasants, women, soldiers, old and young. For any and everybody who will delve gluttonously into books, and press into the halls where the precious manna is dispensed. You would think they were all intent upon making up for the centuries of ignorance that lie behind them.

"There are some who don't go in for recreation and who give all their evenings and Sundays to the spreading of propaganda," interjected a woman

whose thin, alive body seemed to float inside the pleats of her khaki smock.

"That's the woman who devotes herself to the *noyau*" ¹ explained Natasha.

When I asked what part working women took in political life, and what they thought of the new regime, it was not really to find out. I knew—had, indeed, known for a long time. It was to hear again what I had heard a hundred times. But I was properly punished. Their faces went blank when I put my question.

"How can you ask? Are there really foreigners who imagine that the Russian people could have anything but a Soviet government?"

It was an old woman who said this, an old woman with shrivelled, mustard-yellow hands, which she thrust gesticulating out of the sleeves of a jacket literally caked with grease.

"Of course, we don't pretend to live like princes. But before the Revolution there were forty thousand of us workers in Moscow—forty thousand!—living in cellars! To-day we have rooms like everyone else, and we have the right to hold up our heads. Before the Revolution we were treated worse than beasts."

The cords of her neck swelled. As she stood,

¹ Group of communists in the factory.

straight and erect, old Vera looked like the Mar-seillaise of Rude. Two lamps flickered deep in her eye-sockets, a faint red tinged her lips.

"Here am I, for instance. I didn't know how to read. They taught me. As for politics, I had always thought ordinary people didn't count in politics any more than in deciding the weather. Now I understand what we've won. And we won it, we workers. But even if we hadn't gained a thing——. Though I shouldn't be talking about myself ; I don't count; I'm too old. But I have three daughters. My Mary—I haven't seen her since June. Last winter she kept getting thinner and thinner, and was always pale and tired out. Well, the Government sent her to Petrograd, to the Islands. Do you know the Islands?"

In my mind's eye I saw Yelaguin Ostrovsky, Kamenky, the shady delta on the shore of the green Baltic, where Pushkin's heroines moved so gracefully; I saw the villas turned either into creches for children or recreation homes for the workers.

"If the Czar were still on the throne, Mary would be dead by now, wouldn't she? While now she's a textile worker in Petrograd; and she's going to marry a lad from Kronstadt. She's pretty and pink-cheeked and happy. I have another daugh-

ter. The Syndicate have chosen her to study at Pokrovsky for a baby doctor. She's working hard, and she'll get there! Could that have been possible before the Revolution? And, listen, it's more than all this—something that doesn't even concern us."

Vera seated herself on a heap of earth and filings into which she thrust her hand. She groped for words.

"It's a pity not to know how to say what one means. You see us and you probably think we're no happier than working women in France. To you nothing seems changed. To us it's Paradise compared with our old life. Musya, child, you tell her about your Proletcult.¹ Go ahead, tell her. That's right——. She'll tell you about it."

But Musya (undeniably lovely when she blushed) refused to talk about "her" Proletcult. She was shy and obstinate and merely crumbled her bread on the bench, and shot her mother a reproachful glance. Her companions told me she had already written a poem, which was soon to be published.

"Recite your poem, Musya."

Musya hung her head like a stubborn child.

There was no need for Vera to worry. No

¹ Institute for the education of the working-people.

need for this proof from Musya. The very evening before I had attended a propaganda meeting in a Moscow theater, organized by the women communists of the fifth "order," and I was thoroughly convinced of their ardor for politics.

There had been six or seven hundred "bez party"¹ women present. All wore red cotton turbans, and sat with faces uplifted, features tense, and hands folded in an attitude of childlike attention. Six working women were on the stage, one of whom presided—intelligent, sensible, extraordinarily dignified in her peasant's garb. She gave the floor to a number of speakers in turn, whose function was to explain and comment upon the international situation ; and she kept ceaselessly unfolding little question slips as they were passed up to her from hand to hand.

At eleven o'clock a little blonde working girl of *twenty*, slim as a dragon-fly and red-turbanned, like the others, made the last speech. Bit by bit as she spoke, she edged from the wing to the centre of the platform, leaned forward and began to speak freely, straight from her heart, tossing her words to the audience like food to an animal.

"There," she exclaimed when she finished, and

¹ Without party.

ran and threw herself trembling in the peasant-president's arms, and hid her crimson face. "There! I wasn't frightened."

"It's the first time she's made a speech," the president explained. "But she'll get used to it; she'll *have* to!"

That meeting alone would have been enough to convince me.

There had also been the procession of working women on the fifth anniversary of the Soviet Republic. They had made a single glowing mass, walking arm in arm, a turbulent sea of scarlet heads on the Red Square. Ah—their songs, their faces, the emotion their "Hurrahs" aroused, the fervor that went through you when they passed!

A whistle blew. The women got up and brushed away the remains of their meager meal. The factory resumed its life, the life of a mechanical volcano.

"Good-by, Natasha. See you soon again, Vera. Good-by, Musya." Good-by to twenty outstretched hands.

As I turned to wave a last farewell, Vera, who had been despairing of making me understand, pointed with a tar-stained finger to the portraits of Lenin and Trotzky facing each other on the oozing walls. She called them to witness.

I stood on the threshold of the neighboring workshop among the surging forms—the formless raw material of the future—black specks in the advance guard of humanity, bearing beneath their muddy garments who knows what sign of salvation.

Vera, who still stood gazing impotently at the two portraits, seemed to be saying: "You make her understand, you two."

No need to, Vera.

CHAPTER VI

THE SYMBOL OF NEW RUSSIA

HER hair, light and fine as spun silk, was beautiful only in the sunlight. Then it cast a veil of pale gold on her cheeks with the faint color of a ripening peach, and over her great eyes, dewy as if new-washed by a spring rain. She couldn't be considered pretty; nor homely, either. But one didn't think of beauty or grace looking at her; one **thought of** something indefinable, something that no other woman had ever suggested. Beneath her pathetic garments, her man's shirt, her threadbare old velvet tarn, her gaiters, the patches that pieced out her skirt, she looked like—how shall I express it?—what she stood for was so new!

Hair like Demeter's; set face, conscious of its destiny; a terribly *aware* glance; anaemic flesh that drained the swift blood; features that spelled motherhood, although they still bore the imprint of childhood; a straight figure; odds and ends thrown casually together to make some sort of

costume; a gait still somewhat heavy from long forced marches. I should have chosen her, if anyone at all, to symbolize the New Russia.

She was twenty; her name was Helen; they called her Lena. She had come from the wilds of Siberia, of a father and a mother who had been deported for their political views, and she grew up on the shores of Lake Baikal, passing her childhood amid the snows that stretch from Irkutsk to Tomsk. She remembered a very few of her impressions: the forests clasping wine-dark shadows with their frozen limbs, the tinkling of sleigh bells, the long draughts of cold air, intoxicating, almost palpable, a cold that sometimes stung the face like fire or like a charge of gun-shot, and lashed the body from behind, then fled moaning among the frosty branches, like the distant wailing of a prophet.

From Siberia, Lena went to Kiev with her mother, two young brothers, and a younger sister. During Denikin's offensive, she went off to the front, and actually fought as a Red soldier, by a miracle escaping the White terror. When famine stalked at Rostov, she offered to take care of the children. Like everyone else, she had had typhus, and she knew the taste of shavings and grass and straw. She learned to chop up floors and doors for

firewood, and she tasted the luxury of eating a rat when you were starving.

Now, hardly recovered from rheumatism contracted from sleeping on the ground for nearly two years, she was finishing her course at the University of Moscow. At the same time she was learning English, French and German, plumbing the depths of Marx and the great dogmatists of the Revolution, taking an eager part in Party activities, following the work of the Congresses, attending lectures, organizing celebrations, making an application for one friend and coaching ten others, building up, with the others of her group, a great People's Theater, specializing in the history of art, and studying for her examinations!

She lived in a room far away from the University, almost on the edge of town. An iron bedstead, with only her overcoat for covering, a chair, a tea-kettle, walls placarded with pictures and posters. This was the lodging that sheltered four or five together, or even seven, when necessary. Even though the universities were full, and it was impossible to find rooms, an endless stream of youth poured into Moscow, eager to study, without the remotest chance of finding quarters, but confident, nevertheless, of running across some stranger—this could only happen in

Russia—who would be only too happy to share his crust of charity and the cold attic where one stumbled over the sleepers when one came home at night.

So Lena was always harboring her companions. Usually they were girls. But if they were boys, no difference. They drank tea out of Lena's only glass, and shared her rations, which consisted of a small bag of flour every fortnight, a huge loaf of black bread, heavy as stone, a small bag of tea, a packet of three dried fish and a rasher of bacon. Everything was pooled—shirts, stockings, dresses, shoes, fur caps. The first to get up would take the first clothes she came across, and the others casually put on the grey skirt, or the tan one, the vest minus one sleeve, or the mangy fur coat. They'd wash by turns at the faucet on the stair landing, laughing, running to and fro, and calling out, "Whose turn is it to go to the theater tonight? Maria Akimovna has two tickets!"

They loved color; they adored movement and stir; they devoured books with insatiable appetite; they were wild about music. There was always one of them who knew how to dance, and would entertain a clapping, stamping circle. Sunday mornings they were at home in their room to their boy comrades—a perfect orgy of **tea** and **sun-**

flower seed, while they listened in silence to the news, and the echo from the factories. One comrade would give an account of the work at the "centers," and there would be spirited comments upon the events of the week; and they would thrash out questions of propaganda. Occasionally in summer they would set out on foot to spend the day in the country. Singing, singing, singing in chorus all the way. When they found a lake not too far off the road, they would all jump in stark naked and there'd be a happy tumult of shouting and splashing and racing in the water.

But what about individual, exclusive pleasures? These creatures could not conceive of any but joys in common—there was no such thing for them as unshared joy. Truly, the communistic sense runs in the blood of this generation. It comes to the surface not only in the need to share, but in the much deeper need to lay bare the restless secret each hides in his heart. Their doings—carting off whole fir trees, draping red cloth on poles, parading about, singing in chorus—gave them the bright eyes, the flushed cheeks, the triumphant air that our girls have when they first fall in love.

Was Lena a Communist? If being a Communist meant simply to have chosen between two views, she could not be considered one, for that

would have meant nothing. Child of a mechanical age, the daughter of revolutionaries, twin sister to the proletarian, enrolled from birth as a soldier in a mad army, in a chaotic world, communism was not a mere doctrine to her, nor a parcel of ideas. It was the unscathed spirit of her twenty years, her unerring instinct for nobility and justice, something in her as yet incoherent, something that emanated imperceptibly from all her studies; it was nothing less than the world itself, spread out before her like a huge arena; it was a pitiless urge in her blood, something she would have extinguished, had she known how.

There was Krupskayaj there was the woman doctor Lebedeva, the Director of the Department of Maternity and Childhood in Moscow ; there was Pokrovska, who sits as a judge in the People's Court at Moscow. There were Niurina, Gasparova, and Arbore-Rally, who divides her labors between the Communist International, the Division of Women Party Members and the Division of Oriental Women. In addition she speaks at meetings, undertakes, with one or two others, to direct a paper for women, makes a survey of day-nurseries, visits factories, receives foreign delegates. Her face, framed with grey hair, is a stirring face ; but it looks worn to death by fatigue.

There are tens and hundreds of others whose names cannot even be given. And all of them spend their time in very much the same way. They have been at the same superhuman task for the last thirty years. In their narrow rooms there is always a telephone beside the bed. At one, two, three o'clock in the morning it may ring: "Wake up! In a quarter of an hour be at such and such a place. Your sleep, your rest, your health, nothing belongs to you."

I had the opportunity of meeting these older women, and I could see a startling contrast between the two generations. Every sacrificial and unselfish instinct that is implanted *in* human nature caused these older women to become revolutionists. Their activities placed them above and beyond ordinary humanity ; they have been attached to the Cause as to a chain and ball. They have been its mothers, its servantsj in a measure as well, its priestesses. They are its saints and its martyrs.

And for all that they are abnormal beings. No personal life, no comfort, no breathing space. Their inner life is constantly being denuded. Nevertheless they have remained inexhaustible personalities. They have renounced the joys of maternity and the delights of love. Some of them

have sons in the Ural, husbands who work in Archangel. They see each other once in two years; but would they dream of complaining?

Sometimes, when their overstrained bodies give out, they are sent to recuperate in a nearby country place. But even there they find the energy to arrange a program, write a thesis or translate a book.

After passing an hour in their presence, your heart is gripped, your spirit humbled; you feel an aghast admiration for those burnt-out faces which twitch with fiery ardor. And yet something in you revolts and refuses homage.

When you are with Lena, you have a sense of well-being, an assurance that all the flood-gates of joy are wide open. The older women have sacrificed everything to the Revolution; Lena has *received* everything from it. The new generation reverses the destiny of the previous one.

Lena is the spontaneous and perfect product of the fresh-plowed field. She is the deep-rooted plant which has shot up in this pure air and which could not have grown anywhere else. She has absorbed all the elements of the atmosphere in a kind of daily endosmosis.

Lena represents the moment when, in order to adapt itself better, the species becomes differenti-

ated. Here and there, perhaps, its spirit has atrophied, showing it needs a change of scene for rising again. And how high it *will* rise! Will it develop new powers? Yes, but it will retain the bulk of its heritage also. Kindness, maternity, sweetness; there will be room for all of these qualities.

In the daughters of the bourgeois world, in whom intellectual activity and familiarity with books develop nothing but the analytical spirit, intelligence is a poison, knowledge a misfortune. Keen as their brains are, all they use their mentality for is to bolster a sterile pride in never being taken in. Their learning serves only as a measure of the emptiness of their destiny. "What's the use?" they cry. Logically there is nothing for them but to commit suicide.

Whereas Lena is all for life. The life elements are there. She has only to synthesize them, she has only to create. What has she to do with bitter skepticism, with despair, with the view that humanity is groping at night in an impasse? That is an outlook for them, not for her. With her everything is resolved into action; nothing comes to the surface upon which she does not act. Act, do something.

In the beautiful steady glance of Lena's eyes,

there is none of the slightly insane trouble one sees in theirs. In her life there are no emotional flights followed by states of despondency. She who would blush to own a pair of sandals all to herself, but who wishes the sovereignty of the entire world for the workers, wishes it without passion, firmly, methodically; not, as you think, with exaltation; but humbly, as one bears a child; patiently, like a builder. Every day her judgment is sharpened; her will never fluctuates, her blue eyes never cloud over, her demeanor is always serene. Her red lips in her suave countenance widen in a smile like a child's.

Lena knows a great deal. But that is not the unique thing about her. The unique thing is what she does not know. Lena does not know, nor so much as suspect, that one can get satisfaction out of owning dresses, furniture, a house, precious objects; or experience pride in adorning oneself with jewels; or have one's endeavors tinged with the gross desire for tangible recompense; or use one's strength for one's personal career; or be jealous of another woman; or accept an idea for what it will bring one.

She has certainly read that such things exist. But she knows them as we know the manners of

the Zulus and the Kaffirs, from the tales of travellers.

Her conception of ambition, envy, paltry egoism, unashamed idleness, is slightly vague, like something unfamiliar which we unearth in an old document. It is part of the system. She knows that outside of Russia, in the bourgeois countries, in the backward countries, such emotions still exist. With her mind she comprehends, but not with the deep conviction of experience.

Her spirit is the product of her surroundings. She merits no special praise for being what she is. She is content to avail herself of what passes her door, to work, to expend her energy. Set among her companions, she did not seem to be an exceptional person. She was jolly, simple, always on the go. She bit into life with the zest and appetite of a twenty-year-old.

Here's a picture of her coming home in the evening from the University, her portfolio crammed with notebooks and textbooks.

"O Lola! Soava Fedorovna! Zorgin and Volodya have found a room!" she called from the stairs.

"You don't mean it!"

In the room two figures rose.

"Adjoining the Bogoritskaya," Lena continued,

panting, as she threw her bag of books on the table. "Come on, stir yourselves. They're going to commence repairs to-night. They've got at least twenty to make. Hurry, don't let's lose a minute."

In Moscow all the roofs are protected by a layer of varnish. But with the stress of life during first the war and then the Revolution, they were not kept in repair. Rotten with rust and damaged by storms, many of them gave away, so that the houses themselves, or at least the upper stories, were uninhabitable. If anyone undertook to repair a roof on his own account he was allowed the use of all the damaged rooms.

"Is it a too terribly run-down attic they've found?"

"Come on! We'll see. What if there're thirty repairs to make. Just so it doesn't snow in. A shelter's all one needs."

Soava and Lola caught up their coats and hurried down the stairs after Lena.

"They're counting a lot on you, Lola!" called Lena from the foot of the stairs.

One was certainly warranted in depending on the rattle of a street Arab who called herself Lola ; she was a great hand at anything. Almost too capable ; it made her a meddler. She could

dance, take an automobile apart, make a table, write articles, compose music, draw posters, and design stage scenery. She had studied with Meyerhold and had learned acting in comedy from Stanislavsky. She had served as a nurse at the Red front, and had worked a year in a factory. She knew how to take an old, moth-eaten carpet and make a good warm coat out of it. She could make a dress from the upholstery of an armchair. She could translate from five languages with nicety of discrimination. And no one was better than she at getting up an excursion to the country. She earned her living by taking charge of an administrative service from ten to four o'clock. That left her only nights for study, she said, and if she *had* to die for the Revolution, she would go to death as one goes to a ball.

Snow was falling. Houses and objects were almost covered with snow, but the still visible skeleton outlines of them stood in sharp prominence against the dreary white background. A cabby muffled in a blue cape, his head and shoulders swathed in a velvet scarf that made his breast look like a woman's, his filthy high Mongolian *cha-pka* pulled down almost over his eyes, signalled to the three girls.

"Sleigh, ladies?"

A sleigh! The cost of the trip would be as much as a week's entire expenses for the three of them! Laughing aloud, they took arms and decided to walk.

"Let's sing!"

"Lola, you begin."

