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# THE FAMILY

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# THE FAMILY

*by*

NINA FEDOROVA



COLLINS

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**Welcome joy, and welcome sorrow,  
Lethe's weed and Hermes' feather;  
Come to-day and come to-morrow,  
I do love you both together I**

**JOHN KEATS**

*The characters and situations in this novel are not intended to portray any living persons or depict any true events.*

# PART T



THE ONLY THING the Family managed to retain from the prolific line of their noble ancestors was a long and shapely aristocratic nose. Although this hereditary trait was equally bequeathed to each member of the Family, it achieved a quite different quality on each face. On Granny's face it was the incarnation of dignity and patience; on Mother's, a care-worn resignation; on Peter's, a hidden resentment. It Was an index to anxious and romantic expectations on the eager countenance of Lida, and to gay acceptance of life on Dima's. And yet it was one and the same nose, uniting them all into one family and marking them as ever-changing fruits of the same family tree.

This Family was Russian—ex-big, ex-great, ex-prosperous. Having gone through war and revolution, endured poverty and famine and illnesses, occasionally flood and fire and even an earthquake, the Family lost some members, bore others; but the death-rate finally triumphed over the birth-rate, and now they were only five, the total of the long process of the ramification of their family tree. In plain words, they were a granny, a mother, a daughter, and two nephews—the boys being orphans of the two deceased brothers. All together they constituted the *Family*.

The year 1937 found them living at Tientsin, in China. Mother kept a boarding-house in the least fashionable and, therefore, the cheapest corner of the British Concession, which is situated along the Hei-ho River. In appearance the concession is quite European, and the white people immediately feel at home in its broad, wdl-paved, tree-bordered streets, *imong* buildings of modern architecture. Yet, at intervals, one comes to high grey walls intersecting the row of buildings—a Chinese abode, belonging to some rich citizen, which towers like a fortress over the rest of the street. Only the small and brightly-painted iron gates enliven the



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walls, and occasional turrets and embrasures set high above the street. To the curious European, eyes the wall usually presents nothing more than blank grey stone. But if one happens to see through the gate, he catches a magnificent vision of a garden with artificial rocks, fountains, flowers, and birds. . . . The green, red, and gold of the carved lacquered wood enhance the gorgeous setting. The open jaws of a marble lion or a bronze dragon render it fantastic. One or two slim ladies in glistening silk robes add poetry. But this vision is always transient. The gates quickly bang shut and cut it off. And one again walks the prosaic street of a European town, even though rickshaws and coolies and beggars coming around the corners constantly break the illusion. The farther one gets from the centre of the Concession the less English it seems; for the people of other nations are massed on its borders under the protection of the mighty British Empire. Often these folk cannot afford separate houses, and are obliged to live crowded in boarding-houses. The Family kept one such establishment on Long Street, Number 11, which scarcely paid, so each one of the Family tried to contribute his mite to the expenses.

There are many books dealing with economics, but their authors always treat the subject on a grand scale. You can easily get any kind of information about the world's economies', the states' monetary systems, inflations and devaluations; but on the simplest question of how to live on almost nothing with a family and children—on this question these books say nothing. We t this question is of vital importance to one-third of humanity. Being excluded from the sphere of science,<sup>1</sup> *living on nothing* becomes an art, and as such is individualistic and governed by no constant rules.

The economic position of the Family was uncertain and shaky; moreover, it was based on unstable grounds; its first impetus was *to try to earn*, and the second, *to go, without*. The second was much easier than the first, because in order to earn it is always necessary to find someone to earn from/ while going without is strictly one's own affair. So they went without hats, socks, stockings in summer, without gloves and

woollen things in winter, and occasionally without food—all the seasons around,

Granny was the chief sufferer. She tried to earn by knitting. But while her hands were thus busy, her head was constantly pondering over the economic standing of the Family. Her criterions were preposterous. She applied the pre-War and pre-Revolution standards to it and had to face disastrous conclusions. She belonged to the day when people of her class had been encumbered with immovable property and things—things piled in boxes and coffers, in attics and basements and cellars, in store-rooms and warehouses—and now, owning practically nothing, she bore the lack with humiliation. The fact that Lida had only one set of undies, in comparison with the splendid trousseau she herself had at Lida's age—those things in dozens, things with monograms, laces, ribbons, and frills—this met seemed unspeakably degrading. Yes, yes, they were beggars! But Lida herself took the matter lightly, never felt the slightest prick of self-pity on that point, and would consider a second set of undies superfluous. Her problem lay elsewhere—she was obsessed with an ambition to win the town championship in swimming. All she needed was a bathing suit, and that she had; hence no immediate financial trouble pressed her down.

In this way the same course of life took a peculiar aspect for each member of the Family. It was a religious and philosophical problem for Granny, a hard exercise in house-keeping for Mother, a tragedy of constantly wounded ambition for Peter, a lyric rise and all for Lida, and perpetual fun for Dima. This difference of attitudes, perhaps, was due to their various ages and previous experience. The ages in the Family extended from eight to seventy, while the experience . . . well, there is no scale to measure that.

In spite of everything, the Family was not unhappy. They were a family struggling for their daily bread and all the time vaguely hoping for some wonderful change to occur. Meanwhile Granny prayed for it, Peter bought lottery tickets—and so far both received nothing.

As is usual in Russian families, the members were

tenderly attached to each other, always ready to sacrifice their interests for those of the others. Another national trait in them was their keen, palpitating interest in life; not their own lives, their welfare or careers, but life in general, humanity as a whole, and universal human problems in the abstract. To tell the truth, their minds did not dwell much on the current history of their existence. Their immediate needs were but rarely in the focus of their attention and efforts. They spoke of the past or dreamed aloud of the future, and the present took care of itself.

After a hard day, when at last they all gathered in a corner of the room, they would rarely discuss the hardships of life or their immediate needs. Life is hard in exile and poverty. Let it be I But wonderful is the freedom of the human soul! And the Family was not chained to the pettiness of its humdrum existence. Tears and laughter, joy and sorrow, philosophy and a good joke—they had a generous share of everything.

IN THE SPRING of 1937 five rooms of the boarding-house were let. Two rooms were occupied by Mr. Sung, a Chinese professor; in two other rooms lived five Japanese gentlemen. In the fifth dwelt an ex-fortune-teller Mme. Militza. Mr. Sung was always sad, solemn, and silent. The five Japanese gentlemen kept smiling all the time and talking and hissing and bowing. They could never be seen standing erect or with their mouths shut. They came and went in twos or threes always in different combinations, until Mother began to suspect that there were not five occupants in the rooms, but at least twenty. These yellow inhabitants of the boarding-house had their meals out, thus affording Mother a very poor profit. Mme. Militza, a Bessarabian, not only ate in the house, she mingled with the Family every minute of her life, and shared every idea that occurred to her mind with its members. Yet Mother had little profit from her either. Three more rooms were longing for occupants.

On this particular May morning Granny and Mme. Militza were sitting before the house in a place called "the Garden," at a table between the two solitary trees. It was situated aside from the path to the entrance door of the house, and while sitting there one could enjoy the exquisite feeling of being in nobody's way. The privacy of the place was enhanced by the considerable height of the wall separating it from the street and protecting those sitting within the Garden from being seen by the passers-by. The two trees furnished shadow and colour. The rustle of their leaves murmured a soothing melody; all together invited relaxation and a good intimate talk. There they were sitting and drinking coffee. Coffee! Coffee was the last sensual delight of Granny, the only material item of life which she could still enjoy\* But according to the general rule that we never have things we

covet, Granny could not indulge herself in coffee\* The Family could not afford coffee, it being far more expensive than tea.

This coffee was Mme. Militza's. By good luck she was never content to drink it alone. She had a habit of talking over her cup and craved a listener. Owing to this defect of Mme. Militza's upbringing, Granny had enjoyed coffee twice a day during the last six months.

Granny had coffee on every occasion when Mme. Militza was either excited or depressed—it helped in both cases—and Mme. Militza was always, if not excited, then depressed.

Now they were sitting over their cups, both happy, Granny sipping coffee and knitting, Mme. Militza talking and gulping between her monologues.

"I am honest," confessed Mme. Militza. "I am honest," she repeated with a sigh of regret. "I take after my mother in that. My mother was a seraph, a cherub she was. Now, honesty is the enemy of luck. You cannot have both\* Honesty kills luck!" And she shook her head.

Mme. Militza's head was remarkable; it was out of proportion to the rest of her fragile frame. It was a big head, majestic and solemn, with a profusion of black curls and ringlets; and from the midst of her face peered two small round eyes, also black and shining. They never stood still but rolled and shifted in their small quarters. There was no nose to speak of, all the rest of the visible part of the face being occupied by an ominous mouth which was constantly at work.

"Look at me," Mme. Militza went on. "Consider my case. I am, by my training and vocation, a fortune-teller, and a famous one. I am well known all over Bessarabia, Rumania, South Russia, and the Far East. And I am out of work. I gave it up willingly. Why?"

She stopped, took a gulp of coffee, and went on brooding over her complicated problem.

"Why? Because I am honest!<sup>1</sup> she mourned. I cannot lie!<sup>M</sup>

Both women sighed in accord.

"Before the Great War everything was all right, but as

time went by people grew dissatisfied with me. Now, let us look at it from their point of view. Just before the Revolution a young and beautiful lady came, full of happy aspiration and expecting more and more blessings from life. I read the cards for her and I saw that in two years' time she would be a widow, a poor and desolate widow; then she would be ill, persecuted, tried, put into prison, and would die there. I told that to her. Imagine her indignation! Put *her* in prison! Indeed! She made a big row, and the neighbours stood on the landings and laughed at us; for the lady tried to reach my coiffure. Now, noise is very harmful to my profession. And this was only the beginning of calamity."

Once more the two women sighed in unison.

"Groups of officers used to come to me with their girls. And in a party of about ten I saw all the men doomed to death. And famine, prison, destitution, was the lot of their sweethearts. Several times I was beaten—don't take it in an allegorical sense, nay, beaten in a crude way, with a stick—and my cards kept on telling my clientele the most terrible things. Less and less people came to see me. I moved to another town, then to another. I tried almost every town in South Russia; the story repeated itself. Then the Civil War broke out. Well, unhappy girls came to me, and anxious wives. However black their present might be, their future held no consolation. Far from it. . . . You cannot imagine what life sometimes holds in store for a poor human soul! So I moved, and moved, and made my way through Siberia. From time to time a Red commissar would come looking forward to more honours. And I had to tell him that he would receive everything he was longing for—and then be hanged. One of them slapped me in the face. That he was hanged two years ago did not avenge me. Well, I moved to Harbin—the same. I moved to Tientsin—the same. A young girl would come, happy and hopeful. I would have to tell her that in two months' time she would be ruined, disgraced; then would follow illness, poverty, bad life, and suicide to crown it all. Well, what fee could I ask from the child? No wonder I earn nothing."

She grunted sardonically and went on again:

"Once a very handsome boy came—so handsome he was that looking at him I exclaimed in my heart: 'Nature! What have you done? You gave such beauty to a man I His nosel His moustacheP But in my cards I saw that in the near future he would go away and be killed. Well, I even followed his life, asked people; he went to Shanghai, got a job as bodyguard to a rich Chinaman, and was killed."

Gloomily Mme. Militza shook her head and all her curls swayed.

"Then I began to brood over my problem. Who were my clientele? Russians, Rumanians, Poles, Jews. Perhaps they were the unlucky part of mankind. There were others: English, Americans, French, for instance. I started to pick up the English words which are necessary in my profession. There is not much variety in the human lot; the same words do for everybody. You must know 'money' or 'no money,' 'love' and 'death,' 'husband' and 'lover.' Sometimes 'child/' 'long journey,' or 'illness' is called for; but if you keep honestly to the facts, some twenty or thirty words will do for everybody. Certainly, when accumulating words, you should allow the luxury of \* blonde' or 'brunette/ which sound alike in all languages; then 'party/ or 'a present/ or 'unexpected news/ is useful. I mastered them all. In those days I put advertisements in the two local English newspapers. 'A famous fortune-teller/ said I, 'well known all over the Eastern hemisphere/ And what came out of it? *Nobody* came, not one living English-speaking soul came to me."

Her voice rang bitter and full of reproach.

She poured two fresh cups of coffee. Granny stopped her knitting and looked at Mme. Militza with sympathising eyes. After several draughts Mme. Militza acquired the needed energy and began with a new animation:

"Why didn't they come? Are they so confident of their future? Have they no natural curiosity? Take my advice. Better always be on your guard! Luck is deceitful. life is

always cheating people!" And Mme. Militza's eyes flashed an ominous warning.

"And here you see me eating away my rainy-day funds," she went on. "Therefore, I have decided to go to Shanghai, Well, it must be two days' journey, but my cards show two months' travel. They also show not much luck."

"As far as I know," mildly interrupted Granny, "English people never go to the fortune-tellers, let them be ever so famous. It is not their way. And also this modern education—they believe they are masters of their fate." "

"Do they believe *that!*" And Mme. Militza laughed sardonically. "Ppor English people I *Masters* . . . indeed! They would better come to me and ask one or two questions. I am Sure I could tell them something. And they should come now, before is too late. The profession is dying opt. There are not many of us left . . . the coming age of darkness means the extinction of my profession also."

Again she poured two cups of coffee, and began in a low and confidential voice:

"I dearly love you and your family. Many a time I have longed to know your fate, but always I become afraid. Now in two weeks' time I am going. So I think, perhaps, we will try?"

She produced a pack of cards from her pocket and began e<sup>^</sup>geriy, enticingly, to shuffle them.

"Now, yours is a nice family, with a granny. Every decent family must have a granny. And here are my cards. In several minutes they can ruin all your hopes. . . . Well?"

For a while they sat silent. But Mme. Militza evidently could not resist the temptation.

"I'll tell you what," she said at last, "let us deal the cards for you. You are old. Not much can happen to you. You are poor, not too healthy; you cannot lose much. Are you afraid of death?"

"Of death? No, I am not afraid of death," said Granny. She stpped her knitting and looked gravely before her. There was nothing remarkable in Granny's appearance. She was Eke a small bunch of dried lavender—faded, fragile, and

pleasantly scented. " I am not afraid of death; I am afraid of expenses. My death can ruin the Family. Here, in a foreign town, they have nobody to help them. Death means extra expense: first, a coffin, then waxen candles, a funeral Mass . . . a plot of ground to be buried in, a wooden cross to put over the tomb. And again somebody must carry the coffin to the cemetery—and here the cemetery is so far. To pay the clergy, to pay the doctor for the death certificate . . . No, no," she concluded, " it would be too expensive. And then I know my daughter Ashe will never put on my body one of my old dresses, she will think them too much worn. She will make me a new dress, a white one as our custom is. No, no. When I think about all these expenses, and all the trouble for Tania, and of the effect it might have on our lodgers... Oh, when I think of it all, I lose any wish to die."

And energetically she resumed her knitting.

" Well, let us try," insinuated Mme. Militza. And without waiting for an answer she began to shuffle the cards with greedy movements of her hands. Up and down went her hands, and her small black eyes grew piercing. Suddenly, her face took on an astonished expression, as if she could not believe her own eyes.

" For *years* now, for years I have not seen this combination: the fulfilment of your most cherished wish. Happy fulfilment. First you will get a job."

"Me? A job? At seventy?" gasped Granny.

" Yes, and a very well paid job. You will pile up money. Then you will die and your money will not only cover funeral expenses, but there will be plenty left behind for your Family. And your job will establish new and useful relations for the Family. Yours will be a most happy death."

At that moment they were interrupted. The gate clicked **and** a gentleman entered the garden.

### 3

HE WAS an unusual kind of gentleman for those surroundings. He was an Englishman, and evidently a prosperous one—well-dressed, well-shaved, well-bred, well-fed, well-mannered. But what he said was still more unusual. He asked whether there was a room to be let and whether he could see the landlady. He stood and spoke with a slight tinge of superiority, as if he had come just for a minute from another and more acceptable planet, and would vanish at the first offensive touch.

Granny quickly readjusted the expression of Her face from bewilderment to a smiling and dignified welcome. She had received a fine education and spoke English perfectly. She grasped the situation at once, and being unwilling to proceed under false pretences she explained that this boarding-house was Russian, a very modest one indeed; and although her daughter, who was the landlady of the house, would be highly delighted to have some English lodgers in it, she was afraid the standards of the house were far below those which English people required.

The gentleman replied, pointedly, that he wished to see the landlady.

" Will you kindly come in?" said Granny.

In came the gentleman, and in half an hour's time an astonishing affair—was concluded: their best room, with a balcony, was rented for an English lady for two months and paid for in advance. The lady, the gentleman said, was not very young—a recent widow, quite lonely. There was no probability of her having Visitors. To the gentleman's deep regret, he could not state that she was enjoying perfect health—impossible to say that. On the other hand, the lady was not an invalid—far-from it. She was not poor—quite the contrary. Thus any extra expense would be duly-remuner-

ated by her brother, who was then on his way from England. In fact, the arrival of the lady's brother would be the end of the problem. Mr. Stowne, the brother, was coming for the liquidation of the business of the late Mr. Parrish, who was the deceased husband. Mrs. Parrish herself was, or rather had been, quite a charming lady indeed. "But people sometimes change, you know, and let us hope changes will pass!" The gentleman himself was the late Mr. Parrish's partner; now he felt it his—er—his Christian duty to take some care of Mrs. Parrish, who so suddenly began to change and therefore was *Uit* quite alone. Yet he was bound to take care of her as far as his duty went, not further, to be sure. And to his deep regret he must say that the instalment of Mrs. Parrish into this new apartment would perhaps mean the end of his care of her, as he was going for his summer holidays out of town. And now, at his personal request, would they kindly pay as much attention to Mrs. Parrish as possible, she being lonely and not very stable since her husband's death—well, almost unconsolable. This astonishing affair was concluded by the gentleman's remark that the lady would eat everything, go nowhere, see nobody, and that he would bring her that evening.

And away the gentleman went, leaving behind a lot of money. All this looked like a stroke of good fortune, the money was spent on the spot; butcher's and baker's accounts had long been waiting, and rent also was in arrears.

While arranging the room, Mother and Granny speculated about what the new lady would be like. Mme. Militza and Pima eagerly helped in the work and in the discussion.

"I will not believe till I see her with my own eyes," said Mine. Militza, while polishing the doorknobs. "Have you ever seen an English lady polite enough to notice that there are people of our kind here, upon the earth?"

"The English are snobs only here in the Far East, I think," said Granny. "I remember, they were quite different in Europe. I have been in England twice and I never remember being snubbed there."

"Certainly," Mme. Militza grunted. "You hid money then."

"How could they know we have no money now?" asked Dima.

"Think what you like," continued Mme. Militza. "I am suspicious. That swindler of a gentleman I The best proof is the money in advance. An honest man is never in haste where money is concerned. Why? He just hastened to trap you."

A gloomy silence overhung the room for a moment.

"Oh," said Mme. Militza feebly, "I should like to have a cup of coffee this very minute."

"There is some left in the coffee-pot. We can heat it," Granny obligingly supported her.

"No," interrupted Mme. Militza. "No reheated coffee to-day. We shall have *fresh* coffee," she concluded grandly.

At six o'clock Mrs. Parrish's belongings came. There were many trunks and boxes, all expensive, new, and shining.

At eight o'clock, in the twilight of the evening, a big car stopped before the house. The door was flung open. First appeared a bulldog. He came out of the car, stepped aside, and stood there calmly, morbidly, taking no interest in his surroundings.

Then the gentleman came out and with the help of the chauffeur almost dragged out a large lady who was shouting at the gentleman in a boisterous and sonorous voice:

"You brute! Where are you bringing me?"

Presently she was standing on her feet, a tall, florid woman with a swollen but very attractive face; all dishevelled, her dress in disorder. She wore neither gloves nor hat; yet she was unmistakably a lady. The most wonderful thing about her was her voice; it was a fresh, strong, thrilling voice, like a boy's, eager and full of modulation.

A no less picturesque group awaited them on the steps of the house. Mother and Granny, in their best attire, bowed a welcome. Dima, with a face washed afresh and with some soap near his ears, attended them. Mme. Militza loomed behind, like a shadow in the background.

The arrival and reception was a complicated affair. Everybody seemed deeply impressed, although for different reasons. Mother and Granny tried to hide the fact that they were shocked. The gentleman was visibly embarrassed and looked askance. Mme. Militza exuded hot rays of curiosity. The simplest emotion was Dima's: the appearance of the dog took his breath away. A bulldog was all he needed for complete joy in this world.

Mrs. Parrish approached Granny and Mother. She looked at their polite faces and shouted:

"Look at the brute I ' ' And with a wide gesture she pointed to the gentleman. " He mentioned an asylum in case I wouldn't come here I Have you ever heard of anything so preposterous?"

She stood before them, big, even majestic, full of sincere indignation.

" And see, what the brute's reasons are. / shaky on my feet? Am I?" she shouted. " Look first at me, and then look at the brute. Who is drunk? He or I? Who needs an asylum? Here am I"—she shook her head, her light hair tossed by the wind—" here I am in my full senses, up to anything . . . and the brute? . . . Flabby and sleepy! Asylum, indeed !"

Mrs. Parrish was completely drunk; there was no doubt of it. To save the situation, Granny said in her mild voice:

" Will you kindly come in? Your room is waiting for you. Let me show you the way. Here you will live with us, in a simple family circle<sup>1</sup>

She took Mrs. Parrish's arm and, small and frail though she was, she led the way, and the large lady obediently followed.

the gentleman followed them. The door bagged.

" See," said Mme. Militza laconically.

*The money is almost spent, thought Mother. Sa that is that! We have to put np with this. And she sighed.*

" And Granny always said drunkenness was the thing she could stand least," stated Mme. Militza.

Without a word Mother went slowly into the house,

Upstairs Mrs. Parrish was storming with unfailing energy. Every word she shouted could be heard clearly all over the house. She was bickering, opening trunks, throwing things, ringing bells. The Chinese boy-servant was kept flying up and down the stairs on her errands.

At last she calmed down. The gentleman left the house, making excuses and avoiding the eyes of anybody in particular. Peter and Lida, who were employed in a big department store, came home and were told the happenings of the day. The Japanese gentlemen returned in smiling and bowing groups. The Chinese professor was at home all that day, but he asked no explanation of the disorder and noise; he never did.

## 4

THE FAMILY was preparing to go to bed. This procedure was far from simple. Only during those days when some of the rooms were not let (and those days meant disaster) could every one of the Family have a bed. Usually they had only one room for themselves, the room which had the least chance of being taken by a lodger. The chief purpose of this room was to serve as a dining-room, for there often were lodgers who would have their meals in the house, but disliked to have them served in their own rooms. In this room there was always a sofa on which Granny slept. This was the only regular bed; all others were the result of ingenuity and imagination. Sometimes chairs were tied together; if four of them, it made a bed large enough for Dima; if six, for Lida. Peter was tall and his sleeping place was a weightier problem. In the summer-time he slept in a hammock tied between the two trees in the Garden. Mother often slept in the corridor, on the floor, the lodgejs never knowing it, because she was the last to lie down and the first to get up in the morning. Sometimes Dima put his mattress under the dining-table, thus being in nobody's way. There was no end to the variations and possibilities of arranging an occasional bed. Usually it was much easier in the summer-time than in the winter, when before going to sleep they had not to undress, but to dress up for it, putting on spare stockings, an old sweater, or a scarf around the head.

This was the warm season and there were two unoccupied rooms in the house, so the beds were soon arranged. The Family gathered around the table for a final cup of tea. The small room looked cosy. According to the Russian custom, an icon with a *lampada* before it was placed high in the corner, opposite the door. The Family's icon was that of Our Lady of Vladimir. Painted several hundred years ago by

an anonymous monk somewhere in a monastery, with fasting and silent prayers, the icon bore the traits of this special branch of art. The face of the Holy Virgin was sad and ascetic. It was miraculously illuminated by her eyes, full of mysterious and exalted life, A small Christ, childishly tender, clung to her breast. They both looked down upon humanity, with pitying, understanding eyes.

Thither, to that corner, the members of the Family brought their sorrows. Every evening, kneeling in prayer, Granny lit the *lampada* before the icon. The tiny flickering flame, reflected by the silver frame, made the whole corner shine and gleam. The play of light and shadow made the face of the Holy Virgin look alive—the expression of her face continuously changing, as if she were praying, too.

This icon was the only thing they had brought from Russia, the only visible link uniting them to the long lineage of their ancestors. It was the same icon before which several generations of their family tree had knelt to pray.

Now the *lampada* was lit. Peace filled the room. The tea was poured. And only then did they notice the absence of Dima.

Dima was at the same place where they had left him, on the steps before the entrance door.

A dog was the dream of Dima's life. The boy never had been allowed to have one, because a dog must eat. And now here was a dog in the house! The dog was sitting on the porch paying no attention to anything. Dima was sitting near the dog admiring and adoring him. He longed for mutual interest and attention, but the dog submitted to this adoring scrutiny, accepted the admiring contemplation as his due, and gave nothing in return. He was a self-sufficient dog, far above the need of human love and friendship; he even despised sentiment. What the dog really was thinking is hard to say, but his eyes exuded only disdain, a cynical scorn for all that was not canine, for all that futile and shaky world which comprised human life and human feelings. And yet, strangely, the dog's face was almost human in its features and appearance of intelligence, its nearest likeness being the face of a

financier, the head of a big banking corporation—a man who long ago had discovered what was what and was thereafter bereft of any illusions, who had had his share of experience and become equally indilient towards good and bad. if one were to give the dog a cigar of the best quality, the like\*  
ness would be complete.

Mother found Dima in a state of ecstatic admiration. Then she realized for the first time that the dog must live in the house.

" My goodness!" she gasped. " Here begin the extra expenses 1 Feeding such a dog I"

AT SIX O'CLOCK in the morning the bell of Mrs. Parrish's room rang, and as the Chinese servant, Khan, had not yet come, Mother ran up to answer it. She found Mrs. Parrish sitting at the table before a bottle and two glasses.

" Let us have a drink!" she said gaily.

" Oh, it is too early," said Mother. " I never drink spirits at this time."

" Then let us have some beer I"

Mother politely lifted her glass, thanked her, and went down. In fifteen minutes' time another bell rang from the new lodger's room, and again Mother went up to answer it.

" Now it is high time we had some whisky and soda," said Mrs. Parrish with a charming smile.

Thus Mrs. Parrish began her life in the boarding-house. She turned out to be a confirmed drunkard. As long as she had a bottle and a glass she cared little what happened to the rest of the world. She was gay and noisy one half of the day and fast asleep the other. All the attention of the Family was directed towards hindering her from buying liquors or preventing her drinking when she managed to get some. She had plenty of money, so she sent Khan to buy and she tipped him generously. She installed a telephone in her room and ordered liquors herself. Thus in spite of the Family's control, Mme. Militza's included, Mrs. Parrish was almost daily drunk.

But the Family was accustomed to fight things through, so no mercy was shown Mrs. Parrish. By turns they would spend hours with her, talking to her, playing cards, working puzzles. Every one did his bit at trying to keep her sober or to calm her, each exercising his special talents, ingenuity, and invention.

Once it was Lida's triumph, when in the dead of the night

Mrs. Parrish began to ring the bell, to shout, to throw things, and to call for company.

Lida, pale and faltering, tapped at her door, entered timidly, but, looking into Mrs. Parrish's blue eyes, soon grew bolder and said:

"Mrs. Parrish, let us sing together! A lullaby . . . You just lie down on your bed—you are tired. I will sit here, near you, and we will sing low, as lullabies should be sung."

The idea stimulated Mrs. Parrish's imagination.

"It is a long time since I have sung!" she said. "Yes, yes, let us."

And they sang for half an hour, the contralto of the older woman blending well with Lida's sweet soprano. The song became lower, and slower, until Mrs. Parrish fell quietly asleep. Then Lida tucked a blanket all around her body, made a sign of the cross over her (as the custom was in the Family), and tiptoed out of the room.

Another time it was Mme. Militza who stepped in with a pack of cards and, taking at random a combination of three cards, declared:

"It means a fire." (She pronounced it *wire*.)

Mrs. Parrish, hot and panting, as if she had been running a race, looked startled.

"Wire? What wire?"

"The meaning of these cards."

Mrs. Parrish bent low over the cards, all her fluffy hair blown down around her face.

"No wire! There is no wire. Don't take me for a fool."

"The meaning of this combination," insisted Mme. Militza—"the card combination."

"Ah, cards . . . Yes, it would be a nice combination in poker."

Mme. Militza had never heard of poker. Moreover, playing card games was a sin in her eyes. In her scanty English she explained that she was a scientific fortune-teller and could tell one's future. When Mrs. Parrish caught the idea she became interested. Mme. Militza was happy to talk about her profession and to demonstrate her skill.

Thus they would sit on the balcony on their guard for passers-by. As soon as someone appeared, whether a coolie or a rickshaw man, Mme. Militza would deal cards on his behalf and tell his fortune.

In between she would explain the hidden meaning of cards with the animation of a genuine artist:

" Long ago, in Babylon, they used to foretell the future by the sun, moon, and stars. That great knowledge is almost lost by now. Oh, the shame! Oh, the pity of it! "

It was hard to say what Mrs. Parrish made out of this information, delivered with a tragic pathos in the lingo which Mme. Militza used for English, but she was all sympathy.

" Really! Oh, the shame! Oh, the pity of it! "

" But now! " suddenly thundered Mme. Militza in her most basso voice. " Do you know what now ? "

Mrs. Parrish frankly confessed that she did not.

" Now, " thundered Mme. Militza in revenge and triumph, " now your greatest scientists foretell floods and earthquakes by the spots on the sun. They spent centuries *to* find it out. But, mind you, only floods and earthquakes, no prophecy of private life. And who does it? Who? The greatest modern astronomers belonging to the Catholic clergy! Monks! What then was the Inquisition about? Science, they were fighting—science! Burning books, ruining laboratories. . . . Now it will require thousands of years to restore the things well known long ago. It takes a long time to make an astrologer out of an astronomer. But let them find that out by themselves; we shall not move a finger to help. There are not many of us, " she modestly added, " who still know a thing or two about the future. " And as if suddenly tired, she added feebly, " I must be off for a cup of coffee! "

Although Mrs. Parrish was much attracted by Mme. Militza and her cards, she never asked her to deal cards for her personally, and, strangely enough, Mme. Militza never suggested it.

Once, on a Sunday, Mrs. Parrish was extremely stormy, and the neighbours kept sending their servants with requests that the noise be stopped. The lodgers were all a^home and

all, except the Chinese gentleman, grumbled. Granny was at chdrch, Lida had gone to the swimming pool Mother was busy in the kitchen; so it was Peter's turn to do his bit.

He held up a crossword puzzle cut from a newspaper.

"Mrs. Parrish," he said, "will you kindly help me? They promise a nice prize—a journey to Peiping to stay for a week-end, all free I"

"Who is going to Peiping?" she asked.

"If we win, we go."

"I won't," she said., "Let us have a drink."

They had it. Then Peter began again: "You see, I get tired of my life. I need a change. It would be so pleasant forme to go."

"But I won't. I have been there many times. Fed up with it."

"Well, you just help me. I shall go by myself or take Granny."

And they spent two quiet hours over the puzzle.

Even Dima contributed to the common cause of entertaining Mrs. Parrish by showing his poon stamp collection.

"This is from Canada," he said proudly.

"Canada? Phew for Canada! Beastly place. All gone into trees. I was there once. Throw this away."

"And this is Russian."

"Soviet Russia! Don't keep it, for shame! Such a cruel thing!" And she tore the stamp.

Dima bent silently over his torn treasure and went away with the idea of getting even in his heart.

But Granny was the most frequent visitor to the new lodger's room. Mrs. Parrish, so to speak, with all her bulk leaned upon Granny's shoulder.

## 6

DIMA was the only person in the house who had always been happy, and now, with Mrs. Parrish's instalment, he ceased to be—because of the dog. Never before had Dima known that he needed friendship and sympathy. He had been a self-sufficient and intellectually self-centred boy of eight years. He took for granted the Family's love and tenderness towards him. Everything in the world had been created because of him and smiled upon him. Now a new figure of importance appeared on the horizon—a bulldog of the purest blood, aristocratic, self-sufficient, and even more self-centred than he, and to Dima humiliatingly indifferent. The dog led his own mysterious life. He was all alone, needed nobody, and Dima needed the dog. Thus the dog's pre-eminence was established in their relationships at once. Dima admiring, the dog condescending to be admired. Nobody had heard the dog's voice; he never barked. He was above such things. Usually the dog sat somewhere; quietly pondering over some abstract dog-problem. Dima would crouch near the dog and look at him tenderly. This was their usual pastime, the dog never giving a sign that the interest was mutual. Thus for days **and** days Dima suffered the humiliation of that one-sided affection. He longed for reciprocation; he prayed for it. In his daily prayers he started to beg **for** his share of God's benevolence, his portion of worldly happiness. He wished **to have** it in advance, to spend it **now**. He prayed-for the dog's affection.

"**God,**" Dima would whisper at night, lying on his **mat-tress,** "**make the dog love me!** Do it! Do it now, and **I promise never to ask you for anybody's love again.**"

All day long Dima was busy with the dog. He tried to find out everything about the dog's character and his habits. What a shock it was when Dima realized that the dog had

no name,| He was pimply " Dog." Had any one ever heard of anything so incongruous?

Because of the dog Dima started a diary. He had it always in his trousers pocket. Daily he entered in that small booklet the proceedings of his acquaintance with Dog. And with what joy he wrote down once: " DOG IS NOT DEVOTED TO HIS MISTRESS." This statement became the starting point of Dime's stratagem. He was making up his mind to some definite action and preparing a decisive attack.

Little by little, if not affection, then understanding was being established between the two; and although Dog never gave himself away, Dima knew for sure that his heart was gradually melting towards him. And soon—this was the happiest day of Dima's life—he received proof of Dog's real feelings.

It happened on a hot afternoon. All was quiet in the neighbourhood, for people in China usually rest after their midday meal. The only sounds came from the kitchen situated in the back yard in a small separate building. There Mother was washing dishes and speaking in a low voice to Khan. On the pavement of the street, now wholly exposed to the burning rays of the sun, several rickshaws were waiting for customers. Such hours—hot, slow, sultry, soundless—are symbolic of China herself. One knows for certain that an intensive life is steadily going on somewhere, but one does not find a perceptible sign of it on the surface of his field of contemplation. It is illusive. It is hidden. The manifestations fail to focus a foreigner's attention. Time is melting and losing some of its weight. One has a curious feeling of being infinitely old and yet not having begun really to live. In China one perceives that time is not an appropriate criterion of life. Units of time are artificial measures, created by men, not by gods. Their application to the soul's life is an error leading to false conclusions. Who is old and who is young? In China one submits to the mirage of longevity. linked with ancestors and progeny, one lives on several planes in, different spheres. Why be in haste when one belongs to eternity? Hardly dead, one is born again. There is no means

of escaping life. Then let one live peacefully, in conformity with human dignity and honour.

In such a solemn atmosphere of repose and equanimity Dima and Dog were sitting on the opposite sides of the porch, the boy with adoring eyes, the dog with a petulant mien; the boy staring, the dog furtively glancing at his worshipper. A clear-cut scheme for dominating the proud independence of Dog began to form in Dima's mind. Dima looked at Dog and behind his innocent admiring gaze rose and grew a base scheme for dominating Dog. This was the moment of trial.

Dima rose up, made several steps and whistled, low, temptingly, and—oh, miracle I—Dog made an almost imperceptible movement, then halted, then slowly, reluctantly, he went after the boy. It was the first open declaration of the dog's submission. This great moment marked the beginning of friendship between Dima and Dog. Slowly but inevitably the arrogant, aristocratic dog began his descent to his natural place in a human dwelling.

Now it was high time to bring the scheme into execution, to legalize the acquirement of Dog at once. As soon as he could do it unnoticed, Dima stole away upstairs and slipped through the door into Mrs. Parrish's room, and there he stood ready to fight for his happiness.

" You! Look here," he said, " it is dishonest I"

Mrs. Parrish was half asleep in the arm-chair and paid no attention to the boy's entrance. Her swollen face and reddish eyelids made her look ill and pitiful. But Dima hardened his heart against pity. He had long ago decided to step over any obstacle, so he said:

" Last time you behaved badly. It is dishonest."

She opened her eyes. It was one of her vague, empty moments, when she could not realize where she was and what was going on around her. She looked dully at the boy and asked in a dead voice:

" What is dishonest?"

" You are. You tore my best stamp the other day and gave me nothing in the place of it. I am a small boy. It is a shame to hurt small boys! One must take good care of small



Petulantly, without reading, Mrs. Parrish signed the paper in large majestic handwriting and said:

" Now take that dog away and be off with you 1 Give me my rest! Leave me in peace!" And suddenly she began to shout: " Give me something! Come here, someone I Come here! Come here!"

But the steps only creaked under his feet—Dima was far away. Dog followed his new master and his mien expressed disdain for the ways of human kind and their means of dealing with each other.

Soon the steps were creaking again. It was Granny coming to Mrs. Parrish with mild words and unfailing compassion.

## 7

SUMMER CAME with its terrible damp heat, called in Chinese *fu-tien*—that is, low skies. This summer of 1937 was exceptionally oppressive. The inhabitants of the boarding-house became half ill. As for Mrs. Parrish, she stormed, and wept, and swore. All the neighbourhood was now complaining because of the noise she made. It was Granny who tried to appease the grumblers.

"It is not viciousness, it is illness. She lost her husband, she is unhappy."