With your well-knit body enveloped in an old horse-skin jacket, your cheeks reddened by the wind, you child, loaded with all gifts, all opportunities, I envy you your twenty years, so brief yet comprehending so much. A young girl whom chance has set down at the heart of the greatest drama ever played; where are you going, Lena? Farther than the house with the damaged roof? Farther than the distance shrouded in lavender mist? Much, much farther. You who have nothing to forget, no spiritual sores to heal, nothing to conquer, you who have learned everything, hunger, destitution, cold, discipline, the panting silence of primitive struggle, the imperfect form of the world, and the form it should have. Lena, what are you going to do with it all?

CHAPTER VII

ZORIN: THE PROPAGANDIST

THERE is no need for me to speak of the wonderful intellect of the theorist Bukharin; the eloquence and artistic sense of Lunacharskyj; the tireless activity of Zinoviev; the mellowness and learning of the absent-minded Chicherin; the profundity of the views of Sokolnikov, Commissioner of Finances ; the authority of the peasant figure Kamenev, President of the Kalinin Republic. These men have already had their values set upon them and been put into their proper categories. What is not so well known is the contribution that numberless obscure workers have made to the Revolution. Of such the perfect type is the workman Zorin.

He was thirty-two years old. Physically, he fulfilled the conventional idea of the Russian type to a detail. He was blond, fairly tall, with dark-blue eyes, a girlish skin, an apelike mouth, something of a jaw, an athletic appearance, yet with a sort of nimbus—did it come from his forehead,

his eyes or his blondness?—a vaguely Nordic look softening the Scythian heredity ;an idealistic sadness clouding the upper part of his face and modifying the lower part.

He was the descendant of workmen. He had had a wretched childhood, but had shot up straight like a little human plant, and grew large with the breath of rebellion blowing upon him. When he was hardly twelve years old—an age at which most of us are still babies—he was an outlaw and a secret worker for revolutionary organizations. At fourteen he was arrested and put in prison, and spent his year in the cell reading, reading ceaselessly, a regular gourmand. Theory and tactics was what he read. He crammed his mind as full as he could with the teachings of the great Socialist writers. When freed, he carried on illegal propaganda even more energetically.

Then he entered a workshop, where he led an existence like that of an adolescent Kim. It was there he learned a trade. Meanwhile he was nourishing himself on dry bread, poetry and social science.

At eighteen he was a man and a good worker—a real one. He had worked at his trade, which was metallurgy, in the government of Kherson, at Odessa, at Kiev, at Moscow and at Petersburg,

agitating wherever he went. But how difficult it was to accomplish anything in a Russia honey-combed with secret police! One fine day he decided he had had enough of it and he emigrated to America. Without a cent in his pocket for the passage. But it was not for nothing that he had been where he had been, seen what he had seen.

In New York he almost perished of hunger. As an immigrant he became affiliated with organizations in the city, became a day-laborer and a longshoreman, got himself hired, managed to rub along somehow, learned, observed, hoped, and married. When the glorious news of the Revolution came, he jumped on board the first steamer for Russia. His young wife went with him.

At once he went into a factory. For it was stronger than he was, the feeling that the factory was his empire, his native land. He could not quit the workmen's bench, nor lose the daily contact with the mass of workers whose blood was his blood too.

He secured work in a factory about twenty versts from Petrograd where firearms were manufactured. The three thousand workers beside whom he labored were mad with hope and enthusiasm. What work could possibly be more im-

portant than the duty that fell to them: that of keeping the proletarian army supplied with ordnance? They worked like people inspired, like madmen, like demons.

Back-breaking labor all day. Then, after work, came evening meetings, then deliberations, committee-meetings, councils, which lasted all night. They had to get appeals printed, to establish relations with the principals in the movement, with the sailors, with the soldiers—in short to attend to all the superhuman work of organization. They would sleep about two hours a night, on the earth, or on a bench, without covering; sometimes they didn't sleep at all. Often for whole months they didn't have time to undress. Once a day they ate, a wooden porringer of stinking boiled rice. As often as not, they went without eating, or munched a crust of moldy black bread. They took part in the scattered street fighting, they kept themselves informed of all the latest developments, they went out in trucks to speak to the crowds, miraculously dodging bullets as they passed through the streets. At night, in a cutter, they would smuggle arms to a secret depot. Theirs were all the victories, just as the attacks were theirs.

They were charged with the direction of the

Postal and Telegraph Service. After the success of the Revolution, they were commissioned to return foreign ambassadors to their own countries. They were concerned in the military defense of Petrograd and were among the saviours of the city, perhaps were the saviours. After the NEP, they directed for all Russia what was called the Machine Trust. They produced articles for the newspapers, as vivid, as pithy pieces of writing as I have ever read. And in the interims, like homing pigeons, they always returned to the workshop. For they were workmen in spirit, as they were in the flesh.

And here one touches a thing which is not at all explicable, certainly, but which is carried to the last point of perfection in a man like Zorin. That is the conductibility between him and everything else proletarian.

I saw him in railroad trains. It might be anywhere—on the plains of the Don, among the prodigious harvests that are seen only in the Ukraine, on the red earth of the Crimea, or in the narrow passes of the Caucasus. Almost before he took his seat, he had gathered around him railroad employees, traveling peasants or soldiers, every poor and humble person in the train. In some mysterious way this traveler with his boyish face drew

them. They crowded around him, they held up their heads and maintained an expectant silence, as if awaiting something from him.

At the end of half an hour the group would assume the proportions almost of a meeting. And as he sat in the center of the hypnotized circle, he'd offer cigarettes to one man, slap another on the shoulder, or collar one boy and cut up with another. He made them laugh and he made them think, all the time asking questions and explaining things, and stirring up a swarm of thoughts in that circle of heads.

At the stations water-carriers might come with jars of water to drink, street-boys might hawk strings of chestnuts, or baskets of berries, or big white raisins, women might thrust slices of watermelon in at the door of the carriage. But no. Zorin was speaking, they were listening, they were neither hungry nor thirsty. When the group broke up, long after the other passengers had retired to their berths, they left slowly, their brows drawn with thought, their eyes dazzled by the goal he had shown them. More than one man, I am sure, dated his life as a militant from that instant.

If you had suggested to Serge Zorin that he was spreading propaganda, he would have

laughed. Propaganda? Well, they were talking about anything and everything: the weather, the train, the crops, the child asleep in the coach; and could you talk about all these things without mentioning the name they bore in the world now, legible as a book? Could you isolate the spokes of a wheel from the motion that causes the wheel to turn?

One night on the deck of a submarine that was scudding through the Black Sea like a shell, I saw him gather the crew about him in ten minutes. He impressed them, convinced them, discussed with them, bombarded them with a fire of arguments. He buttonholed one of the sailors and left the fellow gaping.

And there he stayed the entire night, an unequalled pilot, lifting up to the stars a face as fresh as the wind. A ray of moonlight glistened on his white forehead. His hand clutched the netting; his feet were splashed with foam; and his prodigal tongue scattered a thousand dancing pictures on the trough of the oncoming waves. His talk made the crouching, silent men forget the cold and the coming of dawn, there off the coast of Asia, in a sulphurous fog, streaked with geranium-red.

I saw his pale blond face with its tinge of blue,

and his muscular body like that of a Norse god, rise up in the midst of assemblies of thousands of proletarians at Batum, at Tiflis, at Baku. The sorcery of his presence, his speech—so simple as to be almost brusque—his choice of a word, an image, a subject; his voice, which sang, vibrated and snapped like a bullet, but which could bark if necessary—these things sent a whirlwind of joy through the hall and seemed to sweep it clean of all pettiness and fill it with swelling hope.

Zorin always wore a blouse of black satinette fastened on the side. When he faced an audience he stood perfectly at ease, something a little cat-like in his slender form. His eyes sparkled like a child's. His body was completely flexible. His smile was a little *gouape*. Sometimes he would begin in a happy, familiar, joking vein and tell an anecdote that teased their imagination. Then, kneading his thoughts with his two granite fists, his face flushing, he would advance by insensible degrees to the climax of his argument. It was a delight to follow him, a delight to hear him, a delight to look at him.

"Tell us the story of the Revolution!"

He would tell it.

"Tell us why such and such a thing happened at a given moment and why not another thing."

He would tell them.

"In your opinion what can be the outcome of such and such a situation?"

He would explain. He was never taken unexpectedly. From the sly fluttering of his eyebrows you knew it was the very question he was waiting for. He could have thanked the man who asked it. He would wait a second, then two, then three, as a gourmand samples the flavor of a new dish before he eats it; then he would give you his answer: to the point, lashing, marked by caustic precision, copious, straightforward. Nothing was ever lacking.

He was like a rich man who gives his entire fortune to whomsoever asks. And, to the responsive crowd, happy, relaxed, he was not only someone who knew more about things than they did; he was one of their own, who expressed in their own idiom, with gestures they understood, a surprising joyous echo of that hidden force which stirred in their own breasts.

When he had finished, panting and jubilant, he would thrust his hands into his pockets, his cheeks flushed, the collar of his blouse undone. He would point to his perspiring forehead and would brandish his damp handkerchief like a trophy.

"I love that," he would say, lowering his russet-fringed eyelids over his blue, slightly bloodshot eyes, and feeling his clenched muscles under his rolled-up sleeves. "Yes, really, I love that."

He would open his volume of Shelley without reading it. You knew perfectly well that he was not concerned with the applause he had created for himself. As a workman he was pleased at having done a good job and at having helped the Cause along a little. And he would have liked—that you knew, too—to begin straight over again.

"It's simple enough. Give me an audience of workmen—nothing but workmen. I don't care whether or not they think as I do, whether they're friends or enemies, Russians or foreigners. I'll take them, I tell you, and I'll make them understand me; I'll drive the Revolutionary idea—in there." He would tap his sweaty forehead.

To express manual labor, sinewy words wrung from physical toil must be used. To express the idea of a crouching body getting to its feet again, you must create slowly in that body a chemistry of gestures, of timid intonations, of long-stagnant blood, of inarticulate syllables and re-created impulses. The way that is done is a secret. Zorin knows it. That is all.

CHAPTER VIII

PURE GOLD

TARI KANIUCHNI

My instinct, like a faithful dog's, led me to the railing of the old home of a Muscovite merchant.

It wasn't sensible of me. I had a lot of work to do, and had to get up early the *next* morning. I'd come back some other evening.

In spite of myself—really, in spite of myself—I passed through the small gateway, circled round the garden, with its borders of vegetables, and paused before the great cubist bust of Karl Marx, with its hair of granite and beard of granite.

There was still time to turn back; I could easily return the way I had come; no one had seen me. But I went on; the attraction was too strong.

I had barely taken ten steps towards the large house that for four years had sheltered the Karl Marx School—a boarding-school maintained, like

¹ Street of the Old Stables.

thousands of others, at the expense of the Soviet State—when two little heads appeared, pressing against the glass of the large bay-window on the second floor. A few seconds more, and four little heads appeared beside the first two; then a whole row of little heads popped up like a row of mushrooms, and bobbed up and down like mechanical dolls. Then whisk! and they were gone!

I just reached the door, when—Boom! Boom! Bang! Boom!—they came tumbling helter-skelter down the long stairway, and I was seized by twenty determined little arms.

"It is she! Magdeleine! How are you!—Take me!—No! Me! Get out of the way! And me? Let me!"

I kissed foreheads, plaits of hair, quivering edges of eyelashes, the vizors of caps, elbows, warm temples, and cheeks and cheeks and cheeks. I laughed. I tried to move on. My hat hung over one ear. I tried to disengage myself from the grasp of six sturdy little tentacles that had seized my head and twisted it around as if it were screwed on. I obeyed the jerks at my skirt, and on the other side the tugs at my involved right arm. In some manner I must have got upstairs, since I found myself there presently, surrounded by laughter, over-excited cries, the stamping of

feet, the clapping of hands, jumps and gasps. I came to myself not far away from the bay-window, surrounded on all sides by a little crowd of excited children that was halfway between a pack of yelping dogs and a flock of prancing lambs.

At last I got my breath and began to see clearly again. A big room, the floor freshly washed, a grand piano and a rickety bench the only furniture.

"Shall we have her sit down there? All right. Won't you sit down there?"

Fifty pairs of sparkling and inquisitive eyes followed the clumsy and attentive hands that removed my cape. The last button was scarcely undone before Natasha, jostling aside the others, laid hold of my shoulders and peeled off my coat as if I were a dead rabbit being skinned. Vassily, on his hands and knees, drew off my galoshes.

"Well! Is it really true? Here are all of you! There you are, little Viera, with your honey-colored eyes, and you, Helen, with your cheeks powdered with light-colored down like fine pollen. And you, Vlady, with your greedy mouth. And you, Sonya, there *you* are, with your tiny figure and your manners like the Little Old Woman Who Lived in a Shoe.—Come now, quiet down a little. Don't shove me. Let me smile

a little unsteadily as I count your heads, one by one. I'll have to find you all again. You see, I can't seem to get accustomed to being received so heartily. I ask myself each time why you are so glad to see me. I've done nothing, Nadejda, to make you rub your head so caressingly against me j nothing to make Sophie clasp her chapped hands over her heart, nor to make Fedor open his big grey eyes as wide as the Man in the Moon. My hands are absolutely empty. I'm not talkative or demonstrative. Are you glad to know that you've made my heart beat swiftly under my dress? You want to go that way? Well, let's go that way then."

I had to be careful not to stroke Viera's hair, a shiny mahogany-color with chestnut tones, nor Natasha's satiny forehead. The others mustn't see that these two were my favorites. It wouldn't have been fair.

"Don't you think I am very obedient, you little tyrants? Since you wish it, I'll let you take me to the big room where all your work is displayed. What's new? Let's see."

I seemed to have seen all the canvases that the children themselves had hung upon the walls: the woman with buttercups in her waist j the white path above the dark-blue brook ;those unrecog-

nizable beasts that were, no doubt, unicorns; the workman standing—a Hercules with tar-smeared sleeves—in front of a glowing furnace; the florid face of a watermelon-vendor.

"But that wasn't on the wall the last time I was here, that village dance, with the balalaika player in a vermilion blouse and the dancing girls dressed in bright blue. Nor was the arrival of the locomotive, nor the crystal oranges at the bottom of those rainbow cones."

The amazing thing was not alone the prodigious artistic sense that these canvases displayed; it was that the great problem which haunts all the painters in the world obviously was also agitating their young brains. The experiments of the epoch were all reproduced in essence on the palettes of these children; their unskilful brushes moved in the same direction as those of more audacious painters. Who would have thought that their dear innocent eyes could spontaneously synthesize form and pierce through externals; who would have said that they could invent, modify, create? Or who would have believed that whatever they had discovered, they had discovered themselves, quite unaided?

A crescendo whisper broke in on my contemplations.

"I tell you, she *didn't* see it!"

"What?"

My glance traveled around the room, which was really not overcrowded. How guilty I felt! I had not noticed the curious octagonal lamp-shade of cream-white parchment, for a hanging lamp. It must have been the latest thing Natasha and Sophie had been doing, for they darted toward it and covered it with their hands.

"No, no, don't look! It isn't finished. Turn around, or close your eyes."

Being of an obedient disposition, I looked away.

"Tell me," I said, "what's going on to-day?"

Nicholas, the oldest, a boy of fourteen, ran to take a typewritten schedule down from the wall. By the time he came back the other children had seated themselves on the floor, with the exception of Vlady, who cuddled against my knees, and Vanka and Luba, who were beside me on the divan. Nicholas sat down, Turkish fashion, in the middle of the ring on the floor.

"I'm *dijiorni* That means, you know, that I'm responsible to-day for the carrying out of the program that the committee of six has planned for the week. The committee is made up of three boys and three girls, picked by the Soviet of twelve

that the whole school elects once a month." Nicholas as he explained turned his close-shaven head toward me so I could see the pale fringe of his eyelashes. "What's going on to-day—to-day? Well, we got up at a quarter to seven, as we always do."

I could almost see the two groups in the adjoining dormitories, one for the girls, with thirty beds; one for the boys, with twenty. I could picture them moving about between the rows of small, beautifully white cots which were without mattresses—for the State is poor. In the main the beds were nothing but boards, placed over two metal uprights, covered by a sheet and a thin blanket.

"By a quarter of eight," continued Nicholas, "everyone had made his bed and washed at the tap. We take a bath only once a week. From a quarter of eight to eight, we took tea in the dining-room. We ate what we always eat, a piece of black bread with a slice of cheese. Sometimes our cheese is moldy, and then we do without it. But this morning it wasn't bad. Next we had gymnastics for three-quarters of an hour, then three-quarters of an hour of 'duty service.' We like that almost as much as playing. Hey, isn't that right? We are the men and we carry up

the wood and cut it, and we sweep and wash the floors. What we like more than anything else is to make repairs in the house. When you came in, did you notice the masonry we'd put up beside the heater? No? Didn't you see it? Well, so much the better, don't say anything—"his glance commanded the circle—"we'll give you a surprise. I'll go on. The girls do the marketing, clean the vegetables, keep house, do the laundry and mend the clothes. At a quarter of ten we all meet downstairs for studies. That is, all except Moussya and Sasha, who're doing kitchen duty this week. And me—I'm 'officer of the day' and I don't have to do anything but inspect and see that everything goes all right in the house, and make up the daily report.

"After five hours of school, we go for an hour's walk. The day before yesterday, we went to the Museum of History. Yesterday we went to the shore of the Sokolniki, and today we visited a spinning-mill. You know the one, before you come to Lefortovskaya. We were hungry, I tell you, but nobody wanted to come back anyway. All the same, at four o'clock we were seated around the samovar, with boiling hot soup in front of us and a dish of cabbage and potatoes that Moussya and Sasha had cooked.

"From five to six, we had our painting lesson. You know how we work, don't you? We choose our own subjects. All we're asked to do is look at life and tell, on our canvases, how we see it. Well, that's simple, they say. All the ideas you have in your head, you just draw them and give them form. They leave us quite free to experiment as we want to—and even to be mistaken," he added, displaying his teeth, moist and white as a puppy's.

"From six to a quarter of seven we have singing and solfeggio. You know the chorus we were beginning to learn?

"From the banks of the Tambov
They departed, the comrades.

"We know it very well now. And then, too,

"Volga, Volga,
Mother of Russia. . . .

"Say, comrades, shall we sing that one in a little while?

"Last of all, we have manual labor. A gang of us does gardening; some of us work at carpentry; some at sewing, some at book-binding, some at electrical work. That's all. Now you're here. In five minutes it will be eight o'clock and you're going to have supper with us. And then we are

free until eleven o'clock to amuse ourselves, to read, to work, to talk or play, just as we want to."

Nicholas gave his recital very fast, while the rest of the children paid religious attention, as they did to everything that concerned the life of the school. When he had finished, he stood up and said in a military manner: "I hereby postpone until to-morrow all committee meetings that were to take place to-day."

He jumped over the backs of the seated children to go and post the schedule on the wall again—with, as I observed, a typically Russian respect for the written word.

Someone pushed open the door. It was the Director of the school. The children leaped to their feet, not so much to express their outward respect as to cluster around him adoringly and make him welcome. It was pleasant to see the man gather in all the youngsters with a fatherly gesture and smile his long, proud smile at them. With the exception of the woman who devoted three hours every morning to the heavy work in the kitchen and to the laundering of the sheets, he was the only grown-up connected with the children's republic, the government of which was entirely autonomous. His role was that of a comrade, older, more experienced and more loving

than they, someone to whom they could tell everything and in whose presence they could be perfectly natural.

I reflected that it would take me some time to become accustomed to the astonishing wisdom of these children. One day, I remember—it was in the beginning—I asked them: "But how about punishment? Do you take punishments, whatever sort they may be? For after all, you are children and you're most likely bad sometimes. And since that can't be allowed to go on, you must be obliged to have punishments."

They had looked at me, knitting their eyebrows. They had scrutinized my features, trying to divine behind which of them any badness could lurk. And then, after that, they looked at each other with a discouraged but loyal air, apparently consulting each other as to whether it was worth while to undertake an explanation for my stranger-ears. It was Natasha, straightforward, child that she was, who changed her mind first.

"Oh, of course, we make blunders every day. Everyone knows that. But when you say we're bad, what do you mean? Do tell us, because we can't imagine. Do answer—what do you mean by *bad*?"

Her accusing green eyes, with their delicate

tawny halo, plumbed the depths of mine. And they weren't twinkling as usual.

I felt uncomfortable.

"Well, I don't know. One can be bad in so many ways. One can be lazy, or jealous."

Sonya jumped.

"Lazy? Well, I could understand being lazy if we didn't know that everything we do we are doing for ourselves, and for ourselves only. If we weren't our own masters——"

And Serge:

"Jealous? *Here?* Don't you see, she just doesn't know us!" he exclaimed, appealing to the group. "She can't know! Whom would we be jealous of? Because we're all equal and nobody has the slightest privileges. If she had seen when Helen was ill how we all loved each other! Quarrel among ourselves? Say, all of you, do we ever quarrel?"

With a storm threatening, my turbulent lambs crowded around. I, on my first visit to the school, faced that circle of starry imperious eyes. And it was I who felt that I had just been bad.

"It's supper-time. Come, come quickly."

The children, rushing headlong like a flock of wild birds, swept me off to the dining-room, this

time, however, without clutching me; each was anxious to get there first and save a seat for me beside her own. But before I reached the dining-room, a large apartment, the walls decorated with curious water-color paintings, they had held a deliberation and decided to seat me alone, facing them, at the head of the table; and to put me on a chair, not on one of the two long benches, but on a chair, and in the middle, so I should be visible to all.

The soup-plates were steaming. Sasha entered carrying at arm's length a platter on which tottered a crumbling pyramid of meat-balls, glazed with white-of-egg.

At the other end of the table, also seated alone in a chair, I saw Vanka. She was hidden behind a large bouquet of blue hortensias, so that all I could see of her were her burning ears, half of one wide-open eye, part of a glossy red cheek and the top of a white forehead that seemed to radiate beams of joy.

"It's her birthday," Dmitry whispered in my ear. "She is thirteen years old to-day!" He pointed to the feast of meat-balls with cabbage, certainly never part of their ordinary wretched fare.

"The hortensias are ours," Marfa told me.

"We're going to have apples, too," added Sophie, using her hands for a megaphone.

The conversation became general. What seriousness! What fire! They talked of the New Theatre for Children, which was just coming into prominence. The school, it seemed, was participating in its work. The evening before they had attended a rehearsal of *Doctor in Spite of Himself*—a *Doctor in Spite of Himself* that would have surprised Moliere!

Natasha set forth the ideas she intended to submit the following Saturday in response to the stage-manager's request for each of them to give an opinion.

"Listen to me. Listen carefully."

Meyerhold would have been surprised to hear the sharp voice of this twelve-year-old girl enunciate, not principles, but instinctive preferences which ought to do no less than reverse the conceptions of the theatre which have prevailed up to now.

Another conversation was going on that showed that their interest had been aroused in social matters, too. Exactly what I should have thought.

"I Certainly am!" Luba declared with emphasis. Her apricot cheeks lost their smooth color.

"No, Luba," Nicholas responded calmly, with-

out raising his eyes from the pile of chopped meat on his plate, "it's more serious than that. To be a communist carries with it duties you have no idea of. You don't realize it."

Purple patches mottled Luba's cheeks. She bent her head quickly.

"Are you one, Nicholas?"

"I am," he answered, biting off his words distinctly and with a penetrating expression.

"Who gave you the idea?"

"Nobody. Oh, you know when one's growing up and sees all kinds of things from the time one's little and later tries to understand—I don't know just how to say it. Well, what's going on in Russia at the present time?"

His hands made a gesture as of building, over his plate. His outspread elbows and something bull-like in his appearance made him seem even more awkward in his attempt to put his feelings into words. "And then, it's not only that. I've studied. And almost every day workmen from the factories come to talk to us. They explain things to us. Well, it's like this: For three months I've been a member of a Communist group. There are seven of us in the school. Four boys, three girls."

"What I've explained to them quite fully,"

broke in the director, intervening for the first time, "is that they ought to abstain rigorously from all propagandizing among their comrades. If the others want to be communists, I've always told them, each should come of his own accord, and not because of idle enthusiasm or the craze for imitation."

The apples, which had just been served, were not as successful as their excellence merited. The faces above the steaming cups were all crimson. Serious, too, as if arrested by a thought which pulsated under the cloth blouses and the little patched bodices, and which was too heavy to come to the surface.

"Now we'll dance."

When I entered the room with the piano, a long line of little plants with diamond-bright eyes like blossoms was ranged to the left and to the right. Sonya had already begun to play. Natasha and Viera, who had taken off their old bast slippers, were standing facing each other with their hands on their hips, ready to dance.

"One, two—Ukrainian dance!"

Each of the girls raised an arm over her head, advanced and retreated. They followed each other, drew close together, entwined arms,

pirouetted, separated and tripped away on their toes.

At the end of five minutes they seemed to be transfigured. For who could have recognized in the stodgy Viera, with her full face, coarse skin, ungraceful hands and oily hair, this sylph who turned, smiled divinely, brought her whole body into play, her arms, her chin, even her eyelashes, and glided lightly over the floor on two swift airy feet?

And Natasha! All the precocious femininity in her evaporated like a cloud and left her with the charm of a little mad butterfly. Poised at this moment on Viera's two fingers, she escaped with a fluttering of wings, made for an imaginary willow-tree and, in a space of three yards, lost herself in a boundless meadow. Her fustian dress stood out about her like a blue circle. Her pretty, bright-blue eyes glistened like sun-flecked water. The glossy coils that covered her ears flapped against her cheeks. I wanted to remember all the details of her appearance, and I didn't know what to pay most attention to: her little tapping feet, her modest bearing, the charming frame about her head, the angelic expression of her eyes when she turned around—blue as wild chicory—

or the bendings of her body, or the rose-petals that appeared suddenly in her cheeks.

"Dance some more! Dance some more!" cried the other children, who for the last five minutes had been clapping their hands and stamping their feet.

They were delighted. The two girls danced another figure, in which Viera, crouching, shot her legs out in front of her like black rockets, first one, then the other; drew them back and kicked them out again like two bouncing balls. Next she leaped like a young wildcat and stamped her feet. While Natasha, bending over slightly, did nothing but a nonchalant step about her partner.

"What are you thinking about?" asked Luba, who must have noticed that my attention had wandered for an instant. The little Caucasian girl's black eyes, with their blue corneas, were so importunate that I answered frankly:

"My own little boy in France."

"But that's nothing to make you look so sad. Tell me, does he go to school?"

"He's little. Yes, he goes to school. Several hours a day."

"But the rest of the time he stays with you, in the house?" She pointed to the circle of children.
"Not like us?"

I shook my head to signify "No."

Her little body leaned closer against me.

"Poor little boy!" said Luba, as if to herself.

She pressed my hand compassionately; but the light mist that had momentarily clouded her lovely gazelle-like eyes disappeared when Natasha and Viera, slightly breathless, rejoined the radiant group.

While we waited for Yegor and Vera to finish preparing the surprise that was being planned for me (I had heard a moment before that it was a pantomime which Vanya had composed), the young heads gathered about me again, and the bell-like laughter rang out.

I should like to gather them about me many, many more times. What seemed so marvelous when I was among them was that between me as a grown-up and them as children there didn't exist the usual gulf. They wouldn't have understood that. Really adults have no common ground with ordinary children. When we wish to put ourselves on a level with them, we disguise ourselves with a childishness that does not match our appearance at all; we are embarrassed, our voices have a false ring. We simper and tell falsehoods. Our laughter cannot blend with theirs. In their presence we are like people speaking a different

language and pretending to understand it, although our pretence doesn't deceive anybody.

And if ordinary children raise themselves to our level and borrow our jargon, then they cease to be children and become pitiful, sick things. Their dreadful "knowingness" is something snatched from their youth, detracting from, not adding to the richness of them.

But those Russian children! Growing up in a country that believes its children are its dearest possession, its treasure, its hope, its pure gold, the flesh of its flesh. Laws have been made for the children, and they understand these laws. As between fathers and children, the Code chooses the children and takes their part. Books are written for them ; for them the whole country works, sacrifices, builds. For their sake everything has been torn down and is now being reconstructed.

To govern oneself, to work, to be responsible—these, for other children, are only words ; words written in books and newspapers, flabby words that collapse, without having any effect, the moment they are said. But this nation of children lives the words. For them, they are not mere words ; they are the strength of their muscles, the warm spirit that stirs in their limbs. At all times these words are with them, are back of the clang of their

hammers, back of their kindly songs, back of the stories they read about the common task, back of the solitudes that agitate the children's minds as they do those of the adults.

The boys and girls live together without dissimulation, without false mystery. And when the moment of love comes for them, they will be more than men and women to each other; remembering the comradeship and joys of their childhood, they will be real human beings.

Their opportunity above all is that they are beginning life in a country where the nature of every existing institution is being called into question. It is not only the social regime that has changed; it is not only in the political order that buildings and beginnings are going on; change characterizes every element in society. All barriers have gone down, not only between society and the individual, but wherever barriers were, wherever life was divided into compartments, and thought was kept from being free and human life was held back from its limitless destiny.

These children are being nourished, body and soul, in this atmosphere. Their hearts and minds have not been closed, as children's used to be. Even the door of the school has been left open, and through it come the sounds of the factory, of

the theatre. Through it the breath of nature enters and human misery, too. And the struggles of their fathers echo grandly. So they know that there are no artificial boundary lines in life, but that everything is interconnected and responsive; they do not need to be adults to understand that.

I thought of the men and women they would grow up to be, these children without a mother, who have only themselves to consult, like plants in the open air, in order to think clearly and to live well. I thought of these things as I held my arms round their soft little necks. And almost unconsciously I compared them *in my mind* with the little boy in far-away France for whom, when he was still a babe in the cradle, I had dreamed austere dreams of a life according to my own notions.

Luba was right. Poor little boy!

CHAPTER IX

MARRIAGE

"T H A T ' S that," he said, taking her arm and looking at her tenderly.

"Yes," she said, "that's that."

Summer lay with its full weight upon the earth. At every step they took it was as though they cleaved through an invisible mass; the heated atmosphere seemed to quiver silently behind them after they had passed. The young man had unfastened the collar of his winter blouse, and the scar of the wound showed that he had received while fighting as a Red soldier.

They were a handsome couple. She was slender, perhaps too slender, in her dress of sheer linen. Her eyes were like the lazy waters of a pool, her chin was prow-shaped, the sort of chin one rarely sees except in Englishwomen. Across the top of her forehead was a white strip giving a sample, as it were, of her real skin beneath the mask of sunburn.

He was blond and hairy and had a long horsy

face. His skin was a little pale from undernourishment. His eyelids were reddened by too many wakeful nights, but he had a bright, penetrating gaze. His body was tall and graceful.

"It didn't take long!"

Her eyes answered him. She took in a deep breath of the sharp, mineral smell from the man-made panorama stretching out before them. The innumerable wooden scaffoldings above the oilwells looked from a distance like groves placed at intervals the length of the plateau, or like a dark rash of illness speckling the countryside.

No, it hadn't taken long, only ten minutes. They had shown their identification papers and their Party membership cards. They had made declaration to the man at the desk that they wanted to get married, and he wrote down their names and occupations and read them certain passages from the Code, to which they listened a little distractedly. Did they need to know that "if one of the parties shall change his residence, the other party is not obliged to follow him," or that "marriage shall not involve community of possessions between the contracting parties" or that "mother and father shall exercise simultaneously their rights as parents?" They had known all that. They had known that the Soviet law protects the

unmarried woman as it does the married woman, the natural child as it does the legitimate child; that it is as easy to get married as it is to get a divorce; in short, that what they had just gone through was only a simple administrative formality. What really united them was their love.

They had passed over the iron bridge from which they could see the dirty yellow clay of the cleared land which surrounds Baku, and which is sprinkled with oily, rainbow-tinted ponds. The land squatting like a dark-flanked monster, sweats, breathes and absorbs petroleum, bathes in it, is nourished on it. Upright timber-work takes the place of trees, parallel conduits, of roads—row upon row of oil-wells, strange towns built on stilts, thousands of miniature Eiffel towers.

The two people did not feel that anything had changed for them since the day before. Two months ago they had first told each other of their love, of their desire to join their destinies. In all that time, their days had been filled with the same tender seriousness and trust that they now felt.

"What are you thinking of?"

"Of a long time ago."

Of more than ten years ago when she was still a little girl, on a warm day, too, near Tula. It was the day her sister Mariska had married—

Cinderella's white slippers — white satin — the diadem of imitation pearls—and the myrtle branches. And then all the guests—the table—the bridal cake, like a white tower of sugar.

"We will never part!" Mariska had said when they left, cuddling close to her husband. The words, the gesture, the fiercely possessive attitude of the young man seemed to trace a narrow magic circle around the couple.

But these two—they were destined always to be parting. He was to set out for Moscow the day after to-morrow—called there by the Cause. She would remain at Baku, busy with her work of organizing the Oriental women. Finally—in the autumn, or perhaps not until the winter—they would see each other again. And the next year where would they be? She in the Crimea, perhaps 5 he at Vladivostok. They belonged to the Cause first j then to each other.

What she was smiling at, this particular minute, was that they had just begun the life of accursed beingsj the hearth they had just established was an uncertain hearth, made to be deserted.

But ahead of them in the grey street, where the white walls seemed to quiver under the heat, the glorious sun lighted up a boundless perspective.

"Let's hurry. We'll be late."

They passed women in *charchavs*, Persians wearing the black fez, handsome Caucasians who looked like musical-comedy brigands with silver cartridge-belts strapped around their middles and jewelled poniards hanging against their thighs. The sun glanced off in blinding rays from a dome of velvety blue in front of them. It was their wedding-day j but it was exactly like any other day. To-day, it was a warm grey view lying before them -y to-morrow, it would be some other.

They were almost at the door of the dining-hall where their communist comrades ate. They would gulp down their dinner of soup and stew. Then, to work again! He was to speak at a mass-meeting, attend a committee-meeting, finish a study for a journal of economics. She would have just time to get to the day-nursery for the consultation-hour.

Their life was not commencing. It was continuing, the giving of themselves was continuing, strong and monotonous, a haircloth discipline that they were coming to inflict on themselves more and more. Later? Who could tell what lay in store for them? There was only one sure thing, and that was that the Revolution would always need them. Still, to have a companion to work beside at the consecrated task, to double one's field

of action, to struggle, to labor, to serve ; and to have a steady shoulder to lean on from time to time.

An odor of *kebabb* mingled with *yaurt* floated in warm, gusts out of a near-by shop. Seated against a pillar, a Kirghiz woman, picking lice off her baby, sang a guttural nuptial song.

Husband and wife pressed close to each other. He slowed his pace to look at her better. Joy flooded over her ; and for the space of a second, she would have liked to let everything go.

How can I express what she experienced? But her fate lay before her, definite, *comprehensible*.

In ages to come, beyond that level horizon, other breasts will burn and quiver with the same emotion that choked hers. But in this moment, like the poor who have nothing, she had nothing she could call her own, not even her love.

She continued to walk, but raised her eyes to his. For in spite of her courage, she needed to feel the harrowing sweetness of pity mirrored in the eyes of a fellow-creature one loves!

CHAPTER X

ALEXANDRA KOLLONTAY

NO, that was not how I had imagined her. I had been told she was beautiful. So she was. I had been told she was charming. So she was. The woman who opened the door of her room and received me with a smile was beautiful and charming. Was the trouble with me, that I had become so used to the slightly masculine appearance and careless dress of the women militants in Russia? This woman was conspicuously feminine, and still more conspicuously western. I had to replace the Kollontay of my imagination with the Kollontay who stood before me.

"Will you excuse me?" she said, pointing to the hampers and trunks that cluttered the room.

Would I excuse her! I was the one to beg pardon. She was leaving the next day for Christiania to take the post of Ambassador of the Soviet Government. On her way from the south of Russia she had stopped off in Moscow for only two days, and I, who had no other claim on her than that I

desired to make her acquaintance, was about to monopolize her last evening.

I was remorseful, then abashed and moved almost to the point of awkwardness. Not by the woman herself, with her fascinating grey eyes shadowed with lavender, her tender, flexible mouth, her youthful presence, and her hair sprinkled with a light grey, like smoke. But in the presence of a woman who had given her youth, her whole existence, to the Revolution, who had participated in the October Days, who for two years had been Commissioner of the People for Public Health, who had all kinds of energy and all kinds of gifts, who was a great sociological writer and a great agitator. I looked into my heart, and asked myself: "You—what have you done, anyway?"