"But many others have lost their husbands and they are not drunkards/<sup>1</sup> said the neighbours.

"Well," Granny would say, "Mrs. Parrish is all alone; this is the reason for her weakness. People should not be allowed to suffer alone."

Yet on a very hot afternoon Mrs. Parrish became dangerous.

After several hours spent upstairs, Granny came down to the Garden. Mme. Militza met her with her arms outstretched in welcome. The coffee-pot gurgled over the flame of a spirit-lamp. The aroma of coffee was full of promise. It meant a *tete-k-tete* with Mme. Militza, her monologues, rest and quiet.

Suddenly a bell rang and Khan ran upstairs to answer it. In one minute he was down, his face pale. He tried to explain something in pantomime.

"What is it? What happened?" asked Granny.

"English missy wantchy makee die."

All trembling, Granny rose. "I am coming. I am coming," she repeated mechanically, while she hastened towards Mrs. Parrish's room. Mme. Militza, all aflutter and dangling curls, tried to keep pace with her.

When Granny opened the door, she saw **Mis.** Parrish

quietly dozing against an overturned arm-chair, with a black and shining revolver in her lap.

Cautiously Granny approached her and took the revolver. The touch of her trembling hand awoke Mrs. Parrish. She opened her blue eyes and said winningly: "Hallo, Granny!"

In the evening the Family discussed the event and it was decided to bring a doctor to see Mrs. Parrish.

"But how shall we pay?" said Peter. "We have no money."

"We will ask Dr. Isaak," said Mother.

Dr. Isaak was a remarkable person. He was another product of the fantastic conditions of our times. He was born in Russia of German parents. During the first World War he fought against Germany on the Russian side. After the Revolution in Russia, he fled to Germany and was naturalized there. When Hitler came to power and started the persecution of the Jews, Dr. Isaak was among the mass of victims; for not only was his grandfather a Jew, but his wife Rosa was of purest Jewish origin. They fled to China. Being disowned by both Russia and Germany, Dr. Isaak became nobody's subject and had no passport. The tolerance of the Chinese made it possible for him to live and work in China.

Yet his troubled and disorderly life was an example of high achievement. He never stopped studying and working and had become an authority on brain diseases and a brilliant surgeon. His capacity for work was extraordinary, his kindness had no limits, and his power of endurance was most enviable. He always needed his power of endurance, for his family life was very trying. His Rosa, healthy, beautiful, and well-educated, at first met the blows of fortune with a charming smile, always ready to fight difficulties to the end. Then, suddenly, she gave up. All her polish went away and she became as Nature had made her—greedy, envious, quarrelsome, tearful, and always dissatisfied.

**They** were distressingly poor. The Doctor was an idealist and **never** thought **about** money. He worked because of his **love for humanity. Injustice, persecutions, slander—nothing**

could cure him of that love. It became a passion with him. He could not pass by any one suffering without trying to help him. And people were accustomed to take him, his interest and care, his wonderful skill in surgery, for granted, and very few bothered to pay him.

The Doctor's dealings with money would cause indignation in any practical man. He never had any cash, nor did his wife. When their debts became pressing and needs intolerable, Dr. Isaak would look around for a rich patient. When one of them came, one really ill and undoubtedly rich, the Doctor would ask from him exactly the sum he needed, no more, no less. And he held strongly to his demand, never giving in. In the end he always got the money, paid his debts, and for a while again lived carelessly.

This doctor was brought to see Mrs. Parrish. His judgment was that she needed systematic treatment and would be better off in a hospital. But she refused to go, and he was unwilling to insist. As her brother was due in three weeks' time, the Family decided to bear with her until his arrival. By this time they had learned to love Mrs. Parrish and to pity her. This waif of humanity had settled well into the Family.

Granny was given all the instructions on Mrs. Parrish's case. She listened to the Doctor gravely, slowly nodding and sighing. When seeing him to the door, she said:

"<sup>11</sup> Doctor, you will have to excuse us. We have no money at present. We were given to understand that Mrs. Parrish's brother on his arrival will see to the extra expenses."

" Money? Who speaks about money? I don't want any. The thing I should like to ask from you is your permission to bring my wife here. My Rosa is very lonely. She has practically no friends here."

" With greatest pleasure we will see her," said Granny politely.

" Not *see*, not just *see*. Let me be frank with you. Rosa is very nervous and dissatisfied with her life. If she could find some sympathy and interest it would do her much good. I saw how you behaved to that lady upstairs and I thought

that perhaps, if Rosa could have some of your friendship . . . "

" Mrs. Isaak is welcome. You see how we live here, really very modestly. . . . Mrs. Isaak is welcome to come' any day, at the hours which are convenient to her."

On the next day, at four o'clock, a panting rickshaw man brought a fat lady to the gate of the boarding-house. She had a sharp quarrel with him when paying for the ride. She threatened him with the police, and he cursed her heartily in Chinese. She tried to slap him with her umbrella and the rickshaw man started to yell. The passers-by looked with interest on the scene and the idle Chinese rickshaw men began to gather into listening groups. The lady tried to open the gate, the rickshaw man caught her by her dress and would not let her go. At the top of his voice he addressed the elements of Nature in testimony that she had underpaid him. " Ten cents it was for any lady of average weight, but for her, who evidently ate plentiful rice, it was worth no less than fifteen cents." At last, in great anger and with many biting words, the lady threw five cents into the rickshaw man's face, and after that made a dignified and even pompous entrance.

Attracted by the noise in the street, Mother, Mme. Militza, Dima, Dog, Khan, and two of the Japanese gentlemen stood on the steps. The newcomer approached them and solemnly introduced herself:

" I am Mme, Isaak."

" Oh, so glad you have called. Please come in. This is Mme. Militza, one of our lodgers."

" The one who drinks?"

" Oh, no! That is the other lady," said Mother and blushed at her own blunder. " I mean, Mme. Militza never drinks," she tried to explain, and again blushed.

" But you introduce me, please, to the drunkard too. I am interested in her."

Mother at once felt that she was no match for Mme. Isaak.

" Will you kindly sit down?" she said. " I will go and ask Granny to come to you."

When Granny entered the room she found Mme. Isaak and Mme. Militza in eager conversation. The knowledge that Mme. Militza was a fortune-teller filled the visitor with excitement. It seemed that a fortune-teller was exactly the thing Mme. Isaak had looked for all her life. She could not wait, she urged Mme. Militza to bring cards and to tell her fortune at once. Flattered, but with no indecent haste, Mme. Militza left the room. Granny took advantage of that moment to introduce herself. This formality over, Granny asked:

"And how are you, Mme. Isaak? How do you like China?"

This simple question produced the effect of a spark applied to dynamite.

"How do I live? Don't ask me *that*. If there are good things in the world, they have not come my way. Why? If I should tell you about all my pains, all my sufferings, all I am going through, you would be upset. You are a kind woman, you would be upset. You would keep worrying and worrying about me—for where is justice in this world? Have you seen that fool, my husband? No, he is not foolish; he is *mad*. How people can confide in him, I really don't understand. A madman, a rare example of a perfect lunatic. He refuses to charge for his work. Is that normal? Tell me honestly—have *you* paid him? No? I see that you have not. And I don't blame you. If you can get anything free—why not? But consider my situation. Nobody gives *me* things free. My husband is the only fool in the town."

"But how do you like China?" Granny tried again.

"Earthquake, a nice earthquake, I should wish for China."

"You liked Europe better?"

"Europe? You mean Germany? Smoke and fire, smoke and fire, I should like to see on the spot where Germany is now. Cursed be the people and the country!"

"Perhaps you had a rest when travelling. You have crossed many seas. Sometimes that is good for nerves-seeing places."

"Travelling? You make me laugh! Really, you do, In

Europe everything is the same. Hotels, rooms, food, all the same—if you pay the same price. The curtains are of the same material, and colour, and design; the chairs of the same set, and everywhere the same carpet—greenish grey. All the waiters have had the same mother and the same father, judging from the resemblance. And the food! You know, those cups of tea with milk or lemon, and the toast, always the same, as if the waiters had been carrying it after you all the way from Berlin to Shanghai. If you do not eat it to-day, they bring it in to-morrow. You will not have fresh toast till that is eaten. Oh, don't ask me about food."

" But other continents. Have you seen India? Is it not picturesque?"

" You are naive, really you are. Everything which is not Europe is dirty—terribly old, ramshackle, and dirty. All those temples are falling to pieces. I have never seen in any of them a single thing I should like to buy."

" It is a pity," said Granny cautiously, " that you had no benefit from your travelling."

" Why? I did sol I lost thirteen pounds."

At this moment Mme. Militza came with the cards.

From that day Rose Isaak became a regular guest in the boarding-house. Her ample figure, her slovenly dress, oily skin, and neglected teeth, made her not too pleasant a sight. Her peevish voice and the things she said made Granny order Dima to keep away when she was in the house. Yet Rosa had wonderful eyes—only it took time to find that out. An attentive observer could still find traits of beauty in her, even of kindness, even of education. Her degradation was her reaction to the hardships of life. It was as if looking at the debris which was now her life, at all those fragments of love, hope, faith, and illusion, she said: " I won't try to **make any** use of this trash." And slowly committing moral suicide, she consciously and willingly went down.

" My goodness! What life sometimes does to people!" said Granny to herself after seeing Rosa several times.

A close friendship or, better, conspiracy established itself **between Rosa** and Mine, MUITza. Fortune-telling entranced

Rosa. Although the first stance was summed up by Mme. Militza in a few words—"no aspirations and no fulfilments"—it was repeated every time Rosa came on a visit, which was twice a week. Gradually Mme. Isaak became engrossed in her future, as if fate had not already spent itself on her. Mme. Militza began to pronounce that there were aspirations, although no fulfilments. A visible change worked in Rosa. She looked like a person who knew an intriguing secret, but would not share it with any one. Her smile became enigmatic. She spoke less. She began to lead a life of hidden importance, with unexpected smiles, with sudden shrugs of her shoulders, and with occasional references to "things to come."

Mme. Militza received but a poor financial reward for all this dealing of cards, whispering and nodding over them. After the first stance she was given one dollar, her regular fee, but she saw no money from Rosa after that.

## 8

ALL UNAWARE, the country was approaching the tragic July of 1937. Outbursts of fighting between China and Japan sprang up here and there. Japan was making friendship on China, The ill-boding rumours about the inevitable war were spreading steadily. Many a fresh tomb was dug in the Chinese fields, many an urn with still tepid ashes was sent to Japan. The yellow mothers shed silent tears. But for the average foreigner all those events had no immediate importance. It was until then only a question of how far the fighting was from the town, and in what way it might concern those living in European concessions; for the average foreigners live cut off from the Chinese life. The Great Wall of China still exists; it separates natives and foreigners, and in spirit it has proved to be stronger than the wall of stone.

The Family was not much concerned with the rumours of the approaching war. And why should they be? They could not avert those events or influence their course, since they had no property to save, no jewellery to hide, no money to buy railway tickets for themselves, and no visas to allow them to go and find a shelter in other countries—really, why **should** they be concerned in affairs which were not strictly **their own?**

**Dima's illness was a prelude to a hard period in the life of the Family. The child became ill with an epidemic fever, and after five days of it he was so changed physically that the hearts of the Family were filled with apprehension. Granny nursed him. Dr. Isaak came daily and twice brought with him another doctor, a specialist on local diseases.**

**The entire house grew motirnfuL Mother, with dull eyes, went about her usual round of domestic drudgery. Whatever might be her feelings, she had no right to slacken her efforts; there was no possibility of her turning her attention away**

from housekeeping\* She had to check her rising tears and emotions, Lida would come running into the house, and a glance at Mother's face made superfluous any questions about Dima's health. Then she would tiptoe into the room and spend silent hours at his bedside. Even Peter, who had usually been aloof and silent, would ask nervously by telephone from his store whether Dima were any better. Since **the** only telephone of the house was in Mrs. Parrish's room, she became involved in the general concern and would run up and down stairs with messages. The Chinese gentleman, Mr. Sung, stopped often to ask polite questions about the health of the "young hope of the Family." The Japanese gentlemen would smile with sympathizing mien and shake their heads in compassion.

Only Granny showed nothing of her emotions. The clearer the danger, the more composed she became. It seemed as if she ate nothing and took no rest at all; yet she was not tired and never left Dima alone for a moment. Quietly, gently, she moved at his bedside, scrupulously punctual in everything concerning his treatment. She took the whole burden upon herself.

Dima, poor Dima, lay on Granny's sofa in delirium. When he began to toss about or moan, the pitiful sound of Dog's low howl was heard from underneath the sofa, where he crouched in an agony of fear and compassion; his master was ill. Mournful and morose at first, Dog became desolate as the illness developed. A final transformation had taken place in him; all the atavistic potentialities were awake in him now. This metamorphosis from a disdainful observer, a free and self-sufficient creature, into a devoted friend whose heart was bleeding with compassion was now complete. His shivering body and nervous howl were proofs of his being simply a dog, and now there he was in his dog place, under **the bed** of his master. He would glare at the Doctor when *he* came in, not **with** scorn but with avid expectancy. He **refused** food. He was slowly dying of despair and grief.

**Every time that Dima came to himself and opened his eyes, he saw a smiling Granny bending over him-Granny,**

smiling so gently I At the sound of Dima's voice Dog would crawl out from under the sofa, and standing on shaky legs look with imploring eyes at Dima. They had not much to Say to each other, those three. A complete understanding made words superfluous.

When Dima. grew better it gave the Family a corporate sense of relief. Dima's voice, his freckled pathetic face, his blue eyes a bit discoloured by illness, the sound of his light tread always accompanied by the heavy thump-thump of Dog—all these restored the equanimity of spirit in the house.

Thanks for the recovery were included in Dima's evening prayers. Granny always supervised this ceremony. After the usual prayers were said, Dima had to kneel and repeat after Granny an extra prayer, then bow to the floor and say silently *in his soul* something for himself.

This concluding moment was rather perplexing for Dima. He liked to stand with his bare feet on the cool straw mat. On his knees it became a bit harder, for they were still weak and trembling, those knees. He had to make an effort in order to keep his balance and not to sway, for he wished to pray decorously—for Granny's sake. But when, on his knees, he had to bow, to put his brow to the floor and balance himself with his arms—his palms flat on the mat—a feeling of slight dizziness would overcome him. Red and orange spots would swim and melt before his shut eyes. And he would lie on the floor forgetting to say things *in his soul*, and giving way to an overpowering feeling of fatigue and unreality. Dog, who always was at Dima's side during praying-time, grew anxious at Dima's immobility. He would wag his tail, thump-thump the floor with it, and even emit a low howl.

" Now **get up**, Dima," Granny would say, **and she would help him to his feet.**

" **Granny.**" Dima said once, " we must teach Dog to pray. Perhaps he could pray *in his soul* also." **And** assuming a slightly didactic tone like that in which Granny told him stories from the Bible, he continued: " **At first God created dogs. Dogs were masterless. Nobody to amuse them**

and to feed them. Then God created men to be their masters/'

" Now you are saying silly things, Dima. Stop it."

\*' Why, Granny I How do grown-up people know at once what is silly and what is not? I never do."

" You must think first, and then speak."

" But if everybody should think first, everything would take so much time. Khan always thinks, and you call him slow."

" Sleep, sleep, Dima," Granny was saying. She made the sign of the *cross* over him and kissed him. Dima caught her in his arms and kissed her tenderly.

" I will sleep. I like to sleep here. Imagine, a whole room, a separate room for Dog, Aunty, and me. It is very good for lungs—so much air——" And he was dozing.

Granny switched off the electric lamp and went noiselessly away. In their room were the other members of the Family.

" Mamma, may I sing? Oh, please!" asked Lida.

" Only in a low voice. It is almost nine o'clock. Dima is sleeping. The lodgers may want to rest."

" Oh, Mother! In the summer-time, at nine. Well—what shall I sing?"

" Something simple and quiet," said Mother.

" Peter, let us sing a duet!"

Peter, who was sitting silently at the open window looking at the starry sky, answered tonelessly:

" No. I won't sing."

" Oh, how dull you are! Why? Is not life wonderful? Dima is well. Everything is all right. How can you remain always so lifeless?"

It was almost dark in the room. Partly for the sake of economy and partly because they did not need much light at that moment, they had only the *lampada* lit in the room. The lantern in the back yard sent oblique rays in through the open windows. Peter was looking at the play of light and shadows in the yard and thinking thoughts of his own. But when Lida began the duet in her clear and high soprano:

*Don't tempt me in vain with a sudden return of your  
tenderness . . .*

he could not resist his passion for music and singing; he stood up, and slowly lifting his head he accompanied her in a soft and deep baritone:

*To one disillusioned are alien all the enticements of the  
old days. . . .*

Granny entered at that moment. Slowly she sat on the sofa, at Mother's side, and put her arm around Mother's waist. They sat silently, these two, enjoying the old-fashioned song. Long ago Granny used to sing also, accompanying herself on a harp. And Mother used to sing in her youth. She had a piano. These two children had all their music in themselves. Yet they enjoyed it no less without accompaniment. Every one forgot that it was nine o'clock, that Lida was to sing only in half-voice.

## 9

MME. MILITZA, who had postponed her departure because of Dima's illness, now began to pack.

On the twenty-fifth of July she said good-bye to the Family. Her baggage consisted of only two pieces—a chest and a handbag. Both things were of unusual appearance and evidently made at the end of the last century, in some odd country where all kinds of handicraft were held in high esteem. But however strange the chest was—long and narrow, with shining inlaid copper work, representing spades, clubs, diamonds, and hearts—the handbag was bound to cause even more surprise to the onlooker. It was half Mme. Militza's size and almost her weight. The front was adorned with a huge piece of tapestry representing a brown lion with a small pink lamb at his side and over them hovered an angel with blue wings and a birch rod—all done in cross-stitch. This style of embroidery made the design look like a chef-d'oeuvre of cubism. Eyes, mouth, ears, paws, leaves, fingers—all were cubes of different sizes. On the other side of the handbag, made of leather, were engraved the words: (" One learned man is worth two ignorant men. " The handle was made of carved wood representing two hands in a firm clasp. One hand had a ring on its little finger. The ring was made of copper with a small red stone set in it. This ring always fascinated Dima. He also longed to know what was in the bag; yet he never managed to glance into it, for if Mme. Militza needed, to open it in someone's presence, she did so quickly. The wooden hands unclasped **and** clasped again giving no hint of the bag's contents.

Mme. Militza wore a huge fiat hat with something which thirty or forty years ago had been, perhaps, **an alluring ostrich feather**. Or perhaps it had **not** been. The **object** could as well be **something of unknown origin, in between**

the plant and animal kingdoms. She also wore a coat, quite out of season, called a *talma*.

Thus dressed, and with a solemn expression on her face, Mme. Militza said her good-byes to the Family. Mrs. Parrish could not be bidden good-bye for she was sleeping after a long and laoisly vigil in the night.

Mother went to the railway station to see Mme. Militza off to Shanghai. The streets had an unusual appearance: the borders of the foreign concessions were defined by lines of fortifications; sandbags formed the walls, barbed wire edged them above; the iron gates, still open, were guarded by a body of soldiers and police. The endless streams of rickshaws brought into the French and British Concessions bundles and boxes, coffers and chests. The prosperous Chinese families, or those of Chinese citizens who had friends living there, hastened to hide their families and some of their property before the approaching disaster.

Mother was startled. Of course, many tumultuous rumours had reached her during the past days; but she was so eager for relaxation after Dima's illness that her spirit refused to be troubled so soon after the last grief, and she entered almost unaware into this period of war.

The railway station, situated on the ex-Russian Concession, was filled to capacity with Japanese soldiers, guns, horses, nurses, parcels. All were jumbled together. The merciless sun parched and scorched and pierced everything and everybody with its fierce rays.

Japanese soldiers, usually of very short stature, were overladen with their arms, and hot sweat poured down their faces from under their helmets. The Chinese people were cautious, self-effacing, on their guard. When Chinese and Japanese civilians met, they looked past one another. The eyes of Japanese soldiers had no expression, just hard black vacancy; for keeping their faces void of any expression is a part of military discipline. Not a single Chinese soldier was in view. The Chinese officials of the railway were low-voiced.

The railway trains came and departed incessantly, one after the other! some bringing in more and more Japanese

soldiers and arms; other trains came from Peiping, bringing in either wounded Japanese soldiers or, Chinese refugees and the wounded. The smoke, the steam, the noise of all those incongruous trains, blended together. The passenger train to Shanghai was far behind schedule.

When Mother saw all this she became uneasy. How many times in her life had she seen similar confusion and caution—it usually preceded fighting. Of the immediate destination of all those guns there could be no doubt. She had seen such in action before. Aghast, she looked around her. Why, why had people come to that again? Could not there be some untried peaceful measure, some pity, some mercy? Evidently not. The tension was so great that one spark would be enough to produce an explosion. Everybody was afraid of being that spark or of provoking it.

A group of Japanese passengers—men, women, children—were standing before the train bound for Shanghai awaiting its departure. They stood in a separate group as if cut off from the rest of the world. Although the platform was extremely crowded, nobody went near them, preferring to jostle in a friendly mass than to approach that hostile element.

The wounded Chinese civilians from Peiping were brought in on litters and chairs, but the porters were not using the common way out of the station: they went under the elevated passages and turned unexpectedly round a corner, as if their load of the wounded Chinese flesh were illegal, as if those bleeding bodies had no further right to live. Only the victims from the well-to-do classes were brought to Tientsin; they were not many.

An old Chinese lady, evidently of high rank, was brought by in a chair. Two middle-aged women walked at the sides of her chair. One of them was holding a sunshade, the other a fan. The lady was extremely old, perhaps no less than a hundred. Her face was of striking pallor, perfectly white in colour, the result of the long years spent indoors. The lady's head jerked at every step of the porters. The last swaying flame of her life was ready to be extinguished at any moment. This human existence, which now might be counted in hours,

was yet filled with pain and sorrow. The small cloudy eyes had, evidently, not seen all of the despair allotted to them.

*Is longevity really a blessing?* Mother wondered.

The train with the wounded soldiers was standing somewhere in the distance. Doctors and nurses were going to and fro. A group of Japanese ladies of Tientsin, in white aprons and with badges, were bringing water in jugs and sandwiches in baskets to the arriving military trains. Some officers in full uniform were giving orders here and there.

And far away, behind all this jostle and noise, there was standing a silent train, the one with the dead bodies of the Japanese warriors brought to Tientsin to be cremated and their ashes sent back to their native country, in urns—to the country of the Rising Sun, which would never more rise for them!

Almost nobody spoke at the departure of Mme. Militza's train. Only the whistles of locomotives and the clang of iron were heard. The mass of life here was not a unit; it was disintegrated, every human soul being alone, feeling alone, full of fear, anxiety, pain, and hostility.

"Well, this is just the kind of departure my cards foretold me," said Mme. Militza. She was looking out of the carriage window at Mother. A light wind, for a moment, blew aside all her curls and ringlets, and Mother had a full view of her face. The expression was ominous. Ominous was her voice, too:

"All the same, it will be no better for those who remain in town. -Take heed, dark days are ahead."

When Mother returned home she saw the drawbridge over the Hei-ho River being lifted up. Thus the military zone was defined: war and death on the one side, safety in the French, British, and Italian Concessions on the other. For the first time in her life she and her Family were on the safe side.

Late in the evening the five Japanese lodgers came in and brought with them an old Japanese lady. With smiles and bows they said that they had to go away for a short time, but the lady must be left behind. Would Mother kindly look after

the old lady and give her tea and biscuits and, perhaps, some boiled rice twice a day?

The Chinese professor did not leave his rooms that day. He paced to and fro, to and fro, endlessly—he who never made a single superfluous movement.

It was all so disquieting. But Lida was chattering about her success in swimming. Dima was teaching Dog how to smile. Granny, who had just returned from church, lit a waxen candle before the icon—and all these ordinary tasks of the everyday life were so quiet, so refreshing, so harmless, so gentle, that Mother's mind refused to dwell on the coming horrors of the war.

EARLY IN THE MORNING they awoke to the roar of cannons. Fighting was going on in the Chinese part of the town. War between Japan and China had not been declared. But declared or not, it was going on: shelling, bombardment, and fire did their work all the same.

Excited voices were heard here and there and small groups of people began to gather before the houses and at the corners of streets.

Mother and Peter were the first to dress themselves hastily and to go out. They stood on the steps before the entrance. Soon Lida, all trembling, and the pale Dima came out and clung to Mother. Peter explained that no fighting would be allowed on the British Concession. It would be stopped somewhere at the borders of the Chinese town. Only an occasional bomb might fall in their part of the town.

As if to prove his words, a violent explosion shook the air. It seemed for a moment that all the world swung aside. Lida screamed. Dima's eyes were round and bulging with awe. A Chinese youth, who was standing on the roof of the next house, cried that the bomb had exploded on the British Concession, and one two-story house had fallen.

Quietly Granny came out.

"What are you all doing here?" she said. "You are not properly clad. Let us go inside. If the town should be bombarded, we must keep all together, in one room. If killed, all killed; if alive, all alive."

At this moment Mrs. Parrish appeared on the balcony.

"Stop that noise!" she cried. "One cannot have a quiet moment in this town!"

The newspaper brought a change into the family life: volunteers were called forth by the British Municipal Council, and Peter decided to go at once. Nobody tried to dissuade

him. All the men of the Family had taken their parts in the wars of their times, and Peter, tall, blond, handsome, was now the male representative of the Family. Peter, who was never in haste, who always looked well-dressed no matter what he wore. Peter, whose presence, always silent and quiet, had a strange quality—it enhanced one's own feeling of loneliness; one could feel less lonely all by himself than when one was with Peter.

According to the Russian tradition, Granny as the oldest in the Family, gave her blessing to Peter. Here he stood, her grown-up grandchild, and she lifted her hand high and with a solemn and broad movement made a sign of the cross over him. Out Peter went, and Granny shut the door and asked them to leave her alone for a while. She must pray. How many times she had given her blessing to the men of her family going to fight! She had given it to her husband, to her sons; now came the turn of grandchildren. Three generations! Her husband died for his country in the Great War; her sons were killed during the Civil War—they died for their ideals. For what would her grandchildren die? Humanity? But which side could claim humanity to-day? She, herself, was a Christian, loving mankind as a whole, longing for peace and kindness above everything—and here she was blessing her people to go forth to kill and to be killed. There never was any escape from the paradoxes of life.

Granny opened the box holding her library, which consisted of only three books: a Bible, *Les Pensées* by Pascal, and *Reflections* by Marcus Aurelius. At present she needed Aurelius. She needed to hear again how this noble philosopher longed for peace, and led wars; aspired to loyalty and love, and was betrayed; coveted repose and beauty, and died from the Black Death in a foreign and barbarous country. The way of all human hope and illusions . . . resignation! A religious soul sees light beyond the terrors of life. As in a thunderstorm when the tumult and the noise is heard below the clouds while high above them all is silence and quiet, so, in human souls there is a point of stillness and serenity known only to those philosophic minds which can rise above **the**

## THE F

storm Granny reached that book, and rose.

When Granny opened the door, and almost radiant. This was the time for being helptur to others.

She found Mother in the kitchen. The current events developed into a discussion of the economical problem for the household. There was nothing, or almost nothing, on the market, and prices soared high. The British Municipal Council was taking measures to prevent any kind of profiteering at the expense of the population. While discussing the situation, they started to prepare dinner, for Khan was not visible anywhere.

" I wonder where he can be," said Mother.

" Why, he certainly went to find out about his relatives. He said he had some in Tientsin, in the Chinese part of the town."

The sounds of cannonade were heard distinctly, but farther away than in the morning. A bomb would rumble and explode at a shorter distance, and the roar would make the window-panes clatter and creak. The doors in the house banged, and small things fell down from the shelves.

" I wonder," said Mother, " if we can have a regular dinner—there are not provisions enough,"

" Well, we have not many eaters to-day," said Granny. " With Peter away—Mme. Militza also—there is not much appetite left in this house."

In the Garden Dima enjoyed the sounds of the fighting. He was not allowed to go out of the yard. With Peter away, *he* was the man to protect the Family. Granny said so, when asking him to keep near the door. And could they rely on his being on guard? she asked. Yes, they could. He promised. He would not step out of the Garden into the street. Two of them, he and Dog, were surely not afraid. As for fee war, Dima longed for it to be nearer and nearer. Could they not blow up some houses in the vicinity? But when a bomb exploded near, Dog tucked his tail closely to his legs, raised his head, and emitted a high, pitiful howl. This

astonished Dima very much. His astonished look at the dog made the coward ashamed. Dog did not repeat the whining sound, but tried to keep as near to the boy's legs as possible. In his magnanimity Dima offered to protect Mrs. Parrish too, but Mrs. Parrish said that her English King would not allow the Japanese to touch her. This was one of life's bitter ironies. Of what use could a king be to a woman? Kings are destined for boys. And yet she had a king, and Dima had not. Somewhere in Russia there was a Stalin, but he was not a king, and he wore no uniform. This would not do, for how could you recognize kings if they wore no uniforms? No, Dima needed a real king, young and brave, and militant. When grown-up, he would take his dog and his gun and go to the smartest king in the world, one in uniform, with a crown and long black moustaches. He would salute the king with his sword and say: "Majesty I We are yours!" And the king would make Dima his brother, and they would fight wars all their lives.

Gun, sword—Dima had neither. After some hesitation he went upstairs and tapped at Mrs. Parrish's door. He found her ill because of the heat. She felt a general muddiness in her spirit and body. Dima assumed his most dignified manners and said, in a low and confidential voice;

"Mrs. Parrish, fighting gets nearer. Peter is not at home. He will sleep in the barracks. I am the only man to protect the house. Mr. Sung being old and wise, we cannot count on him, can we? You have a king all for yourself, but what about Mother, and Lida, and Granny? And how will the Japanese know that your king defends you?"

He paused for a moment.

"Mrs. Parrish," he resumed in a most convincing tone, "how do you think it would be if—between us two—we should buy a gun? It could be mine in the daytime and yours during the nights . . . although if they come, they would have to kill the downstairs people first. .v. then, perhaps, it would be wiser to leave the gun with me in the nights too. . "

Eagerly he waited for an answer. From his trousers pocket

he produced his cash capital, some paper money—total, thirty cents. Mrs. Parrish smiled her broad smile.

" I think we would do better to buy the full outfit of a soldier," she said. " Do you think that one gun is enough in such a turmoil? I guess we need swords also, and machine guns, and trumpets—in case of victory. Give me your money."

She took the clammy lump of Dima's cash, his capital acquired in various moments of pain and misery as compensation from the other members of the Family, and said:

" Now I shall add my half of the investment and try to order things by phone. Come later for them—and there will be, perhaps, some small change. But remember, you are the one to keep the arms and fight. A lady must not stoop to fight with soldiers."

Before the evening came, Dima received the splendid toys and twenty cents in change, in two new, clean paper notes. He was spellbound with this successful business. His guns were real in every detail, except that they could not be fired. But this was of no importance. A splendid exterior often overshadows the lack of the inner value in this life.

Happily Dima paraded in the Garden, with a fierce mien and the most military deportment, marching to and fro, and Dog followed him without enthusiasm, but obediently. Mrs. Parrish, from the balcony, asked at intervals whether she was well guarded and safe, and every time she was reassured.

## II

**IN THREE DAYS** Tientsin was taken by the Japanese. The fighting calmed down, but the nervous tension in the town was great.

About one hundred thousand of the Chinese population [led from their homes, seeking refuge in the foreign concessions. The British, French, and Italian Concessions, which had quadrupled their population with the Chinese citizens even before the open hostilities began, now shut their gates. A continuous stream of refugees invaded the ex-German, ex-Austrian, and ex-Russian Concessions. It became a compact mass of human bodies—old, young; men, women, children. There is no more self-restrained and patient crowd than the Chinese. Wild with fear, under a scorching sun, in the atmosphere constantly shaken by the sounds of bombardment, which meant ruin of their houses and the death of those who had no chance to run away, the Chinese refugees still did not lose their human dignity. Hungry, dirty, and desolate, most of them kept orderly and silent—even the children.

The Salvation Army was the first to bring them some help. Special tents were established here and there, and children were given porridge. Several buildings were equipped as shelters, but all such charity was only a small drop.

The Family got its portion of the over-population, for about twenty people were crowded into the back yard of the boarding-house, and according to Khan's statement they all were his closest relatives and family. All ages from one to ninety were represented. Silently they sat on the ground, externally calm; only the glowing of their eyes and occasionally uttered nervous words showed signs of their inward excitement. They had saved practically nothing and were hungry and tired. Mother opened the cellar in the basement, which was intended for coal in winters, and this made room enough to

shelter half of them for the nights. The rest had to sleep on the ground in the yard. All Mother's stock of food was eaten to the last crumb on the first day by those unexpected guests, and she was faced with the problem of providing food for this surplus of inhabitants. After a slight hesitation she addressed Mrs. Panish and Mr. Sung, and both willingly helped her. Rice and tea were given to all of Khan's relatives twice a day.

"We must not let Dima go to the back yard," said Mother. "Two of the children there are covered with rash. I wonder if it is contagious."

"Certainly the children must keep away. But we have to be polite to these people and treat them in a friendly way," said Granny.

Granny easily made friends with different kinds of people. When she for the first time appeared among the Refugees in the back yard, she smiled to all, but approached the oldest among them—a very small and delicate woman. Granny could not speak Chinese well, yet she found words enough to say most courteously:

"Is it not a very hot day, Honourable Oldest One?" And she bowed.

The old woman smiled a toothless smile and said something in answer, also bowing. Granny did not understand the answer, but this was of no importance. The chief thing was to manifest friendliness, and she saw that her attempt was successful. With Khan's help she sometimes held short conversations with one or the other person in the crowd and tried to help in any way she could.

. On the fifth day, which happened to be Sunday, Mother managed to arrange two free hours for herself to go to church. In order to get there she had to cross the Hei-ho River in a ferry-boat. This river is very narrow, very deep, and extraordinarily dirty. That particular Sunday the river could not be crossed. As far as the eye could see it was filled with the dead bodies of Chinese—soldiers and civilians alike. Here and (here a woman's or a child's body floated, drifting down the river towards the open sea. Thousands of Chinese were killed fighting for the town. While die Japanese cremated

their soldiers' bodies, they had not time to do the same for the Chinese. The frightened Chinese population was scattered all over the concession and the vicinity of Tientsin. Who could make several thousands of coffins and dig so many graves? Heat and flies made the corpses a danger, so they were just thrown into the Hei-ho River and left to the elements. So there they were—afloat, adrift—before Mother's eyes. Stricken with terror, she stood on the bank of the river and could not tear her eyes from the horrible sight. They were so near she could even see the expression of some faces, the torn clothes, the swollen bodies. They were not in a hurry; they floated, swayed, one body gently jostling the other. Some bodies would push themselves up from below and emerge on the surface as if longing to say the last farewell to the sun, to the sky, to the chain of pure white clouds moving from the sea to the opposite side, from which could be seen the homes, left for ever, the trodden paths of the fields where their life had been budding and blooming, the gentle, patient life of hard-working people.

Here and there on the banks groups of people were standing, looking down in silence. Europeans, mostly Russians. But the work of unloading ships was going on its usual round. Chinese worked. Those alive had to think about their daily bread.

"My God I" gasped Mother.

She ran away. But she could not go far, because her heart was throbbing too fast. She took a rickshaw. Mother used rickshaws very rarely. First, she could not afford them; second, she could not become accustomed to using human service that way. Pity for the rickshaw man moved her too strongly. And now, looking at that pounding body, at the abrupt rise and fall of its ribs, hearing the whistling sound of his breathing, watching the rivulets of sweat pour over his glistening skin, she thought bitterly: "We are all cruel and mad."

Pale and shivering, she returned home and went straight to the kitchen in order to keep herself busy with some urgent work and so change the course of her thoughts,

Now Mother had her own way of being unhappy. First she would begin to sing. She had a lovely warm voice, but it broke somewhere in its high register and, instead of clear high notes, there would suddenly be an empty space. In a normal state nothing would induce Mother to sing. Thus when Granny heard that singing she started at once to make preparations. For singing was the beginning of the usual procedure: after it Mother would keep silent for a while, then sob in a loud and desperate voice and knock her head against the wall, and all would end in a "heart attack, and finally a swoon. After that, having come to her senses, she would talk for some time to Granny, and then grow silent, sighing deeply; then she would rise and go the rounds of her usual work and drudgery. After each of these attacks she grew a bit smaller, paler, older. Every recurrence took away some of her life and sweetness and pushed her nearer to her grave. They happened no oftener than once in two years.

Thus while listening to the singing Granny prepared pillows on the sofa, a towel, cold water, valerian drops. She knew by experience that the best policy was not to interfere till the beginning of the loud sobbing.

Mother sang a melodious and tender romance. Her secret grief was that she had been left by her husband. For a long time they lived separately, he in Soviet Russia, she in China. There was no communication by mail or in any other way during several years. They lost each other. She counted him among the dead, and every evening on her knees she prayed **for** his eternal peace and asked that his soul might participate in her life, be with her spiritually, **help** her to be **courageous**, support her in **bringing up** their **daughter**, and **meet her beyond when at last she** should die.