The ardent urge, like springtide, which animates a true communist after he has left Soviet Russia, is based on minutes of shame like this, on these swift comparisons, and the resulting despair.

As she sat in front of me, lithe, active, voluble, in a dress of grey linen (which, upon my word, wasn't very far from being in style), Alexandra Kollontay could not have guessed what was privately disturbing her interviewer. I believe that the only expression on my face was one of

curious sympathy. I appeared only to be paying attention to the capricious way the shadows shifted on her slightly faun-like countenance. In reality it was hard for me to hold up my humble head, my heavy, heavy head.

She spoke in French. Not the slightest accent. And with the same fluency, English, German, Spanish, Italian, Serbian, Swedish, Norwegian, Turkish.

With that voice of hers, which rose like noble music, with the peculiar beauty of those who lead a vigorous inner life, I understood how she must have been able to play upon that born artist, the Russian people.

The conversation grew out of a trite beginning. I do not know which of us alluded to the woman question—a question one would hesitate to broach with Europeans under pain of being assailed with a horde of commonplace and foolish remarks. However, our ideas took fire ; the atmosphere was electrified.

"Marriage—the family—historical phenomena, transitory because they are occasioned by economic relations in a given epoch of production—"

Out of doctrinal jargon our words chiseled a breathing figure. Before us a dual being took

form. It had one face like a man's and one like a woman's ; it was like an apparition lofty as a figure in a fresco. The being was alone in the silent grandeur of a primitive country—nude, hunted. Like links in a chain, ages followed ages ; deluges were wiped out by deluges. The figure always the same, with its two opposing destinies and its two antagonistic hearts which the sex instinct pretended to unite. In cave or hut, in cottage or palace—on virgin continents—through changing centuries—one-half of the being always resembled a warrior ; the other half, a captive. And the dual form developed, vanished, appeared again.

Through the lulls of a storm, through migrations, through cataclysms, we always beheld the same small groups seated in a circle, jealously, around a hearth ; beside the fire that never went out brooded a whisper that never was silent. Always the same symbols above the thresholds, which crumbled but were at once rebuilt. The two shadows on the wall did not change. The one with the great sinewy arms went riding away into the open, working, fighting—and always for food. The one with the two swollen breasts came and went in a shadow where, as the drops of time fell

into the starry silence, nothing was heard but the rhythm of a cradle, rocking, rocking.

"A glass of tea?"

Before I could say yes or no, she had got up. A moment ago, seated, she had appeared stately ; now, as she bent over the samovar, she seemed small and delicate.

The vision assumed a new character. We knew very well that it was of ourselves we spoke, not of the changing of ideas. The vision we had evoked had terminated with us, just as ancient times had terminated with the moment that was just passing. We had rid ourselves of that crouching immobility of our primordial flesh; but it came back again, like the memory of a disease which has lasted for centuries and centuries. Sometimes, in the night within ourselves, one would swear that the old illness had come on again. Women of one age, thrust between two epochs like a bridge, we are a little like sick people whom an irresistible voice orders to get up and march. But how we limp sometimes! Don't we leave freshly-burst chains behind us and don't our eyes sometimes feel hurt before they see the light?

"A new epoch of production. Collectivity assuring the gratification of the needs that **kept the**

family together. A plan for the rational utilization of all productive forces. Destiny of woman completely changed, since the economic basis of life is changed."

This time against the vast rude background of a gigantic city, against a sky barred with stone and metal shafts shooting up into the air like the trumpets of the Apocalypse, two clearly distinct beings advanced to meet us—distinct, and yet resembling each other, united as of old by the same sex instinct, the same need of the flesh which does not will to die, but healthy now, natural, openly avowed, like hunger and thirst, neither good nor bad—the mysterious triumph of life over death. And because each one earned his own bread, the man and woman were freed from one another and from ignominious dependence. If they were near one another, it was because they had chosen to be ; it was because it was sweet to be together, to talk together, to go side by side, to understand each other.

We heard the Kremlin clock strike an hour that belonged neither to the past nor to the present. Tomorrow Alexandra Kollontay would set out for Christiania. Tonight she was making a halt; tonight, in the small room at the "First House of

the Soviets," her beautiful contralto voice prophesied a woman to come who would be luminous as a spirit and perfect as a masterpiece. Different from us, very different, and yet related to us, like a beloved daughter.

CHAPTER XI

PRIESTS AND THE PEOPLE

"*V7"ES," said the Father Superior, for the twentieth time slipping his hands into his shiny, greasy sleeves. "God has sent this cataclysm upon us. Whatever was precious in our country, our faith—and such faith—has been, as it were, engulfed. Without doubt this state of affairs is transitory. Without doubt. Still, who would ever have thought that we should fall upon such times?"

As if he were calling upon them to witness, the old man contemplated the objects that surrounded him: the little table tottering under the weight of the great holy books; the stove, the sight of which appeared to brighten the inky drops that hung quivering on his narrow eyelids; the little couch covered with an old Boukhara rug, discolored by the regular caress of the years ; the copper samovar, its base covered with verdigris ; the ikons speckled with black.

Though I had been there less than an hour, I

was already familiar with the history of the monastery; and I felt the bitter, leaden ennui that permeated the place, like the heavy fumes of incense without a smell.

The Father rose abruptly, disentangled his feet from the folds of his black robe, and strode back and forth on the worn floor of his little cell. Outside, on the old stone bench near the fountain, the monks who were waiting to take me to visit the basilica, sat calmly and very patiently.

"Since the Soviets have been in power, there's been anarchy in the Russian Church—anarchy pure and simple!"

He was a theatrical figure whom I should never have tired of looking at. His eyes were nothing more than two needle-points that formed a flame, his cheekbones seemed almost to break through the parchment of his cheeks. He wore a violet skull-cap, his long grey hair lay on his shoulders in corkscrew curls. A kind of pulsation contorted his face, that was like a dried fig with its thin lips looking like a pencilled line badly erased. His body had a slightly epileptic twitch. On his robe, the wind and the rain had made long, dark-green stains like trimming.

"From the very first days I had a feeling that this would come. There were some here—there

still are some—who rejoiced at the 'neutrality' which the new Government observed in regard to religion. Not so stupid, the Bolsheviki! Persecution would have been madness. It would have alienated the enormous mass of peasantry, without whom the Government could not exist. They were content to proclaim the secularity of the state, and to forbid the teaching of orthodox religion in all the schools!"

The Father turned around, stopped in front of the window and watched the three white figures whom the thick spreading hedge enclosed in a green niche.

"Of course, it was the same with the Jewish and the Mohammedan religions. But that's not what—"

He was off pacing the cell again.

"I foresaw it all—that first Congress—the one held during the Revolution. In spite of the victory of the bishops over the lower clergy, and the election of the Patriarch Tikhon, I didn't think any good would come of it. I knew very well that sooner or later disintegration would follow. I wasn't deceived j we didn't have long to wait for our chastening. Famine came, widespread deaths, piles of skeletons, horror. That was when **God** put us to the supreme test.

"Seeing that the plague was spreading, the Government ordered the treasures of the Church to be requisitioned: the sacred gems, the golden pyxes, the ornaments of precious stones, the beautiful studded ikons. Oh! If you had witnessed the scenes that took place! We" were to deliver up the riches so piously accumulated in the course of centuries, the almsgiving of the faithful in visible form, the holy property of God! There had always been famines in Russia, some even worse than this one. But such a thing had never been done! Never! The great majority of the priests were base enough to permit the sacrilege. The bishops held out and organized resistance. It was over this point that the conflict arose, the division, the schism!"

The monk took his forehead between his hands and screwed his shrunken head on his vulture-like neck as far as it would turn. I thought he might be going to pull himself out of the net-work of wrinkles in which his face was caught as in a snare.

"And then after that. After that came the imprisonment of the bishops who had taken the lead in the movement. Some were shot. The patriarch himself was indicted according to their infamous justice. However, he had never hidden

his monarchist convictions. When His Majesty the Czar was a prisoner at Ekaterinburg, the patriarch sent him his benediction, quite openly. And after that? After that the popes of Petrograd and Moscow united to form a society which they called 'The New Life.'⁵ And they summoned a new Congress from which a new division sprang. 'Analogy of communism and Christianity,' some fools say. Do you believe that the Government has taken the analogy into account? I can tell you, the 'communist-Christians' have not found favor in official eyes. They are too recent adherents of Communism. The writings of Lenin recommend struggle to the death with the religious spirit. And do you know, the religious marriage they allow has no legal value. Ah! The Bolsheviki have been wily and patient and prudent in the war they are waging on God, but they have been none the less zealous and thorough.

"However, they still have a great deal to do, and they know it," added the old man, falling back on the green couch and staring through half-closed eyes at the head of the Virgin that smiled approvingly upon him. "They can't destroy the work of centuries in five years j and God, as always, will have the last word. In the meantime, while

we wait, we must look on as the Orthodox Church adapts itself to the power of the Soviets! Ah! You have to laugh. Adapts itself! So that our treasures may be plundered!"

Father Alexander crossed his hands on his knees and reflected an instant. Then he got up and went over to the table.

"Take this and read it!" he said, handing me several printed sheets and newspapers from a large book bound in black.

Having drained his cup of ignominy to the lees, he drummed softly on the glass with his old-ivory fingers, as if he were tapping with a holy-water sprinkler.

In the garden the three white-frosted monks circled the fountain and walked toward the house.

"Brothers and sisters in Christ," read one of the manifestoes of the New Church, "it is now several years since there has been established by God's will, without which nothing can be accomplished here on earth, a Workers' and Peasants' State. The heads of the Church have ranged themselves against this State, on the side of the people's enemies. Blood has been shed because they flatly opposed succoring the starving Christ. The appeal of the Patriarch Tikhon has concentrated all the counter-revolutionists who wear the cloth.

But the great majority of believers and of the lower clergy have not responded."

Why did the face of the Abbe Gregoire suddenly rise in my memory, and the Abbe Covelau's famous *Letter to a Good, Friend?*

Three timid knocks. I had barely the time to catch a glimpse, at the end of an article signed by the priest Vedensky, of some vehement words inviting the entire Church to "condemn the rich and the capitalists, to take sides with the proletarians and the under dogs," and to fold up the copy of *The Living Church*, a periodical published in Moscow by the clergy of the Left.—In 1791 the Abbe Thommeret also tried to reconcile his religious feelings with the Declaration of the Rights of Man: "The primitive charter on the one hand; on the other, the natural Decalogue."

"They're going to rescue you," said the Father, at the threshold. A sly smile raised his cheekbones and hid his eyes. But it gave him a more agreeable expression.

His gaze followed us a long time, as we walked—the three monks and I—across the green space, half park, half waste land, that stretched in front of the cells. Was he yearning for the days when Ivan the Terrible inveighed against

archimandrites and ikhumens "drinking to excess, feasting with women and girls?"

When we were about to round the corner of the building with the rose facade and the Renaissance windows, he was still there, leaning on the stone, his tiny eyes peering, doubtless, to see what direction the impossible Resurrection would come from.

"He isn't accustomed to talking so long!" exclaimed the huge Rabelaisian-looking monk, who, with his long beard, would have resembled the Moses of Michael Angelo, but for his laughing eyes.

"Yes. Father Alexander has for a long time been deploring what he calls the 'disappearance' of the faith."

"Listen to us," answered the monk, tucking up his white linen robe. His gesture, that of a Marquis under Louis XV, contrasted strangely with his figure and his broad hips. "If the foundations of our faith have been weakened, we have to create a prodigious revival among the ancient aristocratic classes. The set who observed the outward forms up to now—Good Heavens! How shall I express it?—I don't want to say for expediency, nor yet because of habit, because that wouldn't be exact . . . you see . . . •" And he

winked, and fumbled in his beard as if he might find the crumbs of his last meal there. "Those who are overwhelmed with comforts on this earth— isn't there some excuse for them if they don't give enough thought to eternal salvation? Be that as it may, since all these things have happened. God has got whatever the Revolution hasn't taken from them. We are witnessing a great revival of piety in this vile world. One could use the word 'conversion' in speaking of it. All of the representatives of the noblest families who have been content in the old days with giving the clergy the protection of their fortune, come in crowds now to pour out the treasures of their hearts upon the altars of the Almighty. I could mention a hundred names to you. Not only of women. Men, too, crowd into our churches. That's the miracle! Of course, we must have some compensation for the attitude of the peasants. Ah! I'd rather not speak of them.

"Still, we don't have anything to say against the older generation, which hasn't lost the habit of prayer and respect for God. Our old peasants behave themselves all right. If they didn't help us out a little with our living, I don't know how we should get along. All we have left is this

field here, and this garden. But the young people!

"The girls! The young women! Newspapers, the vanities of the city, lectures, railroad trains, moving pictures, all these new ideas, all the Soviets they belong to! I tell you, it's simply turned their heads. They think they are free, and have everything, and no longer need God."

The thin monk, with long hair plastered down like a drowned man's, his cheeks darkened with a reddish stubble, and eyes like those of Christ on the cross, heard the end of the apostrophe, and came closer.

"Guess what is the latest wrinkle of a country girl who was married last year," he began, "and who has just had a baby. A girl very piously brought up!"

"I cannot guess."

"She called her baby 'Electrification'! As if there weren't any more saints now to name a baby after, and no more Christian names or anything. *Electrification!*"

The tranquil striking of a clock cut the silence in two. Peace fell on us again. And on the world. The young lad who passed, leading a cow, the woman yonder with a blue handkerchief, did not seem to be real, nor of this age.

"This is it," said the monk who looked like Moses, standing aside to let me go in and designating the interior of the church with his hand.

It was a colossal structure, splendid with bright gold, stone columns, velvet banners, fresh stucco-work, white capitals. There were nine pointed arches and great empty spaces beneath, where calm brooded. On the whole the place did not look so Russian as other churches.

Footsteps there sounded like knockings on a tomb, which made all the temples echo. I had the impression that presently I should see the mendicant brothers of the Vendee rise up, those who were called Mulotins and conjured up the devil from the bottom of the tabernacles. Perhaps they would approach me gently and speak of the oath they had refused.

But no. It was the fat monk who returned suddenly, his eyes full of the generous optimism of the hearty eater. Tripping on his robe and floundering like a buffalo stuck in the mud, he asked:

"What are you? A Frenchwoman?"

If I had not delicately avoided him, he would have slapped me on the shoulder. Then he said, speaking slowly, trying to remember his French:

"A Franco-Russian Alliance, what! Frenchies

and Roushians—always brothers! Together—" and he clasped his two hands together energetically to symbolize union—"good Frenchies, good Roushians, we'll put down the Bolsheviks." He made a circular motion with his hand. "And then—all will be restored!"

"May God hear you!" From behind us came the furtive murmur of the monk with eyes like Christ.

CHAPTER XII

KRUPSKAYA

ON the first floor of a building occupying a block on the Sretinsky Boulevard, Moscow, lost in a beehive of offices, noisy with the clatter of typewriters and the jangling of the telephone, was the room where Krupskaya worked.

It was a large bright room. On the wall hung a map of Russia, a portrait of Karl Marx, a portrait of Trotzky, and several of those educational charts published by the thousands for use in schools in which colored pictures and large numerals represent the comparative production of wheat, Indian corn, and barley, and the production of metals, and the register of cattle leased out. Two tables loaded down with old papers; a telephone; three or four benches. An impression of bareness and absolute simplicity.

A grey-haired woman who stooped slightly rose from her desk to receive me. She wore a black woollen overcoat with a zig-zag edging, cut sloping on the shoulders, and frayed at the elbows.

Her black skirt might have been a beggar woman's. It hung uneven and was pieced at the hips. Her shoes were terrible, the soles were torn, and her waist of black cotton-cloth from frequent laundering had turned rusty at the neck and green down the front.

Lenin's wife.

Orator, writer, revolutionist all her life, she was now directing the Political Department of Public Instruction in Soviet Russia. I questioned her.

Bending low over the desk—her poor overworked eyes could hardly see clearly—she begged my pardon for speaking such bad French. And yet it was in faultless French (with here and there, perhaps, a slight hesitation) that she told me of the successful campaign they had waged from one end of Russia to the other, to wipe out illiteracy.

"Would you like to see the exact records?"

She got up to look in a pigeonhole for a tract, a book, a pamphlet, came back, and made a note of the questions that interested me.

What kindness there was in her expression! A kindness the like of which I don't think I've seen in any other person. Her kindness! It was her kindness above everything that overwhelmed you.

It streamed from the apparently cold grey of her eyes—kindness, serenity, true majesty. And what a breadth of outlook! A strong sense of reality showed itself in the long report she had just written on the academic program, the purpose of which she explained to me.

Another characteristic was her strict desire to remain unknown. All her being seemed to say: "Whatever effort I make shall be nameless. Over me, as over all of us—those who are willing as well as those who are not—moves historic fatalism. And all we do is to range ourselves on the side of those who are right."

The telephone rang ; someone brought her a sheaf of papers; people were waiting to see her.

She spoke of Lenin's health, of the joy he experienced at going back to work again, of the difficulty those around him had to keep him from overdoing.

"And that's very hard," she said, gravely.

She spoke his name without the slightest show of personal pride, in the tone a militant would use who knew the significance of the two syllables. She spoke as might a woman of the people about her husband at work in the shop.

Workers, there are people whose whole existence is spent only that you may be set free. Here

is this woman, grown old sublimely in her labors for you. There is that great grey look of hers which has been fixed only on your image since it first saw the light.

The interview was over. I said good-by awkwardly, murmuring incoherent words. I carried away with me the warmth of a steady hand, which I should have liked to press harder—or kiss.

CHAPTER XIII

THE THEATRE

AS I came in from outdoors, where the birds were flying and calling, and the sun shone in the eyes of the crowd, the interior of the Gittis Theatre gave the impression of a peaceful church. I wandered through the long empty lobby that echoed with my footsteps. I came to the great staircase buried in cool shadow. I stumbled and groped and fumed, thinking I had made a mistake and got into the deserted entrance of a sumptuous bar for NEP men. Then, finally, I came across the door which opened into the great hall of the theatre.

An abyss, dark as night. At the other end, directly facing me, a spot of light in front of which fantastic shadows passed. I went forward cautiously between the regular rows of seats and reached the center aisle. As I approached the light, objects took on size and shape and assumed a lifelike appearance. Well! Here I was!