**Then suddenly she received a letter, quite friendly, informing her that her husband had divorced her, had married and had two boys. Her husband asked her with warmth how she and Granny and Lida were getting on, whether she was married to someone else, fend requested letters from her with all the news. There was no hint about his economic standing or question about theirs, and no suggestion of help. After**

ten years of constant memory and prayers this blow from one so dearly loved was all the more heavy. To be betrayed by one's enemies—well, after all, that is natural; but to be so injured by someone beloved—that was unbearable. In her pride, she sent him an equally friendly letter, with no complaints and no reproaches, accepting this new situation as a normal issue of a once great and self-sacrificing love, telling him that they were living happily, earning enough for a decent living, and sending him and his family best wishes. Since that time once or twice a year she had received and answered similar letters. She felt humiliated, but gave no utterance and no expression to these feelings; she suppressed them, locked them in the bottom of her heart. But in moments of weakness, when her endurance failed, the bitterness, the poison engendered by that blow, rose to the surface of her emotional life—and that was the reason for the attacks of sobbing. She would live it over again and again. The poetry of her great and early love: she sang it in her melodious romances, the tragedy of separation, exile, her fears, her prayers—she sobbed it out. Then she became quiet. Gentle Granny's words would appeal to her sense of duty, courage, and heroism and she would get up and live again; but those poisonous drops of recollections would ferment again and the vapours multiply and stir inside her dimly, accumulating force, groping for issue. And in time there would be another outburst.

Standing before the stove and mixing a pudding, Mother sang, and tears, big and salty, fell down into the pudding bowl. In half an hour's time she was lying on the sofa sobbing desperately. Dima and Dog stood near/ both forlorn and with blinking eyes. Granny held Mother's head and Lida tried to pour valerian into her mouth. Two hours later Mother was sitting on the sofa listening to Granny's gentle whispering. That was the end.

Mother's was a nature of hidden fire, of internal combustion, and the rarer the explosions were, the more they shook her. Granny, who had endured much more in her life, never allowed herself such demonstrations of despair.

She was always externally calm and self-composed; but there were ashes, only ashes, now in Granny's heart; while Mother's heart still sparkled and smouldered and was capable of flashing and burning. Perhaps one needs to be seventy to have ashes in one's heart. Perhaps Mother also had begun to accumulate them; for there she sat with a livid face, disfigured: by pain, covered with tears and perspiration—old, broken, mournful. And yet hers was once a beautiful face, exquisitely radiant. Nature conceived her in high aspiration for grace and beauty, as one aristocratic, predestined to adorn life. Then something changed in Nature's intention, and she began ruthlessly to distort one of her finest creations.

At four o'clock, when a gloomy quiet hung over the house, it dawned on Granny that nobody in the Family had eaten since morning. Hastily she went to the kitchen and, helped by Khan, she prepared a tray for Mrs. Parrish and sent Lida upstairs with it, gave Dima his portion, and then prepared food for Mr. Sung. Although Mr. Sung never asked for food on days when he did not go out, Granny always sent him something to eat. Cautiously she tapped at the door and entered. Mr. Sung was sitting at the table with vacant eyes, looking into empty space. He silently refused to eat. But Granny smiled and insisted, and finally he drank a cup of tea and ate one biscuit as if he were an automaton. Then Granny went to the kitchen, washed the crockery, and in the same cup poured tea for the old Japanese lady. Nobody answered when she knocked at the door, so she opened it and entered. She saw the old lady sitting motionless on the floor looking vacantly before her in just the same way as the Chinese gentleman. Grief and anxiety were expressed in exactly the same manner by these two representatives of the two hostile peoples. Granny coaxed the old lady to eat and drink. While doing that, she looked closely at that wrinkled face, and in those deep creases she read a long list of past sorrows. Life, evidently, was not easier for the yellow race than it was for the white.

That day seemed an extraordinarily long one. At last the evening came and with it a little bit of coolness and quiet.

**Granny went out and sat down** on the steps of the porch. On the bench, under the two trees, Mr. Sung was sitting. Neither of them spoke. They enjoyed silence. After all the turbulence of the last days this evening was something near to the nonnal life. As dusk settled down birds flew here and there to their nests. There was a nest or two over Mrs. Panish's balcony. Intense life was going on there. The impatient squeaks and the tender chirping showed that the families in the nests were having their supper.

Suddenly the gate clicked and a poorly clad Chinaman entered the Garden. Looking around furtively, he approached Mr. Sung, said something to him, bowed, and quickly went away.

Although Mr. Sung said nothing, made no gesture, Granny instantly knew that there had been a messenger of disaster, and that somebody dear to Mr. Sung had been killed. She had gone through the same experience several times in her life and knew the symptoms. Her eyes had caught the only visible movement of Mr. Sung, an almost imperceptible shrinking back, as if to avoid the blow.

Granny slowly approached the old gentleman, and sat beside him. For a while they sat thus in silence. A belated bird, a swallow, flew before them, sweeping the ground with its wings.

"These swallows here," said Granny mildly, "if come to us from India. Our Russian swallows are African."

To this Mr. Sung said nothing.

"What a mystery a bird's life is," **continued Granny.** **She was silent for a while, then added:**

"**And human life, also/**

"**And death/'** whispered Mr. Sung.

"**There is no death—only a change,"** said Granny. "**Life is changing its forms—and must. It is the law of life—movement—a temporary phase—a temporary separation."**

"**Separation,"** whispered Mr. Sung.

**And again they sat silent, the dusk slowly enveloping them. There was no more sound from the birds' nests, but the soft murmur of voices mounted now from the back yard, where.**

supervised by Mother, Khan was distributing the evening rice to his family.

Suddenly a door banged on Mrs. Parrish's balcony and she herself leaned over the banister and began to shout:

" Why this silence? Is this house a tomb? Are you all dead? Give me a living soul! The house is full of the dead."

Granny hastily rose and almost ran upstairs to Mrs. Parrish's room.

AT THE BEGINNING of August, comparative calm and peace were restored in the area of Tientsin. People really do get over things, and life resumes its usual course. The Chinese refugees began to move back from the concessions to the Chinese city. The Salvation Army decreased the quantity of gruel given to the poor, and the trains with mail began to move in and out. The infiltration of Japanese was taking its course. Fortifications and aerodromes were built on the outskirts of the town; the endless trains were bringing in more and more armaments and ammunition, and the trampling Japanese army was moving southwards, leaving Tientsin behind the military zone.

Only four Japanese gentlemen, smiling and bowing, returned to the boarding-house. There was no mention of the fifth. The grinning four thanked Granny and Mother for their attention to the old Japanese lady, and took her away. Only three of them remained to live in the house. They gave Granny a box of Meiji biscuits and a silk neckerchief as a present for the extra trouble during the siege.

Khan's family was reduced to four. Mr. Sung found himself out of a job; for the university, where he gave lectures, had been destroyed and the new masters of Tientsin had no intention of restoring it.

At the expense of the three Japanese gentlemen, a radio was installed in the hall of the house. It brought in a whirlwind of sounds. A Domei dispatch would roar with Japanese victories; voices of wounded pride and indignation and cries for help and justice resounded from Nanking, the abode of the Chinese government; crashing speeches thundered from Soviet Russia, exulting over the deeds that yet must be achieved; Hitler rumbled from Berlin, and enchanting music poured from the Grand Opera of Paris. These reverberations

of the world's life laid a stress on the tragic certainty that there was no unity of purpose in the life of mankind, that humanity was disintegrating into parts, having no purpose in common.

With the noise of Japanese airplanes above and the roar of the radio below, Mrs. Parrish easily lost her equanimity. Now Granny spent the best half of the day in her room. She played cards with Mrs. Parrish. When Mrs. Parrish won she was allowed to have a drink. Now the bottles were kept in a chest and Granny had the keys. When Granny won she received a cup of coffee. The coffee was Mrs. Parrish's. Granny prepared the coffee on the spot, taking her time in order to make the procedure longer. When Mrs. Parrish did not wish to wash or comb her hair or eat, Granny coaxed her to do so as she had done with the two generations of children. In the evenings they would go for a walk, Dima and Dog gallantly keeping them company, or they would sit in the Garden. When Mrs. Parrish became too excited Granny would induce her to go to bed, and lying there Mrs. Parrish would listen to the story of Granny's life. Once having begun to tell it, Granny proceeded, capturing the whole of Mrs. Parrish's attention. Granny was a good storyteller, perhaps because she had seen so much and kept to the truth. The further the story went the more Mrs. Parrish was interested, attracted, immersed in it. Granny told only facts and restrained from analysis or moralizing. Starting from the cloudless days of peace and prosperity, the story ran on into the tragic era of war, revolution, and exile. From time to time Mrs. Parrish would make comments or ask for details. Then suddenly she would fall asleep. The strange thing was that when she awoke she would repeat the last word she had heard and ask for continuation. If Granny was not in the room, Mrs. Parrish would go to the landing, and leaning over the banister she would shout down:

"Ho-ho! Granny I And when he said 'Get ready'<sup>1</sup> Whajtdidyoudo?"

**And** Granny's mild voice would answer from somewhere **downstairs:**

" And when he said ' Get ready ' I began to pray ' Our Father/ but my emotion was so deep that I forgot the words\* and kept repeating only ' Our Father, Our Father.' " . . . And the frail figure of Granny would appear on the stairs and she would slowly ascend the steps towards Mrs. Parrish's room.

" And then someone asked: ' Where is your Father?' and I suddenly remembered the words of the prayer and cried: ' In heaven I' and he laughed and said: ' Lucky fellow I He escaped the Red tribunal.' " . . . And Granny's voice would fade as the door of Mrs. Parrish's room would shut on those words.

Those were hard days for Mrs. Parrish. Dr. Isaak left town for a month, and there was only Granny to take care of her. Once, seeing some sewing in Granny's hands, she asked:

" What are you doing, Granny?"

" I am mending some of your linen, Mrs. Parrish."

" Oh, you make me feel ashamed. Why, I used to have my Amah for that work. Put that away. I will telephone to the Catholic convent for her. She will be here to-morrow."

On the next morning Amah came. She was a squat girl of the peasant type. Yet her face bore an expression of one sophisticated in her attitude towards life. She proved to be a very skilful seamstress, and Granny, with Mrs. Parrish's permission, tried to avail herself of Amah's expertness. They were working on the landing of the staircase. Mrs. Parrish's door being open, Granny constantly kept an eye on her. Meanwhile, she worked and carried on a long conversation with Amah.

" Now, Amah, are you happy to be a Christian?"

Amah darted a quick glance at Granny,

" No, I am not."

This was unexpected.

" But why?"

Amah kept silent for a while, then said:

" Everything I could enjoy is a sin. And God punishes

for every sin. And He sees everything, everything. You cannot hide. No privacy. Nowhere. I don't like that."

"Do you pray?"

"Always. You cannot live in a convent if you won't pray. They will not keep you."

"You don't like praying, I think."

"Why? I like it very much. You just keep quiet. Very nice."

"To whom do you pray?"

"To the Holy Virgin mostly."

"But why not to Jesus?"

"You cannot tell everything to a man."

This, again, was unexpected. For a while they worked silently. Mrs. Parrish appeared at the threshold of her room and asked:

"Are you now a nun, Amah, or not yet?"

"No, I am not. Mother Superior said I am no good for it. My thinking is bad, she said. 'You'd better marry,' she said, 'and bear children. Perhaps they will be good Catholics.' And then she says I talk too much. A talkative woman, you see, has less chance to become a saint."

"If your chances are poor, why live in the convent?" Mrs. Parrish asked.

"But I like it. No worry. Work and pray. That is all."

"You could do it elsewhere."

"It is better done in a company. \*They are fine people. I like them."

"How did you happen to enter the convent?" asked Granny.

"Oh, I never entered, they carried me in in their arms. My parents sold me for two dollars. There was a famine. They needed an ox to plough, so they sold me and my sisters."

"And nuns bought you?"

"No. It was this way. Someone was buying girls. A bad person. Then the nuns said: 'We better buy.' They gave more and bought<sup>1</sup>

"Granny." Mrs. Parrish said, "let us play cards. It is so hot. I should like to have a drink."

"Mrs. Parrish, will you kindly excuse me to-day?" Granny answered. "I have to fix this dress for Lida. I will call Tania and she will gladly keep you company."

"Is she good at cards?"

"Oh, no! She is a poor partner. Never had an opportunity to play much."

"This sounds good. Give us the key, please."

"I am sorry, Mrs. Parrish, I have to keep it. You remember what we have agreed upon. If you win, I will come myself and give the prize."

During the next two hours Granny gave the prize five times. She offered to send Mother away and to take her place, but Mrs. Parrish said she liked her partner. Then she became tired and went to bed. Mother had to sit at her bedside and tell her "something nice."

Meanwhile the conversation between Granny and Amah was going on.

"In Christianity," Amah continued, "the good fashion is to pray about others, always about others. You just forget about your own affairs. Other people live wildly, they sin, and I must pray for them. Now, in my heart, I am always saying to God: 'You look what the Japanese are doing, you look well. Don't forget any of their evil doings. Punish them. Punish them well.' So far I see nothing of the kind. Is not He slow to punish those who do not believe in Him?"

"Really, Amah, your talk about God is strange."

"I know, my thinking is bad, and I talk too much. Those are sins. But sins are all right, provided they are not mortal sins. There you must keep on your guard. God cannot stand people with mortal sins."

"Who taught you to sew so nicely?" asked Granny in order to change the topic of conversation.

"The nuns did. They taught me to speak and to read a bit in English. They taught me to sew, to make embroideries, to knit. I also can speak a bit of French, I am an educated person."

" Do you read much?"

" No, I am forbidden to read."

" Well, that is strange."

" Not at all. My thinking is too bad. In a convent we are allowed to read only books on religion. I used to like it. But when I tried to tell what I had read, the nuns got angry with me. They say I do not understand what I am reading. And they never allowed me to ask questions, for after reading I always had questions. Then I was finally forbidden to read."

" So you are sorry?"

" Not at all. The less you know, the more you enjoy life. Perhaps you have committed a sin, but you do not know it. Very comfortable."

" Whom do you love most in the convent?"

" Mother Superior and then the Holy Virgin."

" Oh, Amah! The Holy Virgin should be first."

" Not in my case. I see Mother Superior alive and she helped me. Once I was very, very ill. I cried with pain. Mother Superior came and said; ' Now pray, you have no pain now!' And she took my hand. I was happy, and there was no more pain. And I did not pray at that moment. Let her do it, I thought—she can do it so well without me. And my pain melted away and never came back."

" Is not that wonderful!"

" Yes. Afterwards I ask why I could not do the same for other people. For I tried and tried. ' Because your thinking is bad,' Mother Superior answered." And Amah sighed.

They worked in silence.

*What is Tania doing there?* Granny thought. // *Mrs. Parrish is asleep, what is Tania doing there?*

On tiptoe she entered the room. Mrs. Parrish was asleep, her hair in disorder and her face covered with perspiration. Mother was standing on the balcony looking on something below. She was all attention and stood quite motionless. She did not hear Granny's approaching steps. Granny put *her* hand gently on Mother's shoulder and looked in the same direction.

There was a garden behind the house opposite theirs. It

was full of flowers, shaded by the big blooming mimosa trees with transparent clouds of pink tender blossoms. A young woman was sitting at leisure in an easy-chair. A gentleman was sitting on the grass at her feet. A Chinese servant, clad in white, poured tea. The scene was full of beauty and happiness.

Mother slowly turned her head and said:

" Why am I not given a life like that? I am so tired. I would know how to appreciate it."

Then Granny said gently:

" You never know what really is behind the happy surface of another person's life. Your life, my dear, your own life, however hard, is your path to heaven. You must learn to love it.<sup>1</sup>"

THIS IS a queer letter!" said Lida, looking over the morning mail. " It is addressed to Granny and calls Granny ' Her Excellency.' "

" My goodness!" said Mother. " There is someone upon the earth who remembers such things. We have forgotten them ourselves."

" Who sent it, I wonder," Lida continued. " The paper is so poor. Well, it comes from Manchuria."

" Read it aloud for me," Granny asked. "I am busy with my knitting. I am afraid I will be late with this sweater, and we need money so much. Tania, did the baker come again?"

" He was here yesterday."

" But listen, listen," said Lida, and she began to read:

*In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost!*

Our sister in Christ, greetings to you from us all. We do not know you personally, but we have heard that you are a God-loving Christian. Therefore, we address you with the humblest request to help us. We have heard that you have a big house and take in lodgers. Our Mother Abbess is proceeding to Shanghai to open a new asylum for the Russian destitute children and old women. Will you kindly give shelter and board for a few days to her and two other sisters travelling with her? Our convent is extremely poor, and we cannot pay you, but our prayers for you will ascend to Christ and He will reward you for your kindness. We humbly expect your immediate answer. With Christian love and constant prayers for you and, if you have a family, for your family also.

MOTHER THAICIA *{the treasurer}*

MOTHER AGNIA *(the scribe)*

PS.—Mother Abbess will catonly vegetables cooked with the salad oil. She also can drink tea with lemon.

" I am afraid we have not many lemons left in this house, said Mother angrily. " Lemons I should say! Forty cents apiece I "

" Tania!" said Granny reproachfully. " Tania! You astonish me!"

This sudden outburst was really not like Mother, but she tried to hold her ground.

" Why," she said, " we have nothing but debts. I feel so ashamed, so humiliated every time I go to the market—this constant asking for credit—and asking—and asking. And someone says we have a big house. Here are the guests ready for you!"

" Oh, Tania! I am shocked indeed. Three poor women—nuns. We have empty rooms. Only some extra work, that is all. The food—we will manage somehow. They, in monasteries, keep their fasts very strictly. It is not a fancy, that salad oil; they cannot eat lard. All their life long they never eat meat. And look at all this from another point of view. Our children have never been in our monasteries, never seen nuns, never spoken to them. This is a piece of Russia, these three nuns coming to our poor house. They will understand us and accept our poverty. Oh, Tania, let us look forward to it. They can give us so much. Their life is so different. It is like a message from our past life. Our family always supported monasteries. They might hear about that. And for the children, it will be so new, so good."

" Oh, you! My darling *Excellency!*" said Lida and tenderly kissed Granny. " Let me write the ' immediate answer' at once!"

" No, no, Lida! I will do it myself. This letter must be written in style!" said Granny.

Mother smiled a penitent smile.

" Why!" exclaimed Lida. " Here is another letter and no less queer. Look at this handwriting! The letters! Hooks and nooses! And flourishes! Mother, this is for you. May I open it?"

" Yes, do. I will wash this crockery meanwhile."

This was Mme. Militea's letter—her " Odyssey," written

in a mixture of words from four languages. It could not be deciphered at once; it needed scientific investigation of philological roots, prefixes, and inflexions; there was an amusing peculiarity in her style, and queer incongruity in her punctuation. To the Family, not initiated into the art of comparative linguistics, this letter, nevertheless, was a rich source of interest.

Mme. Militza informed them that she had gone first to Tang-ku; there she had been detained, how and by whom was not clear—she called them enemies; but finally she got aboard a ship bound for Shanghai. The Shanghai hostilities having commenced, fierce fighting was going on in Chapei, and she could not land in Shanghai, so the ship proceeded to Hong Kong. She was, as yet, en route.

She shared some of her observations with the Family. On board her ship, as elsewhere, people were divided into two classes only: those who had money and those who had not. For the former group everything was easy and comfortable. How it was for the latter one might ask Mme. Militza in private. Her great consolation was that she knew all this beforehand, and could achieve aloofness and dignity belonging to her social standing. She was never afraid; for she knew for certain that she had to die when eighty-four years old, and, mind you, peacefully in her bed. It would take more than Japan and China with their guns to kill her, Mme. Militza. All those guns and airplanes and submarines were impotent to injure a single hair of her head. And she knew it all the time. This was the power and pride of science, the triumph of light over blindness! If she had lived not in this barbarous era, but, say, 2000 B.C. in Babylon, she would wear a blue mantle covered with silver stars and a high-pointed cap; she would live in loneliness and silence on the roofs of high buildings and her feet would but rarely tread upon the earth. But even those who can foresee events are unable to change their course; so she sent her love to everybody, Mrs. Parrish included, and remained their scientific fortune-teller, Mme. Militza.

The reading of the letter took quite a time. They smiled and laughed and made comments.

"My goodness!" exclaimed Mother at last. "It is ten o'clock! I must run to the market. We will be late with dinner to-day." And she hastily left the room.

Granny went after her. "Tania," she said, "I am sorry I was a bit hard on you. I know how painful it must be for you. I mean this going to market without money."

"Oh," Mother laughed, "I am growing hysterical, that is all. I mean those lemons for Mother Abbess. It was so ridiculous."

"Mother! Granny!" cried Lida, and she ran to them with a newspaper. "Here is good news I Volunteers will be dismissed to-day and they will be paid ten dollars per day for their service! Only think I You just *count!* Peter will be back to-day with such an amount of money I Oh, Granny! I shall ask him to buy me sandals • . . you know, white with bits of brown leather."

"You see," said Granny smiling, "we shall have lemons after all."

Lida read and reread the paragraph in the newspaper. She was happy. All this time she had enjoyed a rest. The store had been closed, owing to the disquiet in the town and the vicinity, and there were unexpected holidays for her: sleeping her fill, never being in haste, swimming and reading. It was so delightful that the sounds of war only added a kind of excitement to her mood of freedom and rest. There was also another thing which enhanced her buoyancy these days, A boy whom she met at the swimming pool, a smart and smiling American boy, kept coming her way, helping her out of the pool, or just meeting her somewhere round the corner and greeting her with a smile and a bow, or crossing the street just at the time she was sitting on the steps before the door. What was *the tkeaning* of that? What could be *the meaning* of it? So far their conversation had gone no further than stating that this summer was really very hot, in every possible form and way. Yet her heart beat faster every time he said it, and sometimes her voice trembled when she tried to say it *in*

her turn. The summer *was* hot. There could be no doubt of it.

She felt she needed a confidant, yet there was nothing to confide. She tried to keep near to Granny, asking questions.

"What do you think, Granny, shall I be beautiful?"

Granny looked at her attentively.

"Well," she said, "you will never be as beautiful as your mother was. You will be all right."

"Only all right?"

"Let us say, pretty."

"Granny, do I sing well?"

"You have a nice voice, but your interpretation is i>por."

"What do you mean?"

"Yesterday, for instance, you sang that romance about lost hopes and illusions. And you sang with such gusto, as if disillusionment were the best thing you can get in this world."

"That means I sing like a fool."

"No. It means that you are very young."

Now Lida had a new dress and she longed for sandals. Really, life was wonderful.

She was helping Granny to dust the rooms when Mother came from the market. She went straight to the room where they were working.

"Listen," she said with a visible agitation, "to what I have learned at the market. Our Khan deceived us. The people whom we have sheltered here were not his friends or relatives. He received money for giving them shelter in **our** yard. Perhaps he took money also for the food we gave them."

"But **how** did this come out? Who told you?"

"In the market. That Chinaman in the greengrocery—he said that when refugees were running away some Chinese servants stood on the border and offered shelter at their **masters'** houses for money. Khan was among them—Oh, **shamel**"

"**Really**," said Granny. "Uda, tell Khan to come here/'

But Khan could not understand a word of the inquiry Granny put to him. His face only grew a bit paler and the slits of his eyes narrower. He made an elaborate show of his inability to understand what Granny asked of him. Which people? In the yard? There was nobody now. Relatives? Yes, he had many. Money? Had he taken money? He never took anybody else's money. He was and always had been an honest man. Food? Which Food? For those people? He never asked for it. Granny herself gave the food.

"Khan," said Granny, and her voice was full of reproach, "I jam very sorry for you. All this is of no use. To-day Master Peter will return home. He speaks Chinese well'. You will have to answer him."

This painful interview was interrupted by the doorbell. A telegram came from Mrs. Parrish's brother informing her that he was due now in three days' time. The news stirred the feelings of all whom it concerned. Mother said that, in spite of all trouble, Mrs. Parrish was a nice lodger. The family loved her. Afflicted by her vice, Mrs. Parrish had nothing of English aloofness or snobbism about her.

After having read the telegram Mrs. Parrish said: "I do not want to see him. I am well off here. What is he to me after twenty years of separation?"

Dima was in despair. Of course, Dog legally belonged to him. There, in his trousers pocket, in an empty candy box, he kept the document to prove it. But you never know exactly what your rights are when dealing with the grown-ups. In his young and fresh memory, there were accumulated recollections of so many false promises and forgotten bargains. Perhaps the acts of acquisition and adoption of dogs must be written in another way, and his was not lawful.

Really, life is not smooth at all. It goes in jostles and jerks.

## 14

AT NOON Peter returned home. He was a new and changed Peter. His face had become darker, and its expression was gloomy. To understand him better, one needs to know that he had not received a solid or systematic education. Brought up in poverty, mental and physical hunger became his usual condition. The influence of the women of the Family, however beneficent morally, was quite insufficient intellectually. Although he spoke and could read and write three languages, he was a master of none. The undeveloped talents, the potential possibilities for which he had no use, made him resentful and depressed. He had no hope of ever having a chance to use them. He worked as a minor clerk in an English store. Although he worked as hard as his English colleagues, he was never either treated or paid as they were, for he was Russian. He represented cheap labour on the foreign market. This was his share of Russia's historical humiliation, and he had to bear it. Far away, in his native country, a new life was in process of building, but he had no part in that either. For he was an exile, an unwanted element in the new communistic system.

But he was proud. He believed in fighting: for victory. Secretly he cherished hopes and built plans for his future. Meanwhile, he worked hard and was considered an ideal employee in the store. Outside of his work he longed for good friends. He started to play football and became an excellent half-back. He entered an English sports club and was listed on its best team. But all the companionship ended on the athletic field. Once beyond the gate, his fellow football players went away in their cars to their prosperous homes\*. He had to walk to his. Never, not even once, was he invited to **go** with them, for he was a Russian. By experience he **knew that an Englishman's house is his castle.** Paying the

membership dues ate up all of Peter's ready cash. He denied himself everything; he checked his wish to buy things for Granny or Dima—and all those pitiful economics would go towards keeping up appearances at his club. He paid his club fee and despised himself for doing it. But it was his only chance of being among decent, educated, and well-to-do people—of breathing for a few hours that atmosphere of ease and well-being to which he had a right by his birth, and which life had denied him. He was very handsome—tall and blond—but somehow stiff, with a proud, constantly tense expression on his face.

Now he had a new experience: he had seen a war. At first it seemed too simple to be real fighting. He, with the other volunteers, lay behind the sandbags on the borders of the French Concession in the area of the bridge. He clearly saw that bridge over the Hei-ho River. There and behind it a battle was going on—just groups of Japanese soldiers trying to seize the bridge and Chinese soldiers shooting at them. They advanced and were swept away amid small clouds of smoke and bursts of sounds. The incongruous gestures of those falling did not seem actual to him. Some fell on the ground; others into the water. There was nothing impressive about it all. The battle was far less spectacular than those he had seen on the screens of a cinema. Far less.

Peter's duty was to lie there and to shoot only in case the soldiers tried to enter the French Concession. There was not much risk for the volunteers at that place. Thus Peter became a detached observer of a war which did not concern him. He was not blinded either by love or by hatred; his emotional self was not involved in it. And yet he had neither brutality enough to look at it and remain unmoved nor philosophy enough to understand and dismiss it. Little by little there entered the depth of Peter's consciousness the fact that this was real death and real killing. The inner, tragic substance of the proceeding stepped stealthily out of the seeming simplicity of the events.

Suddenly Peter was struck by the idea of the fragility of the human body. There it was—an orderly accumulation

of atoms and emotions, a body with a soul, a heart, an intellect, almost perfect in its complexity—a separate world in itself, a piece of pulsating life—and a fragment of iron in an instant destroyed it, finally, irrevocably. One moment only, one bullet, and the man is dead, beyond any hope.

Repulsion and horror began to creep into Peter's soul. For those who were falling, this was their last day, their last breath. No more sun for them, no motion, no seeing. Were they willing to die? Did they look for this end to all their previous life and endeavours? Were they not dying in vain, for nothing, or for the things not worth while? Could this be right—their killing each other, killing those whom they had never seen before, whom they would never see afterwards, whose faces they could not discern at the distance? Why did they do it?

His own position, just lying in trenches, ready to defend the Concession, but only the Concession, no more, no less—was his own position sane and reasonable? Let them kill each other, but at a decent distance. Would it not be more normal to rush forward and try to help the wounded—bring one of them to this sheltered place? But who must be pitied more? They died on both sides in the same human way. In spite of all mutual hatred and killing they were just alike, equally human, specimens of the same genus. Possibly their feelings were just alike too, and yet they could achieve no mutual understanding and peace.

This new experience marked the turning point in Peter's life. With blood and iron he was initiated into an active period of thinking, criticizing, exploring. He understood that his previous existence—belonging nowhere, living for no purpose—was not worthy of a man. He had to find his way. The events of which he was a passive and silent observer had sown their seeds in his soul, and those grains as yet remained mysterious, deep, under cover of the everyday routine of life. In the dark subconscious they were fastening their roots, they were swelling, ready to shoot to the surface, and in due time produce their bloom and fruits.

**But** when Peter entered the house he had nothing to tell.

He went to Granny, sat beside her; then took her hands and kissed them. Those were small hands, soft and tender, in spite of all the work they were doing. Granny looked at him attentively and in one glance understood all. The boy must be diverted from the course of his thoughts. So she began, gaily and softly, as if administering an anaesthetic:

" Peter, dear, we have so much news to tell you. We had letters, Mrs. Parrish is going away; her brother is coming to take her. Mr. Sung has just returned after three days in Peiping. But, the most important, I have let Mme. Militza's room. And to whom? To an old Russian Professor and his wife, refugees from Peiping. Both of them so nice. Think how good it will be for you to have somebody to speak to, to ask the things you want to know . . . a university in the house. They are so friendly, so simple in manners—just Russians."

Then Dima came in with Dog, and Uda and Mother began to bring in lunch. Laughter and smiles and habitual jokes began to overshadow the impressions of the last days. Tenderly and with understanding the Family soothed the troubled boy.

## 15

PROFESSOR CHERNOV and his wife, Anna Petrovna, came the same evening. He was an old man, wrinkled and shrunk, and yet full of an energy and zest of life. Anna Petrovna, who was small, old, and shabbily clad, smiled a perpetual pathetic smile. Their belongings were quite unusual: they had brought with them three microscopes, and a small trunk in which was packed all the rest of their property, a good half of it being the Professor's manuscripts. There was nothing in the way of a pair of spare shoes, or another dress. They wore, evidently, all their clothing, thus being akin to certain plants which are alike all the seasons around, neither fresh nor blooming, but just grey instead of green, and prickly. The microscopes had their proper names. The biggest was Anatole (after Anatole France, in whose company the thing was bought in Paris long years ago); the second Albert (in honour of Albert Einstein); and the third Vania. Vania was the baby of the family. After whom it was named was never disclosed by the Chernovs.

Professor Chernov was a scientist with an eminent name in the field of geology. Submissive to the general law that neither pure art nor disinterested research in the fields of science feeds its adepts well, here he was poor and destitute after decades of intensive work. But to a certain degree that had been his own fault. Like so many other Russians of talent, at the very zenith of his success he threw away his scientific work and started to write things for which he had neither the training nor the knowledge. Thus Professor Chernov had devoted the last fifteen years to the pursuit of three aims: uprooting all human superstitions and prejudices; creating a universal religion of the *Absolute*; trying to persuade humanity to follow his new and happy doctrine—all this in eight volumes.

He had strange mental habits: he thought always in French, spoke in Russian, read in German, and wrote in English. He had an explanation for this procedure. He insisted that writing in English is more economical of space, which meant a saving in paper and ink; that German scientific books are the most detailed on every question; that thinking in French is more bracing than thinking in any other language; but Russian is the only language to speak in. In Russian one could convince any one of anything. This is a language of force and eloquence. However reasonable, this habit made his work slow. In addition to this, human prejudices and superstitions were too many. His scientific method of investigating every separate case, describing it in detail and giving the history of its practical application, had led him too far.

Five years of life in China were not enough to collect and study the one hundredth part of Chinese superstitions; in addition, some of them were so ancient that it was impossible to fix them historically. So at the same time he worked over the *Absolute*, this being much simpler; for the Absolute was just the reason of existence. It was pure, eternal, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, unchangeable, and self-sufficient. Readily and clearly those attributes of the Absolute came to his mind, and the Professor had a dim and uneasy feeling that the Absolute under his pen became very like something else, formerly known, but forgotten. The third part, that of convincing, was long ago set in motion by Anna Petrovna: six hours per day she was obliged to write letters (they could not afford a typewriter) in the small and precise hand, and the Professor only signed them. Those letters were addressed to all who had or could achieve influence over people, especially youth. He wrote to Benito Mussolini, whom our Professor had known years ago as a journalist, to the Y. M. C. A., the Boy Scouts organization, to the Komsomol's leaders, to the Green Orthodox monasteries on the Athos Mountain. While Mussolini never answered the letter, several Boy Scouts responded enthusiastically, ready to be pure, honest, at one

with the *Absolute* The Salvation Army replied that they were already doing their best.

The high scientific qualifications of the Professor's previous books entitled him to address his colleagues all over the world. Thus Professor Chernov had recently received a letter from Sir David Parsons. They had met years ago, even worked together in some scientific institution. Now Sir David amiably acknowledged the receipt of Professor Chernov's letter and wrote that it would be really wonderful if Professor Chernov could uproot all mankind's superstitions and prejudices and make humanity covet only purity, and honesty, and beauty. He wished Professor Chernov success, but as to himself, he was not in a position to take part in this work personally, his time being entirely engaged elsewhere. In the postscript he asked whether Professor Chernov had written anything new in geology, and if so, where his last works could be found. It was evident that Sir David failed to understand the urgency of the cause. Geology could wait. Thus the only concrete result of the Professor's efforts to convince mankind was the fact that the children of the vicinity acquired unexpected foreign stamps for their collections.

These books in creation were the sole and constant topic of the Chernovs' conversation. But about the chief anxiety, the chief preoccupation of their life they never spoke. The chief preoccupation was money. They had barely enough left for six months of the most meagre existence; after that a dark and menacing future lay in wait for them. For a long time now Anna Petrovna had lain awake nights, thinking how old, how lonely and poor they both were. Poor in everything: no health, no hope, no friends, no children, no property, no protection. Nothing. Just two old and helpless human beings. Life, which opened to them in a rich world full of joy, and love, and high endeavours, faded little by little, here and there losing its colour, breaking the ties of friendship and understanding one by one, and finally bringing them to the narrow and thorny path of old age in poverty, thence towards an utter void space—Death.

Their life now was a mere nervous tension. Anna Petrovna lived only for her husband. He lived for his mission. Merely to relax the tension—and she would die, return to nothingness, for there was no God, and no eternal life, for Anna Petrovna. Long ago she had lost her belief in His existence. For where was He when her child was *dying* of hunger in Russia? How could He permit such a thing to be and keep His hand closed? No, we live in a world void of Divine charity/ As to Christ, she loved Him ardently. How she loved Him I How she understood Him I His kindness I His pity to children! His readiness to suffer for all, to take every burden upon Himself, in order to bring to the world His ideal of peace and harmony, to help, to help everybody, everywhere, at any cost. He did not believe in humanity Himself: "The poor ye have always." He did not rely upon humanity's being decent enough to feed its paupers. How happy for Him that He lived in times when He could find followers I Now He would only be laughed at. But she, Anna Petrovna, felt a warm kinship with Him. There was something of Him in her making. She could never pass by a suffering one without a burning desire to help. Science, statistics, laws of necessity, principles of economics, were no solace to her. She longed to help on the instant. To give her last garment, to serve, to shed tears of pity. She knew that *sentimental* was the word for her. Let it be. But seeing the outstretched hand, the trembling hand of a beggar, she failed to remember that occasional alms are harmful. She just gave as much as she had. The stillborn laws of economics failed to solve the problems of pain and poverty. They were poor guidance and comfort. She suffered at every sight of pain, injustice, poverty, at every wound she saw, at every death she witnessed. And these were many. Suffering poisoned her vitality, took away all joy of living. She was ready to return to nothingness.

They came to Tientsin all shocked and shattered by the things they had witnessed at the capture of Peiping. But the congenial atmosphere of the boarding-house braced the newcomers. They entered into the Family, and from the first day

they felt at home. At once the Chernovs were invited to supper, as guests. Granny sliced the bread, Mother poured tea, and endless conversation enlivened the party. This conversation was of the usual Russian kind—talk on some abstract topic, which had no concern with their daily life and needs. It was highly idealistic, projected into the future. It was, of course, the Professor who crated. \*

"War," he said, "seems so odious now, because mankind has grown out of the mental phase when it was considered an efficient means to an end. Every one now feels the savageness of it. We have dispensed with killing in our private affairs: we fight no duels. But the trend of the international politics is not as yet changed. We owe this to the sluggishness of the minds of average people. This is a critical moment. The next war will be the last among the civilized nations; for it will open the eyes of the average man to the absurdity of wars. You, young man"—he turned to Dima—"you will not be a soldier, for there will be no more wars in your generation."

"But I will fight! I want a war!" said Dima with indignation. He took his gun and began what he imagined to be a fine military drill.

Mrs. Parrish came downstairs and stood peering in between the curtains of the door. Feeling that she was not quite herself she restored to the opposite extremity and became too much the lady. With her chin up, although not sure on her feet, she entered the room. She was duly introduced to the new lodgers, and the conversation was carried on in English. With the utmost dignity, as if applying a light and fleeting finishing touch to the discussion of wars, she asked whether the Professor or his wife would like an occasional drink of whisky and soda. She was much bored to hear a negative answer.

"Nobody drinks in this damned house," she said unexpectedly. "And you, Granny, have robbed me of ray keys!"

Lida, always ready with laughter and tears, giggled. Peter frowned. But the older people, to whom good manners meant

the obligation of overlooking their neighbours' shortcomings! looked as if the words of Mrs. Parrish were quite natural.