In front of me, on the unset stage which had no

flies, only a wall of sickly-colored brick, were about a dozen human puppets, dressed exactly alike, running, capering, contorting themselves. In the proscenium a back that I recognized as Meyerhold's was hunched over a table loaded with scattered papers. It made me think vaguely of the back of a general bending over his maps at headquarters.

At the noise I made, in spite of my good intentions, the back turned and showed a peering face like a jack-in-the-box. The eyes blinked—identified me. No danger that he would show by a sign that he had recognized me. The back turned around again, a fist banged on the table, and an unseen mouth barked "That won't do!" at the dainty little woman in a smock who had just made an agile leap and landed astride the shoulders of a simple, big fellow who was standing stolidly at the right.

"It's a very amusing farce we're rehearsing," Meyerhold's associate director whispered, coming up to me. I had met him the evening before, and knew him to be a poet, actor, and translator.

He sat down beside me and outlined the plot. I couldn't help paying more attention to his dress than his words. Like all the actors, he wore leather sandals and a one-piece costume of rough,

deep-blue cloth. His full, puffed tights **were** fastened to his ankles by two leather straps, his white shirt was cut low at the neck, with a large Danton collar. The costume made him and the others look oddly like workmen, aviators and acrobats rolled into one.

"Look, look!"

The figures in tights were jumping over tables with marvelous agility. They played at leap-frog for five minutes and then at tag. Each took a turn at the swings and the bars. Next they drilled at the goose step, with many turns and meetings and separations, and intermittent shrieks. One of the exercises was to lie flat on a piece of apparatus which looked like a combination arm-chair and operating table. It was made of long nickel-plated bars and white enameled uprights, with a balancing board. The trick was to lie with just the loins resting on it and to balance with all four limbs in the air.

"That's not it! That's not it!" bawled Meyerhold.

The actors had to do the trick three times, and they got up rubbing their thighs.

I confess I didn't get the point of the farce, but I did understand—at least I think I understood—the purpose that came to light.

Of all the theatres that I visited in Russia—and for several months I went to the theater almost every night—this one was without doubt the most ardently experimental. I do not know whether Meyerhold is *the* man to outline the new form, but at any rate he was the first man who, in the midst of a revolutionized society, dared to challenge dramaturgy and make a clean sweep of it.

Goodness knows how the theatres have been able to maintain the seething activity they have shown since the Revolution. Petrograd, which in the old days had fourteen theatres for a population of a million and a half, to-day has twenty-seven theatres for a very much smaller population. In Moscow, the number of theatres has grown in even greater proportion. The theatre has entered straight into life. It is true that the majority of the theatrical ventures still cling to the traditions of the past. But there are three or four theatres—and Meyerhold's is typical of them—which have resolutely abandoned the limits of the naturalistic, realistic, symbolistic and psychological schools, which reject all the theories upon which the dramaturgy of the bourgeois epoch was based, and are endeavoring to create a theatre in harmony with the ideals of the nascent world.

It goes without saying that I did not become

accustomed instantly to the innovations that were proposed to me. The evening before I had attended the presentation of a French play, *Le Cocu Magnifique*, by Crommelynck, and I was utterly astonished by the singular settings in which the play was produced. It was absolutely unrecognizable.

No curtain, no dividing line between the stage and the audience. Against the same sickly-colored brick wall, on a stage which looked like an area outside a prison or a bare corner in a factory neighborhood, was a—let me see, what could you call it?—was that peculiar contrivance a machine? There is no name for it. After scrutinizing it attentively, you finally distinguished two different tiers and two planes, a painted staircase, a toboggan slide, wooden parallels, two transverse planks, a strange palette and two huge, solid wheels, one of which was painted red, the other black. Each had some small white letters painted upon it. At some moments, one of these wheels spun around while the other revolved very slowly. At other moments in the action, both stood motionless. To the left, a drum-stand served as a turnstile on the empty stage.

It was in the center of this scaffolding that the Crommelynck piece was played, and played to the

accompaniment of epileptic shrieks, the sweeping of a broom, sobs and gunshots, and in a perpetually fantastic tempo that would have stupefied the author. Stella, the sweet, the resigned, the heroic, was only a sawdust doll with dangling arms and the jerkiness of a marionette. Bruno was only a merry-andrew, thrashing somebody or being thrashed. And the real hero of the play was Martin-baton (the man with the cudgel).

Of course I quite understood the new world's unconscious and childlike need for movement and sound and the love of the grotesque (to use the word so much in favor at this moment in the theatrical advance-guard). What offended me was the terrible license taken with the author, and the over-importance of the role played by the director. It was quite simple. The Cromelynck play was no more than a meager scenario which the autocratic director had—not modified, that wouldn't have been bad—but completely made over into a something that accorded with his ideas, although it bore only a faint resemblance to the author's initial conception.

And what was the significance of the strange setting? Surely it was not for nothing that the wheels revolved, that the screws turned?

"No, it is not for nothing," answered my com-

panion. "We wish to accustom the worker to play with his tools. A wheel, a connecting rod, a piston, a leather belt, are forms which, so far as the worker is concerned, represent exploitation, hell and death. In this country they are only auxiliaries of his power as a producer, but they ought nevertheless to enter into the limits of his existence as an individual."

Vsevelod Meyerhold, who had just given a fifteen-minutes' rest to his co-workers, turned toward us. Now I could ask him the question that was on the tip of my tongue.

"Since you are in search of the new, why use the Crommelynck play? Why not take a new play, absolutely new?"

"Find us authors and write us plays!" he answered with his usual bluntness. "You can't expect an age that is still in its birth-throes to crystallize its dominant thought on the spot into the work of art that will represent it. We are revolutionists; we can't build up until we've torn down. Tearing down is all we have been able to accomplish at present. And God is my witness that there is enough to be demolished! What will the theatre of tomorrow be? I have my own clearly-defined idea as to that, and I'll tell you—if you have the patience," he added, blowing a

cloud of smoke out of his pipe, and sitting down beside me.

Even in the shadows of the auditorium, his strange wolfish profile looked accusing. He opened and shut his mouth like a valve to let out the smoke. The polished lenses that half-covered his smooth eyelids seemed phosphorescent. He was magnificently ugly. His skin was swarthy, probably clammy to the touch, and certainly very rough and wrinkled. His forehead was slanting. His voice was peremptory. One could understand the deep respect which he seemed to inspire in all who surrounded him.

"What," he began again, "is the theatre of a social system based on capitalism? A transposition of life. What does it seek to convey, with its foreshortening and its appeal to the eye? The illusion of life. Well, we've had enough of that; that can't go on any more; it's over. In this country the laboring man has become the master; do you know what that means? The master! And he is beginning to live the truth and know the truth. He knows that two and two are four, that he can drive a good blow home with his fists, if he is strong, that he has a right to soup when his stomach feels the pangs of hunger, and that he who does not produce anything is not entitled to

vote." He paused. "So, you see," he went on, and his sharp canine teeth seemed to grind his pipe, "the Russian people have swept away illusion in the social domain. Every day furnished new proof that parasites could never have ruled if the workers had not been blind. So they feel they must have a clear vision regarding every aspect of life, a secret need to banish lies from art, too, as well as from politics and society. They no longer tolerate what was once tolerated. A crying need for facts dominates the human soul."

I made a gesture of acquiescence.

"Not so quickly. Wait! Let us begin at the beginning. Let us glance over what we have done. You are convinced, aren't you, that we have pretty nearly suppressed whatever used to make the theatre artificial, sham, untrue? No more make-up. The actor is now obliged to use his natural features ; he mayn't use the conventional aids. No more curtain, telling the spectator: 'On this side—your side—is life ; on the other side—our side—is the imitation of life.' No more starring system, distorting a play by making it rest on the shoulders of this or that celebrated actor or actress. All very well for the decadent countries to produce plays expressly for great courtesans. We'll have nothing but an ensemble, nothing but a

great living machine in which each actor is part of the machinery. No costumes. Ah! Your exhibitions of *toilettes*, your changing of costumes! We have the same uniform for both men and women, a garment allowing the body perfect freedom to move and to translate the multiform mysteries of life. We have stripped the theatre of some of its accessories and of a little of its sham.

"Let us go a bit farther. What is the significance of the fact that I produce all my plays against the same wall, in this dreary, hideous, bare setting? It means that it ought to be possible to play any play against any kind of a background, without special preparations or constructions for each particular play. Contrary to the naturalistic conception of the theatre (take the artistic theatre of Munich, that of Reinhard, or even the Art Theatre here, directed by Stanislavsky), I claim that the actor of the twentieth century should carry his theatre with him, that his calling is essentially a peripatetic one; wherever the actor is, there should his theatre be.

"When I say that the actor is everything to the theater, that implies much more than it seems to. Come to our school some day. You'll see that what we want to make of an actor is not, as in your theaters, a servile mimic, but an all-round

human being. The proposition can also be turned around. I say that the man of the future, who will be exactly this all-round human being, this accomplished individual, that it is our ambition to develop, will be the born actor, the unit of those great crowd-manifestations which the theatre is bound to become. They won't be a representation, a counterfeit of the feeling of the masses; they will be the sentiment itself. The man of the future will not need to *learn* to be an actor.

"In the theatre as it has been up to now, as it still is in your country, the actor has been only a mannequin placed on the stage to imitate the individual in the grip of passion or of necessity. In the theatre that we want, or to be more exact, that a crystallizing society demands, the actor who shoots a pistol will be an experienced marksman; the man who sits down at a piano will not have to have music played off-stage, but will be a real musician. If the script calls for a hand-to-hand fight between the protagonists, it will be a real fight, with real muscles and fists in play. **The** same in the realm of the intellect: the 'text' of a play **will** not consist of tirades learned by **heart** by well-dressed parrots. The actor **will really** understand and know what he is **talking about** ;

if he speaks in scientific phraseology he must really be a scholar.

"We begin to train our actors at the age of twelve. We give them an extensive general culture, a thorough training in gymnastics, rhythemics, physical culture and even acrobatics. We teach them to ride a horse, to swim, to shoot, to drive an automobile, to be sportsmen, to understand machinery and to work in a laboratory. They must choose and practise some manual trade. And in addition to all this, they must be perfectly familiar with the history of the theatre, of art and music, with the literature of every country, with the history of human culture. To be a perfect mime is only a small part of an actor's profession. He must know how a play is made. Our students work at prosody, metrics, fugue, harmony and counterpoint. They learn to write, to invent, to express.—The future authors of our future plays? They will be recruited from among the actors themselves. You must bear in mind that in our eyes schools have no reason for being except in the transition period in which we now are. Our efforts are worth nothing except for this transition stage. In the future—later—much later—every producer, finding in society the means to become an accomplished human being,

will be an actor by definition, but an actor in a sense we don't yet imagine.

"The material of the theatre? The crowd. The setting? The street, the square, the workshop, the whole world—any place where men are together. Real plays? Life itself as it becomes more communized, will furnish a million occasions for concentrating its imaginative flights and directing its desires into suitable channels, for bringing the past to life again. Inaugurations, anniversaries, fetes, the change of seasons, pilgrimages, the commemoration of past events.—How do I know? Don't you think that would be beautiful?"

Yes. While he was silent, his eyes dreamy, I went with him in his limitless development of a majestic creature never before seen on earth. I thought I could feel the very life of its cells. I was one of its cells. I shared in the joy that thrilled through its myriad fibers.

"Look at the manifestation that took place in the Fourth Congress. You were there, weren't you? One of our collaborators improvised and produced on the Vasviszhenka a vague, an extremely rough outline of what I have caught a glimpse of. I don't give you that as an example.

We know better than anybody that what we do today is nothing. We lack the materials.

"What materials have we retained from the past? Some hints given by the *commedia del' arte*, by the mystery plays of the Middle Ages; in modern times, some of the elements of the music hall, and almost all the elements of the circus. Those are all that can be used, I think. Why the latter? Just consider: a juggler and an acrobat do not simulate dexterity and suppleness. They are *really* supple, *really* dexterous. What they do in front of us is not the imitation of something, it is in and of itself an action. Any unsteadiness, and the acrobat will break his neck. You hold your breath as you watch him on the slack-rope because you know his situation is serious, real—real to the point of spelling possible death to the performer."

The blue-clad figures on the stage seemed very impatient.

"The fifteen minutes are up," said Meyerhold, looking at his wrist-watch.

"It is true," he added, holding out his hand, "we do nothing but mumble, grope, and collect whatever there is in the ruins that may reflect the sunlight of to-day. Not much, of course, not much. In this country life has become action; it

is no longer passive acquiescence. And the theatre will tend now, if not to become action, at least to furnish a *motif* for action. I tell you, it will be a *doing*. But that needs explanation, and I haven't time to develop it. *Dosvidanya!* Come to our school some day."

In one stride he scaled the footlights and was in the midst of his blue-clad actors again. He motioned to them, and they resumed their "doings."

"Here, comrade! Hurry up, you! And you—do this. No, not like that, see, like this."

With extraordinary ubiquity, he gave the direction, watched someone on his right, signalled to someone on his left; then, suddenly alone, began to stride up and down the stage. His neck was thrust forwards, his ears were alert, his glance fixed. He held his breath. You would have said he was listening to the slow and concerted tramping of a crowd ascending out of limbo.

CHAPTER XIV

PROLET CULT

IT WAS at the house that the fabulously wealthy Morosov had built on the Vasvizhenka, a horrible palace of white confectionery, ornamented with anaemic gargoyles, pointed arches, and winged lizards, and girdled with commas in plaster.

In the great medieval hall, the traditional brown bear with his fat furry belly held out a paw with long claws.

Vanished were the beautiful ladies who used to descend the mottled marble staircase with stately tread. The great banquets which filled the regal dining-hall with a savory smell had become things of the past. Ended were the gallant conversations, gently murmured in the atrium paved in mosaic, with Roman benches and great golden niches in which figures of Venus crouched. To-day, one passed hurrying figures which seemed to have come from the night, yet were at home there.

Each room was occupied. The entire palace had

been transformed into a strange bee-hive. Everyone was hurrying. Work was in progress everywhere. You opened a door—they were rehearsing a play. In another hall they were reading and analyzing, word for word, a manifesto which was to be issued as propaganda. In another room two young men were constructing a model of a theatre, a skilfully-made toy, a little masterpiece. With a little thrill of pride they called on me to admire it.

In the library an orchestra of twenty-eight pieces was performing a strange symphony doubtless called "The Symphony of the Locomotive." The instruments they used were fragments of bottles, strips of sheet iron, three whistles, a reed pipe, a gong, packing-boxes, copper drumsticks, paper horns and wooden rules.

In the dining hall, which opened on the garden, ten or twelve athletes in tights were doing acrobatic stunts on a heavy mat. In the servants' hall a group was reading and discussing a poem by Mayakovsky.

Can a distinctly proletarian art come from the masses which have just been liberated? After all hasn't the worker his word to say in that creation of the human spirit which is called Art? Isn't it possible to dream that art can be re-invig-

orated and even completely renewed if it seeks the contributions of the majority of human beings, who have never given it anything heretofore? That, in essence, is the *raison d'etre* of the Proletcult, which had its headquarters here. A formidable problem, an imposing question.

But this I must say at the beginning. If the student youth, vaguely proletarian in sympathy, which composes the membership of the Proletcult, has up to now accomplished a considerable critical work, if it has wisely rejected whatever was rotten in bourgeois art, still it has not yet produced anything new or anything that contains in embryo the original material of the liberated class.

Thinking these things, I passed through the Marie-Antoinette boudoir where a couple were stamping the floor in a spirited negro dance. In the great Empire study, about a dozen young people awaited me. Some were dressed in soldier's uniforms, some in jackets; the girls were shabbily clad. Their faces were the faces of people who are preparing their minds for a spiritualistic seance.

They were having a discussion on art. A solemn and parliamentary discussion, for they were not allowed to speak out of turn, and were

strictly limited as to time. Questions were put down on paper, and minutes were kept of the proceedings.

A young man with an ascetic face and burning black eyes behind his spectacles had the floor.

There was a kind of tenseness and religiosity in the atmosphere. What seemed like the opposition of contrary currents made it difficult to catch one's breath. The young man's words hung on the air ; they should have been hung up somewhere on invisible pillars like ex-votos. Comrade Azarov pronounced them, moreover, in a monotonous voice that was uniformly energetic.

"Art is not, and ought not to be, a specific independent branch of culture. No. Art ought to be universal activity applied to the creation of the material forms of life."

He pounded on the table with his fist and his youthful jaw bit off the word "ma-te-ri-al," and rolled it upon his tongue.

"Human society has developed, up to the present, without the intervention of the human conscience."

The door opened. Azarov did not even wink his black eyes. I'm sure he didn't even see the girl-comrade in a blue smock who brought in a

trayful of glasses of tea and silently placed one before each listener. Probably none of them noticed her either, since nobody touched the tea.

"Hasn't collectivism in this way been able to create the forms of reality methodically? Until now there has not been real creation, there has been a pictorial art, a sculpture, a literature that have created illusory forms, constructed in and by the imagination."

He should have encircled that last in quotes, for one can find it word for word in Karl Marx.

"Art as a method of action has taken a part completely outside of the social structure. The practice of art has become a profession, a specialty. It is because of this that the artist has always been an isolated figure in his own generation, an exception, an abnormality among other men."

Always this tendency appears in new Russia—to break down partitions, to suppress differences, to urge all men to all human potentialities!

"The art of the future will concern itself first of all with the improvement of routine labor, and it will first attack the problem of creating things of material usefulness."

Though his words were sometimes utterly true (on the whole the critical efforts of the Proletcult

youth seem justified to me), my impression is that along this line the Proletcult will not find what it is looking for with so much faith. It smacks too much of dogma, the tone employed is too often preachy, the ideas, in spite of everything, are bookish. The hypothesis that animates the young intransigents is beautiful yet there is a naivete in believing that the great change which must inevitably occur in art can be accomplished otherwise than by time and life, in their great and fortuitous and mysterious ways.

The atmosphere became tenser and tenser. The tall girl perched on the stove took notes slowly in a note-book balanced on her knees. The orator's words cut into the air with the hard coldness of a steel saber.