At last, to save the feelings of all, Professor Chernov started another topic vital to the company, that of France's losing steadily her international influence and importance. With his old-fashioned courteous manners he addressed Mrs. Parrish, at frequent intervals asking for her opinion. She did her best yet never managed to give a correct answer. The old Professor charmed her completely.

Even Mr. Sung left his room and asked permission to join the company. He had a cup of tea with the rest and listened pensively to Professor Chernov's prediction that the self-centred and shortsighted policy of Japan would end in ruin and shame.

Dima interrupted him with a question whether a dog could be made a vegetarian dog, eat only vegetables and drink tea and remain a healthy regular dog. "For meat is that expensive in the market," he concluded.

To introduce the always delicate question of money was surely bad manners, and Granny had to stop Dima. But Professor Chernov willingly and enthusiastically confronted the problem. Yes, he thought that eating meat and looking on that as a necessity was a fallacy. We need vitamins; animals need them also. We can get them from vegetable food. He was afire with the subject, linking it to his favourite idea of universal goodwill and peace. With inspiration he depicted a tiger who ate only grass, with an occasional violet or two. This sent Mrs. Parrish into peals of hoarse laughter. She began to argue with the Professor but soon dropped out of the race.

Even Khan, who had been so evasive since Peter's return, lingered in the room and seemed to understand every word spoken; for, from time to time, he uttered low sounds meant as approbation of the Professor's eloquence. The only silent person in the room was Dog. It may be that the question of the vegetarian food offended him deeply.

This peaceful and quiet evening was a balm to many souls. Late into the night, when the house was half asleep. Pro-

fessor Chernov and Peter were sitting under the trees in the Garden/ The heat and noise of the day were ebbing into coolness and calm. A quarter moon shed a velvety twilight. The faint aroma of flowers arose from the neighbouring gardens. Granny's gentle voice floated down from Mrs. Parrish's room. She was telling more of her life story.

The Professor was speaking about the future victory of China over Japan. " That will be a united China. Citizens will replace the inert population, citizens with a fully developed sense of duty towards their country and towards mankind."

Granny's voice was low but distinct. " And seeing that Tania had scurvy, the warden of our prison pitied her. But he would not show sympathy, for you see we were the enemies of the people. So he brought some slaw and garlic and said: ' Eat.' She was afraid and refused. Then he made a terrible face, his eyes bulging, put his revolver to her head, and shouted: ' Eat, or I will kill you.' "

" Khan," Mother's voice came from somewhere below the stairs, " remember, we have no potatoes at all."

Peter sighed. Life could be gentle after all.

THE NEXT DAY was Lida's triumph: she won the T.A.S.A. championship in swimming and consequently received as a prize a pretty tea-set for six persons, six silver teaspoons included. And who helped to bring the box with those cups to her home? The smart American boy! He applauded, he congratulated her, he offered his help. Was it not wonderful? Lida had not been spoiled with friends. She had almost none. The English girls at the swimming pool, which was Lida's only place for rest and recreation, were remote and formal—like Peter's football friends. They never asked her to call, and she dared not ask them; for a well-bred English girl would never be allowed by her parents to visit a poor Russian family. Why? Lida did not know, but she would never lay the fault at the door of the foreigners. Why should they be interested in her? They were better off than she: dressed according to the latest fashion, entirely regardless of the cost of things; always had leisure, company, good times, cars, parties, boy friends, pretty and young-looking mother, kind and rich fathers. What could she show them if they should come to see her and her home? It was not their fault that she was born a Russian.

Thus willingly and humbly Lida developed an inferiority complex, grateful for any mite of attention from those more fortunate than she.

Suddenly, without warning, this happiness came to her: the attention of a handsome boy, of a foreigner. Perhaps rich; perhaps coming from one of those prosperous houses where people eat what they like, dress well, and always have ready money. And what kind of attention! It seemed as if he were seeking her presence and were thankful for it. She, whose presence was everywhere taken for granted, if not as superfluous, could not believe her happiness.

Yet it was true. The lanky boy was walking by her side, carrying the box with her tea-set. With great difficulty she managed to keep a semblance of composure. They were at the gate of her house, yet the boy showed no haste to leave her. Moreover, he insisted on carrying her box into the house.

They went in. She introduced him to her Family, referring to them as my Granny, Mother, Dima. Peter was not at home. The American boy said he was Jimmy Bennett and really very happy to meet them all. Granny suggested tea in the new teacups. Jimmy thanked her and accepted.

The six cups and six teaspoons started their social service on the spot. Mrs. Parrish came down to ask why everybody downstairs was laughing. When she did not offer a drink to Jimmy, Lida felt happy and kissed her. Professor and Mrs. Chernov took part in the celebration. Finally Dima broke one cup, which provoked immediate tears from Lida, and consequently from Dima also. Jimmy proved helpful, for he appeased the sorrow by saying that everything had been his fault and that he knew the place where such cups were sold; so to-morrow, with their permission, he would come again at tea-time and bring a new cup, just like the broken one.

At this Lida began to laugh happily and, without any reason, kissed Dima. A pause presently ensued and then Lida suddenly announced that she never knew Americans were so attractive. Professor Chernov said it was because of their democratic upbringing, and started an ordered and elaborate speech about the preponderance of delusions in our valuations. He addressed Jimmy chiefly.

To the bewildered but politely attentive boy he explained how false are our appreciations of time, for the longer one lives the shorter become the days; that the same day is four times as long for a boy ten years old as it is for a man of fifty; consequently he, Jimmy, had up to this time spent more than half of his life. The old Professor accompanied his lecture with graphs and figures so convincing that Jimmy could not help believing.

After Jimmy's departure, the Family settled down to an

ordinary evening. This day was, as usual, concluded with the complicated preparation of beds. Lida smiled when trying to adjust the length of her body to the space of six chairs tied together. Her sandals, the new ones, white with brown trimming, stood demurely under the chair. The silver spoons glittered on the table. Giving a last fond glance at her property and recalling Jimmy's dear face, she thought: *When such things happen to one, Ufe is worth living!* She fell asleep at once and into a wonderful dream. She saw a meadow covered with flowers, lit with the delicate morning sunshine. The air, the flowers, the grass, were sparkling with minute drops of dew. Tenderness permeated the lines and colours.

She was alone. She went singing brightly, happily, like a nightingale, rejoicing in her song. Then her feet left the earth and she went into the air, higher and higher, lighter and lighter, into the shining blueness of the sky, through the pearly and cool whiteness of clouds, away from earth, towards the sun.

Mother, lying on the floor on her mattress, was at the same time having a worrisome nightmare. Her last thought before she fell asleep was about coal; for coal had risen in price because of Japanese activities, and with the autumn approaching she had to find money for coal. In her dream she saw herself in a level space, which was all coal. All was black and shining, menacing, horrible. There was no sky, nor sun, only coal. The place was lit only by its sheen. Furtively glancing round and seeing that she was alone, Mother began to gather the small pieces of coal. She put them into her bag, thrust it inside the bosom of her dress. She looked cautiously round her, for she knew that she was *stealing* coal, and might be caught and punished. She Was in haste. She reached for more and more, summoning all her courage.

" Only this morsel," she whispered, " and this, and this. Perhaps it will be sufficient for winter." And she stooped again and again, choking with fear and apprehension.

Granny had a sleepless night. She worried. She faced the fact that Professor Chernov was an atheist. His *Absolute* was not acceptable to her Christian training. Notwithstand-

ing his intellectual brilliance and pleasing personality! he could have only an evil influence over the childrto. And then again, his habit of speaking on those unexpected topics of his; that feverish joy, that zest of living, in spite of the visible hardships of his existence; that manner of popularizing the great ideas of science—for he was popularizing them. His careless attitude towards Anna Petrovna. Was he altogether bad? Could he be? No, she was afraid to make any conclusion. She was looking for a way out of this new trouble. She prayed:

" Holy Virgin, the support of the perishing, Thou, alleviating every sorrow, listen to me."

But she could not pray lying in bed. Carefully, trying to make no noise, she slid from the sofa, and on to the floor. On her knees she continued:

" Oh, Holy Virgin, look at this poor house. By God's will my children are deprived of their worldly goods. Let it be so, according to God's will . . . but save their souls, keep them away from any temptation and impurity."

Dog heard Granny's whispering. Seeing her kneeling, he came nearer and began to tap the floor lightly with his tail. He always felt uneasy when he saw people on their knees.

Granny's whispering and the taps of the dog's tail were the only sounds downstairs in the house.

In the Chernovs' room the Professor was sitting at his desk writing a letter. It was his new letter to Hitler. In the morning Anna Petrovna would make a copy of it for Mussolini. He was writing diligently, with the utmost care and attention:

" But why write about all that? Why waste so many words in order to express the simple fact that we suffer? I know that to suffer in silence belongs to human dignity. I have tried and failed. I cannot achieve resignation. I have had enough of being an anonymous passer-by in the streets of life, the man counting only in statistics. I long to say a word or two about ourselves. I cannot wear away my sorrow in silence. And the thing I should like to say is: *Give us peace!* Give peace to mankind, to races and nations. We can get it by agreeing among ourselves. I address in general

those who start wars and bring about revolutions, who introduce new systems of taxations and punishments; those who send us to barracks, to prisons, to trenches, to exile; those who fail to foresee and prevent the coming famines and economical depressions, who devaluate the little money we earn and raise the price of the few things we need. I address you all and say: We need rest. You *have* had your fun. Now, please, *give us peace!*"

MR, STOWNE, Mrs. Parrish's brother, came at last. He turned out to be a small elderly gentleman, who looked as though everything were too large for him. His car was too big, his coat was too long and too broad, his hat was too high—it concealed more than half of his head; even his spectacles were too large for his small, lifeless eyes, and hid parts of his cheeks also. Although his face and body were covered and hidden as much as possible, his clothes did not disguise the chief trait, the fundamental quality on which his temperament was built—an apathy towards life, a kind of somnolent indifference to everything he saw, had seen, or would see. The impressions of life, whatever they might be, when passed through the prism of his mentality took on the quality of weariness. *Taedium vita* was his reaction to the world.

Unfortunately, Mrs. Parrish had just managed to win the game with Granny several times and consequently had had several drinks. She became excitable exactly at the moment of his arrival. Hardly had he entered his sister's room when she began to abuse him. Only after hours' of persuasion did she give in and consent to go first to a hotel and then to England. When they went out Mr. Stowge looked even smaller and his garments, in contrast, bigger; he had never imagined how far his sister's affliction had gone.

The parting was confused. Mrs. Parrish had taken only **one trunk**, promising to send somebody from the hotel for **her** things. Mr. Stowne's thanks were curtly worded. He asked to have the bill sent to him at the hotel. Mrs. Parrish was in an uplifted state. She kissed Granny and shouted her **love** to every member of the Family. She tried to take Anna **Petrovna's coat and Mr. Sung's umbrella** and insisted upon **everybody** going with her to live quietly at the **hotel**.

**Mother tried to find Dog, but there was no dog** either in

the house or in the vicinity. Dima, popeyed with anxiety, rushed to and fro, helping Mrs. Parrish to get away. Granny tried to explain about Dog, but Mrs. Parrish understood little and cared less; Mr. Stowne was anxious lest any delay might divert Mrs. Parrish's attention and make her forget her decision. He winced at the idea of going again through the whole strategy of convincing her; so he said that the dog could be left behind, and would they kindly send him afterwards with someone who would come for Mrs. Parrish's things.

Professor Chernov gallantly held the door of the car open for Mrs. Parrish, and stood waiting for more than ten minutes. Khan likewise held the entrance door open. Anna Petrovna's smile was, as usual, pathetic—a victim's smile. Mr. Sung bowed several times, wishing Mrs. Parrish happiness and prosperity in her new and splendid abode. He never mentioned health, thinking it an unsuitable topic in Mrs. Parrish's presence. Mr. Stowne stooped every two minutes to pick up his sister's handbag, which she dropped again and again.

To increase the general confusion, a letter from Mme. Militza was brought in at the climax of the farewells, and, the postage having been insufficient, some small change was urgently required. The suspicion of possession of cash-money could fall only upon Mr. Sung. He had the knack of producing it promptly on every request. The focus of the whirlpool being thus shifted, Mr. Stowne gently pushed his sister towards the car and finally caged her in. So Mrs. Parrish went away, shouting her good-bye and abusing her brother, her voice resounding in the distance several minutes after her departure.

The Family immediately attacked Mme. Militza's letter. It was another specimen of her extraordinary linguistic abilities and courage. The letter was dated from Hong Kong. It seemed that Destiny had postponed all her immediate plots and had given the whole of her attention to Mme. Militza's voyage. The passenger steamer experienced a terrific typhoon, one of such extraordinary force that for several days the boat could not enter the haven; it was the greatest typhoon of this century. It, certainly, could not frighten

*her.* When at last they landed, there had been no spare lodging in the town. Cholera was devastating the Chinese quarters. The officials of Hong Kong refused to give permission to Russians to settle, either Red or White, and they had to be sent back to Shanghai. But Shanghai for the moment being unattainable, Russians were allowed to set their feet on the ground, awaiting the further whims of Nature, history,, and officials. And yet she, Mme. Militza, had her revenge. A Russian girl requested from Mme. Militza professional service, and the cards told a wonderful story, the girl, still young and shy, was sure to be rich, famous, and influential through her marriage to an elderly foreign gentleman of high rank. In addition, the girl would have all her family around her and bear six children. Prosperity and plenty were her lot. And, mind you, the girl had no dowry or anything of the kind, just her face as a fortune.

All this being told, the girl could provide only fifty cents, instead of a dollar, but Mme. Militza was a generous soul, ready to serve humanity in need almost gratis, from time to time. One can be rewarded sometimes by the feeling of the sublimity of one's profession. As to her private fate, according to the cards, they would have her next letter from Shanghai, and were, please, not to be uneasy about her. Whatever that city had in store for itself, nothing evil would befall Mme. Militza personally. She sent them all her love and remained their most devoted Mme. Militza the scientific fortune-teller.

Professor Chernov revealed an extraordinary ability to read Mme. Militza's hieroglyphics and interpret her thoughts. Sometimes one needs encyclopedic erudition to understand an. encyclopedic ignorance, and there is always something akin in deep wisdom and childish innocence of knowledge. If Mme. Militza did not always know from which language she had picked a certain word, the Professor did. If she happened to omit a link in the sequence of the thoughts, he easily restored it.

Ibs. Parrish gone, the house lost half of its sounds. Granny found herself with plenty of time on her hands.

But she had her plans. Some time ago Mrs. Parrish had thrown away several hanks of knitting, wool, terribly tangled. Granny asked to have the wool for herself. Mrs. Parrish laughed and consented: to disentangle the wool seemed impossible. But little by little, with her usual patience, Granny successfully made it into ballsh Now she had a pound and a quarter, or maybe a pound and a half, of good English knitting wool. Not poor Japanese stuff, which would shrink and lose its colour, but real pure wool, fluffy and dark blue in colour. Knitting was a rest for her. The monotony of the movement of her hands lulled her, alleviated anxiety and work. For she was annoyed now. What a sight Mrs. Parrish. and she had been when Mr. Stowne entered the room! A bottle of whisky and cards on the table . . . Mrs. Parrish, red in face, unrestrained in speech . . . and she, an old woman, sitting at the table and so absorbed in her play that, in fact, Mr. Stowne had to address her twice before they noticed him. And she could not explain to him *why* she was so eager to win. He would not listen to her. Oh, shame! Yes, she needed to sit quietly for a while and to knit—knit one, purl two, knit two, purl one—arid rest and quiet would presently descend upon her soul, and her thoughts would not be crowded in her head, but alive and marching in measured pace.

The sight of balls *of* wool soothed her. Dark blue. Almost one pound and a half. But what would she knit? If a blouse with short sleeves for Lida, there would remain enough for a sleeveless pullover for Dima. It would be a nice sight—two of the Family clad alike—style, you know. But then the wool would make a nice sweater for Peter, full size. He was a handsome boy. He would look grand, wearing it on his football field. But Tania, Tania. How long since she had had anything new to wear? She needed it. On cold mornings going to market. Then those two poor orphans—Chernovs—he wearing a nondescript thing bought in Germany before the first Great War. He had decided to start lessons with Dima to-morrow. This would be a nice present for him. And she, Anna Petrovna—her

mousy dress—it was a thing without colour, without shape. She washed it in the evenings and put it on, not even completely dry, the next day. A lady with her education and having only one dress! No, no, that was impossible!

And with a stern face she counted 84 stitches for the back of Anna Petrovna's sweater.

She was deep in her work when a low and prolonged sigh attracted her attention. It was Khan, who evidently planned to wash the window at which she was sitting. This was unusual. To wash windows at this time of the day and to wash them without being told—well, there must be something behind it.

"What is it, Khan?" she asked directly.

"Askee your honourable opinion and advice. Me wantchee marry."

"Marry?" You are not married? Are you?"

"Me married long ago."

"Children?"

"One boy, two girls."

"Well, Khan?"

"Me wantchee second wife. Girls are cheap now; war, houses burnt, no food—a good time to marry."

"Khan, that is shameful. Your wife alive—a second wife! Shame!"

"No, Missus. Chinese second wife all right. No shame. Fashion."

"No, Khan. Shame. I read books. I know. Very, very good Chinese men have one wife."

"Missus"—and Khan tried the most convincing intonations—"before the war, marry a good girl—town education—you pay 100 dollars the honourable parents, makee three days' festival for friends and relations. Me pay all. The girl wantchee winter coat, fur collar, a gold ring, gold earrings, and a watch—town education. Me pay all. Now, see, the honourable parents—sixty dollars. And no watch to the girl, and a winter coat, no fur collar and silver ear-rings, See?"

" I don't see anything. I say *no*. Keep you\* money for your family."

" My family—country people. My wife workee fields. I am a town gentleman now. I go cinema, wantchee nice second wife come with me. Town education."

" And your first wife bore you children, now ' workee fields. Shame."

" She cannot go cinema. Afraid. Country education."

" Khan," said Granny solemnly, and put away her knitting, " your talk bad talk. No kind. Take your wife to live with you in the town and no more of this second wife."

" But she so cheap now. She said she marry without earrings, only her sisters laugh at her. Too cheap. They all had gold earrings. Town fashion. If she too cheap, family lose face, sisters ashamed. Must have earrings."

" Listen to me, Khan. I am an old woman, I know life—second wife no good. You must ask your old people. They say same. Have you parents alive? "

" Only most honourable mother. Cannot ask her. Living too far. War. Letters coming slow."

" Why do you ask me? "

" Your honourable permission—we live here. That pantry near the kitchen. No much food. Maybe a room."

" Well," said Granny, " I promise to give that room to you and to your first wife. Second wife—never. Then you go away."

But she wanted to explain, somehow, her decision, not to offend him too much. So she said:

" You know that big book I read often? Must live how the book says. It says, ' no second wife in the house/ Cannot give permission. Afraid of the book. That book is very, very old. Two thousand years old. Must obey."

" It says your people, not Chinese."

" It says" Tell everybody/ Warn. No good. My house. I answer."

Khan evidently changed his mind about the windows. He took all his implements and went away-

WITH THE COMING of Professor Chernov, the mode of thought at Number 11 took a scientific turn. Dima's was the first mind to be so influenced. The Chernovs loved children, and gave Dima all their spare time. From the moment Dima was invited to look through a microscope at a drop of water, they had won the child. He incessantly asked to look at every object possible. Dog's hair, a drop of milk, a leaf's tissue. He got an answer to every one of his hitherto neglected questions. He was given regular lessons.

Once, when Anna Petrovna bought a chicken to make soup, the Professor took possession of the chicketat, and Dima had an excellent lesson in anatomy. That was a thrill I Poor Anna Petrovna was patiently waiting for her turn in manipulating the chicken. She looked forward to that soup. It was long since they had had any, and chicken broth is so good for old stomachs. At eleven o'clock Anna Petrovna mildly gave notice that she needed the chicken to boil, and it was given over to her, cut up according to the laws of autopsy, which did not correspond to those of culinary art. The chicken's head, heart, and intestines were put into the ice box for future experimental lessons.

These fragments of science fired Dima's imagination. With rapture he opened his mind to knowledge. Life hitherto had been a superficial process for him; now he caught glimpses of its hidden workings. So *that* was inside him! He touched various parts of Dog's body; the dog's heart did beat, his lungs did swell and then draw in. With eyes aflame Dima ascended the first steps of the temple of science. He lived in a state of chronic awe before the wonders of life.

Peter, also had his share of Mr. Chernov's attention. Long

evening hours were spent in the Professor's room; Peter listening, the Professor haranguing. Before the bewildered mind of the youth, the conception of space and time was Shattered. Hitherto accepted ideas became fallacies\* Humanity was on the eve of the greatest discovery: the immortality of the human soul. And it would be derived not from the religious hypothesis; no, it would be mathematically proved, one of these days, according to the laws of scientific doctrine. We ail are immortal I We all live in the Absolute. So let us throw away the pettiness and prejudices. Why do we so strongly cling to the preposterous ideas we have acquired through wrong thinking of previous generations? Fear! Fear is the answer to it. Why not be courageous and say: " We know nothing. And with new zeal we would begin again our endeavours to comprehend the universe. False conclusions have led us info a trap of illusions to which nothing in reality answers; for there is no colour, no sounds, no substance, no weight. We have profanely mixed up unfinished discoveries, unproved theories, in the hasty attempt to find a practical use for them. Why persist in this madness? Why live behind 'the decayed tradition of life? Let us go into the open. We must not be afraid, for we *shall* love each other, and with greatest care preserve human life, this precious mystery, this wonderful phase, where—materialised—we can invests gate the world. This investigation can be done only in this phase, only on this planet, only by human beings. The grandeur of this task! And mankind—nations spending time in hatred, in wars, in pursuit of things which, in reality, do not exist, and meanwhile carelessly ruining their chance 1

Anna Petrovna would sit listlessly somewhere in the corner. She never had a word to add to this kind of conversation. She only shuddered at the perspectives her husband opened before her eyes. Those void spaces, those spiral movements—not She hoped that death, at least, would not be one deception more. To die—wholly, body and soul, and forever—that would be a test to look forward to.

Suppers and teas the two families had together, and the expenses became so mixed that now Mother could not && out which was whose, and what was due from the Chernov family. The absence of money in both families simplified the problem.

Yet life became fuller. The Professor's enthusiasm was contagious. The children became busy with books. Anna Petrovna started to teach Khan to read and write English. He was given the choice of the language, and he named English, because it was "good fashion." The Chernovs were that kind of people; they could not bear to see anybody illiterate in the house. They had an extraordinary ability of finding the books they desired. Through them everybody in the house had everything he or she was interested in. And the Professor helped them all. He liked to read aloud. He created before the listeners life of the past, life of the future. There were no limits to his conceptions. This constant play of ideas and images rendered the youth of the house capable of finding new plans for life, taught them to be independent of external hardships of life, so far as their ideas were free. In short, they developed into individuals, the collective term for which is "Russian intelligentsia."

Even Mr. Sung took part in the teas and conversations almost daily. Only he never spoke. He listened. Always clad in a European suit, neatly shaven (if he ever shaved), with closely cropped hair and wearing big spectacles, he was a colourless, soundless figure in comparison to the Professor, afire with his eloquence and plans. Yet Mr. Sung had some weight, a hidden, mysterious' weight. The atmosphere of the room changed when he stepped in. He brought with him some quality of caution and depth that made Mr. Chernov's speeches seem too clamorous and too oratorical.

Only Granny kept apart. The non-Christian outlook on life was alien to her. She had her own world of ideas, where light and kindness were the laws, where everything was clear, pure, and saintly. But the way to a lead through

suffering, resignation, self-sacrifice. It could not be reached by any other way.

After supper she would lead Dima away to one of the unoccupied rooms. She would watch the child play, put him to bed.

"Now I will knit," she would say, and she would switch out the lamp, for she needed no light when knitting. And she would sit there in the darkness till the sounds of steps proved that the company had broken up downstairs.

A STRANGE SCENE took place in the hall of the boarding-house in the quiet of a late evening. The door of Mr. Sung's room opened and he came out. Seeing no one, he made a sign, and a tall, slim Chinese girl appeared on the threshold. She wore a dark robe and, although very young, she looked grave and quite distinguished. Noiselessly they crossed the hall, and Mr. Sung laid his hand cautiously on the doorknob. At that very moment the door was flung open from outside, and Professor Chernov entered the hall. Seeing a lady, he gallantly stood aside in order to allow her to pass. The hall was but dimly illuminated with a shaded lamp, yet the first glance at the girl's face threw the Professor into a state of utter excitement.

"Mrs. Wang!" he cried. "You! Here, at our house? I **am** so glad to meet **you** again!"

But she turned a blank face toward him, and did not answer his courteous bow.

"How do you do, Mrs. Wang! Certainly you **remember me**! We came from Peiping together," insisted the Professor.

The girl shook her head as if to indicate that she did not **understand** English at all. Professor Chernov was visibly **wounded**. He made an attempt to say the same in Chinese, carefully choosing his words, but **Mr. Sung led the girl out and followed her**, closing the door behind them.

**Professor Chernov was offended**. He went straight into the **Family** room, where Granny, Mother, and Anna Petrovna were spending a quiet hour with their needlework.

"**Anny!**" he cried. "**Do** you remember Mrs. Wang, the **Chinese lady who came with us from Peiping?**"

"**Yes, I remember her,**" said Anna Petrovna.

"**Just this moment I have met her and she snubbed me!**"

" Oh, it is not like her at all," protested Anna Petrovna.

" She did," snapped the Professor, and left the room.

Anna Petrovna followed him. From the corridor could be heard his angry voice admonishing her to remain where she had been. Professor Chernov professed to being tired of the inconsistency of womenfolk in general. He longed for a bit of solitude. He had letters to write, and he wanted to be left alone. With a perplexed face Anna Petrovna returned to the Family room.

" Who is this Mrs Wang? " asked Granny in order to break the tension which had been created by the Professor's outburst of temper.

" Oh, it is a long story, it is quite unusual," said Anna Petrovna.

" Then tell it to us now," Granny asked. " We have another hour to work before we go to bed. It will keep us awake."

And Anna Petrovna told the story:

" We left Peiping after the town had been taken by the Japanese. We travelled in {he second-class car packed with the Japanese soldiers and officers. There were also Chinese refugees from Peiping.

" It was sultry. The Japanese were noisy; the rest of us were exhausted and depressed. Whatever the feelings of the Chinese passengers might be, they kept a silence as usual.

" A Chinese family sat motionless and soundless near us: an old gentleman with closed eyes, two women with several children on their knees, and an Amah with a baby in her hands. I knew that they were all tired, hungry—nobody, except the Japanese, had any food for the last 12 hours—exhausted by the sitting in the sultry car, but all that I could only guess, for they gave no sign of their distress. Even the children were stony calm. Only the baby grew fidgety at times; then the amah would whisper to it and rock it in her arms, and it would grow silent too.

" A Chinese couple were sitting on the opposite bench. The gentleman was middle-aged fat, with a big face,

serenely calm. The girl was remarkable. She was tall slim, and young, with a passionate expression on her oval face. I had never seen a Chinese lady in a similar state of excitement. Her eyes sparkled, her lips moved, as if she were soundlessly talking to herself.

" This journey, instead of the regular three hours, lasted twenty hours, for we were all the time giving way to the trains with the Japanese soldiers. Guns and tanks covered with huge canvas appeared and disappeared on our left. On our right lay a desolate country, the scene of recent hostilities.

" The Chinese girl counted aloud the passing cars and wrote the numbers in her pocket-book. This was forbidden by, the Japanese.

" Having met my eyes she addressed me directly.

" ' Do you not think it strange,' she asked, ' that in China, along the Chinese roads, in Chinese cars, attended by Chinese servants Japan is bringing every possible means of killing the Chinese population? That the war is not declared, but people are killed and towns bombarded—and that the whole is called, simply, a *local incident!*'

" She spoke in a loud voice intentionally. Her language was perfect English.

" My husband immediately joined in the conversation, saying that all of it was just one of the paradoxes of history. I became anxious, for English is readily understood by many Japanese officers. So I said hastily, ' Let us admire the landscape! '

" ' You call that a landscape?' the girl cried. ' Three days ago Japan made friendship on the Chinese population in these quarters. You see the ruins? '

" This open criticism became dangerous. I looked around. Yes, we were heard. Although giving no visible signs of their interest, the Japanese officers were discreetly listening to our conversation.

" ' Where are you going?' the girl asked me.

" Tientsin/

" Ah,' she said, ' have you heard that 10,000 were killed there? '

" I saw that a slight movement was going on among the Japanese officers. I was certain that the girl was marked. In vain I tried to direct our conversation into other channels.

" ' What is the cause of hostilities?' the girl went on.

One of the Japanese statesmen sincerely said, " Because Japan wants Chinese cotton. But perhaps China also needs her own cotton. Can the covetousness for another's cotton justify the killing of its owners? Secondly, Japan longs for Chinese love and admiration. Hence the bombardments of Chinese universities, hospitals, schools. . . , Yet, not only love and cotton, but Chinese coal also, and iron, Chinese lands as a whole, trade in general. . . those for Japan. For China—a permanent peace and a bit of chastisement from time to time, in order to keep the mutual " love " going/

" Now the girl was trembling, her face quivering, her fists clenched. Hatred flashed from her eyes.

" I could not understand her bravado. She saw that she was listened to by all the Japanese occupants of the car. The Chinese remained motionless, their faces bearing no expressions. Only something happened to the baby, and it began to whimper. The atmosphere was strained, no one else was speaking, and the girl's loud voice dominated the car.

" Again we were stopped and again a military train was passing by. On the other side of the track several broken cars were lying, signs of a recent wreck.

" The girl pointed to the damaged cars.

" ' Do you see that?' she asked. ' *This* landscape? The Chinese refugees were killed here. Five hundred of them. Bombarded from the air/

" ' You are tired/ I interrupted her.

" They were tired too/ she said sadly. \* The refugees . . . Japan took their land, their homes, killed their fathers, husbands, and sons . . . and when those poor women and

children tried to run away, Japan bombarded them from the air/

" In great nervous excitement she halted. An ominous silence hung heavy over the car. A movement was going on among the Japanese officers. One of them was heavily rising.

" I could not guess what her purpose was. She was intentionally provoking a sally from the Japanese. But why? She could not be so naive as to think that, all this being said, she would be allowed to leave the train safely, and go away in peace. Perhaps she meant to provoke an insult and then defend herself and kill one or two of the officers. But where would she get a weapon? She wore a pair of slacks, a silk jersey blouse, and a beret, everything so tightly fitted to her slim body that there was no possibility of a hidden gun or even a dagger.

" The Japanese officer was now standing in the passage at our side. I tried to speak aloud, addressing the fat, happy man. He did not answer. I whispered a hint to the girl, but she would not listen.

" ' Ah/ she said, ' Japan is proud of her soldiers, but in reality, what good are they?'

" The Japanese officer pushed away the Chinese amah and sat down heavily. He looked into the girl's quivering face.

" ' Are you a student?' he asked.

" ' Yes, I am a student/ Now she snapped out her words insolently. ' Yes, I am a student/

" ' Where are you going?'

" ' Tientsin/

" ' Are you going alone?'

" ' No, I am going with my husband/ And she waved her hand in the direction of the happy fat man.

" ' For what purpose is he going?'

" Oh, I do not know. He has some business there, I think." she answered negligently.

" ' **Where** do you **usually** live?'

" ' **I?** I live in a free country, where people are en-

couraged to talk over their problems quite openly—a country where Japan means nothing—my native country.'

" ' Your name?'

" ' Mrs. Wang-Sun-Lin.'

" ' In what province were you born ?'

" Here she thrust her face near to the officer's, her eyes suddenly bulging out of their sockets. The bones of her thin face became visible under the tightly drawn skin. She became like a snake, hissing, ready to leap and sting.

" ' Province?' she hissed. ' What do you mean by a *province*? I was born in a *state*. The State of California. I am an American by birth !'

" So that was her weapon: a girl ' American by birth was quite out of the power of a Japanese soldier.

" The officer was taken aback. He understood that he had been laughed at, because there she was sitting, radiant with an ironical smile.

" I am sorry/ he murmured.

" ' Sorry? Why sorry? Because I am an American? Is it really such a disaster as all that?'

" ' No, but you are so like a Chinese.

" ' Oh, very like indeed. It is, I think, owing to my deep sympathy for China.'

" He made no comments. He rose heavily and was ready to go. But suddenly he stopped. He wanted to regain his ' face ' a bit.

" ' And your husband?' he asked.

" The fat happy gentleman slowly rose, opened his eyes, made a polite bow, and said:

, " ' At your service, sir. Mr. Wang-Sun-Lin. State of Michigan. American by birth/ "

Here Anna Petrovna stopped. Exclamations filled the room.

" My goodness!" Granny said. " That was dangerous for you too! And how happily it ended."

" That is not the end," Anna Petrovna said.

" Oh, tell us the rest of it," Mother asked, " I am glad

that you and the Professor were safe—but what about Mrs. Wang?"

" We came to Tientsin late in the evening," Anna continued. " We lost sight of the Chinese passengers. Some were searched, some were pushed off the car. We went on afoot. At last we crossed the bridge and were in the French Concession, out of danger. I caught my husband's arm and cried:

" 'At last! We are safe here!'

" Suddenly we heard a laugh. Mrs. Wang was standing at the entrance of an hotel. She waved a greeting to us. We approached her and I said:

" 'Mrs. Wang, why did you behave with such bravado? You gave me a fright!'

" My husband began to tell her that it was not worth while to make so much fuss merely to tease some Japanese soldiers. He said straight out that it was not even dignified, and that the only excuse for it was Mrs Wang's youth.

" Mrs. Wang laughed, then she said:

" ' Friends, I did it all for a purpose. There was a man in the car whom it was very important to get to Tientsin. The Japanese were after him. I had to direct their attention to myself in order to help him to remain inconspicuous. . . . Well, I kept them interested in me, did I not?'

" ' And the man?' we asked.

" ' Ho, he is all right now.'

" ' But who was the man?'

" ' He was the woman with the child,' Mrs. Wang answered."

At this moment, attracted by a strange sound, Mother, Granny, and Anna Petrovna all looked towards the *door*. Mr. Sung was standing on the threshold. A wave of fright passed through the room. *When did he enter? What had he heard?*

But Mr. Sung bowed to the company and said in his usual toneless voice:

" May I ask you, Madame, to do me a great favour:

might this story be quite forgotten, and never a word of it repeated?"

And again he bowed.

Anna Petrovna gasped: in that bent figure and blank face she suddenly saw the amah with the baby in her hands.

THE FINANCIAL STANDING of the Family grew more and more shaky. In their own modest limits they had to meet shattered economics of the country and bring their contribution for the money spent for the "Chastisement of China." "Chastisement" was the word Japan used to describe her actions in China. Japan's plans were clear: to uproot China's love of freedom, to bring her to her knees, and to live happily ever after with China's love and friendship as her reward. But this was a costly procedure and the Family had, indirectly, to help bear the burden. And they did.

Lida lost her job, because the store diminished its staff. Russians were the first to be dismissed. Peter had had a plain warning of a similar dismissal in the near future. The empty rooms in the boarding-house meant a heavy loss to the budget. Nobody came to take Mrs. Parrish's things, and her room was an uncertain item, neither free nor occupied. Peter's money for "volunteering"—"war prey," as Dima called it—went to cover the surplus of the expenses, for the prices slowly but steadily went up. Thus the war ate at once the profits which it produced, achieving a mysterious end, to the innocent mind—that in war none won and all were losers. Lida's sandals were the only visible thing which the Family had gained because of the war.

After having been dismissed, Lida wept three days. She was in a state of nervous despondency. She had no hope of finding other work. And then suddenly something **happened** to her and she instantly grew better. With a permanent smile, with a vibrating voice, with an unexpected **happy** laugh, she helped Mother in the kitchen. Her nose **was** constantly covered with powder. At half-hour intervals **she would** go upstairs into the free room and open one of **her two** books in order to guess—was Jimmy thinking of her this **very** minute or was he not? The ritual was simple:

she opened a book at random and read the first words which caught her eyes, then she interpreted those words in connection with Jimmy. For Jimmy was the reason for the change in her\*

With her face all swollen with tears, she had met him in the park. She was returning from a house where she had offered herself as a governess and been rejected. She was, these days, rejected everywhere she went in search of work. The unexpected meeting with Jimmy made her burst into sobs, for in those days tears came readily to Lida. For two hours they sat on a bench, each intermittently speaking and listening. What they said to each other no one knows. But Lida never wept afterwards.

On the next day Jimmy had tea with the Family. He said he had to go to America in order to enter a university. He asked Mother's permission to give Lida a souvenir and to have her photo. She had none. On the next day Jimmy had tea with the Family again. After it, with Mother's permission, he took Lida to a studio and she achieved there an unexpected photo, smiling such an open smile that one could count all her teeth; but the creases produced by her uplifted cheeks made her eyes narrow in quite an extraordinary way. Lida's dream of acquiring a fascinating image of herself was gone, and if she did not shed tears at this lost chance it was because she had given Jimmy her word never to weep in her life again. And how could she? His souvenir proved to be a watch on a bracelet, so pretty, so wonderful, that its exact description was beyond words.

On the next day Jimmy again had tea with the Family. After it they sat in the garden, all absorbed in their talk. No wonder, for they discussed the most sacred things—their love and their future.

"Would you not be afraid of poverty?" Jimmy asked.

"Me? Of poverty? I have always been poor. No, Jimmy. I will not be afraid of anything with you."

Their plans were clear. Jimmy was to go to America and enter the university. He would work hard. As soon as there was the slightest opportunity of earning money, he

would earn it. When he had enough for the scantiest living, Uda would come to him and they would marry.

"We will be poor. We will have to work hard. You will feel tired," said Jimmy.

"When life seems hard, when we feel sad, I shall sing for you," answered Lida,

"Can you sing?"

"My voice is good, but my interpretation is poor, for I am young, you know."

"I should like to hear your singing."

"Well," Lida smiled radiantly, "I can sing for you now!"

This time, no one would say that Lida's interpretation was poor. She sang the Pastorale from the Tchaikovsky opera *The Queen of Spades*. She sang spontaneously, her voice full of love, joy, and innocence. She sang, and looking at her Jimmy thought that there could not be a lovelier sight than a singing girl.

Why did Lida *fall* in love? Why do we all? For the same obscure reasons hidden so deeply in our hearts. No matter how much we discuss love, the last word on it is still to be said.

It was spring. There was warmth in the sun and coolness in the shadows. There was a mysterious vibration in the air, in the ripples of the river, in the fluttering flight of birds, in the rustling of the leaves in those two lonely trees in the garden. Flowers came out of nowhere, began to open, to bloom, to smile, to tremble.

This mysterious vibration was in Lida's body too. She responded to Nature. She felt very, very light, yet tired. A little sad, yet with a fluttering, exultant feeling in her heart. There was in her a new force, pushing forth, longing for expansion.

There were no other reasons why Lida fell in love.

Why did Lida fall in love with *Jimmy*? This nobody can really answer. One can only guess.

In guessing one might remember that there are moments vacant of feelings and thought, moments which are some-

times followed by other moments of attention and absorption.

We enter a garden. We stand before a rosebush, with unseeing eyes and sleeping senses. Suddenly we return to life and become aware of our surroundings; the world opens to our rested eyes in a new and fresh light. We see a rose. "Oh, what a rose!" we cry. "I love it!" And we do not realize that we have seen that same rose many times before.

In her simple way Lida did just that.

Refreshed and rested she came out of the swimming pool. She saw Jimmy. He saw her. They smiled. They blushed. They fell in love.

It all happened because they were swimming in the same pool.

Granny heard Lida's song and by it and by many other clear signs she knew that Lida was in love. She took it seriously, as a final fact. The women in their family loved once and for ever. If widowed, they never remarried. There were no divorces or betrayals; even if disillusioned, the women in their family were loyal. Was not poor Tania a proof of that? So Granny knew that, Lida's choice being made, there was nothing left to make her change her mind. Her fate was launched into the unknown.

Granny knew only one cure for all the misery which could befall a human being, and this was prayer. Replaced by Lida in the now decreased domestic drudgery, she daily went to church. When Jimmy left, and Lida, with a radiant smile and unseeing eyes, entered the room and began to move things on the table with no evident reason, Granny said with a slight reproach:

"Don't be so fidgety. Do some real work. Here is ironing,"

"Ironing?" Lida was reluctant to tear herself away from the world of dreams. "Ironing, you said? Ah, *ironing!*"

"Yes, my darling, ironing. But I see I cannot trust you that much. You will scorch all the linen. No, better you mend this blanket."

Slowly Granny dressed and went to church. As usual, she left the house dull and tired, and came back serene and calm, with a radiant face. She used to go to a small missionary church. It was not, in fact, a real church building; it was only a room extremely poor, adapted for church services. The priest was a Chinese, who came from a family of martyrs to the Christian faith. Humbly and ardently they prayed. None but the poor, the old, and invalids came to that church. There were no florid faces, no rich clothes, no haughty airs. Not many candles were lit, for those people had no worldly goods to offer their God; they had no gold, no silver—all they could give was their faith, their devotion buried deeply in the silence of their souls, brought to that last refuge through all the trials of life—through blood, pain, tears; and only there, in church, some memory would spring up and provoke a tear, a sigh—and then again silence. And the same Christ who used to look down at Granny in Russia, from golden frames, wearing a pearly crown, whose body was then beautified with diamonds, sapphires, and rubies in those splendid churches of the past the same, the *only* Christ now looked down from the poor wooden-and-paper icons, freed from jewellery—and He was the same. In this ever-changing world only He remained the same. And He spoke to Granny the same words of encouragement and consolation, gave the same promises, and from the inexhaustible source of His love she drank gladly and freely. And the source never failed, but was open to all who deigned to stoop and drink.

MME. MILITZA'S letters had a special quality: they usually came just ahead of some change in the Family's life. Her third letter came from Shanghai, whither she had been brought under the designation "the deportation of the undesirable element." The Professor read the letter at tiffin time before the attentive congregation, Mr. Sung included. Mme. Militza conveyed astonishing news: the King of England grew interested and sympathetic towards Russian refugees in Shanghai. At his request they must be registered and the most provoking questions asked, such as *where would one like to go?* Well, speaking the truth being Mme. Militza's profession, she said frankly, if the King of England was willing to do something for her, she hoped he would do it freely, without any fee, for she, Mme. Militza, was tired of paying for her passports and visas and, she understood, he had money enough without her sixty cents which they asked for registration.

At this an unexpected thing happened. Peter, who always had been self-restrained, and whose manners were more those of an attache at the Embassy than of a clerk, said in a loud and angry voice:

"To help Russian exiles? Is it not a bit too late? The King of England missed a better opportunity to do it. After twenty years of struggle, what remains of the Russians in exile? How many have died, degraded? We are finished by now. It is a fine time for us to say that no one has helped us. *They* let us alone."

"Up dear," said Granny gently, "do not talk like that. They are not obliged to help us."

"Not obliged! Are they not Christians? In the whole of their foreign possessions they could not provide homes for one million Russian refugees, then all able to work,

mostly army people whom they would need in their next war. No, no. They were blind. They played blindly into the hands of the Bolshevik interests. They showed *what* one could expect from the prosperous and mighty in case of misery: they get cheap labour from us."

"My dear," Granny interrupted mildly, "in my youth—in the splendid house of my parents—I used to read sometimes in newspapers about the famines in India. We studied in geography also: one million of the population died yearly from famine. Well, what did / do about that? One comes to understanding through experience, only through suffering, I should say."

At this another unexpected thing happened: the door opened and Mr. Stowne entered the room. The small part of his face, open to observation, was haggard; *taedium vita* would be now only a mild expression for his mood. It would be presumptuous to suppose that this was a social call. Only direct necessity could bring that gentleman to that house. Therefore, at his appearance, the company dispersed, Dima taking the lead. However unpleasant, the truth has to be told: Dima rushed out, found Dog, locked him in the coal room, and then, hiding himself under the window, crouched there eavesdropping; he was certain Mr. Stowne had come for Dog.

Mr. Stowne began from the beginning. He said that his sister, being a woman of habit; was all the time insisting on coming back to the boarding-house. Especially she kept asking for Granny, because the latter had not finished telling her life's story. He, Mr. Stowne, had been and would be, for a time, extremely busy with the liquidation of the late Mr. Parrish's business. He had to go to Mukden and then to Shanghai, and only afterwards to England.

Taking into consideration Mrs. Parrish's peculiarities of character and deportment, he had to choose between their house and a hospital. So would they not be so kind as to have her for a while again? Now that he realized how much time Granny had spent with Mrs. Parrish and how valuable was her attention to his sister, he felt very much indebted

indeed, and asked Granny to accept, say, one hundred dollars in compensation. He wished to have Granny's beneficent influence upon his sister for as long as possible. Might he now offer Granny a salary and ask her to take Mrs. Parrish in charge again? At the same time a doctor would be engaged to take the greatest possible care of Mrs. Parrish's health; for unless she was restored to health, he could not see how she could make the long journey to England on a liner. In short, he was willing to pay for Mrs. Parrish on the previous terms, plus Granny's room and board and also Granny's salary, say sixty dollars per month, in addition.

*One hundred and sixty, and sixty—well, this will pay the arrears in rent, at the bakery,* thought Granny.

*Granny's room, Granny's food—it will keep us all fed,* thought Mother.

*One hundred and—and—*thought Dima, and became lost in calculations.

But would they kindly persuade Mrs. Parrish to undergo a strict medical treatment, Mr. Stowne proceeded. Mother and Granny kept mentally counting and counting, and their faces accordingly brightened and brightened, until each was an open smile towards Mr. Stowne. Thus sunflowers turn their heads towards the sun and open their petals in proportion to their exposure to it.

"So what is your answer?" Mr. Stowne asked.

Well, they accepted.

Mr. Stowne opened his pocket-book, and put a one-hundred-dollar bill in the middle of the table. Granny stepped back a little. In Russia one did not give money that way, tossed on the table, openly. But no matter how the money was presented, it represented good fortune. Granny thanked him humbly.

And in the afternoon Mrs. Parrish was brought back. She stepped out of the car, dishevelled and ruddy, and shouted:

"You brute! Threatening met England, indeed! What else? I am not going. Try to remember that."

Then, seeing Granny and all the Family on the steps of

the house, she smiled her nice open smile of full recognition and sympathy, and said:

" How do you do, all! Here I am, coming back to you. I got tired of the hotel and all its fuss and noise. And this brother of mine—pestering around—he gets the creeps whenever he sees a bottle."

Then she turned to Granny.

" Hallo, Granny! Let us play cards. But first, tell me: *when you saw the smoke, what then?*"

And Granny, assuming her job, approached Mrs. Parrish, greeted her in the courteous way of old times, took her hand and, making slow progress upstairs, told in her gentle voice:

" When I saw the smoke, I guessed at once that our house was on fire. ' Children,' I said, ' we are homeless ' I "

And the door of Mrs. Parrish's room shut on those words.

Mr. Stowne fell into the hands of the old Professor and could not get upstairs. He was sitting at the table before a cup of tea, which he could not bring himself to drink; for he also was a man of habits and would drink only English tea: milk first, two lumps of sugar, then strong tea. There, before him, was standing an undrinkable version of the beverage—no sugar, no milk. In a small basin there was some sugar, but not in lumps—something like powdered sugar but grey in colour. The tea he could not drink and the Professor's lecture he did not enjoy. The Professor was voicing, with his usual ardour, an impromptu speech on how everything depended on the point of view, or on the point of observation.

" Imagine," he said energetically. " Imagine that here, in this room, a Japanese soldier shoots and the bullet kills a Chinese soldier. But imagine that you are observing it standing somewhere on the sun"—and he made a noble and broad gesture. " Then what happened? Standing on the sun you will see the earth as immovable, the bullet hanging in the same spot in the air; also without movement, but the Chinese soldier—you **would** see him rushing towards **the bullet**, striking himself against it, and getting killed. This would be the view of things happening here, if you

observed them from the sun. People precipitating themselves towards bullets, soldiers throwing themselves headlong on the bombs. Now let us look at the same scene from Mars."

But Mr. Stowne did not believe a word of what the Professor said. He had received his bullet in the World War. It spoiled his liver and consequently his life. He remembered well how it all came about and was not in the least interested to know what a sight it would have been if observed from another planet. The earthly point of view was quite enough for Mr. Stowne.

MRS. PARRISH, how do I look?" asked Lida, timidly entering the room.

She wore a green checked cotton frock, her sandals, and a red ribbon in her hair.

Mrs. Parrish looked at her with dull, heavy eyes.

"What do you mean—how do you look? Just as usual."

"Oh!" Lida was evidently disappointed. "You see, I am going to a party."

"Party? Which party?"

"An American party. Jimmy Bennett is leaving for America. His parents are giving a party to-day, for Jimmy's friends. Dance and supper. I am invited," she said with a touch of pride in her voice.

"Oh, this dress will not do. Not at all. And those sandals of yours—low heels. You cannot go like that!"

Despair registered on Lida's face, but Mrs. Parrish was busy with the telephone.

"*Salon Pochette?* Please, come yourself, at once—take a taxi—we need an evening dress. Bring several. A girl. No, very young. Not tall—medium. Very thin. Very pretty. Blue eyes. Exquisite."

*She means me!* gasped Lida within herself.

"No, no. Not a sophisticated type. Just sweet. And tell somebody to go to Fun-chan and bring slippers. No, very, very small. And please be quick. Now Lida—" Mrs. Parrish turned to her—"take off your things and put this dressing gown on. \* You do not need a hairdresser. The more natural your hair is the better. Those elaborate coiffures always add age to the face."

She was another Mrs. Parrish—full of energy and interest. Her eyes became alive. Her movements were quick.

"Try this pair of stockings. The ideal Going to a party

in anklets 1 Of course my stockings are too large. Well, that cannot be helped."

The evening dresses were brought in. Four of them—beyond description. Just things from a fairy tale. Long, flounced. They did not economize on materials, those who made them. All the Family took part in making the choice. Granny voted for the white dress, and finally she won. Lida would never be able to make the choice herself; white, pink, light jade, light blue—and one might think that they all were made for Lida, they fitted so perfectly. Yet Mrs. Parrish thought that Lida needed some spots of colour. She turned out all her drawers and at last gave Lida a wonderful jade necklace and bracelets. Granny tried to protest, but Mrs Parrish insisted:

" I never wear them. They will get lost somewhere,"

Mme. Pachte had two faces: one when addressing Mrs. Parrish, the other when looking at the rest of them; for she only looked, she did not speak to them. While the face turned to Mrs. Parrish was all eager attention and admiration concealed with difficulty, the face which the Family could see was an arrogant cold mask.

The slippers fitted marvellously. When Lida, at last ready, saw herself in the mirror—from head to heels—she exclaimed:

" How beautiful I am! Oh, how beautiful I am!" and added naively: " Who could think that I could be so beautiful Granny," she said, " remember, you said I am only pretty. Look now—I am really beautiful!"

" You are not," said Granny, " you are pretty, and young, and *happy*."

" You are a queen!" said Dima. " When Peter and I grow up we will both marry you."

Dima, sitting on the floor, tried to make Dog look at Lida. **But** Dog was not interested in what he saw; he insafetly **hung his head**. It seemed he had **no** aesthetic feeling at all.

Jimmy was expected to come for Lida at any minute. She could not keep quiet. Every one had seen her. **Anna Petrovna** emitted a radiant smile; it seemed as if light came

out of her very wrinkles. Professor Chernov kissed Lida's hand and said gallantly:

" My homage to youth and beauty!"

Presently she tapped at Mr. Sung's door. When she entered he looked at her with sad, vacant eyes. And instantly Lida felt a cold chill in her heart. He did not notice any change in her. He, perhaps, was not seeing her at all. In one sharp moment Lida saw that Mr. Sung was unhappy. Why, he was growing so old! His cropped hair was all grey, and his face was ashen. Timidly she stood there. At last she said, almost whispered, in a restrained and eager voice:

" Mr. Sung, I—we all—hope—we all are sure, that Japan will never, never conquer China."

He smiled: "*Those swallows came from Africa,*" he said in a low voice. Lida gasped. What swallows? Why did he say those words? She did not know that for a moment she was very like her Granny, mild and eager to give sympathy and consolation, but giving them delicately, gently.

The only people in the house with whom Lida did not share her joy were the Japanese gentlemen. They were different. In spite of all their smiles, and bows, and polite mariners, they were felt in the house as some heterogenous element, incongruous, chemically insoluble in the atmosphere.

" Lida," said Mother at last, " I don't like to spoil your rapture, but please try to be self-restrained. Don't smile that open-mouthed smile. Keep your mouth closed. Really, dear."

Lida tried. When the bell rang and the outer door swung open, and Jimmy came in, she tried her best to go to him in a quiet and measured pace, with closed mouth, self-composed. But seeing him in his evening attire, blackest black and snow-white, and feeling all that rapturous splendour of life, she succeeded in doing this only the first **half of the way**. Warm admiration in Jimmy's eyes drew

her to him like a magnet and she rushed to him and cried:

" Jimmy, look, look how beautiful I—my dress is!"

With Lida went all the glow and excitement. Every one felt a bit tired. Dima went to bed. Mrs. Parrish became flaccid, as if a light had been extinguished inside her, and insisted on a drink. Granny saw how lively Mrs. Parrish was when busy with Lida and how listless she became now, and she decided that to keep Mrs. Parrish on the move would be a very good plan. She thought a bit and then said:

" Now that you are going to England, why not start preparations? You can ask Amah to make a quilted bedspread, for instance. She is an artist at that. And we also could sit with her and learn how to do it and then help her."

" Well, let us," said Mrs. Parrish abstractedly.

" Let us start to-morrow."

" Well, how many bedspreads shall I really need? I don't want any."

" But you have some relatives there, I presume."

" Yes, some cousins or aunts."

" You see, Mrs. Parrish, how happy you made Lida to-day. There in England you have some young girls—relatives, I am sure. Let us prepare nice things for them. You will make them happy."

Mrs. Parrish's eyes became thoughtful, as if some ideas were stirring within her. Then she sighed and said:

" Our family is rich. It is very difficult to make a rich girl happy."

Yet they decided to start their work to-morrow.

Granny sat up for Lida. In fact, she did not sit up: she knelt and prayed for Lida's happiness in life and love and marriage. Certainly, it was a question of years, but she knew that Lida's lot was cast.

Lida returned at two o'clock in the morning. She was all happiness and excitement.

" Oh, Granny!" she whispered, kissing her. " Oh, Granny I How happy I am!"

" You'd better take off your dress and slippers. Don't spoil things."

Granny," said Lida as soon as she had taken off her dress, " I love him so much, so much. I want to tell you all, all, I want to tell you how I feel."

" Don't do that, Lida. Words empty feelings. They make a heart shallow. Keep your feelings to yourself."

" But Granny, I want to talk about Jimmy. He kissed me twice."

" Now, Lida, better not allow that. You are too young. Do not be in haste with your life. Do not throw to the wind the first seeds of love. They may be the most precious. Be just friends to each other at first.<sup>1</sup>

" But he leaves for America in one week. We shall not see each other for two or three, or even four years. Yet we are not afraid of this separation. We shall write, Granny!" They were whispering and tears glistened in their eyes: cool drops in Granny's colourless ones, burning hot mist in Lida's sparkling blue ones.

The peculiar thing about Lida was that she had no doubts. She was sure of Jimmy's love and loyalty, because she judged his love on the basis of her own feelings. The idea that in separation Jimmy would forget her, fall in love with somebody else, marry another girl, never came into Lida's head.

" And how nice his family are! When I came Mrs. Bennett said to Mr. Bennett: ' Here comes Jimmy's sweetheart. Is she not pretty?' Mr. Bennett said: ' Hallo, queen of the party!' And they laughed. And his two older brothers danced with me. Then I sang, and they all liked it. Oh, Granny! I am so happy! So happy! I cannot sleep!"

" Now, Lida, you go to bed. If you cannot sleep, pray. Lie quietly and say prayers, one after another. If you are so happy, don't you think you should thank God for it? "

NEXT DAY Amah, whose "thinking was bad." worked in the house for Mrs. Parrish. She was sitting on the floor, on the matting, evidently deeply absorbed with her thoughts. Needles, scissors, thimble—all flew and sparkled in her hands. Her head was inclined low over her work. Her face was clouded. Granny was sitting beside her preparing work for Mrs. Parrish and herself. Amah's directions and comments on the work were short. There was no conversation between the two. At luncheon time Amah refused to eat. Granny said that she must then have some rest. Amah refused to rest.

"When I am angry I work better," she said curtly.

"What is the matter with you?" Granny asked.

"I worry."

She inclined her head lower and began to sew with such a speed that her needle broke in two.

"Why, Amah! You must relax for a while," insisted Granny.

"No, I cannot. I worry."

"What are you worrying about?"

"About a nun. The one I did not like."

"You must not feel like that."

"Well, I do. That nun, Sister Agatha, always doubted whether I would be saved. She would look at me solemnly and sadly and then say in a very mild voice—she used always her best voice when saying unpleasant things—she would say: 'Sister Thais'—that is me—'Sister Thais, I wonder if after all your immortal soul will be saved!' And she would nod her head and sigh, as if I were ill or something. 'Well,' I said once, 'I know all the prayers. I can say "Our Father" three times in one minute without ever

stopping to take a breath '—and she would nod her head again sadly and say: ' That is it—that is it.' "

Amah took a needle and began to scratch her head. Then she said, as if in parenthesis, " I must not do that "—and continued about her worry:

" Sister Agatha has been sent to a country mission on an errand. There is no news about her. The rumours are that she and other Catholics have been taken prisoners by Chinese robbers. Perhaps they have been tortured, perhaps killed. We are ordered in the convent to do extra praying for her sake "—and she sighed bitterly.

" And you do not want to pray?" Granny tried to guess.

" Me? Won't pray?" Amah even jumped at the suggestion. She looked at Granny, and her glance was almost contemptuous. " You do not understand. You understand nothing. I pray more than I am ordered. I fast. I eat once a day. My knees are bruised because of kneeling. ' Jesus/ I say, ' let her come back unharmed. Happy and healthy. Let all her hair be saved, not one of them lost.' I pray and pray and pray; even now when I work, I repeat and repeat, ' Save her! Save her!' You see how I pray—I have broken my needle."

" Then I really do not understand," said Granny.

" Listen. If they kill her, she is a martyr. A saint. See? No purgatory for her. And if she should be in heaven before me—see—what she would say there about me? More than that, more than that," and she began to sway, as if in despair: " She being a saint, I may be ordered to pray to her. See that? And she would use her mild voice and say there: ' I wonder if Sister Thais is after all worthy of heaven/ "

She took her work and began to sew mournfully. For a while she kept silent. Then she said in a bitter whisper:

" **All** my life I dreamed and hoped to get there before **her**, to be at the gate when she should come and say to her **casually**: ' Oh, this is you, Sister Agatha? You worked **long to get here!** "

" Well, Amah!" Granny did not know what to say. She was at a loss.

" Hallo, Amah," Mrs. Parrish said, coming out of her room. " How is your thinking? Better?"

" No, worse I" said Amah gloomily. " These days I asked a nun, Chinese—she is younger than I am, and she became a nun years ago—I asked her advice. ' I tell you,' she said. ' Keep silent and nobody will know whether your thinking is good or bad. And they will like you.' But I guess Mother Superior likes me a little, notwithstanding what my thinking is. Once I asked her how she thinks—would I be saved or not, and she said: ' You just keep praying and praying.' You see," Amah added confidentially, " they get tired of your asking and asking and finally give in to you, for they like peace there, in heaven."

" Why do you want so much to go to heaven?" asked Mrs. Parrish.

" Well, first because there is good company there. All saints, nice people. Then people here below will pray to me—I wish to feel important, I suppose."

" Where is my needle?" asked Granny. She wanted to change the course of the conversation.

" Why do you not marry, Amah?" asked Mrs. Parrish again.

" Whom could I marry? A heathen—I cannot. A Protestant—I cannot. And how many Catholic bachelors—Chinese—eligible Chinese—do you know? I have not seen one. If he is a good Catholic, he wants to be a monk. There you are. And then again a married woman has less chance to become a saint. There is not much heard about married women becoming saints," she added doubtfully. " Virginity is the thing! So many became saints only because they were virgins and have kept silent. But keeping silent is so very difficult. As to marriage, well, I won't marry at all."

" Why, Amah?" asked Lida, who had just come into the room and had heard the last words. " Why? Marriage I Love! To love and to be loved! Is not this wonderful?"

"Tsh—tsh," hissed Amah in fear. She even drew back as if a whiff of smoke tinged with brimstone reached her nose. "Don't. I am not allowed to think about love! For you have only to start—and then you will see!" she concluded menacingly.

"Well," said Granny, "I think this is about enough talking. We are all talking far too much."

"And our thinking becomes bad," laughed Mrs. Parrish.

## 24

" Missus," said Khan, " there are three black madamas at the gate—don't wantchee come in—asking for you."

It was breakfast time. Granny stood up quickly and took the situation in hand.

" Those must be Mother Abbess and her nuns. Tania, clear up the table, put on a fresh white napkin. Khan, tea, fresh tea—quick. Dima, take the dog out. Lida, don't sit here in that dressing gown, dress properly. Peter—you are the man of the family—come with me to meet them." She said all that in a new imperative tone, that of a mistress of a great house. Then with modest dignity she went out to meet the guests. Peter followed.

Three black figures were standing at the gate. Mother Abbess stood in front, two nuns kept a little behind her. There was nothing of decorum about Mother Abbess. She was a small, round-faced woman of sturdy peasant type, smiling, fidgety and gleeful, as if her life were perpetual enchantment. A tall, thin figure behind was Sister Marionilla. She was young. Her face was striking, unforgettable. Pale and drawn, it bore the outlines of severe classical beauty in its aloof perfection. This face expressed but one feeling: the utmost intensity of suffering. If there ever has been a living incarnation of the Muse of Tragedy, it, certainly, was Sister Marionilla. Her eyes were usually cast down. If, on rare occasions, she lifted them, one felt burned by her flaming glance\* During the three days she stayed with the Family, nobody ever heard her voice. The third figure was Mother Anastasia. She was old, burry, **and** peevish. Her face **was** covered with warts of various sizes. It seemed that wherever she went, whatever she saw, nothing was worthy of her approbation. Seeing Granny

coming down to them, the three black figures stooped in a slow and deep bow.

"Welcome, dear Mother Abbess! Welcome, Mothers," said Granny, and also bowed to them. Slowly and decorously they proceeded to the house, but Mother Abbess evidently could not remain dignified for a long time. In the short distance from the gate to the door she erred several times against etiquette, either by darting quick glances up to the balcony, where Mrs. Parrish dozed, leaning against the banister so that a flowerpot was in imminent danger of falling down under her weight; or clicking her tongue at Dog, who snorted at this familiarity; or making such a funny grin at Dima that the latter instantly grew dumb with awe and admiration. It seemed that Mother Anastasia, pacing behind, noticed every shortcoming Mother Abbess displayed; noticed and recorded it somewhere inside—in her memory. It seemed that she guessed what she could not see. Guessed with the grim satisfaction of one who had no illusions about the possibility of changing people, making them better. It seemed also that this state of mind gave Mother Anastasia a kind of gloomy satisfaction, which is an outstanding trait of all misanthropic natures; for a fleeting moment her face had something in common with that of Dog.

Once in the house, according to the old Russian custom, they stood before the icons, which usually hang in the corner, and said a short prayer, making the sign of the cross over themselves. The icon in the hall was the image of the Holy Virgin of Kazan. When Mother Abbess saw the icon, her face became radiant, as if she had met someone whom she knew personally and dearly loved, and whom she never expected to see again. She smiled and bowed before the icon, and made the sign of the cross, and smiled and bowed again and again. It seemed only with an effort that she tore herself away to turn towards the rest of the company and say to them:

"May God's blessing and love be for ever with you, dear people!"

The Mother Abbess was a remarkable person. She was poorly educated, and knew none of the foreign languages. Even in Scriptures she was not strong. In the pre-Revolution times she could never have had a post in any convent except that of a simple working nun. In Russian monasteries abbesses are first elected by the nuns among themselves, then the election must be sanctioned by the bishop of the diocese. That second phase our Mother Abbess would never have passed, for she would upset any bishop, however self-controlled, the very moment she started to speak about religion. She could not be called strictly a righteous member of the Greek Orthodox Church; she was a heretic, and in some ways she was even a heathen. There was in her some pervading human quality that refused to be put in limits, to obey rules and bow before established methods of thinking. She was a human being in its most pure incarnation, daughter of a young race of Slavs, unspoiled with too much history or knowledge. Her other quality was kindness. Or, perhaps, it was not really kindness; for she needed not to stoop to help, to make an effort to understand, or to venture to blame. She accepted life, and she and the rest of the world were not separated. She was in everything and everything was in her. People's hearts, thoughts, deeds, and their motivations were an open book to her. To feed a hungry one was as natural to her as to eat, to cover a naked one was equally natural; for she felt hunger with his hunger, cold when seeing him shuddering. Mother Abbess represented the pure essence of the quality on which, to one degree or another, every Russian soul is built and which is the source of all the achievements and the reason for all the failures in Russian history—and this quality was a blind kindness.

Perhaps this quality had been the reason for her election to her present position. Religion had nothing to do with it. Thirty nuns exiled, bewildered, and stripped of all belongings needed someone to keep them together in a small band and they, certainly, could not find a better one among themselves.

In fifteen years Mother Abbess built three monasteries in three towns of China, and having no regular income she kept about three hundred women—nuns, novices, orphans, invalids, and the old. Her only income was the money she could get through her personal intercourse with people. And in this she succeeded splendidly. If she had lived in times when Russians were rich, she could easily have had millions, but now she had to ask from the poor to give to the poorer. The chief thing that kept people, and especially clergy, wondering was that real miracles had taken place in her monasteries, miracles about which there could be no doubt. They happened somehow just at the moments when unbelievers and sceptics were near by, and this put the latter in a state of utter bewilderment and terror. Once it happened to be the case of a child, on whom a conclave of doctors had pronounced the sentence of incurable blindness, and then Mother Abbess entered with her icon of the Holy Virgin of Kazan, and prayed, crying bitterly and imploring—and lo, the child opened his eyes and straightway saw everything. In another instance it was an old sinner, who never prayed and who at first laughed at any suggestion of help from beyond. But as his sufferings grew more and more gnawing he consented to see Mother Abbess and let her pray over him. She would pray and he would grumble, a bit ashamed of his weakness. Then to his amazement he was cured. He remained reluctant to admit it, but—yes—he could move, eat, sleep, laugh, and never felt pain. And this return to good health was so pleasant that, at last, he would admit that he had been healed through a miracle.

But this was but one part of the story. The second was that, the miracle once performed, Mother Abbess would state her terms, which usually were: first, that the patient should come often to pray in the monastery and, second, that he should pay a monthly stipend for the poor in the monastery. She would fix the sum and indicate when to come to pray, and she would keep to it. All this was not exactly the practice of the Greek Orthodox Church, and the clergy felt uneasy. But what could they do with her?

She was the one to whom they could send any poor person, invalid, or orphan for help. For she never refused any one; Sometimes the children of her asylum would play in the yard—all fifty-two of them. Then they would be called in for dinner, and there would be fifty-four. A careful investigation would reveal the fact that an unknown person had opened the gate and pushed in two more. The unknown person would never come back to take the two children away. The children would be questioned. Usually they would turn out to be orphans, both parents having been killed somewhere during the innumerable battles and conflicts in Manchuria, and the children would say that an "aunt" had taken them and brought them to this town. The aunt was evidently afraid of the legal procedure of installing children in an asylum. She could be refused, or they had no papers—it was always a long and complicated story in those times of general poverty and disquiet. So the children were just "pushed in," and Mother Abbess had to face the increased expense. Then she would, with God's help, perform another miracle and ask for help in return. Her faith, her belief, was really astounding. Doubt was perhaps the only thing she did not share with mankind. She never admitted its existence. She affirmed that every one always believes in God, and that without faith nobody could live a minute. The negation of faith she explained as a kind of childish perversity in denying an evident fact. She was always full of joy, energy, and zest. Her personality worked like a magnet. Wherever she went she instantly became surrounded by crowds of people, as if some invisible threads drew them to her.

The three days of the nuns' visit were exciting. The keynote of that mood was Mother Abbess herself. She lived in a state of perpetual burning curiosity toward life. The simplest things put her into a state of alert wonder, as if she saw in them something which escaped other people's eyes.

One hour after her arrival she led an animated conversa-

tion with the Professor. She was awed by his vast knowledge. She stared at him in admiration.

" Well, Mother Abbess," said the Professor, " so you think that all good people will be saved, be they Catholic, Protestant, or even heathen? "

" Certainly they will. After all, what has religion to do with it? A good heart and a good life are the things that count."

" Oh! " cried the Professor in rapture. " Dear Mother Abbess, you would have been burnt for that, had you lived in the Middle Ages."

" But I would argue with them."

" Exactly. You *would*," chuckled the Professor.

Mother Anastasia sat with a wry half-smile. She knew how terribly Mother Abbess had blundered.

The visitors began to pour in at noon. First came a priest. He was a monk, a mystic, and a fanatic with a fiery faith. He was known for his highly ascetic life and a gift of prophesying which he used very rarely. And again Mother Abbess looked at him in awe and stared in admiration.

" Germany, Japan, Bolshevism or Nazi-ism—all this is the deceptive appearances of events," Priest John said, and his eyes glowed in his exhausted face. " The real cause of these things is the fight between faith and atheism. We must unite and be prepared,"

" For what? Prepared for what? " asked Mother Abbess in a flutter.

" For martyrdom," said Priest John, and his voice sounded like a solemn funeral bell.

They spoke and spoke, and although all of them were either old or invalids, they had such an intensity of life, of faith, of feeling, that the house acquired an unreal quality, as if all the things were animated, the Atmosphere vibrating with the waves of sound and exclamations.

On the third day, when Mother Abbess came in after early Mass she was moaning. With visible difficulty she ascended the three steps of the entrance and fell into the

first chair. Granny instantly surrounded her with little attentions, giving her water, helping her to take off her mantle. But in five minutes Mother Abbess was herself again, eager and smiling. With her usual zest she bowed and bowed before the icon. When, finally, she drank her cup of tea with lemon, she became flighty and cheerful.

"My dear sister," she said gaily to Granny, "I think I shall die soon."

"But what is the matter with you, Mother Abbess?"

"First, cancer of the stomach."

"But, but——"

"Yes, very painful," said Mother Abbess simply. "Sometimes I am all twisted with pain. Then stones in the liver. Also very painful. Rheumatism, of course, for we nuns all suffer from our feet—too much standing in church. And then something with the kidneys," she concluded gaily, as if being glad to share this plentitude.

"Here we have a wonderful doctor, Dr. Isaak. He must be in town again. Perhaps you would see him?"

"Isaak? A Jew?"

"Yes."

"Gladly I would see him. I like Jewish doctors. They are usually very good doctors indeed." ,

"Then we shall ask him to come to-day. In any case we must invite him, for he treats the English lady upstairs."

Dr. Isaak came with Rosa. While he was busy with his patient, Granny exercised all her tact to keep Rosa away from the nuns. Professor Chernov and Anna Petrovna, between them, accomplished the assignment successfully.

Being a nun, Mother Abbess could not be examined by a male doctor. All the examinations were previously made by a woman doctor. She had it all written down, X-rays, analyses, and all. Before the astonished eyes of Dr. Isaak was presented a unique case: according to all reason this woman could not live, or at least could not bear it as she did, sitting before him with her mischievous smile.

"Well, Doctor," said she, "What have you to say to all this?"

" There is nothing to say—er—— " He was at a loss at the moment as to how to address her. He could not say "Madame"; "Mademoiselle" was a ridiculous word when applied to this nun. " Sister "—the Doctor found the word at last.

" That is it. As soon as one is seriously ill, medicine has nothing *to* offer—eh, Doctor? "

" You bear it splendidly."

" Medicine has nothing to do with it. But let us not talk about all this unpleasantness. Tell me, Doctor, how are you living here? "

And they had a pleasant chat about current life. They understood each other well, these two.

The nuns had to leave in the evening. Mother packed provisions for them. *I must buy lemons*, she thought.

When the nuns were gone, the house seemed strangely empty and quiet. All felt tired. The Family were sitting at their tea, which was served instead of supper, when a cautious tapping was heard at the door.

" Come in! " said Mother.

Nobody came in, but the tapping was repeated. Peter went and opened the door. Amah stood there. She looked an embodiment of modest triumph. In the corners of her slanting eyes, in the dimples of her face, even in the gleaming of her teeth—everywhere was a sweet, if hidden, enjoyment of victory.

" Good evening I " she said politely. " I have finished my work upstairs. I am going away now. May I say a word to the Honourable Old One? "

Granny rose and they went out. On the steps, lit from above by an electric lamp, Amah presented a shining vision, for she was also lit from within.

" She came back. Sister Agatha came back." And she laughed a happy and sly laugh. " In good health—not a hair injured. Robbers just questioned who she was, and then let her go free. It cannot count for much there! " And she pointed her finger to the dark sky above.

DIMA WAS REVELLING in the fantastic world of exact science into which the Chernovs had introduced him. It surpassed anything he had happened to hear from Granny's fairy tales. The magic of knowledge gave to the world a new importance. Under the apparently careless and easy-going ways in which things happen, there lies somewhere a hidden and great plan, a strict order, an inexorable and scrupulously working system. And how powerful he, Dima himself, could be! A human being! The pride of it! For every material richness of the external universe belonged to him, and existed in him in its abstract form too. There, inside of him, lay accumulated and hidden all the human experience and inexhaustible creative powers. If it had not been he who discovered America, it could not have been he. He felt as if it were he who had led Caesar's legions to victory! He had built the Pyramids and pasteurized milk, and had leapt into the stratosphere. In the nearest future he would make a trip to the moon, establish communication with the adjacent planets, train the human body to last, say, for 200 years, and make people love and cherish each other. There was some work left to his generation too!

And no one could ever deprive him of his mental force and power of understanding. No one could really annihilate him. Dima was gloriously eternal. He could only be transformed, every single atom of his body would continue its life, even though it was in another shape and arrangement. His, Dima's, ideas, mental images, aspirations, would only change their starting point; being projected into the future, they would live eternally, going on **and** on in spiral repetitions of *superterrene* time. These who loiter here, upon earth, are fools, and really merit one's pity as much as one's disdain: for, unaware, they destroy the most successful of Nature's achievements

human bodies), transforming them into lower shapes of disintegrating atoms. Dima pitied and scorned them.