"In the future, technical invention will go hand, in hand with spiritual invention. The worth of the finished object will be taken into account in the act of production itself. For that cannot exist without an organic fusion of art with production. And do you know," he added, raising himself up by placing his flattened palms on the Empire desk, "do you know who the man is who in our time may indicate the type of the artist of the future? It is the mechanical engineer."

"Your time is up," phlegmatically remarked the president of the meeting, a big blond with light eyes, who had hardly taken his eyes off the hands of his watch.

"Five minutes more, comrades!" the dark-eyed orator begged.

No one stirred. "Neither a yes or a no. He placed his palms on the Empire desk again and went on.

"This introduction of art into production is impossible unless we renounce the old esthetics and create a new esthetics based on efficiency in the social realm, and on technical perfection. We cannot even faintly realize the field of art as we conceive it. That will be possible only in a degree of development characterized by the complete triumph of collectivism."

What a beautiful face the workman had who sat timidly perched on the edge of the armchair ornamented with a honeysuckle design in gold. Sometimes he raised his head, sometimes his knitted brows testified to the fact that he didn't agree at all, not at all, with the opinions he was listening to. Nevertheless he listened, he received the other's thought open-mindedly. How honest his forehead was and how thoughtful his eyes, as

he tried to separate whatever was durable and true from the monotonous inflexible words that rang in his ears.

"Humanity is still in its infancy. It is still necessary to play upon it by means of images and emotional appeals. In these inferior and purely transitory means we ought to endeavor more and more to eliminate illusory art, analytic art, contemplative art, and to approach always nearer a synthetic art, an art of action" ("an-art-of-action"—his palms emphasized the syllables with a sticky, patting sound) "which will be the art of the communistic era."

"I must contradict Comrade Azarov," said the girl with the note-book, which was now full of notes. She slid down from the stove, and turned toward the audience a fine, wrinkled forehead and an exhausted face, racked, one might say, by thought.

It won't be here, I am sure, that the great discovery will be made, or the magic word spoken. All the same, the wind will carry off the fine pollen floating in the atmosphere and will scatter it in the soil where it will germinate. All the

young people present seemed to feel this. Perhaps that is why they had such a penetrating expression.

"Your turn, Comrade Murkine," said the president of the meeting.

CHAPTER XV

LENIN

NO MATTER where you go, whether to a school, a factory, a day nursery, a railroad station or a hospital, you are struck by one object: a bust, squarely facing you. Black, set high against a white background, it challenges your attention. Huge, egg-shaped head, massive, Jovian brow, a slightly grinning smile, Mongolian cheekbones, narrowed eyes with an intense expression in them, projecting jaw, chin covered by a lichenous beard, ogreish mouth making a broad border to the bushy moustache. All these traits combine to give the head the look of a wild bull ready to charge at the first sign of opposition.

Suppose you call at the lodging of a student, of a communist couple, of a woman, or of a soldier, and talk an hour with your hosts. You will go away feeling that what dominated the conversation, gave it tone, animation and depth, stimulated it when it flagged, was that face standing out from the wall in vivid relief, those eyes

fixed and unwavering as the needle of a mariner's compass, that formidable, ruthless expression, at once pitiless and protecting.

If you walk along a street, whether it be in Moscow, Petrograd, Kiev or Rostov, there he will be, on all the facades, behind all the plate-glass windows.

Lenin.

Everywhere Lenin. In museums, on shipboard, in offices, in any public place, that unforgettable look of his arrests you, lays its spell upon you and haunts you. If you go to the theater, there he stands at the entrance reminding you that the world is in a gambling mood and is staking everything on a single throw of the dice.

Go to hear a speech. Always the prologue will be delivered by that silent mask, which harangues you without a word, but with an effect as impressive as the approaching rumble of thunder. And no matter what the topic of the speech itself may be, the name Lenin comes inevitably into it at some point, and, like a spark falling into a powder magazine, touches it off with a sharp flash. Then all other ideas are shattered by the force of the detonation, and after the smoke has cleared away, all that remains is—Lenin.

In the country, if you go into a peasant's hut,

it may be that you will see to the left of the stove a gilded ikon. But what you will be sure to see is the likeness of Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, the saviour.

Or, in a group of women, you instantly notice an enameled brooch mounted on a thin nickel bar pinned like a jewel to the faded pleats of their woollen blouses. It is a medallion of Lenin, whose glance, even in miniature, lashes you relentlessly. Even under crystal, his smile does not lose its terrible grandeur.

Open a book of current history, look over a newspaper, or a magazine. Even if Lenin's name does not rattle through the lines like grapeshot, you will find him there, I assure you, in a word, or a turn of thought, or an idea, in which you catch an occasional gleam of his doctrine, like a precious jewel half-hidden in uncut rock.

To know him, you **do** not need to meet him in person. He is immanent. From the moment you set foot in transfigured Russia, you feel his presence.

It is, of course, a quickening experience to meet him. He is a simple man. Nevertheless one finds him disconcerting. Without seeming to **watch you** particularly, he sizes **you** up in an instant, mentally noting **down** the sound of your voice, **your**

strong points, your weaknesses. He likes to **ferret** out your indefinite thought, vacillating, wavering like a feather in the wind, and pin it down. He says little; he prefers to listen.

It is something of an event to see him enter a hall where he is to speak.

He is awaited in a dead silence, an extraordinary silence, as in a cathedral. The audience seems hardly to breathe, anticipating the oxygen of his presence. The hushed breathing of the many sounds like the breathing of a single one. You would say their hearts are barely beating. All the feelings the man arouses in them—their reverence for him, their confidence in his destiny and their zeal to serve him—seem to hover in the hall and deepen and widen. The silence is full of majesty, but quite without heaviness and tenseness. It is a grand silence, that may become, presently, the matrix in which history will be cast.

At last, here he comes: a footstep is heard. Is it really Lenin? It is!

And then—a sudden volley as of musketry fire followed by the roll of a thousand drums; exultation, delirium, a frenzy of handclapping. Lenin! Lenin! If they stood clapping until **the** next morning, they wouldn't say a hundredth **part** of what they had to tell him. They crane

their necks until the veins stand out, their heads almost leave their shoulders, like balloons floating by a thread above the solid bodies anchoring them.

"Come on, everybody, clap your hands! We've got to let him know we're with him. Hey, you next to me, you're not thinking of stopping, are you? Don't you understand, this big noise is telling him something he wants to know?"

The audience, on its feet, is like a wheat-field stirred by a tempest. Young men's eyes are wet with tears, like the eyes of a father when he looks at a beloved son.

"Long live the Proletarian Revolution!"

It has been triumphant once, it will continue to be triumphant. There stands Lenin. Their thirsty eyes drink him in in long gulps and still they are not satisfied.

"Long live Lenin!"

The shout cuts short three thousand adoring smiles, and the long paean makes the walls tremble with the ever-growing clamor of a frenzied crowd. The noise threatens to bring the ceiling down and overwhelm him as he stands there in full view. And yet, he is only a human being after all, not particularly tall, lounging first on

one leg and **then** on **the other**, waiting **for the** noise to subside.

Patiently he waits, his body relaxed, his **face** tranquil. His is the pose of a captain on **the** bridge, watching in the midst of **the** storm **for** that slight brightening of the clouds which only his trained eye can see. From time to time he consults his watch with a phlegmatic hand.

"Six minutes gone? This is really lasting too long. What's this? More of it! Well, it's high time for me to begin."

And as soon as the cheering seems to have abated a degree, he cuts in with a word, straightforwardly, not striving after effect, but conscientious and engrossed. He is not an oratorical speaker. He uses short, simple sentences, interlarding an arid thought with a bit of humor and a shrewd chuckle. He goes over the same idea again and again with telling persistence, plodding ahead with heavy monotony, like a yoked ox. Now, like a demoniac but benevolent magician, he pulls a slip of paper from his pocket and a new idea from his massive forehead. He clumps heavily about the platform in pursuit, so it seems, of the exact word that will make his meaning clear. Suddenly he pounces on it, and **sure**

enough, it penetrates the tangled thicket of events like a brilliant searchlight.

Aggressive, trenchant, he bases his arguments on logic. Wisely abstaining from all oratorical gestures, he thrusts his two thumbs into the arm-holes of his dark jacket. Now he goes over quietly and leans against the small reading-desk on one side of the stage, where he reads some statistics, and then returns to his place.

He uses no bombast ; he lets his ordinary voice convey his meaning in a conversational tone. He seems as approachable as any man on the street, yet all the time he is as dangerous as a shooting star. So simply does he speak, with such simple words and delivery, that you appropriate his idea as your own the moment he has uttered it and you wonder why you have not expressed it before.

Lenin speaks deliberately, amending frequently as he goes along, painting with steady strokes a blinding picture of the world, making facts and figures tell all they have to tell and no more. He ends with an abrupt word and then disappears as he came, in the midst of a tornado that is the outward expression of three thousand people in transports of ecstasy. But this time he doesn't listen. No. They continue for eight minutes!

And so you have heard Lenin.

I daresay it is nothing—only one of his multiple aspects, only one of his moments of genius, of which each day reveals another. Taken all in all, they give him the unity of a great natural force.

One day he will hold a conference with a man from the country and question him for five or six hours. The day after he will tell you about the conditions of potato-growing with infallible knowledge, minute detail, and an instinct that only a man raised on the soil could have. Tomorrow he will have instructions broadcasted which will serve to quadruple the potato crop in a certain section of Russia.

Many people have a description of Lenin to give you.

One of his co-workers who had been at his side constantly for many years said: "People think he is devoid of personal feeling. Of course the bringing about of communism in Russia and the outbreak of the World Revolution overshadow everything else so far as he is concerned. That's all he's lived for. Who can tell what the man really is?

"For example, in 1918, in Petrograd, he and I were scheduled for an important labor meeting where his presence was eagerly looked forward to.

The automobile came for us. We had just enough time to be punctual. Lenin was silent on the ride, as is his habit. After a few minutes I felt his hand on my arm.

"'What time is it?'

" 'Eleven, exactly.'

"He hesitated a couple of seconds. Then, in some embarrassment:

" 'If it's only eleven o'clock, I'm going to suggest that we make a short detour.'

"'Which way?'

"He told me. There was nothing to take him there. I must have sounded astonished.

" 'Don't be afraid. I won't get out of the machine. It's only that I'd like to see a house where I lived—oh, quite a long time ago. I have many memories connected with it.'

" 'Comrade, we have fifty-three minutes. If we go that way, we'll be more than fifteen minutes late. It can't be done.'

"He did not reply, but settled closer into his corner. A few instants later:

" 'Look here. If we asked the comrade who is driving to go a little faster, don't you think we could make the detour and still get there on time? I'd like so much to see that house again—only see it.'

"His eyes spoke to me, man to man. His face wore an expression of sweetness I had never seen. He drew his head in close to his shoulders, as if he were ashamed to make such a request. I needed all my courage not to say, 'Yes!' Instead of that, looking at my watch a second time:

"'We're going as fast as we can. If it were to make us only a single minute late, you would still have no right, for a purely personal motive, to keep the five hundred comrades waiting.'

"'You're right,' he said, and again sank back on the seat.

"Twenty seconds passed. Then he thought no more of the incident. But^during those twenty seconds you can't imagine the tenderness and homesickness in his eyes."

The man's life is so little localized, one is thankful to be shown at intervals that his genius is embodied in flesh and bone. And it is satisfying also to know that his mortal body has experienced the sadness of memory and the taste of sorrow.

But this is only one anecdote, and one anecdote does not make a Lenin.

He is someone who passes and will disappear like everything else, this being with his prodigious forehead, this unassuming soldier for the Cause, this ideal statesman* this inspired worker who is

also an encyclopedic intellect, a great dialectician, and a scholar of impressive culture.

But the setting in motion of the power of the strong, the break in History, the installation among men for the first time of what is called the Ideal, the voice which says NO! from one end of the world to the other, the thing which is too great to be named but which we call an idea, the idea which has arms, heads, hearts, justice-loving eyes and hands carrying guns—that is a reality which will change the centuries, and that's Lenin.

CHAPTER XVI

TROTZKY

IT WAS at Angora, last summer.

Back in the rocky hills under the blue sky, where so much history has been made, an eagle had been captured. He was kept in one of the villas in the gaunt, bare little valley which was used as a sort of country-seat and playground.

I often used to go to see him, though it really disconcerted me. It was frightfully intimidating to look into his face; to endure the piercing rays from his two great round eyes. It was as if he unlocked the door of your secret self and looked in. Then he would turn away, as if he had had enough of the humble force latent in you.

Some time later I was ushered into Trotzky's office, through two rectangular halls, severe and comfortable as the halls of the Council of Administration, into the great somber office, deep as an abyss, where he was seated. When I saw his face, in the brutal glare of the electric lamp turned full on him, it flashed across my mind—the eagle!

The interview began. He was quite like the eagle. The same flashing, almost unbearable eyes, the same domination in his pointed beaklike nose, the same regal poise of the head, the same absence of chin, as if all the lower part of the face had been suppressed to make the upper part more prominent, the same radiating splendor of tranquil power, the same subtle effluvia emanating obliquely from the deep-cut hollows of his eyes.

As I became accustomed to the dimness, I gradually plumbed the depths of the room seeming illimitable in the shadow. A white column supporting the ceiling; a table loaded with books; an English armchair; on the wall, on the rollers and on the folding cabinets a conglomeration of maps of Russia, Asia, Europe, the whole world; a little nearer, the gleam of nickel, the soft reflection of polished wood; everywhere an order as regulated as a compass. The man himself emerged from the tiny circle of lamplight, buttoned snugly into a khaki jacket, smiling, imposing, affable, intellectual.

So he is when in repose—as if poised on the earth. A question, a word, and he unfurls his pinions to their full width, and soars to heights from which he explains everything, appraises everything in its entirety. He lists **the** sum-

mits, he links the seen and the understood with the vague and the invisible. He soars on high in the pure ether, asphyxiating to mortal minds. And at length he swoops down to earth again to tell us ordinary beings exactly what is taking place and what is going to take place in the valley. He is an eagle in full flight, Trotzky of the victorious revolution. He talks as an eagle acts, and he looks like a thunderbolt. His whole personality proclaims the inevitable triumph of human justice. Not a triumph expected and destined in time to come, but the sort that is snatched like booty, the sort Trotzky himself achieved. His personality evokes the times he himself has vanquished, the period of the Czars and persecutions, the period from which he himself sprang—the caged eagle, the prisoner of Cell Number 462.

In January, 1907, Trotzky was on his way to Siberia along with the deputies of the worker's soviet. Direction unknown. Fourteen deputies. A convoy of fifty-two soldiers to guard the prisoners ; almost as many mounted police to guard the soldiers. Viatka. Tiuman. Tobolsk. The iron-barred door of the train grated shut.

"I wonder whether we'll come back soon," he asked himself, "over these same rails?"

They started. They withdrew further and further from civilization, until they came to the end of the railroad. Then they traveled in sledges, four sledges. Ultimately they learned that they were being sent to Obdorsk, about a thousand miles from Tobolsk. So that was where they were bound for, in the icy wind! They drove through "motionless forests where frost hung like cobwebs." A fantastic panorama unrolled before their eyes. Villages. Places where they made halt. More villages. The "politicals" who lived in them came to meet the exiles. What an event it was in their lives! They followed the course of the Ob, passing the huts of Tsingalin, now called Berezhov, where they stopped two days.

"In regard to my own intentions," wrote Prisoner No. 462, "I have not yet settled in what direction."

It was done. It was decided. It was *the other direction*. How? By the Tobolsk highway? Towards Archangel, crossing the Ural Mountains and the Ij ma River? Or by the Sosva, toward the railroad spur which begins at the factory at Bogolovsk and joins the trunk-line at Perm?

This route was full of dangers and privations. Exanthematic typhoid raged in numerous places

to be passed through. For hundreds of miles no dwellings. And the dreadful blizzard of several days' duration. To face it meant death. And this was February, the very month of storms. Within the last few days not even a native Ostiak had taken that road, from which all tracks had been obliterated. So how could one keep one's bearings? Above all, how find a guide?

Well, no help for it. That was the route to take. Decided.

The third day. Midnight. "At last we set out! The sensation of cold in my hands and face was agreeable to me," he said. "It seemed to me a real proof of my departure. The reindeer paced gallantly, their tongues hung out and they panted."

The night passed, dawn came at last. The relay station. Another day, another profoundly dark night. The huts of Chomin. But he was still far from being saved.

And then one of the reindeer, "the bull who hasn't his equal," according to the driver, hurt his *leg*. How were they to get another pair? In that Ostiak tent, where a block of ice served as a window-pane and where even a drink from the bottle stung like flakes of fire, it would be like

a death agony to await the dubious return of the owner of a herd of reindeer.

But finally he did come, and the prisoner could continue on his way. A week's journey, through forests where the tree trunks were "dry and straight as are the masts in an ice-bound portj" across vast untrodden snow-fields, through plantations of fir-trees. . . . He halted to make tea from melted snow in a kettle slung from two branches planted in the ground. He set out again, stopped at a Zirian hut where the stultified inhabitants saw a knife and boots and a book for the first time in their lives.

After sleepless nights came middays so brilliant that the snow and the sun dazzled his eyes like molten metal. And at last—'at last!—with a great cry of joy, he beheld the train on the Perm-Koltass line, speeding along ahead of him.

They hunted for him then. And now it can be said of him, as of Lenin, that he is everywhere. He is in the barracks of the Red Army wherever its standard is planted deep and irremovable. He is in the souls of the soldiers, the rapturous, singing souls of the soldiers ; he is in the mechanical perfection of the machinery that transports them, he is in the magic word that runs through Russia.

When Trotzky speaks, oh, how the people run to hear him.

Once I heard him speak in Red Square.

A dozen orators preceded him. You could see them gesticulating like movie-actors, but you couldn't catch a word they said. But he! When he got up, his tall body straight as a lance in his all-enveloping wool greatcoat, with his helmet on his head, he thundered loudly enough to shake the foundations, and his Mephistophelian eye gleamed like a blue carbuncle. Not a word that did not carry. The symmetrical ranks of soldiers held their fine, intelligent faces up to him as toward the sun. They all seemed to be operated by a handscrew as they turned like one man: "Hurrah for the proletarian Revolution!" He saluted them, talked to them. He galvanized their marching. Without effort, his message clove dominantly through the noise of the tramping divisions, the clatter of horses' hoofs, the rumble of cannon.

And again at the Kremlin, before a public meeting of Congress, in the Hall of St. Andrew. The hall is marbled, decorated in gold, with enameled coats of arms. The floor is of rare wood; the ceiling sustained by cunningly wrought pillars.

He had been speaking for seven and a half

hours, in four different languages, and yet there was no trace of weariness on his face. He went on—skilful, brilliant, superb—cutting out his words as with a scalpel, making his thought glisten like a diamond of the first water. His audience was enthralled by his commanding forehead, his arrowlike glance, the way he pounded with his fists, like a shower of hailstones. His intrepid delivery, his magnetic presence fascinated the crowd. When he had finished they were blinded, confounded, and looked up in the air expecting to see the white-hot fragments and mass of each of his dynamite-charged words.

You should see the eagle in battle with an adversary, lashing him, dismembering him with beak and talons and great blows of his wings, darting down on the last quivering remnant of life—if life there was at all. He is always in the right, not only with his knowledge, his dialectic and his genius, even shrewder than that of Lenin, but with his humor, his caustic rebuttal, his incendiary formulas.

He is a learned theoretician, a fascinating writer, a poet, a master-organizer, an incomparable controversialist, a realist of the first rank. And all his gifts he has never ceased to lavish on the proletarian cause.

It is quite true that here below there is "neither God nor Caesar nor tribune," there is no "supreme saviour." Trotzky himself said so in the last Congress of the Russian Communist Party, when he filled the unfillable gap occasioned by Lenin's temporary absence. But it is also a fact—I quote him again—that "this is true only at the final reckoning." Without a Trotzky, without a Lenin, the Russian Revolution would still have triumphed, but more slowly and at cost of greater suffering.

The interview was over. The door closed on him.

I know I shall forget that luminous face which the shadows just swallowed up. I know my swift impression—a forehead—two eyes where Intelligence tended its devouring flame—will fade. But I shall never forget that promontory standing firm above changing weather and shifting border-lines, where a sovereign presence made my eyes comprehend the outlines and masses of that which has not yet come to be.

What fields will the Revolution open up, and what lives in these fields?—this Revolution which at its very beginning threw up the flashing moment called Trotzky, who stands tall in his age like a leader, an eagle, a king of men?

CHAPTER XVII

THE PEOPLE'S COURT

"The more our power becomes fixed and stable, the more civil life develops, the more it becomes necessary to think of the greatest revolutionary legality."

LENIN (*Report to the Ninth Congress of the Soviets*).

NEVER, I believe, have I seen a more expressive face. None more affecting. As certain pictures, in background, foreground, and grouping, are composed with the purpose of throwing an enhaloed head into prominence, so it seemed that the audience hall had been planned as a perfect setting for him.

He was the one thing in the place that did not have an artificial and accessory air. He drew everybody's attention. The manifest and diligent spirit of popular justice was centered in him. The serious, dignified, attentive six seated beside him in front of the red-draped table—three on his right, three on his left—could not have been of the same stuff. If they were flesh and bone, then he was molded of some unknown clay made to radiate human seriousness.

His gentleness was softened, as in a portrait ; all his gestures seemed to move through an invisible down; his faint smile was hardly outlined, lest it become volatilized.

"I wouldn't be in those fellows' shoes for anything," whispered a voice in the crowd. Apparently every bystander must have been thinking the same.

Ten years ago this hall in the Palace of the Nobility, adjoining the Festival Hall where S. R.¹ cases are tried—this room with its white pillars, its deep bay-windows, its walls of an intimate soft blue, its lifeless friezes of Greek games—was crowded with pearl-decked women, men in uniform, churchmen. Today it serves as the headquarters of proletarian justice.

The newspapers had given much prominence to the trial. Officials had been bribed. Jars of wine had been paid to railroad employees in return for special privileges in the transport of merchandise. The two sentinels of the guard had difficulty in keeping back the curious mob.

Smirnov, the one-time bakery worker—today President of the Superior Council of the Judges of Moscow²—proceeded to the interrogatory.

¹ Socialist Revolutionary.

² Equivalent to a Chief Justice in a Supreme Court.

Smirnov: smooth-shaven, reserved, imperturbable, close-mouthed; his hands held one inside the other; a slightly square face, a parchment-like skin with a faint green tinge; a forehead that was a rectangle of light outlined under lank, abundant, dark hair; a plebeian look; two greenish eyes that shed a softening light; something of the air of an American detective, of an angel of justice, of an agreeable Bonaparte.

A woman rose from her seat among the fourteen accused persons, who were almost merged with the crowd. She bent her head, which was wrapped in a large white kerchief pulled down to her eyes, and repeated for the third time that she hadn't touched a thing—only a bag of flour—that she didn't know—and looked up with a ludicrous expression. Everyone was pointing out the communist beside her who was implicated in the affair. "There, see, that's the one, with the brown sheepskin tunic and the fuzzy hair."

A misdemeanor of this sort is a rare thing among Party members. Two years before there had been a "purging" of the Party by which about 150,000 members had been weeded out. Only tried men remained, whose integrity, capacity for sacrifice, abilities and past records justify the confidence placed in every communist in Russia, and

the authority given him. Not everyone is accepted as a communist who wishes to be. The card of the Party does not merely signify that one subscribes to a certain opinion ; it means that one has been judged worthy by an implacable tribunal and that one has consecrated one's entire self.

The railroad employee was testifying. He stood twisting his green cap in his hands and cast appealing looks at his lawyer while he poured forth a string of prepared phrases. He stopped, and plunged again into a long rigmarole, his flabby cheeks puffed out as if with a mouthful of something he couldn't chew.

Smirnov listened almost as kindly as a father confessor, led him back to the subject when he seemed to be rambling, distracted him with gentleness.

The accused who were seated near the employee—the red-haired man, the old fellow dressed in blue, the tall dark priest, the *sfeculant*, as they call mercantile men—made themselves as inconspicuous as possible in their chairs. Even the one who looked like General Durakin tried his best to efface his Herculean shoulders.

What good sense, what simplicity were dis-

played in the judicial formalities. Smirnov and the six workers associated with him would presently show that in order to judge wisely and truly there is no need to belong to the "nobility of the robe," nor even, according to the current prejudice, to "a certain class," nor to have a doctor's degree. What versatility is presupposed by the great work of self-education that these men have had to accomplish!

Since the October when the victorious proletariat destroyed czarism, the law of the old regime has had to go. The Revolution was well begun by the abolition of the rights of property-holders, by the closing of all the courts of justice from the tribunals of peace to the High Senatorial Court, and by the burning of the sixteen-volume Bulletin of Laws. Once masters of power, the workers and the Russian peasants set themselves to the task of creating *their* State, *their* Law.

A Penal Code, then a Civil Code were respectively adopted by the Pan-Russian Congress of Soviets, a new body of law was worked out, "law founded," according to the word of Marx, "like all law, on inequality," a law which, like all other law, imposed respect for class domination in the name of legality. But whereas bourgeois

law sanctioned the domination of the bourgeoisie, the all-power of capitalism, the bondage of the working class and the exploitation of man by man, labor law sanctions the domination of the proletariat, the all-power of labor and the liberation of the exploited class.

Bourgeois erudition constructed all its notions of law upon individualism. A contract between two individuals was, to it, only the agreement of two wills. This principle, derived from the French Revolution, amounted, in practice, to the law of the strongest. According to bourgeois law, public right is not in force in a contract except in the absence of private right. Private right supersedes public right. The Soviet Code has deliberately broken with this "respect for the free will of the contracting parties." It permits the state to break contracts prejudicial to the interests of collectivism. It inserts into private right the character of public right.

But these two legal systems nevertheless have one point in common. Both of them are based on class interest. So far, certainly, as one can speak of a "juridical constant," the only difference is that the workers' law frankly sets itself up as class legislation.

Since the first draft of the workers' law was made, modifications have had to be introduced. The NEP re-introduced private initiative into daily life, put private commercial enterprise and industry into competition with nationalized commerce and industry. The necessity for legislative changes then made itself felt imperiously. With its circumstantial provisions on property and on inheritance, the Civil Code reflects this new phase. But the new law is no more of a restoration than the NEP is a return to the old state of things. While leaving private initiative the necessary freedom, the Civil Code of the Soviet Republic is so conceived as to serve the Proletarian State as against private capital, and to permit organized society to direct the entire economic life; which was in essence the aim of the Proletarian Revolution.

Later? Later, what can properly be called Communist law will supersede working-class law. This is only a step, just as the dictatorship of the Proletariat is only a step toward Communism.

Meanwhile the Institute of Soviet Law is preparing an index of legislation and jurisprudence for the use of the magistrates who are all, like the six whom I saw, of proletarian origin and are chosen by the Soviet electors.

The lawyers were not long. They soberly made their summing-up, and, in accordance with the law, completed their clients' arguments. No striving after effect, no empty rhetoric, no clever speechifying: this was not the theatrical performance that law-courts used to be.

The last lawyer—the one with the long black beard—finished speaking. Smirnov and the six judges arose and withdrew to the adjoining hall for deliberation.

The crowded courtroom relaxed and buzzed ; people pushed in at the side, the lawyers went back to join their clients, everyone kept asking: "How many years do you think they'll get?"

As for the accused, they were silent. It meant prison and they knew it. Their arraignment had not lasted long—four months. Prison might be their just desert; there would be enough food, and visits would be allowed—but—it would still be prison.

Smirnov re-entered. Always that sovereign calm, that gentleness. Then the other judges.

Stern as a soldier, in the midst of outcries, the worker-President read the verdict in his deliberate, expressionless voice. Not a shadow crossed his good, satisfied face.

" In the name of the Proletariat. . . . "

Silence turned on its hinges like a massive door. Two years to the red-haired one. Five years to the priest. Three years to Durakin. Five years to the railroad employee. Five years to the man whose underlip looked like a piece of raw meat. Eighteen months to the woman.

Smirnov raised his eyes, this time, it seemed, reproachfully—it was the communist's turn. The duel between their eyes did not last more than one or two seconds, but the flashing encounter impressed everyone, and the man in the sheep-skin tunic hung his head. Though his complicity was not absolutely proved, though he had in no case touched a ruble, he received the maximum sentence—ten years.

The President, blinking his eyes, shook off his contempt. He let his green eyes wander slowly over the hall, raised them to the walls where plaster cupids were blowing conch-shells, placed the verdict on the table, then assumed his impassive, beautiful ivory mask. The people had judged.

CHAPTER XVIII

ARISTOCRAT

" . . . The Revolution is reflected there as the sun is reflected in a pool of mud."

TROTZKY.

N L Y a moment."

So the maid had said when I asked to see Count Z.

Almost twenty minutes passed, still nobody. There I stood alone in the vast drawing-room. I walked up and down; I turned aroundj I stopped in front of the window ; I gazed a long time at the polished red cylinders which were the pillars of the cathedral of Saint Isaac, at the high marble stairs, and the virginal white of the road-way encircling them, at the passing sledges that looked like toys.

Absurd! I used to think I should never, absolutely never, get used to wasting my time in the insouciant way of the Russians. I sometimes found unpunctuality even among the communists, the same total lack of a sense of time. Unbearable!

"Only a moment" meant at least an hour's tramping up and down in this drawing-room, which smelled as though it had never been aired and looked as though preparations were being made for moving—piles of books on the floor, three glass cases leaning stupidly against the wall, folded screens, bandy-legged arm-chairs piled one on top of the other, and a carved table on which a centaur, between two wounded lions, galloped after a modest naiad emerging from an alabaster wave.

So much the worse for Count Z. I did not intend to wait another second.

The door opened. From the approaching figure—a short, thick-set mass of shadow—suddenly escaped a nasal tone like the liquid twang of a phonograph.

"The Count is not at home! Too bad! He won't return until tonight! Ah! When he finds out!—He had received notice of your kind visit! He was so happy to have an occasion to talk with you. *Nitcheve!* It will have to be put off to another time! Permit me to present myself: Countess Z. Charmed, truly charmed at my good fortune. A Frenchwoman! Do please sit down! Here we are in our poor St. Petersburg! But how did you manage to cross the border? You

were not afraid of the firing squads? And France? What is going on in France? We know nothing—complete isolation; not a newspaper, not a magazine, not a French book; like living in a tomb for five years! And to think that you, a Parisian, are here in this wretched country! I cannot believe my eyes."

For almost ten minutes the lady talked and talked, and I sank into the depths of a gilt easy-chair unable to edge in a word.

"You have been here a long time, have you? Do tell me everything; we have been without news from Paris for so long. By the way, I am going to give a tea; are you free next Saturday? I'm going to ask all the ladies of our circle that are still here."

The Countess thrust her chin out above the cameo that held a cascade of black lace on her chest, patted the gray toupee which lay in spit-curls on her forehead, and spread out her black grenadine skirt.

"It will give me pleasure to make the acquaintance of your friends and learn what you have been doing these five years—in what way your life has changed."

"Tell you how our lives have changed? I'm -

possible! It's past description.—It's been hell; it's been hell."

A look of sincere pity came over my face.

"Ah! The ruffians! The brutes! The savages! But tell me—why didn't I think of it sooner? You haven't had your lunch, have you? Oh! Then please take lunch with me. Oh! Do not say no; I should feel hurt. I was about to begin when you rang. No, it is settled, do not protest. I know that after the dinners to which you have been accustomed in Paris our fare will seem execrable. Dear me, dear me, what has become of our dinners of the old days? Madame, the table used to be set all day long. No matter what time friends came, they always received the same greeting. There were always *zakuskis*, white *balik*, caviar, hams, whole chickens, ten different kinds of smoked fish and five kinds of preserves, *blinnisy* watermelon, *faska*, all the wines of the Caucasus—and I don't know what else. And to think that it was the same in every self-respecting house in Russia! Ah, one may well say that things have changed!"

I wasn't sure whether or not I ought to accept, but I found myself being propelled by the hospitable and voluble energy of my kind hostess into another room still more sombre than the salon.

Here a Renaissance chest as big as a steam-engine was so placed, at an angle in the corner, that its jutting paunch seemed intent on barring the way.

"Do please sit down!"

There is no doubt that the Russian language is sweet on the lips of women; it has a yielding and caressing sound when they say *pazhalusta*.

There was no way out, and I sat down at the table. It was covered with a red and blue embroidered cloth. At one end a samovar, with its row of cups, made a genial altar of sparkling nickel, purring steam, and mirrored porcelain.

A moment of silence enabled me to say a few words of thanks: "Really I am at a loss . . ." I began. By way of answer my hostess put her hand out to a little bell on the table. Ding! The hempen-haired woman who had first ushered me in entered with two steaming plates, and set them on the table.

While I was enjoying the good cream soup, the objects in the room emerged from the shadows one by one. Behind the Countess was a large brass bed with a poppy-colored counterpane and an extravagant pile of pillows in stiffly starched cases. Close beside it was an Empire book-case, stocked with a disarray of books. On top of it I made out the turquoise tone of two Persian vases. In front

of it were three velvet arm-chairs pushed close together and partly hidden by slender gilded chairs pretentious enough to belong in a ball-room. Prayer rugs were nailed together on the walls, and, spread about everywhere, on the black wood dresser, on the nest of tables, on the little stand by the window, on the Louis-Phillipe dressing table, was a profusion of bric-a-brac: Chinese grotesques, Sevres cups, jade statuettes, tortoise-shell vials, miniatures, seashells, Christs in ivory, portraits of beautiful women in floods of tulle. The one thing missing was the auctioneer's hammer.

"There," exclaimed the old lady, pointing with her spoon to the handsome bric-a-brac heaped all round. "This'll give you an idea of the life we used to lead. Three rooms to live in! How in the world can we be expected to manage? You know we used to have four salons! It's too ghastly! I could sit right down and cry! My husband sleeps here in the dining-room." She pointed her spoon at the bed. "As for me, I am *obliged* to sleep on a couch in the next room. It's dreadful! Dreadful!"

I knew the cause of her outburst. An effort was being made to solve the housing problem by the rigid enforcement of a decree obliging persons

with spacious residences to give up a tenth of their rooms to the homeless.

"What frightful times these are!" the Countess went on. "And yet a little quieter than they were. At first! Oh, at first! It's a wonder we're still alive!"

Tragedy played in the sapphire-blue of her eyes. The spoon fell to the table. The hollow of her cheeks deepened, her chin trembled. I hardly dared to put my thought into words:

"Have you—have you lost someone dear to you?"

"No, not that, thank God. My family has been spared! A nephew of mine even succeeded in escaping over the border. But *they* have taken everything ; we have been plucked bare! Our vast estates in the Ukraine—larger, I am sure, than two of your departments—were parcelled out among the peasants! We had a magnificent place: a park, a pond, and a French garden. They turned it into a wretched orphan asylum for little ragamuffins! My mother—I was born an R., as you may know—my mother had a diadem of emeralds and a pearl necklace, far-famed for their splendor. Yes, without exaggerating I may say they were celebrated. They were taken, too. And even my husband's books. He is a great

booklover, you know. They took his incunabula for their museums, our securities and our gold for their State Bank, and my sables for their poor—the poor—because the poor women were cold. Aren't they used to being cold? Giving people like that a taste for luxuries!"

The silent maid left cutlets *a la Pozharsky* and an enormous dish of potatoes on the table and disappeared.

The blue eyes of the Countess flashed darkly.

"And the persecutions!"

"You were imprisoned?" I asked, almost in a whisper.

"No, I was spared that too! But listen! For eighteen months I didn't even once undress to sleep! On the alert the whole night long. Can you imagine it? Always conscious that at any moment you might be arrested! Could any torment be worse? Ah! If I had to live through those nights again! And yet, in spite of everything, how desperately we cling to life! And the confiscations! Three times within two months! Poor Serge Sergevich had his pictures taken away before his very eyes! His beloved pictures! He adored your modern French school. He had a Degas, a Claude Monet, some Odilon Redons, Matisses, two Renoirs and several Gauguins—and

I don't know what else. Just imagine! All those treasures in museums visited by moujiks—fancy, by moujiks who haven't the faintest idea of what they're looking at."

My hostess was so absorbed that she emptied into the charming plate of Meissen porcelain that she held out to me, almost the entire contents of a jar of raspberry jam. Meanwhile I was still wondering how, without being indiscreet, I could frame the question that I had been contemplating for several minutes.