With those lessons, quite unexpectedly, Dima acquired proof of the inferiority of Dog. For Dog did not *understand*. He only listened patiently, but was lacking in creative mental powers. Once, when being shown a fine piece of raw meat, prepared to be examined under the microscope (Vania), Dog actually tried to *eat* it, because in his simplified animal conception of things he thought that all flesh was created only in order to eat or to be eaten. Yet one must not be hasty in blaming Dog; for the last weeks he had not had enough to eat, meat being no cheaper than 30 cents per pound.

Strangely, Lida withstood the Professor's influence, and little by little evaded the sphere of his interests. Overwhelmed by her love, she lived in the world of emotions, and her intellectual interests stood still. She was not interested in any planet except earth. She was indifferent to any possible kind of life except this one, hers, here and now.

Jimmy had left China, and was on his way to America. The day of his departure had been wrapped in mists. Not that it was a foggy day, but because there was a mist in Lida's eyes and in her heart. Still, Lida had not cried. Had she not promised?

Until the final moment, at the railway station, Jimmy had kept at her side, grinning at her a courageous, boyish smile, and she had answered him with a look of pathetic feminine courage. When the final moment arrived, he kissed her, and this, their third kiss, sealed their love for all time.

Then the train shuddered, whistled, clanged, and began to move. Jimmy tried to keep her in sight as long as possible, and Lida ran along the platform beside his carriage. But you cannot keep up with a passenger train, can you? And finding herself left hopelessly behind, Lida looked at the train smoke, melting in the evening sky, and whispered;

*Like the sun you sank in the flaming West.  
Oh, one ray more! If only one. . . .*

Not West, but East was Jimmy's destination, but is it really important to state exactly in *which* direction one has lost one's love?

After Jimmy's departure, Lida lived in the exquisite realm of youthful happiness. Now and then she opened her books at random in order to know how Jimmy felt about herself at the very moment. As her books were Pushkin's and Lermontov's, the two highest achievements in the world of poetry, they answered her questions in terms full of significance and beauty. They enhanced her will to love, and believe, and endure, and suffer. One time it happened to be Puskin's stanzas:

*Yes! I remember well our meeting,  
When first thou dawnedest on my sight,  
Like some fair phantom past me fleeting,  
Some nymph of purity and light.*

And Lida, enraptured, would whisper, " Like some fair phantom past me fleeting "—and dishes danced in her hands, and towels waved their full length, and the teaspoons chimed, and the cups tinkled—" like some fair phantom past me fleeting, some nymph of purity and light."

Sometimes It happened to be Lermontov's pessimism:

*He is so far. He will not listen. . . .  
He cannot prize your priceless tears. . . .*

And Lida's heart twisted with pain. But then she would open another page, and again another, till she came upon some satisfactory verses.

Jimmy's first letter came from Hong Kong. It was a big, fat message, not easily portable in a young girl's bosom,

and it bulged out of her blouse. So Lida, however poor and humble she might be, however underfed and shabbily clad, and badly treated by life and the world, Lida possessed the dearest treasure—pure youthful love, asking for nothing, giving all. She was happy in its pure flame, she was shining with its reflection, she was fed with the thoughts of it during the days, and peacefully dreamed of it during the nights. Only the very young and pure and unselfish can experience this kind of love.

While the young generation was undergoing changes, the old one changed also. Some deep although externally imperceptible change was going on in Granny. Perhaps it started when she began to tell Mrs. Parrish the story of her life. Memories, like huge waves, rose, and in their intensity swept her away from her present life into the past. There were moments when, lost in her memories, she could not realise where she was and why she was there. She would suddenly awake in the depth of the night with a happy, singing heart.

*What is that? Where am I? Oh, there is a window. It opens into the garden. (She thought she was in her parents' house.) I must open it. Why is it closed? I will open it, for lilacs are in blossom. I will let in the fragrance. OK no! There must be no door. What is behind that door? What? Oh, there is the nursery. My children are 'there. Children? Which of them? How many of them? Oh I And she felt a blow near her heart, for she remembered that her sons were dead—but Tania? Tania. She is alive. I live with her. How old am I then? Fifty? Sixty? Seventy? And suddenly, with a start, she would be brought to reality, to the complete recollection. Yes, seventy, seventy. And there were no lilacs behind that window—no garden.*

And the feeling of the warm happiness of youth would leave her completely, as if melting away. She would feel the tiredness of her body, the weakness of her feet, the sadness of her heart. Sleepless she would lie hours and hours, until morning, brooding upon the past and upon the

present, not the future. *Seventy I* There was left for her only one future, and to that she had been resigned long ago.

Sometimes a momentary vision would break into her mind and link her to a recollection, then to another, and then again to another—and she would in an instant be far, far away.

Once, sitting with Mrs Parrish in the Garden, she occasionally looked at the trunk of the tree. *Why, she thought, that is the tree my grandfather planted on the day when he was promoted to the post of governor of the province—Mother told me about that, and how she had loved that tree. "Something of himself," she used to say. And then, one by one, all in a row, they planted their trees on the days of their promotion to something important. Who? My uncles, my father, my eldest son. But his tree—where is his tree? And lifting her head she instantly saw, took in the real surroundings. What is it? Where am I? Where is the tree?* she repeated helplessly, frightened and apprehensive.

She began to forget the use of things. *What have I to do with this cup? Why have I it in my hands? What are cups usually used for?* And for a moment she would feel frightened, as if being disconnected from the rest of the world.

Prayer was her chief joy. It invariably brought light and warmth.

GRANNY DIED at the end of November. There was no visible reason why she had to die at all. Perhaps only because, once born, she had to die sometime or other, and this time evidently happened to be appropriate for dying.

The autumn was cold, the town was menaced by a flood. The same sandbags which had been used in making trenches were now used to dike and raise the banks of the Hei-ho River. The anxiety of the people, the Chinese beggars, the roars of the radio, the ominous rumours about the course of the war, the illustrations in the papers showing the ultimate cruelty of mankind—all took something of Granny's vitality. She, evidently, had enough. Her cup was full.

She prepared herself for death. She dia it in her usual mild and inconspicuous way. She fasted for several days, went to church daily, partook of the Holy Communion. After that she moved silently about the house looking tenderly at the members of the Family. One by one she had long conversations, with them. She finished her life's story to Mrs. Parrish. She put a hundred dollars into an envelope and wrote on it, " For my funeral."

On the twenty-third of November she said to Mother:

" Dear Tania, I am not well to-day. I will not get up. Ask dear Mrs. Parrish to excuse me."

As simple as those words were, they filled Mother with fright; for never, not once, had Granny complained before. Hastily Mother prepared coffee, and with an encouraging smile put it on the chair before Granny's sofa. Granpy looked at the cup, then looked away. Glanced again and closed her eyes.

" Thank you, dear, I do not want coffee this morning."

" Do not leave me alone to-day," said Granny a while after. " Manage, dear Tania, to be free for several days. Take another servant. I shall need you."

" Sit beside me, dear Tania," she said again in the evening; " I should like to look at you."

On the next day a visible change worked itself in the whole of Granny's appearance. The change was, as yet, almost imperceptible, but some final touches of decline were seen in it. Dr. Isaak came to see Granny, but he had nothing to say. It was simply death, the end. The mysterious source which gave Granny energy and strength was drained. There was nothing left now.

The Doctor's words threw Mother into despair, but they sobered Mrs. Parrish, and she took charge of the situation. She gave an order to get a cook and another servant-boy. She took Lida into her room, and put Dima into the Professor's. She provided money for all the extra expense, and turned out to be efficient and competent in everything she undertook.

On the third day Granny said:

" Dear Tania, I should like to have the Chrismation. Ask the priest to come."

Now this was final. Mother knew now for certain that Granny was dying. And yet she could not grasp the meaning of the coming event, for all her life she had lived with Mother; they had never been separated. Even in prison in Soviet Russia they had shared the same cell. They were spiritually and emotionally joined like two links of a chain. How could they be painlessly disunited now? What kind of life would it be without Granny? Mother felt so miserable and helpless that she needed care no less than Granny.

And on her deathbed Granny was now lying, dressed in white and covered with white; and the priest came for the last rite. Waxen candles were lit, the aroma of incense slowly pervaded even the farthest corners of the house. An icon stood on the table covered with a white cloth; an Evangel and a crucifix lay before it. The old priest, poor and sad, coughed gently before beginning the prayers. All the Family, except Dima, gathered round the bed. Nobody spoke. Distant Japanese airplanes buzzed monotonously,

but those gathered in Granny's room heard nothing of their sound.

In a calm and solemn voice the priest began to pray, and gave Granny his blessing on going away into another world. Then he began the procedure of Chrismation. With the holy anointing oil, smelling of roses he gently touched Granny's eyes. Eyes which, were accustomed to light, and now had to go into darkness. He touched her ears, which had listened to so much misery of life. He touched her hands, which had tried so hard to work, to earn, to be useful till her last. He touched the soles of her feet, which had trod the whole path of human sorrow and desolation, and now refused to go farther. All her body was purified now. Now all worldly ties for Granny were broken; she belonged to God. With mild resignation she attentively followed the rite; it was *she* now who was dying; those were *her* last moments. The priest began to read the last prayers Granny yet needed: the Canon *On the exit of Soul* A lit waxen candle was given to Granny, and Mother, on her knees beside the bed, helped Granny to hold the candle straight.

This Canon addressed the Holy Virgin, asking Her guidance and help in the last moments *when terror and pain are the only feelings, when eyes do not see, ears do not hear, when deep night is descending upon all human senses, when all hope to live more is past and behind, when really there is no more of body and only the soul is left in its terrible significance. Those prayers are full of touching poetry.* For Granny's sake, the priest said—*Like drops of rain are fallen all the days of her life and now nothing is left.* For Granny's sake, he was asking the Holy Virgin to remember how she, Granny, all her life had been devoted and submissive to Her guidance, and that now she needed Her help more than ever, entering a new life and the unknown world.

However lonely most human beings are at this supreme moment, Granny, evidently, felt none of death's terrors. Her face was simple and serene, and a little shy, as if she

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However lonely most human beings are at this supreme moment, Granny, evidently, felt none of death's tenors. Her face was simple and serene, and a little shy, as if she

were a bit uneasy because she was receiving so much attention.

When the rite was performed the priest congratulated her—a faithful Christian, dying in piety and in submission to God's will. Lifting the crucifix high, he blessed her with it in a solemn and magnificent gesture, and in the name of the One who suffered for the sins of mankind, he absolved Granny's sins once and forever.

Now it was all over. Granny's face expressed peace and contentment. Yet life was visibly ebbing from her body. She had to do one thing more: to give her blessing to each member of her family. She asked for Dima.

All this time Dima had been in the Chernovs' room. With the old Professor he was sitting before the microscope with two small pieces of something on the glass, while the Professor explained to Dima how simple the process of dying was. In reality, there could be no death. All of Granny's atoms were all right, if taken separately; *only the cementation weakened*. That temporary adaptation of atoms which formed Granny could not go on any more. But nothing in the way of catastrophe was really happening; Granny changed, into' something else—that was the gist of the process.

When Dima was brought before Granny he was not afraid. With what tenderness Granny looked at him! How pale and delicate the boy was! An orphan! First his mother, then father—and now she was deserting him. They looked at each other for a while, and then suddenly both smiled their usual smile. For a moment they were as always: the tender Granny and her cheerful boy.

Granny gave her blessing to all. She found strength enough to pat Iida's head, to stroke Peter's hand, to give Mother an icon. Mrs. Pafrish also asked for a blessing—the end of the story—and the Professor came in to say "*Du courage!*" and "*Bon voyage!*" Leaning against the door he tried to make a short speech about an unknown planet which was precipitating towards the earth, and perhaps would be clearly visible one of these days, and to

express his regret that they would enjoy the sight without Granny. But Anna Petrovna gently drew him out of the room.

Granny asked for Khan. The moon-faced Chinese entered the room. Granny gave him three dollars and sent her kind regards to his family. And then suddenly Khan, usually sunken in deep taciturnity wherever a foreign company met, began to speak: —

"It is nothing, Old Lady," he said. "You be away some time and then you go here—in another, new body—and live here again. We all do same."

Then Granny sent her kind regards to Mr. Sung and the three Japanese gentlemen, and, tired beyond her strength, she began to die. She died in the depth of the night. Till the last moment a lit candle with its trembling flame was in her hands, Mother helping her to hold it. A small icon of the Holy Virgin was placed upon her breast.

Cloudy and more cloudy grew her eyes, losing their colour and brightness. Soon they did not focus on anything. Rarer and rarer grew her breathing. Movement wag going on only in her throat. Then only one vein on her neck kept pulsating, the rest of her body being dead. When that vein stopped its beating, Granny had departed.

Then solemnly, with dry eyes, Mother got up, took the candle, and extinguished it with her breath. *Granny existed no more.*

There and thus she died. Through all the terrors of life—through wars, and blood, and pain—she kept her faith, and now she had given back her soul to her Creator, as pure as she had received it from Him.

WHEN MR. STOWNE came to see his sister before his departure for Mukden, he met the funeral procession. Mother in her poor mourning things (hastily dyed and unsuccessfully black, being so old and worn) walked behind the coffin with Lida at her side; Peter led Dima by the hand; several friends formed a group at a distance. The Professor cheerfully looked around for an audience; Anna Petrovna was carrying a poor wreath of chrysanthemums, they being the cheapest flowers of the season. And preceding it all, just ahead of Granny's small and cosy coffin, a black crucifix was carried, the symbol that *every life is a cross*.

Mr. Stowne had to wait for the whole of the procession to pass by. He had also to take off his hat. Then he entered the house. It was almost empty. Only Khan noiselessly moved to and fro putting things into their usual order, and in his room Mr. Sung was burning an aromatic burial candle, the smoke of which, according to his belief, would help Granny's soul to ascend towards the heights.

Mr. Stowne found his sister in the kitchen. She was helping the cook prepare the dinner. When she saw her brother, she suddenly smiled at him a bright and tender smile; and, as if by some magic, the two saw themselves far away in time and in space in a garden full of roses, on a glorious summer day, a day when the girl, all beauty and happiness, had said to her brother: "Davy, I am engaged."

She said nothing of the kind now. She said a quite prosaic thing:

"Davy," she said, "come upstairs, I will bring you a nice cup of tea."

## **PART TWO**



ON THE BLEAK and windy day of January sixth, the Family prepared to celebrate Christmas Eve—in accordance with the Russian calendar.

As they had no money to buy a Christmas tree, Professor Chernov suggested painting one.

"Live in your imagination," he said to Dima, "and your life will be fuller; and have more of freedom and beauty. The idea of a thing is more perfect than the thing itself. It lives when the thing is ruined. The same is true of emotions. Imaginary feelings are the strongest. In your real life you cannot be happy. Imagination gives one balance and keeps him from utter disillusionment. It compensates, it makes one invulnerable. It helps one to overlook unpleasant details, while real life always moves in repulsive accuracy. The thing is perishable; the idea of it is immortal. Don't lock yourself in the material and concrete. Soar above! Soar in the clouds over the ugliness of the world.

Three big sheets of paper were pinned on a wall of the Family room, and a tree was drawn on them in brown and dark green. Anna Petrovna made the design. Every member of the Family was asked what he or she would like to have as a Christmas present, and the respective images were added to the tree.

At four o'clock a car stopped at the door, and the Family, with Mrs. Parrish, went to the cemetery. Dima was holding one chrysanthemum wrapped in paper. This he had bought with the remainder of his capital—20 cents—and was carrying it as a Christmas present to Granny's tomb. Mrs. Parrish paid for the car, and it could have been no less than three dollars, since the Russian cemetery was so far away. This money was Mrs. Parrish's Christmas present to the Family.

A wonderful thing had happened to Mrs. Parrish: she had ceased to drink. Since Granny's death she had not taken a drop of spirits. Why? Perhaps because a certain circle in Mrs. Parrish's inner life was completed; or perhaps the Doctor's treatment helped—but she needed it no more. Perhaps some vacuum in her emotional life, which cried for stimulants, had become replenished with something new. One morning she awoke and felt that there was no more vacuum, no empty hours, no sudden fears, and no cold loneliness. And Mrs. Parrish was changed. Her buoyant vitality left her. She became calm and silent and tidy. Her boisterous voice softened into the low and clear English of a well-bred lady. She became self-controlled and polite. Her manners were excellent. In short, it was now quite another Mrs. Parrish, not the kind of woman whom Lida would hug and kiss on an impulse. In this, her new character, she did not fit well into the Family. They were shy of her.

The Christmas Eve supper was a very modest affair indeed. It could be called a supper only because it was given late in the evening. But the Professor smiled enigmatically, and said that he had a good dessert for all safe in his pocket. In due course of time he took Mme. Militza's letter out of his pocket, saying that it had come during their absence. With great anticipation he put on his spectacles, and asked for silence and general attention. At this moment Mrs. Parrish rose and apologized. She was afraid, she said, that she had no more spare time; but every one felt that it was because she was not interested. She thanked Mother, and was ready to go. Then she looked at Dima, and added that she had something in the way of a Christmas present for him and, with Mother's permission, would he not better come up with her now. Dima rushed upstairs. He believed in Mrs. Parrish's presents, although she gave him concrete *things*, which, according to the Professor, were perishable and repulsive in their accuracy. Dima still appreciated presents more in *things* than in *ideas*.

It took two hours to read, understand! and digest Mme.

Militza's letter. It would be impossible to give in English all its wild beauty. Made concise and coherent, it ran as follows:

Mme. Militza went to Shanghai. Hardly had she posted an advertisement when she obtained a Situation. Now Mme. Militza was a chaperon to an Englishwoman, Lady Dorothea. They were living in one of the best hotels of Shanghai, having a suite of three rooms, and although Lady Dorothea took all of Militza's time and attention, she paid her a good salary in addition to room and board. The impetus to this was Lady Dorothea's unhappy love. A quarter of a century ago, before the World War, she had come to Russia on a visit. There she met a young Hussar, Lieutenant Bulat, and fell in love with him. He was about half the age of Lady Dorothea—a gay youth, a gambler, and a wit. Whatever she said, he never took her seriously. Once she proposed to him. Although very gently, he laughed the thing away. After a while she repeated her proposal. Lieutenant Bulat called his valet and best friend—Ivan—to come in, and asked:—

"Ivan, can *we* marry? "

"No, your honour, *we* cannot!"

"Why? "

"First, *we* are too young. Second, *we* are a gambler."

"You see! " said Lieutenant Bulat to Lady Dorothea.

But she held her ground. "I am vrey rich," she said, "and although I would lose my title and my castle in Scotland because of marrying you, I would still have enough for you to gamble on. As to youth—it passes."

"See! " said Lieutenant Bulat to Ivan.

But Ivan held his ground too. "*We have debts,*" he said, "and *we* do not believe that *we* can be reformed."

"About the last, we shall see," said Lady Dorothea convincingly.

"Hey, Ivan, so *we* do marry?" asked Lieutenant Bulat with glee.

"No, your honour, *we* don't," was Ivan's firm reply.

"**Then**, my lady, ***we* thank you and humbly *we* refuse,**"

Lieutenant Bulat said, and kissed both of Lady Dorothea's big hands.

But in her opinion he was too young, as yet, to be able to understand what was best for him. He could not be given the right to decide this question of the utmost importance to himself. She knew life better, she was so much older, so it became her duty to pilot their destinies, and she took up the prow. But she had to go to England for a while, and before her departure it was agreed between Lady Dorothea and Lieutenant Bulat that the question of their future was still open. [x]

Then followed the Great World War, Revolution and Civil War in Russia. Lady Dorothea lost her lover from sight, but not from her heart. As soon as peace was signed she started in search of Lieutenant Bulat. She tracked the movements of his regiment throughout the war and the revolution. She had found several officers of the regiment and several soldiers, but it seemed as if Lieutenant Bulat were no longer alive. She began to travel to the countries in which there might be Russian exiles. It took about 15 years before she discovered a faint trace of her lover's progress. It seemed that he had moved across Siberia, through Mongolia — and there the traces were lost again. Lady Dorothea established her camp in Manchuria, and from there organized expeditions into the depths of Mongolia. There were two big expeditions along and across Mongolia, and several small ones. She pitched her tent under every hill and beside every lake — those sad lakes with brine, instead of water. There was no sight of her lover there. Yes, she had found many a lonely tomb with rows of stones in the shape of a cross over it, marking well the progress of the White officers; yet Lieutenant Bulat was not lying in any one of them. Lady Dorothea put the query to every available Mongol, yet none of them remembered seeing her lover. Mongols are an honest, never-lying people; they took nothing from her for the information and even tried to give her a present, which usually was a living ram. Thus with a small herd she came back to Manchuria and in Hailar,

suddenly came upon an officer of the White Russian army, who knew for sure that Lieutenant Bulat had gone to China. She gave him a gold watch as a present, and after that many officers appeared to give information and receive a gold watch. Some were veritable scoundrels who implored her to forget about Lieutenant Bulat and marry one of them. But she had by this time enough proofs that Lieutenant Bulat's last movement was towards China. There again all traces disappeared.

When she had told all that to Mme. Militza and the latter had dealt cards for her, it became evident that Lieutenant Bulat was alive and was, if in poverty, in good spirits. He was not alone, yet not *quite* married. But the important thing was that he was living somewhere near by, in China. This first stance was a shock to Lady Dorothea. She realized at once what it would have meant if she had happened to come across Mme. Militza earlier. Now she would not dream of sending Mme. Militza away. On the spot she made terms with her and, taking her chest and handbag, brought her in her car to the hotel. It seemed that Lady Dorothea spoke as many languages as Mme. Militza did, if not more; thus they understood each other perfectly. Now, foreseeing busy days for herself, Mme. Militza would try, notwithstanding, to keep the Family well informed about her career. She called herself a *Chaperon* because Lady Dorothea would not move a pace without her approval.

She sent the Family her love and best wishes for Christmas, all that on perfect stationery and with quite adequate postage,

"Well," said the Professor, "what do you think about all that? Now let us all tell our opinions by turns."

"Really," said Mother, and she had no other word to add.

"If Lieutenant Bulat had half of Lady Dorothea's devotion they would never have lost each other," said Peter.

"Army?"

"I," stammered Anna Petrovna, "I think this is a sad story.'"

" Lida?"

" It is beautiful! It is wonderful! I hope Lady Dorothea will find her lover and they will be very, very happy!" said Lida hotly.

" Hmm," the Professor said, " Those who are in love never have any sense of humour."

" But if you were given the choice between love and a sense of humour which would you take?" Lida replied vehemently.

" You are right," said the Professor, " yet at my age I would, perhaps, take humour."

Upstairs, in Mrs. Parrish's room, Dima was gloating over his presents. He had a watch and a box of English biscuits, Huntley and Palmer's, the best biscuits in the world. After a short inner struggle he decided to make a present of those biscuits to Mother, on the condition that the pink ones on the top of the box should be his. The watch ran and ticked. Even Dog could hear it.

Of late Mrs. Parrish had developed quite a special interest in Dima; more—a sympathy, almost an affection. It dated from the day when she gave him a bath after Granny's funeral and not only saw but touched those poor bones of the child's underfed body—and then sharply, with a sudden pang in her breast; she remembered, for a brief moment, her own baby to her life once so full. Oh, how full it had been! Full of joy, of hopes, of affection. Perhaps that had been the crucial moment and, perhaps, exactly then she felt that alcohol was but a poor tonic, that maybe there were better means of uprooting sorrow and counteracting its poison.

After that day she had spent hours with Dima in endless conversations.

Presently, the first wave of emotion because of the presents being calmed, Dima sat on the carpet with Dog and looked at his watch.

" Tell me about yourself, Dima," asked Mrs. Parrish.

" Me? About me? Tell you what?"

" How are you getting along?"

" Me? I am getting on well. I am well."

" Would you like to go travelling?"

Quickly he raised his head and looked at Mrs. Parrish.

" Travelling? Yes, I should like it, only I have never travelled."

" Would you like to go to England?"

" Yes, I would like to go to England. I would like to go everywhere."

" Then come with me to England. I have a house in the country there. The garden is full of roses in summer time. You will go to school, play with boys. You will have toys and books and sports."

Dima's eyes radiated vivid interest.

" You will take me to all that?"

" If you will go with me."

" I will go with you; when do we go?"

" But would you not worry about your Family?"

" We are not to take them with us? Oh, Mrs. Parrish, take us all. Oh, please!"

" I cannot. I have not money enough."

" But we do not cost much. You do not know how little, Mrs. Parrish! We do not eat much. Do not think we eat the same meals we give to you. Never, We never have butter."

" Why?"

" Oh, Mrs. Parrish I" Dima seemed shocked. " It is *two dollars per pound*. That expensive!"

" What kind of food do you usually eat, Dima?"

" I eat whatever is left after you are served, Mrs. Parrish. I am allowed. Mother says you are clean and healthy. But Peter never would eat leavings. He is that proud. And I am not proud, for I am so hungry when I see food."

" So you will go with me, Dima?"

" Take us all! Oh, dear, dear Mrs. Parrish! Mother will like roses so much."

" Dima, I cannot. I can take only you, if you be willing. You **will** grow up into a good healthy youth. You will be **a well-educated man**. You **will** earn money and then send

for all the Family, live together with them and give them everything!"

" But will they live that long?"

" Why! Of course they will."

" For Mrs. Parrish"—and Dima lowered his voice to a whisper—" oh, Mrs. Parrish, I am afraid of death. Before I was not? Only after Granny's death, The Professor said it was all right. But it is not, it is not!"

Dima rose from the floor and was now standing by Mrs. Parrish's chair.

" Mrs. Parrish! I know now. Granny's poor atoms lying in a coffin, in that deep tomb. Is that all right? They must be so cold, so damp, and dark, and lonely—the atoms. And we use her sofa. Now where is Granny really? Not atoms, but Granny herself? Do you know?"

" No, I do not know."

" And nobody knows." Dima kept silent for a while. Then he began again eagerly: " Granny always said she had been promised another life. New and better. What if they deceived her?"

" Do not think about it, Dima."

" But I do. I am afraid that I also will die soon. I am so thin. Look how thin I am"—and he stretched and displayed his poor bony hands. " And do not you think, Mrs. Parrish, that it is much nicer to be alive?"

" You will not die soon, Dima. You will live to Granny's age. I will take care of you."

" Do you remember Granny? How she smiled! And we always had secrets—she and I. Chiefly about something sweet to eat. She always kept some food hidden for me. And she was always sorry that I had no bed of my own. Every night she would come and cover me with her overcoat. And always she would kiss me and whisper nice words."

" Do not worry, Dima."

" But I do. I worry. I need Granny. I have tried to see her in my dreams and I never have, not even once. How completely she has gone."

" Now, Dima, think this over: will you go with me? Are you afraid of me?"

" Afraid of you? Oh, Mrs. Parrish! You are nice, you are kind. Mrs. Parrish, you are very good"—and Dima kissed her at every word. " You give us money. You bought me toys. You gave coffee to Granny. When Granny had coffee with you, Lida could eat her lunch; for you gave Granny biscuits also. Granny loved you. She told me to pray for you."

"To pray?"

" Yes. Like this: ' Oh, Lord, heal Mrs. Parrish's soul and body,' Granny loved you. When neighbours abused you—for you see you shouted so much at night they said you were a drunkard—Granny always said you were noble and good, whatever you happened to do."

After this conversation Dima was invited to have his meals with Mrs. Parrish, in her room—" to keep her company." She paid for Dima's food.

IN THE VERY BEGINNING of January Mme. Klimova moved in to live at the boarding-house.

She was one of those Russian lady-emigrants who just *could not* cope with the hardships of life. She could not cook her dinner, for the heat of the kitchen-range hurt her eyes. She could not wash her linen, for her spine ached so terribly afterwards. She could not walk much; she must use rickshaws, lest her feet become swollen. But the chief object of her apprehensions had always been her "poor heart." Too delicate, you see, too sensitive, to endure this coarse life. She just *had* to keep away from any trouble, any worry. *Peace* And *beauty* were the things she needed. One could not expect of her more effort than a little chat, or a quiet card game, or some odd sets of mah-jongg. Meanwhile, other people worked for her; for China is notable for her cheap labour, usually done on credit.

The little money she had she received from her daughter Alia, the dancer, who was, according to Mme. Klimova's words, "on the very brink of world fame." If anything kept Alia from laurels it would be only the bitter envy of her rivals. So while the last ten years Alia had danced on the threshold of fame and could not quite manage to enter the temple, Mme. Klimova lived the same ten years in the constant feverish expectation of a letter, a telegram, or something of the kind, informing her that Alia had married a fabulously rich Oriental prince; for Alia was travelling in the Orient and the Pacific Islands, and those, in Mme. Klimova's eyes, were just the places in which to marry princes. Alia's photos in every possible kind of posture and degree of nakedness covered all the walls of Mme. Klimova's dwellings, and were the constant source of her maternal pride and admiration. Alia was in her thirties now, nearing the close of a dancer's career. She "starred in a third-

rate ballet troupe somewhere on the islands. Down and down and down she went, and only Mme. Klimova was blind to the fact.

Out there on the Pacific Islands another legend was created, that of " Martyr Mother," by Alla. For Alla adored her mother. If it were not for her, she would never dance; for deep in her heart she was a shy and gentle woman. She hated this exposure of her bare gaunt flesh, the intimacy of dancing with an almost nude partner, the false passions and exaggerated emotions she had to vouchsafe before the public. But her saintly mother needed a hundred dollars monthly, and Alia never failed to send them. On her neck, in a golden locket, she wore her mother's picture, and this was the only thing Alia had to support her on the thorny path of a mediocre dancer.

With Mme. Klimova a new stream of people and ideas entered the boarding-house. As a house-warming she gave a party to which " all the world " was invited. Tea had been served in the room below, while her own " little corner of a nest " was called for that evening a *boudoir* and arranged in the way most inviting to intimacy and frivolity. " Light is so rude," she said, and covered her lamp-with a rosy shade. " Ladies like to rest their senses," she said, and perfumed the furniture with a cheap Japanese scent. " Flowers are too expensive in January," so an artificial bouquet was gathered from her wardrobe—flowers from dresses, hats, and coats making a lively bunch in a vase.

Mother had to pour tea, Lida to pass it to the guests, Dima to open the entrance door, Anna Petrovna to wash cups and spoons when needed, the Professor to take the coats and hats and carry them into his room, Khaa to provide hot water for tea at intervals.

Mrs. Parrish had also been invited, but she declined the honour.

Mme. Klimova sat at the head of the table and enjoyed her party.

She opened the performance with her beloved topic— " that enigmatic Russian soul " in men, and " that fatal

Russian charm " in women, that irresistible, although quite indefinable charm. Of course, she felt (and gave others to understand) that she, personally, had plenty of it.

But she was not the only orator in the room. An old General, in times long gone a famous Russian military authority on strategy, had been speaking about the Chinese and Japanese hostilities. " Speaking " is but a frail term for his performance, for he was shouting, gesticulating, almost sobbing in despair over the maps he had produced from his breast pocket and put on the table, sweeping away the other guests' cups and saucers.

" Look! " he implored. " But only look what is going on. This savage affair cannot be called a *war*. It is something from the Dark Ages. For war means culture, science, civilization. It has its own history, its theory, its philosophy, its methods. And here? Japan makes blunder after blunder and China fails to take advantage of it. Now look here I "

With a trembling old finger he drew a line on the map. " Here are the Japanese—now." He bent his small old head towards the map. It was a pathetic head with a wrinkled thin face and tired blinking eyes. It would inspire pity if there had been no moustaches. But a pair of long and bristly militant moustaches gave an illusion of ferocity.

Lida tried to give him his cup of tea, but he impatiently waved her away.

" In this situation," he went on, " only put at the head of the army a man of education and instantly he would become a Caesar, a Suwov, a Napoleon. He would win all the battles and in a year would rule over the half of Asia. He would be a new Genghis Khan by now."

With an eager face Dima listened to him, keeping near to his elbow and nodding his head at every word the General said. At last he was not able to restrain his feelings and he cried:

" Oh, General, what a pity they did not ask you."

But nobody was much interested in Sino-Japanese blunders, for Mme. Klimova had introduced a new and more vital topic.

" ladies, I ask for your help and advice," she began. " One of the daughters of Prince Golitin has married one of the Romanovs. How should I write to her—for, you know, I have to congratulate her. I am related to the Golitzins," she lied, " through my mother. We write to each other." (Heie again she lied.) " Certainly, in the letter I address her now as usual ' Dear Mashenka,' but on the envelope should I write ' Her Excellency,' or ' Her Highness'? This has been my special concern for the last few days. Oh, how one forgets all etiquette in this terrible life I"

Mme. Klimova was a liar, and, what is worse, a slanderer. She was born in the family of a poor dentist and was the third of five daughters. Those five sisters lived on gossip enhanced by their envy towards all who were richer or luckier than they. They hated each other, too. They led organized battles among themselves and plotted against their parents. She had married Klimov, a captain of the infantry, neither rich not remarkable in any way. But for her it had been a brilliant match. The reaction of her four spinster sisters was so sharp that it magnified Mme. Klimova's triumph to the nth degree. She lost the sense of sober reality for ever and lived in a fantastic world of chance and hazard. Her married life was never too easy, she lived by contracting debts before the Revolution, during it, and all the time after it. On leaving her parental house she left behind her real self, entering an imaginary world of balls, etiquette, and aristocracy. To look like an aristocrat became her ideal and she tried to accomplish this task by telling stories about the 6clat and splendour of her past and brooding over her " poor, broken life, once so magnificent!" With every year she promoted her deceased husband in rank and honour, till he became a governor-general, his brave breast all covered with decorations. She had a kind of inspiration while telling lies, and while she spoke she, herself, believed every word she said. It rested her soul strangely and gave her the pleasant feeling of a creative artist. Why Klimov married her, nobody ever could guess, and it was destined to remam a mystery since Klimov was

dead. Alla took after him; she had none of her mother's talent for beautifying life. Poor Alla saw it in all its cruel nakedness.

There Mme. Klimova was sitting now, in her boudoir under the rosy light of the lampshade, and in a restrained whisper she spoke about Alla.

" And the Hindoo prince Rama-Jan said to her: ' As my wife, you will have the most splendid jewels in Asia. In fact, we have cellars full of precious stones—they are waiting for you. On Mondays you will wear only emeralds, on Tuesdays rubies, on Wednesdays—sapphires. Then comes a fasting day and you will wear only opals.' "

The eyes of the audience, which consisted exclusively of ladies, sparkled like the Hindoo Prince Rama-Jan's jewels.

" Then Alia said: ' I am indifferent to jewels. There are only two in this world. One I have, the other I hope to find.' ' Which are they?' Prince Rama-Jan cried. ' Art and Love/ said Alia. ' My art I have with me. My love I have never met, but my heart keeps telling me that my hour is coming. I do not love you, Prince Rama-Jan, I cannot marry you. I will wait for my love-!' " Here Mme. Klimova paused and then added either her own ending to the story or, perhaps, Alla's conclusion to it—it was impossible to guess. " Love," she said emphatically, " a man's love—there is no substitute for that I"

Certainly nobody believed a Word of the story, and yet the women listened to it with a kind of greedy interest. Perhaps because women like lies about love.

### 3

PROFESSOR CHERNOV was sitting at his table writing. On a low chair Anna Petrovna crouched with her work. They always worked like that, together. Living for years on the move, they could not carry many books with them. Anna Petrovna served her husband as a memorandum. In case the Professor needed to make some notes, he just told his wife to memorize them. Data, figures, quotations—all those she had to keep in her head. And the miracle was that she did. Perhaps it was possible only because she had no life of her own. It seemed as if she was not a separate being but a shadow projected by her husband. Deep in her heart, there were as yet some emotions of her own, but her brain belonged to the professor and his work. Memorizing things for her husband was also beneficial to her; it helped her to get rid of so many bitter memories by replacing them with alien and unemotional images.

She mended a sock. It had been knitted by her many years ago. The fact that Anna Petrovna took pains with this sock, mending it so absorbingly, cried aloud the meagreness of their economic standing.

"What said Count Almaviva about life?" suddenly asked the Professor.

She was so absorbed in the problem of restoring the absent heel of the sock that she was startled by the sound of his voice.

"Almaviva? Which Almaviva?" she said forlornly. "I do not know."

"Anny," the Professor began sternly and with reproach,

"Anny, have you forgotten the quotations from *Beau-marchais*?"

"No, no—here it is," and she made a visible effort at recollection: "*Chacun court apres son bonheur.*"

Silence,

" *Chacun court apres son bonheur,*" thought Anna Petrovna, " *son bonheur,*" one's own happiness—and " *chacun court apres.*" But it is not true. In this house, for instance, who is running after happiness? We all try to run away from our misfortunes. If one only could! And her thoughts acquired their now habitual trend of anxiety. She perceived the coming denouement: her husband showed signs of insanity.

It all began on a day in November. He came home running, banged the door of their room and, all out of breath, leaned against it.

" Anny," he stammered, struggling for his breath, " this time I am saved."

In broken words he told her that a woman was spying after him that day on the streets. Wherever he went she followed. He tried to linger before the windows of shops, she waited for him near by. Wishing to distract her, he entered a bakery, but she kept outside standing at the corner by the window. Although she was all the time hiding, he now knew her by sight. She had only one hand; the other had been cut off somewhere near the elbow. That was good; he would not let himself be caught by a woman with only one hand—and the left hand at that. He was strong, still. He would fight—he would run away.

Since that day Anna Petrovna's heart had been heavy within her. There was nobody to whom she could confide, and she, personally, knew nothing about mental diseases. Now, helplessly, she was facing one. With the passing days her worst apprehensions began to materialize.

Once, early in the morning, the Professor suddenly got up from his bed and ran towards the window. He stood there, in the corner of the room, and leaning forward he looked out of the window.

" Anny, Anny," he whispered, " be careful! Come close, Stay behind me. Look down! You see her?"

They were living on the second floor. Looking down

they could see only the Garden with its two trees. No living soul was there at that time.

"There, there she stands," whispered the Professor; "she is hiding herself behind that tree. You see? You see?"

He clutched Anna Petrovria's hand and on tiptoe led her to the opposite corner of the room.

"We are found out!" he whispered in despair. "We are spied upon. But they do not know me! I will arouse all the youth in the world. I will lead them to victory. I am not afraid, I am not." And he trembled like a frightened child,

Anna Petrovna tried to calm him.

"We must not be afraid, Anthony. We fled from the Soviet, we fled from Manchoutikuo. We fled from Peiping. We can go to Shanghai now. No, they shall never catch us."

"Yes, really!" said the Professor, suddenly again his bright and cheerful self. "They will never catch us. This day is due the letter from the President of the United States. We shall go to America. Spies are not allowed there. We shall have a quiet life, Anny! Quiet, quiet. We shall have a chicken farm. I like so much hearing a cock at dawn. 'Peter' is the name for our cock, Anny!"

There was a reason why the Professor's persecutor took a feminine form in his imagination. During the Revolution he had been denounced by a woman, his student, and three other women had been his judges at the trial. While he was taken to prison, their only child had been brought by a woman nurse into a Detdom, and there the child died. Thus his imaginary persecutor acquired also a feminine shape.

These days, before going to bed, he would look under the bedstead and behind the curtains.

"I know their ways!" he boasted in a whisper.

But otherwise he was just himself, always on the move—intellectually and emotionally. Only changing his topics too swiftly. Only more and more prone to express his indignation. Always believing in his mission to unite the youth

of the world and to arouse them against the social evils of life. Anna Petrovna feared and hoped in turns.

Presently he began to pace the room and then he said:

"Anny! A new plan. Listen. The American President is my last hope. His is the only sane country. The process of purification must be started in America. Now, if he does not send his letter one of these days, I shall give him up and all those great leaders and influential persons. I will, forsooth, address the common people. I will go all over the town and speak at the corners of the streets. This is my duty. I cannot stand by and watch calmly how one\*part of mankind devours the other. The stronger consumes the weaker. Always Cain killing his Abel. I must appeal to that last spark of reason which as yet is left in every soul. For I feel responsible also. I am living. I am seeing. I understand what I see. I know to what end the world is going. And, Anny, Anny"—and his voice acquired the passionate tone of a real prophet—"if once, long ago, mankind tried the teaching of Jesus, and for a while they succeeded, why not now—a second time? Why would it be impossible? Kindness, simple kindness, could save the world."

He paced the room in a state of great excitement.

"I will approach the common'man. I will put my hand on his breast and say: 'Human being, nay, brother!' "

In half an hour he was eagerly writing a letter:

"My Brother Cain! I am still alive and before you have done away with me I wish to address several words to you. You have deprived me of all I had a right to possess: my country, my home, my child, my friends, my work. You sent me into exile. And when, in despair, I was leaving the parental house, you stood on the threshold of it and cursed me. I am far away now. But remember, Brother Cain, you will not possess the world after my death. It will never belong to you. Seth will be born, and he will have our parental house for himself. You aspire in vain."<sup>1</sup>

Suddenly he turned his anxious face towards Anna Petrovna and almost cried::

" **Anny I** To *whom* am I writing this letter?"

" **I don't** know, Anthony," said Anna Petrovna very low.

" How is it that you do not know? You must know, I think I have mentioned it to you. And now . . . the letter is almost ready. To whom shall I send it? To Stalin? And a copy to Hitler—eh? Anny? What do you think?"

" Anthony," said Anna Petrovna mildly, " don't send it at all "

And lowering her head over her work she thought in despair: *How could this happen? Why? His powerful, his brilliant intellect*—and small round drops fell from her eyes and glistened on her hands. With greatest tenderness the Professor took her hands, kissed them, and said in a low and trembling voice: " Do not cry, Anny. Don't cry, my dear."

## 4

IN THE MIDDLE of January a new lodger came to the boarding-house and she brought new joys and new sorrows with her.

She came in on a cold, grey morning. A tall American soldier came with her. Her blue, sparkling eyes, her golden hair, his gay smile, illuminated the way before them. She wanted a room for herself, "as small and as cheap as possible." While she went with Mother upstairs to look at the room, Dima stood in the hall, in mute adoration, his eyes on the American soldier. Dima was worshipping this tall, strong, well-groomed man. All previous objects of Dima's adoration—Dog, the Professor, the old General with maps—all melted away in the presence of this young giant. The soldier in uniform entered and won Dima's heart. A real man. A masculine being.

Dima made several hesitant steps, and—or, miracle!—the divine being in uniform said simply and in a friendly tone:

"Hallo, boy!"

In that moment, when Dima's eyes flashed rapture and devotion, an understanding was established between the two.

At last Dima had found a human being who could be his ideal. He had been brought up among women. The few men he happened to mingle with occasionally were either a bit strange, like the Professor or embittered and joyless, like Peter. Now he had found his man. And this sublime human being began the conversation strictly to the point.

"Have you a gun?"

In one moment Dima's armaments were in the hall and the newcomer, whose name was simply Harry, showed him how to use them properly. Meanwhile Dima asked many

eager questions. To Dima's surprise, there was no king in America. The Americans had a president and changed him from time to time. The president wore no crown, but could lead wars. Any one could be the president, if only he wished to very much. Even women were not excluded although they were usually content only to be wives of presidents. The country was big—forty-eight pieces—and the people there were gay. They also had cows, and the cowboys that Dima had seen once in the cinema also lived there. Children ate ice cream and candies daily (incredible!) and were allowed to chew gum, this not being bad manners in America. Nobody ever dared to throw bombs on children in America.

" You see, I am a bit uneasy about bombs. I have seen pictures: in Spain they put tablets with numbers on children and then make a photo. People may afterwards recognize the picture and know for sure under which number their child was killed."

" Gosh, that's a shame!"

" Is it not?" Dima eagerly agreed. " Children cannot fight back, they are never given bombs."

Upstairs the girl liked the room and the price. After a short hesitation she said that, before entering as a lodger, she had to explain how she stood socially. She was temporarily the wife of the American soldier downstairs. Yes, in China, among other wonders, there exists also such a social standing, almost legalized in public opinion. These temporary marriages are verbal contracts lasting two years. Foreign soldiers in China, although forbidden to marry, are not forbidden to love, and many an occasional tie turns into a real and profound devotion. Very often, as in this case, these temporary wives are Russians, for Russian girls and women in exile are exposed to all the perils of poverty and protected by no one, if they have no protection in their families, or have no families at all. Some of them make voluntarily, or are forced to make, that social standing their profession. Some few marry their first temporary husband and achieve a life of love and devotion. Here comes in that " mysterious charm " of Russian woman that kept Mme,

Klimova so aglow at the mere idea of being a Russian. Yet this "charm" had none of the qualities Mme. Klimova would covet. It resided in the simple and sincere heart, in the capacity to feel deeply and act self-sacrificingly. In modesty, also/ and in a humble awareness of one's own dejects. These traits, encountered where only selfishness and flippancy were expected, seldom failed to produce a profound impression.

Irina Gordova's story was short. She had met Harry. Soldiers were not allowed to marry in the foreign countries. They lived together without the blessing of religion and the sanction or support of law. So far they had been happy. The future looked dark and menacing. The rumours spread that the American army would soon be ordered to return home.

When Mother heard that the visitor's name was Irina Gordova she clasped her hands—Irina was the daughter of a once much-beloved girl friend.

Far away, long ago, in Russia, theirs were two wonderful estates near the town of Simbirsk—two big seats of Russian nobility. With columns, with orchards, with lilac gardens. Irina's mother loved the lilac, and about forty different species of it grew in her garden and greenhouses. The memory of her—tall, beautiful, proud—always rose in clouds of lilac fragrance. That white Persian lilac in tiny fluffy blossoms. And the heavy purple clusters, overladen with scent. The delicate tenderness of the first; the passionate density of the second.

For a fleeting moment the shabby room gave way, and Mother saw herself slowly coming up the drive, between two walls of lilac in bloom. There at the end of the alley, hiding her face in the dewy branches of lilac, stood Mariana, Irina's mother. And above an apolescent Russian sky crowned her with light and glow.

Then the picture moved away, and a cheerless wintry morning appeared in its place.

"Ira!" said Mother in a suddenly husky voice. "Where is Mariana—I mean, your mother?"

"My mother?" cried Irina. "You knew her? Who are you?"

"I was your neighbour at your estate near Simbirsk, and your mother's friend."

"Auroral You are Aurora!"

This word struck Mother's heart like a blow. Yes, she had been given the surname Aurora because of her triumphant beauty. It was, it had been true. And she had quite forgotten being Aurora once, for three seasons in her brilliant youth before her marriage. "Aurora Borealis" some called her, for she seemed to be too proud and cold. That had been part of her education—self-restraint, dignity, aloofness. Where, where was it all now? How completely gone and forgotten!

"Yes, I remember. I was called Aurora in my youth," she said lifelessly. "But tell me about Mariana."

"Mother died in 1920."

"Oh, Ira, live here with us! We shall be one family. What a miracle that we happened to meet!"

But that was no miracle at all. The wave of Russian emigrants towards the East took for its main direction Harbin, Tientsin, Shanghai.

And so Ira entered the boarding-house and at once became a member of the Family, loved by all and loving all of them. The same evening she gave tea in her room to the Family and the Chernovs, for they also belonged to the Family. Ira told about her life in tragic simplicity. Only two had been left of their, once large family—she and Aunt Ruth. They fled from the Soviet and lived in Harbin. Ira only dimly remembered her parents, their house and prosperous life. She knew well poverty, fear, anxiety, exile, and again and again poverty. Aunt Ruth gave music lessons and their daily bread had always been uncertain. Then Ruth died, and Ira was left all alone in the Far East. She had no profession; all her education had been given to her by her aunt. Thus Ira could speak four languages, play the piano, sing French romances, and embroider in the style of "Richelieu." In China all this was nothing as a means to

earn one's living. Ira became a governess in a Chinese family, moved with them to Peiping, and eventually met Harry. After an interval of two years she had allowed herself to go to the cinema, which proved momentous, for an incendiary bomb was thrown into the theatre and in the panic which followed Ira was dragged out by an American soldier. And there she lay in his arms, fifteen minutes after, clinging to him and unwilling to let him go. When at last she lifted her head and opened her eyes and looked at Harry, she recovered in a minute. She thanked him. He offered to see her home. Her home was a Chinese home and that gave Harry a shock. And under a low and starry sky, before the gate crowned with two lions and a dragon; Ira told him the story of her life. Now for about two years they had been happy, and Ira defiantly said that she refused to consider herself degraded or depraved.

"And why should you feel debased?" said the Professor. "We all, Russians in emigration, depend on chance, on luck, on hazard. We come to be adventurers. We live, if we manage to catch the strongest straw, and to keep adrift and not drown. So let us enjoy this tea, this peaceful house, this quiet hour. Let us forget about petty personal affairs. Our minds must soar above them. We are not our bodies, we are our souls. Let us leave our bodies to all their pains and sorrows, to degradation, if necessary, to old age, to ruin, to death. But keep our souls pure, our minds high I Do not mix your souls in your bodily adventures. There is no parallel between the two. The eagle *cannot* keep pace with the reptile. Enough, if he may throw some shadow of his upon that serpent."

Here Mme. Klimova tapped at the door and entered. According to her own words, she was "afire" to make acquaintance with the newcomer.

"I feel as if we all belong to one family. 'Russian aristocracy in exile.' Oh, how sad it sounds."

"Russian aristocracy here? I do not see any," said Irina coldly.

## S

MOTHER AWOKE very early, at dawn, and lay quietly on Granny's sofa. She awoke on purpose, she looked forward to it. Yesterday, deady tired, she went to bed saying to herself: *I postpone it—to-morrow, early in the morning I will think it over.* What was it? "Aurora . . . Aurora Borealis." In the evening she had looked at herself in the mirror for a long time. Could one see that she had been so beautiful in the past? Could one? Were there any traces of her beauty left? In colour? Oh, no, no! In expression? None. In the outline of her face? Yes, perhaps. If one would look *attentively*, there remained the primary draft, the basic shape of the bones which could give the idea. Everything, when passing, leaves traces, but a woman's beauty. Whither is it gone? Why? Yet this was not Mother's preoccupation. The idea which made her shudder yesterday was different. *Beauty gone—let it go! What would I do with it now? But suppose my inner self decays also at the same time. Suppose my intellectual and moral self is deteriorating with every passing day. What am I now? There were times when beauty, nobleness, high ideals, made vibrate the consonant chords of my heart. Why not now? Are there no more of those supreme things in the world, or are there no more chords in my heart? All torn? All broken? Why? Am I now living in a cold and dreary world?. The world is the same, and I used to feel so warm, so exultant in it. So this change is in me? Am I so subject to the material side of existence that, physical privations devastate my soul also? For years I did not have food enough and ate food that I did not like—this dried my skin, I see the consequence. But could it dry my lope of life, my imagination, my sense of beauty? Why? Priest John eats almost nothing, and he can even prophesy. Se lives on*

*spiritual heights. Why not I? So the reason is in me, not in my life. Could be helped? Could it? But she had been too tired yesterday. She said to herself: I shall postpone it. To-morrow I will awake two hours earlier and I will think it over.*

The dim, sad twilight began to pour through the windows, and one by one the things of the room stepped forward: six chairs tied together, with Lida sleeping on them; an extension dining table, with sides hanging down, because of the lack of space; the old, clumsy cupboard in the two lower drawers of which lay all the linen of the Family.

*// I could only have a rest—lie in bed one week. Not to move. Not to live this jerky life. Not to think about money, or, better, about means of getting credit all the time, all the time. Perhaps this anxiety about food, rent, coal, underlying all my existence—perhaps it is exactly what has dried up my soul.*

Lida moved, and all the six chairs gave a staccato squeak. Now there was more light in the room, and the peculiar details of things were revealed. The table was scratched. Lida's toe peeped out of the coat with which she was covered. The cupboard looked older. On the white door Dima's fingerprints were visible.

These fingerprints started a new course of ideas. One day Mrs. Parrish, in that new polite and calm manner of hers, had offered to adopt Dima and to take him to England. Mother's first impulse was to be offended. Why? To give the boy away—to take the boy—is he a thing? And she declined the offer in a most amiable but cold manner. She had even forgotten about the offer. Now, with Granny gone, Dima spent almost all the day with Mrs. Parrish. And looking back over this period of time Mother thought:

*Is not this my fault? Should I not show more affection to my children? Laugh more, express more of interest or approbation? Could I not remember the jokes we had in my childhood and tell them? I must change. I must make my self over.*

Yet she felt too tired to think more. Just to lie calmly.  
Hours, days, weeks\*

At this moment she heard voices at the gate of the back yard. One masculine voice was calling Khan. The voice was strange. It sounded excited. Some low murmuring voices made a chorus.

*I won't get up. Whatever is happening, I won't,* thought mother.

She heard Khan's angry voice. Then his astounded Exclamation. Then his hasty steps.

*I won't get up. Whatever is happening, I won't,* thought Mother.

Suddenly a sharp, thin sound cut the air. It was Khan's voice. The cry was abrupt, but terrible. There was a moment of suspense, and low murmuring voices began the refrain of the chorus.

In one movement Mother was on her feet. Hastily she dressed and woke Lida.

"Lida, put on your dressing gown and wake Peter. I think something has happened to Khan."

Lida was smiling sleepily.

"Something happened to Khan?" She evidently could not grasp the meaning of the words, and yawned: "Well, something happened to him!"

But Mother was in the back yard. On the steps of the kitchen was sitting an old Chinese woman clad in rags. Her dishevelled head, with a bald spot on the crown, was uncovered. Dry grey meshes of hair hung down the wrinkled, dirty face. On her knees sat a boy. He was frightened. Some kind of eye disease made him look quite miserable.

That was all that remained of Khan's big family which had been living in the country.

Khan was standing before the old woman and bowed in the most resigned and pitiful way. She was telling him about the disaster; her voice was expressionless, as if she were saying something which she had known long ago by heart and had become fired of it. A group of Chinese stood at a distance,

When Mother knew what had happened, her first feeling was that of despair:

*Oh, God, she thought, is there no end to all this? I am tired. I have no time to think about my soul. No, I do not think that I can help. I shall go in and lie in bed. I am^ tired.*

But half-way in she stopped. She stood still for a moment. When she turned she was another woman. The tiredness was gone. A light was in her eyes.

"Now, Khan, ask the old lady in. Give them food. If the old lady consents, better bring her into the house, into the empty room. You need not work to-day, Khan. Take care of your mother."

She felt easier now, as if her tension had found issue in the activity. Something must be done about the boy's eyes. She had to ask Peter. There were free hospitals in the town, perhaps.

In half an hour Khan's misery became known among his countrymen, and a pilgrimage of anxious men began to drop in to see his mother and to ask her about their own families. They were coolies, servants, rickshaw men—all working people, earning their living in the town, while their families tilled fields in their native province. They could not get much of good cheer from the old lady. She told them that the Japanese attacked the village, burnt the houses, killed the people. Only the very old and very young were spared. She and the boy, her grandson, were set free. They moved slowly towards Tientsin, for when the Chinese troops retreat they usually take the railways to pieces and carry them away. The old lady was extremely exhausted, yet she refused the invitation into the house and lay in a small lump on a bed in the pantry. The boy lay at her side and whimpered. His eyes gave him much pain.

Peter said that there were two places at Tientsin where the poor Chinese could appeal for medical help in case of eye disease: the American Red Cross and the Methodist Optical Hospital/

In general the Chinese 'population in towns were accus-

tomed to foreign medicine and appreciated it. Therefore, it was not difficult to get Khan's consent to take his son to a hospital.

"You will go with him, Khan. Then somebody else must help you. I cannot leave the house. We'd better ask Anna Petrovna."

They could get the doctor's help only on the third day. All *6i* them returned from the hospital quite contented. The illness was not dangerous. The first aid helped so much that the boy was not whimpering any longer. He was sleepy and quiet. Khan felt better. Anna Petrovna's face was radiant.

"It gave me such joy to see how kindly and with what attention they treated the child," she was saying at their evening tea. "The patients have to pay a copper coin each—well, this is almost nothing even for the poorest—and they have the best possible treatment by the best specialists in the country. If you could only see those crowds afflicted with eye diseases. What misery! And then this efficient and competent treatment. The cleanliness in the hospital. The kind and cheerful manner in which the patients are met. And all this kind and noble work going on at the same time and almost in the same place where the war develops all its terrors. I was so touched seeing that charity still exists, and in the same name, in the name of Christ."

Mother listened to her and smiled. They were sitting in the Chernovs' room. Suddenly the bell rang. Mother went downstairs to open the door. It was Peter. His face was more stony than usual and some new lines of suffering were carved on it. Peter never had his own separate room to which to bring his pain and shut the door upon it. So he sat at the table in their only room. Mother approached him\* and put her hand on his shoulder.

"Peter, what happened?"

"Oh," he said, "I have been to the meeting at the Russian Emigrants' Bureau. It all went under the supervision of two Japanese officers and the question of a close collaboration of the Russian emigrants with Japan was openly discussed—serving in their armies, fighting against

China—that is, against the country which sheltered its. Japan, from her side, promised—through those two officers—to help the Russian monarchists after the conquest of China, to restore the old regime. I could not resist my impulse, I said that I, personally, refused to enter my country supported by Japanese guns. I had not time to conclude my speech, there was such indignation, such a burst of cries and threats—yet some were on my side. I rose to go. At that moment one of the Japanese officers came to me and slapped me in the face with his hand!"

" Oh, Peter!" cried Mother. " Oh, Peter! What had you done to him?"

" Nothing."

" Nothing." Incredulity, then indignation, was expressed in her eyes. " Nothing? You had to kill him on the spot? You belong to a noble family. We may be killed, but not beaten ! Better to die with dignity than to live without it." And suddenly, somewhere on the other plane of her thinking, ran quickly: *This means that Dima must go to England.*

"Aunty," said Peter, " it was not the lack of courage. It was because I thought of the Family. Had I killed him, that would have been my end. But you? It would involve all of you in suspicion and persecution. You are all alone here."

Then Mother came to her senses and wondered at her own outburst.

" Am I not ridiculous? After all these years of humiliation I am speaking in this militant tone! I am ashamed, Peter! Instead of calming you. .. Now, Peter, let us speak no more about it. You must have a rest. Don't think about all that Have your tea. Sleep."

And tenderly she kissed his forehead. When her eyes were near his face she noticed the darkened spot on one side of it—the spot left by the heavy Japanese hand.

"Peter," she whispered, " be careful! With these Japanese lodgers in the house. And then Mme. Klimova

is the president of the Russian Emigrants Women's Society."

She could not undress herself, so heavy was her heart. And there she stood bent for several moments, and again some voice was saying within her: *This means that Dima must go to England.*

*I cannot, I must not make hasty decisions, Mother thought when going to bed. I am too tired. My mind is not clear. I must wake up early in the morning to-morrow and think it all over.*

## 6

THIS AT LAST, was something like a quiet day! The house was so silent! It seemed emptier and bigger. Mother finished the dusting and, although tired, she felt somehow relieved by the tranquillity and stillness. How good to be alone for a while! Nobody to take care of, nothing to attend to—the repose of it! Slowly she went downstairs musing about what to do with that richness—silence and rest!

*I will sit quietly here in the room, at the window. I will look at those two trees—Granny liked to rest there. And I will think it all over. Peter has lost his job. This week is the last.*

Suddenly she felt very hungry. She decided to have a cup of hot tea—to banish that gnawing dullness in her body. What a pleasure it would be sitting alone and drinking tea, all alone; for Mother never had time even for quiet eating. She ate occasionally, on the move: she had lost the habit of eating properly.

While preparing tea for herself she wondered where all the people could be. Mrs. Parrish had gone with Dima. They went away in a taxi, for she planned on buying things for her voyage. Mother could not resist the plea in Dima's eyes, when the taxi stopped at their door. Dog went with them. Ira and Lida went to the Japanese Concession. Ira planned to buy some knitting wool to make a sweater for Harry. The Chernovs also went somewhere, he in haste, murmuring something angrily, and she running after him, all anxiety and solicitude. Mme. Klimova, pompous and noisy, left the house to preside at a meeting of the utmost historical importance. Well, everybody was somewhere.

The tea was ready. She took her cup and thought:

*I will drink it, warm myself, and then think it all over slowly, quietly.*

And again the unusual silence of the house struck her now as something frightening. Was there something menacing in the air? She poured another cup and the sounds of pouring water seemed so thin and small, as if afraid to break the silence. She sat, now uneasy, listening to the silence. Suddenly she was on her guard. A distant, almost imperceptible movement was going on somewhere in the house. It was a faint sound of stirring, far and near at the same time. Yes—as if somebody hid himself, and, on his guard also, was listening in ambush—listening to the sounds produced by Mother's movements. Mother clearly and instantly felt sure that someone was listening to her.

Mother's heart began to beat slowly, with rare and heavy thuds. The fact that it was a bright day and that there was no visible reason for fright made her even more terrified. She felt as if some current were coming from a spot in the house, pushing her away, away.

Slowly, cautiously, a door was being opened somewhere in the house. It stopped—again the same low sound of an opened door. Silence again. A halt—a moment of suspense—a standstill.

And suddenly sounds brought life back to the house. Slowly and cautiously, but now steadily and with decision, the door was closed and soft steps were nearing the hall where Mother was sitting—the door opened and a figure slid into the hall. A Chinaman, clad as a poor coolie, bent under the weight of a bale wrapped in dirty canvas, was stealthily, not coming, but gliding noiselessly across the hall, away, towards the corridor, across it—into the back yard, then away, into the back street—disappearing there. Whether he saw Mother or not, he made no sign of it. He just slid away, out of her view.

**There was something unreal** in the sudden appearance and disappearance of that silent bent figure. Mother was trembling. Who was he? Where was he hiding? **How could he have entered** the house? What had he carried away in **that bundle?**

**This was an unknown man—and yet there** had been some-

thing familiar in that Chinese face and figure. Where had she seen him before? Or had she seen him before at all?

And then suddenly Mother was all shaken: *It was Mr. Sung! Never before had she seen him in Chinese clothes and without his spectacles. But why? Whither was he going so unusually clad with that bundle? Why did not he, always so amiable, even look at her?*

Then the reason dawned upon Mother. Hastily she went to Mr. Sung's apartment and flung the door open. The rooms were empty. But how completely empty were those two rooms! Not a thing which belonged to Mr. Sung! Bare walls and bare furniture! The rooms usually so full of books and papers and maps, and plans—for he was an engineer, a professor. And rolls and rolls of manuscripts. All gone.

Suddenly there was a hasty and imperative ring at the front door, and at the same time some one entered the house from the back door, which was not locked. The bell rang and rang. The hasty steps were nearing. Mother closed the door of Mr. Sung's apartment and rushed to the entrance. Hardly had she opened the door when two of her Japanese lodgers ran in, pushing Mother away. Two others stood behind; and the fifth Japanese gentleman, hardly recognizable with a black bandage across his eyes, stood barring the exit. The first two rushed to Mr. Sung's apartment. Instantly they emerged and climbed upstairs. She heard them rushing toward the attic—and she had never known that the door to the attic could be opened! They cried out something, and the other two Japanese ran out of the house into the back street. The fifth gentleman with the bandaged eye sat quietly on the chair and looked at Mother. He was now neither bowing nor smiling. He did not even deign to say a greeting. He began to question her. But this was on the English Concession. She was not obliged to answer him. So she said that he, who had been living here, and his friends must know everything about the house and its inhabitants better than she did, and she had nothing to add. For her

situation was clean-cut by now: Mr Sung had escaped. The Japanese gentlemen were spies.

Just at this moment Khan entered the hall. It seemed that he was delighted to meet the Japanese gentlemen. Instantly they assaulted him with their questions, and he answered with the utmost readiness. Yes, he had some information to give. He was but a poor servant, but glad to be useful. Yes, Mr. Sung went away. Just to-day. Yes, he went to Peiping to visit his female cousin; for, you see, she most happily gave birth to a male-child. Yes, a nephew had been born to Mr. Sung. Mr. Sung wanted to celebrate the coming New Year among his cousin's family. Will he come back? Sure, he will be back! right after the New Year celebration. The address? Yes, he had the address, that is the address of the hotel where Mr. Sung planned to stay. Things? What things? Yes, he had to take some eatables for the New Year's celebration, and, perhaps, some clothing. Mr. Sung's other things? Sent away. Yesterday in the evening a car brought some boxes in for Mrs. Parrish, and Mr. Sung thought it wise to hire the same car, since it stood empty at their door; and the English lady had no objection. Where were those things taken? That he did not know, for he did not go with the car. What was sent in the car? Mostly books. In what language? Khan was sure it was Chinese. What about? Oh, Khan was a humble and almost illiterate man, he never touched one of them. Would Mr. Sung come back? Surely, for, you\* see, Mr. Sung liked this place and this town. Only after the New Year's celebration. Where had he—Khan—been? Sent by Mr. Sung to buy some tea of the best quality and give it as a present to the landlady, as a token of Mr. Sung's gratitude for her attention. Seen loitering in the neighbourhood? This was possible—there are always things to discuss among the neighbours. What about? Mostly the coming New Year's celebration. The parcel of really excellent tea was examined and then given to Mother. It bore a red congratulation card.

The same afternoon the Japanese lodgers left the house,

and that made two more rooms to let in the future. All the evening was spent in the discussion of the event. They spoke in English and in low voices, lest Mme: Klimova should hear or understand. For she was on the Japanese side in all this. The Professor was thunderstruck by the idea that he, so clear-sighted, never guessed that Mr. Sung was a prominent Chinese Leader, that he was spied upon by the Japanese, and that he spied upon them too. That holes had been bored in the attic floor which gave a view on the proceedings in the room of the Japanese gentlemen; that Mr. Sung's documents were of the greatest importance—the papers with which Mr. Sung was always surrounded. Now, when the situation was cleared, the old Professor interpreted it with gusto.

"He could not find a better place than this house. First it was in the English Concession. Second, an inconspicuous boarding-house with a constant flow of people, moving in and out; Always in view, Mr. Sung could not be quietly kidnapped from his rooms. Well, he was coming to live here; but why did he never give a hint to me? And I was always so open and sincere with him—about my plans."

"If only he is not caught," said Lida, all trembling. "He would be killed then."

"I hope he will get away safely," said Mother. Peter was silent.

Suddenly Mme. Klimova tapped into the room on her high heels.

"My gobdness! What a successful meeting we had to-day. *All is decided.* At last! Japan will help us to restore monarchy, and we will give Siberia to Japan!"

"Who decided that?" asked the Professor.

"We. The ladies of the Russian Emigrants' Society. Under my presidency."

"Do you not think that you are too generous, giving such pieces of our country at the start?" asked the Professor hotly.

"It is not much, if they will restore the old regime for us."

"I do not see what you, personally, win by restoring the

old regime," said the Professor. "Are you not better off as you are?"

"What? What?" gasped Mme. Klimova, and she could not continue. All *frappee* with indignation, she left the room.

THE NEXT DAY was a busy day for the Chernovs.

The Professor received a letter from Europe which evidently had been opened and censored by the Japanese officials at the post office. Although the letter had no importance, the fact upset him.

Immediately he went to the British Consulate to draw their attention to this violation of English laws on their own concession. He was received by one of the Vice-Consuls.

When, in a speech full of eloquence and indignation, he exposed the purpose of his visit, the Vice-Consul answered calmly that he, personally, *did not believe* that the mail could be thus interfered with, and all such talk he considered as empty gossip.

"Sir," said the Professor, rising, "sir, unfortunately I have not brought the envelope with me—you see, I have been accustomed to move among gentlemen who believe each other—I shall send you the envelope to-day. But, sir I To be told in an official place by an official person that my words are not true—oh, sir, I was not sure of finding protection here, but I was sure of meeting with civility. I thought that before being nominated a Vice-Consul you had passed the usual examination in courtesy, that you treated politely the visitors in this office. Pardon me this, sir, I am old enough to be your father, and that is the reason why I must excuse you. I am going, sir, but before I go let me express to you my sincere wish: may you never be in my position."

And he left the Consulate. He reached home in a state of utter agitation. In the hall he found Irina and Mme. Klimova, and told them about his visit.

"Well," said Mme. Klimova, "I do not see why you

are so full of indignation. The Vice-Consul did not actually call you a liar."

"It would be better if he had." And the Professor was aflame again. "If he did. I could think that he was a rude man, or a stupid one—and dismiss the event from my memory. 'But this polite and careful wording of the insult shows that he was an educated man. He just did not wish to condescend to a Russian, whoever that Russian might be. We simply do not count in their world. Oh, the old times, the Middle Ages, were better than this. In the darkest days of the Middle Ages, a man of science—be he an Arab, a German, a Jew—could freely go to his learned brother. He would knock at the door and say who he was. The door *would* be opened. He would enter and say '*Argutamus*,' and as equal to equal they would discuss their problems; for no race or social rank could separate intelligent human beings."

"But," Mme. Klimova interrupted him, "he did not actually throw you out of his door."

Here Irina took the Professor's arm and led him to his room.

Once at his writing table, he wrote a letter:

DEAR SIR:

In reference to the audience you have kindly given me to-day, I am sending you the envelope bearing the unmistakable signs of being opened by  *censor*. I hope you will not resent this my persistence, for it happens sometimes that those who have lost the protection of their Government are not indifferent to losing their dignity in addition.

He put the envelope and this letter in the hands of Anna Petrovna, and told her to go immediately to the British Consulate.

Thither she went, but on the steps of the building she lingered. Oh, how high are those staircases of other people's houses, if you enter them as a suppliant; how thick the

walls, how cold the greetings. She hesitated. She looked round, she looked at the envelope. Why try again? It is so rare, that miracle of human kindness and understanding.

Suddenly she felt tired. Tired of climbing the steps, of opening the doors, of asking politely whether she might enter, of smiling, smiling, smiling. And slowly she tore the letter across and threw the pieces away. The wind rolled them down Victoria Street. She stood there, on the steps, wondering at what she had done. Was she not *yet* accustomed to being jostled and slighted and snubbed by those who were stronger and happier, or both—also by those who were richer, healthier, luckier—by Russians, by foreigners, by whites, by yellows? By those who had a visible superiority over her and by those who had not? This was only once more. Let those steps be high, let those walls be strong and cold—let them be. She had no strength to fight them. She and her husband—they were almost finished now.

Tears began to overflow her worn and pathetic face. Tears of weakness, she could not hold them back. Oh, the bitterness of their homeless existence! Unwanted guests everywhere.

Blind with tears, she went straight ahead and came to the English Park. She sat on a bench. She was weeping soundlessly, all trembling with cold.

"Don't cry—please!" said a tender little voice. A beauty, no more than five years old, clad in blue, was standing before Anna Petrovna. With a small hand in a tiny blue glove the girl tried to wipe the tears away.

"Don't cry," she repeated. "They want you to behave?" And the child gave signs of starting to weep herself, for company.

"I will not, I will not," said Anna Petrovna hastily, and smiled.

After all she was offered sympathy and compassion. It was given spontaneously by this child. But in ten years' time this girl would never repeat that action. She would bloom into a well-poised, well-mannered girl. She would never more stop before a lonely and shabby woman weeping

on a bench in the park. She would, perhaps, give such a phenomenon a fleeting glance and dismiss the sympathy with the supposition that the woman might be drunk or a criminal, or both. Ladies never weep on park benches. She would go the easiest way of dealing with human suffering, that of supposing that the sufferers deserved their destiny. The child would lose, forever, the wonderful gift of a free sincerity and compassion. That is to say, the child would become well-educated.

Anna Petrovna kissed the blue glove, rose and went home. There, on the steps, she remembered that she had not fulfilled the errand of her husband. This was the first time she had failed him.

In the hall were only Harry and Dima.

*/ shall rest here for a while, thought Anna Petrovna. / must think how to explain my behaviour. He may be annoyed,*

Dima, meanwhile, was telling Harry about Russia and the Russian Revolution.

" It was a big country. There were rich and poor. The rich had their Tsars. Every Tsar bore his son in order that there might be no end of them. Then the poor got angry and bore their Lenin. They took everything from the rich and gave it to the poor. So the poor became rich and the rich became poor—understand? "

" Sure! " said Harry gaily. " But what is communism'?" "

" That Stalin made."

" And where did they get Stalin? "

For a moment Dima was stalled. " I think Lenin bore him," he said at last brightly. " Instead of a son, you know. And communism is like that: no one has anything."

This chatter refreshed Anna Petrovna, and she found strength to go to her room. When she saw her husband-pale and haggard — she burst into weeping again. She could not repress her tears.

"The Professor looked at her with blank eyes. Then suddenly tenderness lit his face.

" Anny! Weeping? Why? Are you not happy? "  
And standing in the twiddle of the room he said: —

*Tears of humanity! Oh, tears of humanity  
Early at dawn, late in the night  
Numberless, countless, shed in the darkness  
Shed in the silence. . . .*

He never asked Anna Petrovna about the letter. He had quite forgotten it.

Miss PINK was "doing slums." According to schedule: on Tuesdays from 10 to 12 p'clock.

Miss Pink was a Christian by religion and an "active kind woman" by profession. She was also many other things, and a member of all the benevolent societies worth mentioning. As a social type, she was a born reformer; she just could not stand a vice in others. Like all great reformers, she was quite alone in this huge over-populated world.

One could easily compare Miss Pink to a quail hunter. Here he is sitting on the grass, so tranquil, so benignant with his reed pipe, which serves as a lure for his game; for those small quails, with their good flesh and passion for music deep in their hearts, hear the appealing sounds of the reed pipe. They lag, they hesitate, they approach—they are fascinated. For a fleeting moment they and their hunter are one hymn of pure joy. Yet he, the hunter, is sharply watching, and how cunningly, how shrewdly watching, if only out of the corner of his eye, for the most credulous quail, the most arduous lover of harmony in the flock; for precisely this bird would be the catch for his supper.

For this bird, Miss Pink came to Number 11, a boarding-house.

She was an expert in sinless existence, having never broken any Commandment, having never done a thing on which she could not pride herself. Faultless behaviour had become her natural state. Not only her soul, but all her person, even her clothes, even the air she breathed—all was clean, and respectable and edifying, the product of a righteous life.

But let us begin with her shoes. Long ago and far behind are the times of barefooted preachers, the times of prophets

wearing rags, of homeless ascetics, covered with sweat and dust. Miss Pink wore brown walking shoes. But this is a poor definition. They were not a pair you could buy ready-made. They were the real thing. Genuine. From London, England. Comfortable. Of an excellent quality, as to the leather; of a quiet tint, as to the colour. Big, nice, noble, modest. Rather low-heeled. They were a thing of race, of rank, with an historical background, the product of the systematical development of the shoe-making industry. Money was not enough to buy them; one would also need a cultivated sense of one's own bodily comfort. It is difficult to give an adequate eulogy to those walking shoes, especially for the people who never wore them. It is not very easy to buy them. Your attempt would be in vain if you did not belong to Miss Pink's class. Try to enter an English store where they are sold. The duchess behind the counter would be annoyed if you were not the "right kind" of customer or if she simply did not "fancy" you. With a delicate movement of a delicate hand she would wave you to somebody else, or even wave you away. But if Miss Pink should ask for a pair, the duchess, all eagerness, would instantly turn into a first-class chambermaid. Understand the difference?