But thought is contagious, and the Countess soon came to my aid.

"Poor Serge Sergevich! You don't know him, of course, and so you can't realize how much he has changed! Think of it! To have to work at his age! The former possessor of one of the greatest fortunes in Russia! He is very busy just now preparing the new catalogue for his museum. So much trouble for a few hundred millions a month!"

She changed the subject suddenly in that disconcerting way so characteristic of Russians.

"If you like Russian music," she began, "it would give us great pleasure if you would come to the Princess P's tomorrow evening—I'll write her address down for you. Luckily for her she

still has her large salon and so we arrange a concert there, twice a month. A great many of the right sort of people come, many of the aristocracy! Two million a ticket. Do you want one? A young woman is going to sing Moussorgsky's *Enfantmes*. Oh, how she sings it. You've never heard anything like it."

I acceptedj she was delighted; and I was able to continue my investigation.

"But how do all your friends, all these ladies manage?"

"Some of them are in terrible want. You have probably heard of the Countess Cheremetiev?"

I knew the name of course, a name well-known to Russian history. In the thirteenth century a Count Cheremetiev had owned more land, more jewels and even more *souls* than the czar.

"Well," the Countess went on, "she used to own entire provinces, kept a regiment of servants, had a yacht and marble palaces. Now she lives in the basement of one of her houses, where her cook used to live! Terrible, isn't it? I tell you she has certainly remained uncompromising. In our set there are some who have capitulated and even gone over to the enemy. But she! They've offered her situations, important posts. She won't take anything, *anything*, from the Bolsheviks.

She would rather die, she says, than eat their bread. And she means it!"

"Nevertheless, one *must* eat."

"Ah, yes, one must eat. There's precisely the rub. So she's had to sell the things she had left, her valuable rugs, her furs, her smaller jewels, her silverware, her last works of art—we *could* sneak a few things out of the sight of the confiscators after all—the diamonds she had laid by—she's selling everything. And it's common knowledge that she once dazzled Russia by her luxurious way of living. Well, that's over. The day's coming when she won't have anything left."

I remembered the "markets" stocked with a strange medley of goods, where people bargained for sausages, furniture, linen, ball-slippers, tallow, old coins, hot meat-cakes, bread with poppy-seed, flour, ikons, big fish, chubas, sewing-machines, fine laces, watchsprings, stuffed birds, diamond necklaces, filthy boots, broken plates, and sables languidly offered for sale by distinguished-looking ladies.

"The strange thing is," added the old lady, screwing up her eyes into malicious wrinkles, "that six of the countess' six children are working for the Soviets."

"From conviction?"

"What a question! You innocent creature! Conviction! No, not from conviction. But they're young people, you know. Their attitude is different. And, as you said, one must live. Many of our set have had to get used to it. My friend, Baroness R, is keeper of archives at the Rumiantzov Library. But it hasn't changed her opinions. *Not* a bit. Maria Stepanovna's a spit-fire. Oh, but she's a case! You ought to hear her talk about them! She's so funny!—My cousin, Nathalie G, has started a school for teaching foreign languages to young girls. She hasn't done so badly. She'll manage. The women who are still beautiful have gone on the stage. Some have taken to giving lessons in water-color painting, music, and foreign languages. Some even dance and sing in expensive cabarets, where people spend thousands. Sasha, Princess P's niece, gives a gypsy number at the Hermitage. Some of the women have gone down fearfully—poor things! Ugh! Imagine coming to that when you've had horses, diamonds, carriages, villas, armies of servants. And have been received at court, and had a big position!"

Darkness had fallen. The Countess' high spirits had fallen too—and suddenly. The only sound was the slow dripping as steaming drops of

water fell from the samovar tap into a great silver bowl.

"But we have talked enough of the misfortunes of our dearly beloved Russia. Tell me a little of what's going on in Paris. What do they talk about? What's being worn? You fortunate people! It's nine years since we and poor Serge Sergevich stopped at one of the big hotels on the Rue de Rivoli. What's the name of it now? Let's see—opposite the Tuileries? Ah! dear lady! You don't realize your good fortune! The opera nights! And the toilettes! What a paradise Paris is, what a paradise!"

The old lady's head and shoulders swayed close to me, her eyelids fluttered, her eyebrows rose high on her forehead. A smile of voluptuous desire made her face seem young again.

In the warm room where the vanities of past days came to life again, the samovar whistled its ancient song.

CHAPTER XIX

REFUGEES

"A R E we off?"

/ J L "Yes, actually. Off to Stettin!"

Almost imperceptibly the ship turned, paused an instant, then with a steady sweep cleaved the icy grey of the Neva, and headed for the point of Vassilievsky Ostrov. On the left the Admiralty and the Winter Palace soon disappeared behind the screen of yellow fog that had just descended. For the last time the six old ladies who looked as though they had stepped out of a novel by Turgenev waved goodbye to the Lilliputian group on the wharf. Handkerchiefs fluttered, gloved hands signalled, and the young woman with the salmon pink cheeks who stood apart had to restrain a smile.

Petrograd disappeared. Before us, the heavenly Baltic; far, far back the slender spire of Peter and Paul still gleaming, and presently no more than a needle pricking the ocean of fog.

Brr. It was really cold. The ladies, driven

in by the rough sea wind, took precipitate refuge in the warm inside of the boat. From the first-class section came the timorous shuffling sounds of retreat. For a quarter of an hour you heard little cries of alarm and the patter of feet along the passage where the ladies' smug valises were piled.

The second bell sounded for dinner. The same flutter and flurry and shrill invocations to the Holy Virgin each time the ship tossed. For—mercy on us!—she was beginning to pitch.

At last. They had taken some time about it, but had finally succeeded in dragging themselves into the dining-saloon. The eldest of them wanted to keep on all her wrappings—a black squirrel-lined overcoat on top of a plush cloak, the cloak on top of a homespun tailor-made suit, the suit on top of a knitted hug-me-tight. She was so bulky that the steward had to help wedge her into the armchair screwed to the floor at the table.

All the rest of the company had made some attempt at a toilette. The lady who carried her head so well wore a close-fitting turban made of tan feathers. Her neighbor displayed a stiff lingerie jabot pinned on with a coronet of fine diamonds. The smallest of the ladies was certainly very appealing. She was a thin, shrivelled little

thing in her jet-trimmed waist, and gazed through the port-hole at the onset of the waves with a melancholy blue eye, said "Yes," "Thank you," "No," in a minor key, and smiled sadly, with an air of apology for the space she was occupying.

"Well, my dears, what do you say to this?" the lady in the bonnet demanded in trumpet tones. "Our nightmare is ended, our tormentors far away! As for me, I still can't believe it."

The muffled figure gave a prolonged "Ah-h-h-h," intimating that she was drawing a free breath for the first time, that a weight which was *here, right here*, you were to understand, on her white jersey sweater, had at last disappeared.

"Those are the two Baronesses M , " whispered the man sitting next me as he indicated the last speaker and the woman whose pimpled face was framed in a black mantilla. "They were always at court—counted in the imperial family. I believe they were, as a matter of fact, distantly related to the Czar."

"Ah, how delightful! To be free for the first time in five years to say what one thinks! I vow I'll make use of the privilege. I shall tell the full truth when I'm abroad. I'll proclaim it from the housetops." That from the spinster with the

triangular face and yellowish eyes. I noted that the dainty gold watch pinned over her heart also bore a coronet.

There was a criss-cross of exclamations. Nobody was aware of the pitching of the vessel. A pleasant warmth crept over them, they settled into their armchairs, and drummed on the tablecloth with their fingers. Presently a woman said:

"What will you have, Alexandra? I'll have some wine. It's bad for my stomach but I don't care. This is the happiest evening of my life. Waiter, a bottle of Saint-Emilion."

To intensify their joy, to see it incarnated, they directed their sallies at me. Everything was said for my benefit. The whole table had to participate.

"Oh, how we've suffered!"

The babel ceased, heads went down, as at the Elevation during mass.

"Really?" I said. "Tell me about it."

"Just think, before we were allowed to leave, *they* inflicted a final martyrdom. We had to fill out application after application, submit to investigation after investigation; we had to dance attendance for hours in the offices. The mean things, *they* made us pay for their visa by weeks of waiting. They wouldn't let us take our art

objects along. You saw the abominable way they inspected our baggage."

The last remark rather surprised me. I had been present from beginning to end of the inspection. It had been conducted in the most correct, most neutral manner imaginable, like any ordinary customs inspection.

"But what has your life been like for the past five years?"

"The innocent! To ask such a question.—Can you imagine what it was like to see with one's own eyes the triumph of brutes who can't do anything except under the spur of vodka and the whip! We know it; we went through it ourselves. You don't know what it means to submit to the law of the lowest classes. What has our life been like! Oh, the answer's very simple. We haven't had a life. You can't call *that* living!"

Nevertheless they were all there, and well-fleshed, too; I was not dealing with immaterial beings.

"I used to have," interrupted the very thin woman, "a matchless collection of miniatures. They took them away from me. It appears that they sent them to the Hermitage."

"And the food!" put in the youngest baroness vivaciously. "'Kasha,' potatoes, tea, for five

years! We have had to do our own errands, our own housekeeping. And my sister-in-law not able to stand—very ill—kidney trouble. We are going to consult our family physician at Baden-Baden. I'm afraid she'll have to have an operation!"

I couldn't help making a mental calculation of the expense of this trip and the medical care to be given the sister-in-law. It was quite evident that *they* had not taken everything.

"And the things they've done, the brutes! Oh, if you had seen how beautiful Petersburg used to be. *They* have destroyed everything of value, everything! The Czar's beautiful palace—they pillaged it, fouled it, destroyed it."

I began to be annoyed. The night before I had made a four-hour visit to the Winter Palace. I had seen the White Room, the Gold Room and the Silver Room absolutely intact. I had seen the Imperial dining-room with its great musical chandelier and its dull-silver samovar j I had seen the chamber of the Grand Duchesses with its blue enamel Easter eggs on the wall, and its ikons ranged one behind the other. I saw the Czarina's dressing-room, for all the world like that of a butcher-woman retired from Joinville after making a fortune—insipid pastels, dressing-table

draped with sprigged muslin, spangled pin-cushions trimmed with Valenciennes lace. I had seen the Emperor's study, with its middle-class furniture, the life-size reproduction of unimaginable objects ; the divan with its padded cushions, the books with childish pictures that were the kind he usually read. I had seen his ivory inkstand and jade objects, the gifts of royalty, ranged in a glass case. On his huge desk, along with his penholders, knives, pencils and tablets, was the placid display of family portraits, among which a photograph of a woman, inscribed in English "Your ever-loving Alix," stood out from the rest. I had seen the Palace and its treasures the evening before, and I ventured to say so timidly.

"It's not true!" snapped the baroness in the cape, furiously.

"I can understand why you say what you did," said the thin little lady gently, to excuse me in the eyes of the others. "You are a Frenchwoman, and perhaps some regard was shown to you. *They* didn't martyrize you."

"I beg your pardon, but you always say *they*. *They* must have names. Do you mean Lenin? Trotzky?"

"Le-nin? Trotz——What's that?"

Such must have been the baroness's expression six years before when she addressed her moujiks.

"What, don't you . . .?"

"And I'm proud of it! I don't want to hear their names. I don't want to know who they are. I've forbidden my house to be defiled by the sound of their names. I know they're a gang of Jews, scoundrels, hangmen, cut-throats—and that's all I want to know."

The thing was so unbelievable that I felt I must be the victim of a hoax.

"It's true," remarked the small thin lady smiling, emboldened by the Saint-Emilion. "We've refused to read their infamous newspapers, and we forbade anyone to speak to us about what was going on. It's all carnage and pillage; what else? So we have succeeded in creating a little circle of our own. Nothing from outside leaks in. There are just ourselves, some friends, an old nurse. This is our life, our life in common. We have closed our eyes and stopped up our ears. And we have recourse to prayer," she added furtively. "They've left that to us at least."

"But—where were you when these—events—took place?"

I was delighted to have hit upon the word "events." If the word "Revolution" had passed

my lips, I think they'd have thrown the bottle of Pilsen at my head.

"These ladies were in Petrograd. I was in the Crimea at my country-seat."

"You were in the Crimea at the time of Wrangel's advance?"

"Wrangel?"

The ladies turned up their noses. The muffled one sniffed suspiciously as if she detected a burnt odor escaping from the hold.

"Oh, Wrangel! Wasn't he the one America sent to save us? Wrangel. Let's see. Wrangel."

She stuck her eyeglasses on her pimpled nose. Her withered, beringed fingers broke into a furious polka on the tablecloth. All eyes were fixed on me. The pleasant warmth had disappeared. Above the table rose the severe and averted faces of old examiners, confronting a candidate who has been up to some deviltry. But what did it matter? I questioned and they answered me.

I heard them tell that the schools—which I had spent six months in visiting—were all closed, all, without exception. No more culture for poor Russia! That the theatres—to which I had been going almost daily—had all been burnt down. Farewell to art, farewell to the ballets! **That** the Tverskaya in Moscow—where I had lived the

most peaceable life—resounded daily with the shots of machine guns, that slaughter and plunder were going on there, that the bandit communists, whose heroic and wretched existence I had shared, were rollicking through life as gorgeously as pashas, seated on money-bags. And that wasn't all. But there are certain things, you know, that are not mentioned among genteel people.

When, to put them on the right way, I stated a fact, quoted history, told what I had seen, I saw six human beings who seemed normal, who gave the impression of being intelligent and cultivated, who had merely left their apartment on the Sadovaya, where for the past years they had created a planet apart in the universe.

I have since talked frequently with old Russian aristocrats. I know the passionate resentment with which their words are fraught, and I know that they are unfit to judge a regime where they no longer have the right to live on the labor of others. But all the same I have never met such stupefying ignorance, such contempt of evidence. If I were to report word for word the conversation I had, no one would believe me.

"*Mahlzeit!*" said the captain, bowing to everybody at table. Dinner was over. The old ladies arose heavily.

I felt a need of fresh air, the wind, solitude. Within five seconds I had climbed the ladder up to the bridge. Immediately I was caught in a cyclone which slapped a cold mask across my face, whipped my garments about and made me stagger. No more horizon. Night. Only the mad cavorting of the ship, which seemed to climb heaving mountains, poise itself, wavering like a feather, then slide down again with a crash of chains, creaking rigging and a heavy sound as of distant artillery.

Someone spoke, behind me. I turned. It was the elegant lady who had not said a word during dinner and had been visibly embarrassed by the statements of her fellow-countrywomen.

"There are a great many like them," she shrieked, holding her pretty fur toque tight down on her head. "But you have to be tolerant; they have lost a great deal."

Where had I seen this face before? Where had I seen this figure of a village woman in all her Sunday finery? (It was a village woman's figure under the princely coat.) Had I seen her buying at a grocery store where they weighed caviar by kilos? In a box at the theatre? Or getting out of her carriage to enter a restaurant where the meal cost five billions?

I moved back a step to get a better look at her. I did not take in the whole of her at once; I assimilated her little by little. One after the other, I saw the shops open in the big Russian cities, saw the shop-fronts fill up with merchandise. I saw scarfs draped on feminine shoulders, little plump hands suddenly sparkling, clumsy boots replaced by elegant low-cut shoes, necklaces of the first water encircling milk-white necks. And now the figure was there, complete with all the finishing touches to the last degree—like a house on which a great bouquet is put to show that it is done. . . . I know her, this little bourgeoises the NEP-woman has grown under my very eyes; I know her.

"I'm not of their opinion," she said, cuddling her arms into her warm pelisse. "I haven't anything to say against the Soviet Government. One has to conform to the age one lives in. I'm young and I understand that. Anyway, why should I be against it? Over a year ago my husband put through a big deal. They tried to lay a fabulous tax on him, but he evaded it."

Judging by the necklace that blazed in the hollow of her neck, her husband had certainly not come off badly. Clinging to the netting, I learned that the little lady was from Kiev and was going

to Germany for a three months' pleasure stay—not that one couldn't live well enough in Russia—no, it wasn't that—but for a change—recreation—to get a little benefit from her money.

The wind slapping broadside made the vessel list heavily. As it righted itself, a formidable bulk of water battered against the bridge and fell back with a sharp report, routed the young woman to the side of the gangway and threw me violently against the doorpost of the entranceway to the cabins.

As I struggled against the whirlwind that rushed into the narrow passage, and tried to shield myself from the deafening whistle of some unseen Triton, I heard the baroness's voice:

"Good-night, Alexandra, good-night, my dear, and sleep well. Five days more, and we'll be in civilization again. Five days, and we shall tell the truth!"

The face of the old Royalist appeared at one of the double doors, then vanished. On the dripping bridge, the wind rushed off with the echo:

"The truth!"

CHAPTER XX

CONCLUSION

PEOPLE say: "Things are always the same, and everywhere the same."

No, things are not the same! I have just come from the country where that is no longer true. I have lived in that country, I have walked its streets, crossed its fields, breathed the air its people breathe. I know. I have got the proofs.

Time was when things were always and everywhere the same. You're right; they once were the same. But now there is a place on earth—your earth, Russia!—where things are beginning to be not "the same." What that means is beyond the range of the imagination. People think that there has merely been a change of occupants in places that have not changed. The fact is, something as miraculous has occurred, something as miraculous, as unheard of as if a river were suddenly to flow backward.

I assure you I am not exaggerating. Up to the present time, humanity has really traveled

only a single day. And now, in Russia, the second day is breaking.

I realize—having seen with my own eyes—that the form of the whole has only been rough-cast so far, that you, Russia, are only a great work-yard where tasks are being allotted, where there is a bustle of masons at work, where hammers are ringing on anvils, but where a new structure is actually rising up upon the old plaster and ruins, and taking definite shape.

That is what is going on. That above all. Social upheaval, you say? Certainly. But if it stopped at this, there is one thing that in itself would be an immense achievement—the fact that the peasant is emerging, as it were, from the soil where he crawled, a colorless and slimy reptile, and slowly, as he gains room, arises, and begins to stand upright. And the worker, inarticulate through the centuries, speaks for the first time. And with a gesture like magic raises himself on the leverage of his tool—a tool no longer murderous.

But far above this is the power given to mankind. Who knows what its bounds may be? It is the flight given to the soul. Has the soul any limits?