Thus perfectly shod Miss Pink approached Number 11 with her decisive, pace. But why not look at Miss Pink's person as a whole?

All—her stockings, skirt, her fur coat, felt hat, leather gloves, all were in harmony with her shoes. All—brown, dignified, at peace and accord with each other and their bearer. There is no need to mention that all were *clean*. As clean they were as her past, her present, and certainly her future. The idea of dirt was incongruous with Miss Pink's person. Her things were always perfectly washed, ironed, brushed by yellow hands, all by that cheap Chinese labour which is very handy to reformers living there, giving them enough leisure to espouse any cause or vocation.

On the steps of Number 11 Miss Pink opened her handbag (brown leather), took out a card with the name and address,

looked at it, then put it back, rang the bell, and asked for Irina Gordova.

When Ira opened the door of her room Miss Pink introduced herself and was invited to come in. She was much relieved to hear how good Ira's English was, for Miss Pink hated misunderstandings.

Being asked to sit down, Miss Pink took a chair, and for a while they sat silently. Ira wondered who this visitor could be, and why her face was so grave.

At last Miss Pink looked at Ira with a kind of mild reproach and said with a sigh:

" Miss Gordova, you are living in sin."

Ira did not grasp the meaning of this remark. She decided to take it humorously and answered:

" I think we all do that."

Although almost imperceptibly, a shudder went through Miss Pink's person.

" Miss Gordova, *you are living in sin*. You are losing your soul for eternity. Let me help you. Let me lead you out of the peril."

As Miss Pink went on with her speech, Ira began to understand the meaning of what was happening to her. *She was a fallen woman*. Her visitor was some kind of social worker or a missionary.

A wave of hot blood rushed over the whole of her body, as<sup>1</sup> if a hot shower sprang from her heart and washed her.

*Oh, shame! Oh, the base shame! So this is now my social standing*. Indignation, hatred, rose in her. *So while I thought I was alone in the world with my problems, somewhere those ladies spied on me, found out my name, my address*.

She began to tremble. *What right has she to come to me? Where was she when I needed somebody's support?* Yet she could not say a word.

Miss Pink, looking into the girl's hot face, seeing her trembling, was ready to trumpet the victory. Methodically and logically she put before Irina all the proofs of her shame, of the dangers she was exposed to, of the baseness of her life.

But Irina was not listening to her. Thoughts whirled in her head.

*You! You! My happy sister. You know nothing of despair, poverty, the misery of existence. You? Prosperous, protected with your social standing and money. I hate you with your pure but cold heart! Oh, that cold voice. I hate you!*

Miss Pink, hearing no objections, hurried to strike while the iron was hot. She took a Bible from her handbag, and in few words made evident what a shameless sinner Irina was.

At last Ira recovered some of her strength and decided to fight.

"Thank you, Miss Pink, it is really very kind of you to be so interested in my life," she said. "I never thought before, but now, after you have said it to me, I see that really *I am living in sin*. But my *man*"—she used the word "man" intentionally—"is leaving soon. I am willing to be saved—and take as an ideal your pure and comfortable life." She was sure that Miss Pink would be offended at the irony of her words. But Miss Pink was extremely unimaginative. She had no sense of humour. There was no joke in the World which could make Miss Pink smile.

"I am ashamed of myself—and I am ready to be saved by you. If you can give me a job—an honest job, certainly—I give you my word to be reformed," said Irina.

Miss Pink disliked her remark.

"I do not believe in giving *things*!" she said coldly.

"Then what have you to offer me?"

Patiently Miss Pink explained that she was offering a spiritual help and advice. She would not commercialise the affair of a soul's salvation. She expected to meet a disinterested volition on Ira's side. She could offer only her spiritual guidance her message and her prayers.

In order to put an end to this humiliating and painful meeting, Irina arose and said that for the present she thanked Miss Pink ever so much, and that she would think it all over.

She was glad Miss Pink had given her that fuller view of her shameful life.

Solemnly Miss Pink arose and, after some additional admonition, departed.

Left alone, Irina looked around with widely opened eyes. This small room, the few pieces of furniture — oh, the poverty! Oh, the ugliness of her life! She was happy here, but some people could not let one alone. They would come with their daggers and poison, and would not leave off until they had ruined the pitiful illusion of paradise. Suddenly, with no previous signs or preparation, she burst into loud, desperate sobbing. She thrust her head against the wall, and with hot tears she tried to overcome her moral suffering by the physical pain.

Attracted by those sounds, Mme. Klimova slipped into the room. Hardly on the threshold she took in the situation\*

A woman in a fit of tears! According to Mme, Klimova, the unique cause of any feminine chagrin could be only *a man*. Once on the spot of the calamity, she started a front attack.

" Oh, dear! Oh, *darling* It happens—for men won't marry.

Thus speaking she busily poured water into a glass, held Irina's shoulders, and tried to make her drink.

*And I thought she had an aristocratic upbringing, she thought. Oh, no! Crying like a peasant girl at a funeral So even I do not know an aristocrat when I see one. But Mme. Klimova never halted at blunders, if they were hers.*

Aloud she was saying:

" We women, we must be shrewd—don't be unhappy—don't cry in this way—it spoils the eyelashes—they fall out—and the eyes, dear, the eyes become a shade paler."<sup>1</sup>

She took a towel, poured some cold water on it, and put it around Irina's forehead. Then she made Irina recline on the sofa, sat beside her, and continued:

" Listen, darling—with your charm—well, let him go—you will be better appreciated by another one; for you see, dearest, in love one always gains by the experience."

She busily took off Irina's slippers, covered her with her coat, again sat beside her, and continued:

" Take my advice: go to Shanghai. - This town is too small for a good career. Shanghai I No better town for success. War is going on there, but there is no time better for the haphazard marriage than wartimes.. All in haste—no one looks deep into the future and things. In Shanghai, witty all those foreign people around — you, with your charm—military' officers, travellers, newspapermen—all going to and fro, doing practically nothing. One is never so much inclined to risks in love as in days of uncertainty and troubles. Believe me, in Shanghai they really marry anyone on sight whether they have permission or not—and a marriage remains a marriage—and again, in Shanghai there is so much money."

Little by little coming to herself, Irina heard:

" But, child, if men do lose their heads, women never do. We are on our guard. In Shanghai an English or American soldier pays to his sweetheart from 60 to 150 dollars per month. Think of this! Take one! The French are worse—jealous, always suspecting, and they cheat for money."

While Mme. Kliniova was thus speaking, Irina thought:  
*/ must slap her face! I must spit on her! I will push her on the floor and beat her, and trample her body.*

But she did nothing of the kind, for a torpor was taking possession of her. As fascinated she heard:

" Civilian Frenchmen are worse, too exacting as to the style in a woman, yet they often marry in China—even the rich ones marry any one, if she is up to their fancy. Now I don't know what has happened to the Germans. They used to be such jolly company, lots of them. Now they keep to themselves. Nowadays it is almost impossible for a Russian girl to marry a German, however great her charm. Italians are too poor, and you would always risk having a dagger thrust into your back, not money ia your pocket. Japanese—that *never I* They cannot appreciate a charming woman. As to Chinese—although some of them **are** fabulously rich,

*better never try.* Afterward a girl is marked and her career spoiled. Certainly; they marry, but soon they get tired of a girl, and then send her into the country, to some awful village; they would say, to pay a visit to the tombs of their ancestors. And the girl never comes back. Some say she is poisoned by his family.

Mme. Klimova shuddered at the picture she displayed, and then began the convincing part of the advice:

"No, child, you take my advice: keep to the English people, keep on the right side of civilisation and culture. Their invincible pounds! Even American dollars cannot be compared to them. Have you ever seen a pound in gold? I never have. And look at the rates on the stock exchange! Oh, my dear, with an English soldier at your side you would feel like a duchess."

*No, thought Irina. / cannot spit on her—/ must not. She means to be helpful to me. This dirt is pouring out of a pure source of pity. She has nothing to give, except this. In her way she is doing the same as Miss Pink was trying to do, to help, to save me. Only they approach me from different angles.*

"Dearest," said Mme. Klimova, aflame with her own wisdom, "if you want a serious man always take an Anglo-Saxon. At once you acquire self-respect in your own eyes\* You would get this from him, for self-respect is contagious. And Anglo-Saxons always have plenty of self-respect—even the worst of them could not help having it."

*Is this all her first-hand experience? thought Irina. Will it be my experience also? Could one false step lead so far?*

And again she began to sob, not so loudly and desperately as before, but with a new bitterness; and Mme. Klimova felt obliged to postpone further enlightenment on the possibilities of the life of a girl with plenty of charm, and to busy herself with the nursing of Irina.

## 9

PASSPORTS, which were taken and given as a matter of fact to any citizen by one's native country, became the constant preoccupation in the life of Russian emigrants. In China passports were given to them on the basis of their Russian documents and had to be revised and extended every year. When the Japanese had taken Tientsin this governmental function was given to the Bureau of Russian Emigrants, under the strict observance of the Japanese officials. Emigrants had always had to pay for every extension of their documents; and the fee was the same for every one among them.

Now the passport business became a fantastic affair at Tientsin. Passports might be given and they might not. The fee for one varied, Sometimes being higher than the value of all the property of those from whom money was asked. The condition on the basis of which a Russian emigrant could be given his passport was his loyalty to Japan.

In the first six months of this regime about two hundred Russian emigrants without passports trod the streets of the town. The only places where they could reside were the English and French Concessions where passports were not required from the residents. In any other part of Tientsin they would be arrested by the Japanese police.

What is a man without a passport? He cannot live in the country and he cannot leave it. There are two doors open to him: either death or prison.

Peter was refused the extension of his passport and no longer had legal documents by which he would be permitted to live in any part of the world. He became as if non-existent. Nobody's subject, the citizen of no country. He had also no work and could have no hope of finding any. Day by day for hours he walked along the streets of the two concessions, and the rest of the time he sat alone in one

of the empty rooms. Mother knew that he was looking for a solution.

Once in the morning he said to Mother:

" I am going to the Soviet Russian Consulate to start my request for Soviet citizenship."

Mother quietly sat in her chair and, motionless and silent, she looked at Peter, Her eyes were round with bewilderment,

" Consider it, Aunty. Without a passport I will never be able to get work. I would never be able to leave the borders of these two concessions. In case the concessions should be abolished I should go to prison. There is no prospect of a normal life. I do not want to be passive. I will try to fight my life through. I am Russian. Russia cannot disown me. I cannot be a communist. But in the whole of one hundred and sixty million of Russian population the Communist Party consists of only one million four hundred thousand. I will belong to the rest who are not communists, yet live in their country."

" Peter," said Mother, " you are a grown man. It is your life. I cannot advise you. I will pray for you, and God will lead you in the right way."

After the Japanese invasion the U.S.S.R. Consulate was located in the English Concession.' When Peter approached the building he saw two Russians of the Emigrant Bureau standing on the steps of the entrance and holding cameras ready. They made photos of all who entered the Soviet Consulate. Those, snapshots were given to the Japanese officials and thus a record was kept of all who had any connection with the Soviet officials.

Peter was photographed by the men with whom only a few days ago he had sat at the meeting in the Bureau which had proved so disastrous for him. Now an abyss divided them.

With great difficulty he managed to be received by the Consul himself. He was a man neither good nor bad, not very clever and far too weak for the responsibilities laid upon him. In addition, he constantly suffered from liver complaint and the climate of China only aggravated his condition.

Mournfully he listened to Peter, keeping his hands on his right side, where a gnawing pain in the liver made a *memento mori* tune in his spirit.

When Peter concluded with the request for the U.S.S.R. passport, the Consul answered bitterly:

" You come a bit late, citizen. Where \*have you been all these twenty years?"

" Be human," said Peter, " We both are Russian. I am going back to Russia because the emigrants here support Japan. As far as my non-acceptance of communism could be passive, I remained in the ranks of the emigrants. Now they order me to be active and that is to harm my native country, even if indirectly. I refuse. I come to you. I cannot be with the communists spiritually, but I give my word of honour not to act against the interests of my country."

*He is young and healthy*, thought the Consul meanwhile, for he was not listening to Peter. He had a ready answer for him. *Young and healthy—single, perhaps educated and clever—and he bothers about a passport—that habit of living on a lawful basis! My goodness! All the world lies open to him—young and healthy.*

" Now, citizen," he said aloud, " look at the situation. We have no direct communication with Moscow at present. Even if I should send thither your request you would be answered no sooner than a year's time. This does not suit you, for you need a passport now." \*

And with the refusal Peter went home. He was a Russian, born of Russian parents in a family which could trace its Russian origin for several hundred years—and yet both Reds and emigrant Russians disowned him.

With a bitter heart he went home. He rang the bell. No answer, yet he heard voices in a lively conversation inside. He rang it again. Mme. Klimova, with shining eyes and her face all aglow, opened the door.

" Oh, if you could only imagine! New lodgers in the house! " And in a voice all broken with rapture she said: " Countess Maria Diaz da Cordova and young Count Leon!"

Peter looked at her with derisive, incredulous eyes. But yes I Countess Maria and Count Leon had been welcomed to the household and were drinking tea with lemon in the Family room. The presence of lemon was most convincing. There was nothing decorous in the Countess. She was middle-aged, plain and quiet. Yet her life was extraordinary even for our troubled times. She was born in an aristocratic Russian family in Petersburg, went through all the horrors of the great World War, Revolution, and Civil War in Russia. Then she married Count Diaz, who was in the years of his youth connected with the Spanish Embassy in Russia. They went to Spain, and there lived through the horrors of the Revolution and the Civil War. They fled to China and landed at Shanghai exactly in time to see the whole of the Chapei warfare. Now the Count with two children remained in Shanghai, and she, with the eldest son, had come to Tientsin in order to decide where to live and what to do in the future.

This eventful life raged over Countess Maria's head in vain; it failed to break her heart or embitter her mind. She remained a simple, sweet, quiet lady. More, she was a rare specimen among the women of our times: *she was a normal woman*. She was not even nervous, she had no complexes, no fits of the blues, no fits of temper. And she was always healthy. Her temper was even, her manners quiet, her voice calm, her speech restrained. She was a constant source of joy to Count Diaz and their children.

Count Leon was strikingly handsome, well-mannered and silent. The boarding-house, according to Mme. Klimova's words, " was teeming with aristocracy " now.

Yet the Countess insisted on being called simply Maria Fedorovna; and Count Leon, once having met Peter, gave him his undivided attention. Soon they both went to the other room and then for a walk. The Countess, in spite of Mme. Klimova's expectations, was reluctant to talk on topics of high social life. The coronation of the English King seemed to be none of her business and the mysteries of the royal love left her indifferent. Her interests were on a rather lower

plane. She discussed, with Mother, the assets and liabilities of keeping a boarding-house at Tientsin.

"It never pays," Mother was saying. "Nothing and nobody pays at Tientsin. All live on credit: people sign *chits* instead of paying cash. The real necessity to pay debts comes only once a year, before the Chinese New Year, Usually Chinese are extremely patient, but then they become insistent and one has to pay something, if not all."

"How much does one need to start a boarding-house?" asked Countess Maria.

"You can start a boarding-house if you have money enough to pay one month's rent for the house. The fact of renting a house opens credit everywhere."

"But lodgers pay in cash?"

"Oh, very seldom. And never regularly. The financial life in this country goes by fits and starts, and everybody becomes involved in the system of living on the promise to . . . pay."

"Well," laughed the Countess, "all this sounds forbidding."

"Yes," confirmed Mother, "it is hard to live this way, never knowing exactly one's own financial situation. But this system has entered so deeply into Chinese life that it is very dangerous to touch it." And Mother began to pour fresh cups of tea.

Mme. Klimova had at last an opportunity to bring the conversation into other and more aristocratic channels.

"Countess," she asked sweetly, "what do you think about dear, dear Edward?"

"Edward? Which Edward?"

"The Eighth."

For Mme. Klimova he had become simply Edward long ago. She had thought so much about him And his love story that, at last, she felt quite familiar with him. That dear, dear Edward—king of so many hearts! How much encouragement, support, and consolation his love story had given women all over the world. Especially to elderly women with young hearts. For humanity was accustomed to think that

youth is love's best season. But this love of middle age proved to Mme. Klimova that Dante's "abandon hope" really refers to hell only.

Yet the Countess's answer was quite plain.

"I think it was hard on his mother, Queen Mary," was all she had to say.

THE BURDEN of life hung heavily over the town. With industry and business slowly coming to a standstill, with the prices going up, with no prospect of any new openings for human activities, with the war devastating the country, with an ever-increasing number of refugees, beggars, and Japanese soldiers, with the cold and wind—the biting wind bringing with it clouds of sand from the desert of Gobi—with all that, life lost little by little its free movement and charm. The Japanese pressure increased. Every one in the town felt, with perfect clearness, the Japanese domination over everything. Almost daily events of misbehaviour, offences, aggressiveness of the Japanese, now concerned not only the Chinese and Russian population, but all Europeans in general. Every one lived on his guard, lest he should provoke an outburst of the Japanese militant spirit.

When an *English* police officer was slapped across his face with the whip by a Japanese cavalry man, the population of the town grew apprehensive. *This was serious.* The incident took place on the English Concession, and the English officer was on duty—that is to say at home, "in his castle." The fact was symbolic. It proved that the Japanese were, after all, a power. In European eyes one beaten English officer meant more than the thousands of miles of devastated country and the half a million of Chinese killed. It filled them with awe. And those who could afford it went to their respective embassies for visas to their native countries. If England could abide this insult! Certainly the Japanese apologized—but their promise was merely a gesture.

National characteristics and traits of personality began to play a prominent rôle in human intercourse and each showed its real worth.

In the most **turbulent days** English **ladies** sat at home,

very quietly. But when a Frenchwoman was pushed on the street by a Japanese soldier, in one moment she tore off her coat and gloves and attacked him. With the cry "*Vive Ia France!*" she almost tore his face away with her highly manicured nails. The bleeding soldier and the bruised lady were at last separated, although the Chinese spectators were not too hasty to interfere—there could be no sweeter sight for a Chinese than that of a Japanese beaten and humiliated. The French lady's garments were torn half off. Her coat was reverently put on her trembling body and, with the unanimous cheers of the crowd, she was driven triumphantly home.

Upon the slightest offence to France or the French, the only French battalion at Tientsin would instantly march to the scene of the incident, always with the same colonel at the head and the two old guns behind. The colonel, with a round and protruding belly, would assume his most militant pose and in beautiful, rolling French defy the whole Empire of Japan. This Tartarin of Tientsin was chasing his lion under the encouraging and sympathizing eyes of the whole population.

Italians were always dangerous to touch. Instantly one of them would produce a dagger from his boots, another one would telephone to the Italian barracks, and several carloads of Italian soldiers, breaking all the rules of discipline and of the commonwealth, would hurry to help their countryman. The car would rush with blind speed; the soldiers would sing military lyrics, thus bringing in more sound than force, and the crowds would run after them full of high expectations.

And some kind of understanding was established in the town. While daily incidents occurred in the rest of Tientsin, almost nothing ever happened on the French and Italian Concessions, and house-owners there commanded the highest rents for their apartments.

Violence begins with those who are weaker and cannot retaliate. After the Chinese came the turn of the Russians. With the meticulousness particular to the Japanese, they entered every detail of the life in the town. Numerous in-

quiries and endless questionings were going on in every spot under their power, and soon there was scarcely a person who could share a common lot in the estimation of the Japanese, and no group could unite their forces in a common cause. Thus every single human being had to fight with Japan for his own vital interests.

Mother suffered on behalf of her Family. Three paths opened before the children. It was decided that Dima should go to England with Mrs. Parrish. Now they often went out together in order to acquire all the things Dima would need and to legalize his documents in the English Consulate. Usually they went in a car, and every expedition was a happy adventure for Dima. Dog was taken along. However gay those trips were, on his return Dima would look anxiously for Mother. He would run towards her, cling to her tenderly and kiss her, as if to compensate for the time he had been away.

Lida had no work. Jimmy's frequent letters kept her spirits high; yet there was nothing in the immediate future for her. At Lida's age this waste of time was painful. Her education was poor, her interests limited, and the sad fact was that she, herself, had never noticed this latter privation. She was satisfied with her mental equipment.

Peter's problem was the hardest of all. Daily, late in the evening, Mother held eager conversations with him. They would sit in the corner and talk almost in a whisper. Peter had definite plans.

"There are groups of beggars," he said once—"I mean professional beggars. They are roaming all over the country. They spend the winters in the South—here in Tientsin, or in Shanghai—and in the spring they move northwards, to Manchuria. They are criminals, tramps, nondescripts, and all kinds of mysterious people of unknown professions. Some of them go from time to time to Soviet Russia; they know how to escape the cordons, patrols, and guards. This spring I shall go with them."

Mother listened to him with a livid face.

*I will go to Manchuria and some night I will cross the*

border into Russia\* In the morning I will go to the next station and declare myself. They will put me in prison. In all probability there will be a trial. But there is nothing much against me, as I am young and have never actually fought against communism. They will give me no more than several years of prison and compulsory work. I will serve that, and once out of prison I will begin my new life in my native country."

" Oh, Peter," said Mother, " it sounds so terrible."

" But I will live in hope."

" I am afraid," said Mother very low, " that they will kill you."

" Aunty"—and a deep bitterness sounded in Peter's voice—" it seems that whatever way I go I am doomed to be killed. And why? It is strange; it looks as if I were every one's dangerous enemy, while I am actually a peaceful human being and never interfere with other people's ways. If such is my fate, let me be killed standing on my native soil—be killed for something. I believe I shall find my way in Russia—then, if necessary, I will die with faith and enthusiasm for my ideals."

" Oh, Peter," said Mother, " my heart is bleeding."

And perhaps this was not an exaggeration, for Mother's heart was torn with sorrow and pity. To rear a child with pain and toil and then to see that there is no place for him in the scheme of life!

The Chernovs were also refused their passports, but the old Professor took it easily.

" We will form a group of ' international' men, citizens of the Universe—soon we will be very numerous. We will fill the world, and the nations will be drowned in our sea. For we will have no obligations. We will not pay taxes, we will not fight wars, we will not be liable to any law code. Freedom at last."

## II

ONE EVENING, when the Professor was explaining the blessings coming to those without passports, and the Family was drinking tea, the doorbell rang. In the noise of voices nobody had heard the bell. The visitor rang once more, and then, evidently being acquainted with the customs of the house, opened the unlocked entrance door and came quietly in. When the visitor tapped at the door of the Family's room, there was also no answer; for the thunders of the Professor's eloquence filled the air. The door was quietly opened and Mme. Militza appeared on the threshold.

She was much changed\* Although she wore the same *talma* coat, the hat with the disreputable ostrich feather was absent. In fact, Mme. Militza was bareheaded. The number of ringlets and locks had decreased so much that not all of Mme. Militza's brow was covered. This made a new Mme. Militza of her, for the forehead thus inadvertently exposed to the public observation was that of a thinker: it was white and high. But the incredible thing about her, the thing which made her unreal, was the fact that she had a new handbag. It was a pitifully faded thing, with not a thread of mystery in it. It could not be related to the history of Babylon at all, and it would be most preposterous to admit its connection with stars and planets. Just a pitiful black thing, with a chain by way of a handle, a plebeian thing, with no historical background.

Yet this impoverished Mme. Militza possessed a new aura of importance, which one can never see in an unemployed human being. She had the quiet dignity of those who live on a salary.

While the astounded party sat in dead silence, half of them even forgetting to shut their mouths, Mme. Militza opened her vulgar handbag, took out a small parcel (and the smell

of coffee filled the room), stepped forward, bowed, and quietly said:

" Good evening, company!" And then, addressing Mother, added: " Will you kindly give me a cup of coffee ?" And she put the parcel before Mother. Then she moved her quick glance from one face to another; even Ira, Harry, and young Count Leon were transfixed by her sharp eyes. Dog slowly left the room. Mme. Militzka sat in the offered chair and broke the silence with the question:

And where is Granny?"

The company winced. Only then did the members of the Family realize that they never had written any letters to Mme. Militzka for she had never given them her address.

Looking at Mother, Mme. Militzka instantly understood.

" So I will drink my coffee alone," she said, simply and sadly. These words broke the spell, and all began to speak at the same time.

Only after the fourth cup of coffee did Mme. Militzka acquire the energy to tell her story. One hour ago she had reached Tientsin on a schooner. She had eaten no food for the last twenty-four hours. Her new handbag was her only possession.

It all began like that. In Shanghai Lady Dorothea received information that on the battle line, somewhere near Hankow, there were several Russian officers of the old pre-Revolution regiments. Mme. Militzka dealt cards and they obstinately kept answering that soon Lieutenant Bulat would be found. Lady Dorothea decided to go to Hankow. They packed their things and left the luxurious hotel. Several days they moved up the Yangtze River, under the bullets of the Japanese soldiers, Chinese guerrillas, private pirates, and the bombs from the airplanes of unknown powers. Hardly had they reached Hankow when the obligatory evacuation of all the European women was proclaimed in the town. In spite of the eloquence with which Lady Dorothea expounded the urgency of their purpose in coming to Hankow, the English Consul ordered them to leave the town. Neither money nor title could help in this circumstance. Only two ways were

open: the railway to Canton and the airway to Hong Kong. They took the latter. This was Mme. Militza's first air voyage, and she was reluctant to dwell much on the confessions it made upon her.

In Hong Kong the passport commission verified their documents at the exit door of the airplane. Lady Dorothea was allowed to pass with the utmost courtesy, but Mme. Militza was detained. The document she used as a passport was scorned and she had to undergo a strict inquiry concerning the legal side of her existence in the world. She could not say exactly what citizenship she had, but she suspected that she was Russian. Her parents were Bessarabiati, which meant they were Russian subjects before the Great War, and Rumanian subjects after. Her deceased husband was a Macedonian. Meanwhile, Serbia and Bulgaria were fighting for the annexation of Macedonia; its people regarded themselves as the citizens of the free and independent country. After the Great War Macedonia was annexed by Jugoslavia; but this never meant that Mme. Militza's deceased husband, Danko Milov, had laid down his arms. She, personally, had lived in Russia, Manchuria, and China and had everywhere been constantly refused passports and visas.

The English officers disliked her story. She was warned not to put her feet on Hong Kong soil. When it became known that she had been in Hong Kong only three months before and had also been forbidden to land there, Mme. Militza was declared under arrest. They would not listen to her explanation that the first time she was going to Shanghai on the ship bound to Shanghai, and that only owing to the war had their ship changed its course. All that time Lady Dorothea was trying to persuade\* the authorities to allow Mme. Militza to go free. Her voice was heard above the pounds of the aerodrome. All in vain. No rendezvous was permitted. Mme. Militza's possessions were confiscated and she was forced to depart instantly from Hong Kong, under the accusation of having no visa and under the suspicion of being a spy dangerous to the fortress of Hong Kong. The airplane landed her in Tsingtao, and she was set free. She

had only twenty dollars with her. She bought a ticket on a schooner going to Tientsin, a quarter of a pound of coffee, which she brought untouched in her handbag, and some food. The food being insufficient, she fasted the last day of her travelling.

" We are very glad to see you," said Mother. " Of course, we invite you to live with us as a guest."

The youthful are always willing to know their" fortunes, and Ira acted as a delegate. Instantly Mme. Militza's face clouded. The tragic fact was that she had not a single pack of cards with her. - All of them had been confiscated with her baggage. She was deprived of her professional tools, so to speak, which is against the laws of civilized people. Upon hearing this Harry offered to buy cards in a Chinese shop at the corner of the street, this particular shop being open very late nights. But Mme. Militza almost petrified him with a single glance. The profanity of the ignorant I As if cards like hers could be *bought!* Hers had belonged to her family, came from generation to generation on a par with jewellery, and she knew no man in the world who could make an imitation of them.

THE NEXT DAY Fortune beamed upon the boarding-house, but Fortune, being decidedly feminine, addressed her smile to the young Count Leon. He procured a well-paid job.

In the Italian Concession there was a place called the Arena. It was a sport stadium, a restaurant, a dance hall, and many other things; one of those modern places where one can be shaven, brushed, ironed, curled, fed, amused—provided one has money. In the vicinity of it one could also be robbed, pounded, arrested, and given immediate medical assistance—all free. In this Arena, among other games, that of *jai alai* had become the rage the last two years. It was played by Spanish gentlemen exclusively, for no nation could match them in the refined athletic performance and in the noble graciousness of movements. The players were mostly of the Spanish aristocracy, young, all very handsome, haughty, and quite unattainable for stratagems of love and friendship. This last enhanced their fascination greatly and also helped to fill the stadium to its utmost capacity. They played all the year round, and the ten summer days when repairs were made at the stadium were gloomy days for the fans of *jai alai*, who were more than half ladies. Leon was met with cheers by his countrymen, and being good at *jai alai* was instantly received into the company. The salary fixed for him would provide food and shelter for all his family.

When he told all this to his mother, he concluded his words with a request. Kissing her hand, he said:

"May I ask you to give up the idea of a boarding-house? We will have enough to live by ourselves, although very modestly. Certainly there are wonderful people here, but I think Father would like more privacy than one can find in a boarding-house."

The good news enraptured all except Mme. Klimova. She felt something like a prick in her spacious heart. To lose young Count Leon Diaz da Cordova was not easy. Every time she looked at him she felt a kind of flutter in all her material frame, and her heart was suddenly squeezed if he looked at her, however indifferent those eyes might be. Life became sweeter in his presence. A kind of youthful shyness possessed her now, and she began to stammer if she even tried to say good morning to him.

*And those two stupid girls chirping round, blind, quite blind to the danger they were near. Oh, youth!* thought Mme. Klimova.

She began with Lida. Catching her in a corner busy with mending stockings, she whispered;

"Lida, would you not like to be a Countess da Cordova?"

Lida lifted her eyes and looked at Mme. Klimova as if the latter were a lunatic.

"But I am engaged to Jimmy!"

"Engaged? And where is your ring?"

This struck Lida uncomfortably. "I have no ring," she said with hesitation, and then added brightly: "But I have a watch."

"Watch! Fiddlestick! It cannot be evidence of your engagement in a lawsuit. So, no ring?"

"No."

"Then you are not engaged!" said Mme. Klimova—"for an engagement means giving a ring."

Here their conference was interrupted by Mme. Militza, who returned from the cemetery. Early at dawn she went to see Granny's tomb and now she returned, tired and with red-rimmed eyes. What if she were a scientific fortune-teller? She could not help being human.

Mme. Militza was drinking the rest of her quarter of a pound of coffee with the energetic help of Mme. Klimova. Mother could not participate, first, because she was busy, second because her heart was too delicate for the coffee of the strength Mme. Militza drank. And Mme. Klimova, always

ready to oblige, stated that the best coffee of Tientsin could be bought at "Carazas," in the French Concession. This information was met gloomily by Mme. Militza and aroused notcuriosity about the exact whereabouts of that wonderful establishment.

The last cup of it was offered to Mme. Isaak, for Rosa came in hastily in a great flutter of heart, voice, and her ample, flounced skirts.

She came to say good-bye. There were rumours that Jews were allowed in Manila. Towards Manila she was going. Nowadays nobody would believe rumours and promises as to the places where a Jew could abide. So she was going in person. If she could reach the place and rest her feet on its soil, well, that would mean Jews were allowed, and the Doctor would follow her. If not—well—there is no evidence that people are killed because they have no passports—somehow she would manage to come back to this English Concession of Tientsin<sup>1</sup>.

And suddenly she began to cry by her bitter Jewish tears. There were no cards by which to peep into the future. What was Mme. Militza's sympathy without her pack of cards? It was intangible, immaterial, unconsoling. They decided that if Mme. Militza should ever get back one pack of her cards, she would deal them for Rosa, and, telegrams being so outrageously expensive, she would wire one word, "Yes" or "No"<sup>1</sup> with reference to the fulfilment of her desires. The address would be provided by Dr. Isaak. The fee—one dollar—would be sent by the return mail after the wire was received.

Mme. Klimova was sitting with pinched lips and absent eyes—she never liked "mixed" company. After coffee, the ladies retired and a semblance of rest and quiet sank over the house.

*I must have rest now, thought Mother. I will lie down on the sofa. All alone in the room in silence.*

Hardly had she touched the sofa when a timid bell rang at the door. She had to answer it. On the mournful background of the low wintry sky and the grey lattice of the gate

she saw a nondescript beggar standing on the steps. A boy was standing behind him, a step lower, and one step tower still stood a dog. The beggar's left eye was blind, the dog was lame. The boy was evidently healthy, but extremely thin and dirty. All three were shivering in the cold wind.

The beggar asked for Peter. Mother invited them to enter. They refused. Mother could not shut the door on them so she shouted into the house for Peter to come.

"Coming!" Peter's voice was heard.

Mother turned to the beggar.

"Is this your dog?" she asked.

"Yes, Madame. It is mine."

"Is it not rather hard on you to take care of it—I mean to feed it?"

"Madame, a Russian,exile cannot live without a dog, for one needs sympathy."

The voice of the man was hideous. It was a biography in itself. It bore witness to many nights slept on the bare earth, in any season and weather, to drunkenness, to smoking, to hunger, to cold and diseases gnawing the body for years. This kind of voice could not be acquired casually—it was a summing up of a long, misspent Ufe.

When Peter saw the man he said:

"Aunty, we must speak quietly for a while. May we sit alone in the room and not be disturbed?"

They went inside. Again Mother asked the boy to come in and again he refused. The dog looked hungrily around but also did not move. So Mother put on her coat and went out again. She sat on the steps. She could not tear her eyes away from the boy beggar. He stood quietly with half-closed eyes, but Mother instinctively felt that he was on his guard all the time, ready every moment to jump down the steps and run away.

"What is your name?" she asked.

"Igor."

"And your family'sname?"

The bay stood silent. Then he said:

"I don't know. I have no family."

" Where are your'parents?'<sup>1</sup>

" Dead."

" Have you any relatives? Uncles, aunts, sisters, cousins, here?"

" No."

" Where are they?"

" I don't know. Dead."

" Where did your parents live? In what town??"

The boy looked evasively aside, trying to escape Mother's inquiring eyes. Then he said:

" I don't remember."

" With whom do you live?"

" I live with them."

" Whom?"

" Some people—friends."

He was completely dirty. His small hands were covered with layers of dirt like the scales of a fish.

" Sit down!" said Mother gently. " You have to wait for your friend and he might be a long time."

She took the doormat and placed it for the boy to sit on so the stone steps should not be too uninvitingly cold.

The boy sat down. The dog, as if on the defensive, approached him and stood close to his legs. One of the dog's hind feet hung down pitifully useless. Evidently it had been broken long ago.

Mother went into the house. For a while she stood in hesitancy before the open cupboard. Finally she took one *cotelette*—it was Mrs. Parrish's—put it between two slices of bread, and wrapped all in a paper napkin. She went out and gave it to Igor. At the smell of meat some slight movement, like shivering, went through the dog's body.

Igor put the bread into his bosom.

" Igor, eat it now," said Mother.

" No. I will eat afterwards." ' '

" When?"

" Afterwards."

Dog, coming from the back yard, approached the group.' At his appearance the lame dog grew smaller and smaller

and his figure and posture expressed one humble appeal for mercy, as if it felt that its simple existence in the world was an offence to the high-class scions of the tribe. Dog halted, threw but one glance at the visitor, grunted scornfully, and slowly proceeded further. Put into human terms, his behaviour meant that he disliked mixed company.

Mother's heart ached for the boy. He, evidently, was one of those numerous children of Russia who were doomed: revolution had torn them away from their homes, killing their parents; then the government proved to be unable to take care of them. In Russia they are called *besprisorniki*, which means that nobody takes care of them. Mother looked at him attentively, trying to read in his features his life and his class. He could not be older than eleven. The shape of his head, hands, the whole structure of his body showed his race. Under dirt and rags she could discern noble, almost aristocratic forms and deportment. Whose boy could he be? Was he as yet a criminal, a *narcoman*, or only a beggar, a stray child?

"Are they cruel to you?" she asked in a low voice.

"Who?"

"The people you live with."

"No," said the boy. "They are not."

"Do they punish you? Beat you?"

"Who?"

"The people you are living with."

Here Igor looked her straight in the eyes. For a moment she sat under his gaze. It was strangely limpid and quiet. At last he said:

"No. They are poor. Poor people never hurt each other much."

This was unexpected.

"So you like living with them?" she asked.

"I have nowhere else to live, but with them."

"Would you like to live with us? We are also poor. I should like to take you."

The boy sat silent. Then he said:

"No."

" Why?"

" You are alien. Different."

" But we are not. We are Russian."

Again he looked straight into her eyes and said:

" I belong to them; I am accustomed."

" You will become accustomed to us also. You will be better off here\* We have a bath—hot, hot water in it. We have tea and food every day. You will go to school. If you like, you can help do something—sweeping these steps, floors, or something. We read books, we go to church, we often laugh or sing. We are a *Family*, you know."

The boy sat motionless and silent.

" You will never be very hungry or very cold. I will wash your clothes and make new ones for you."

" Dirt is nothing," said the boy. " It does not hurt."

Peter came out with the beggar. They said good-bye. Suddenly Mother addressed the man:

" Leave that boy behind. I will take him into our Family."

The man was taken aback. Then he cautiously looked at Mother and then at the boy. This was a strange, steady gaze of only one seeing eye. Then he said:

" He would not like it here. He is better off with us."

Then he asked the boy in a different, light tone:

" Would you like to remain here?"

The boy was silent for a moment. At last he said:

" No."

They went out of the garden. First the man, then the boy, aside and a bit behind, and last of all the lame dog with its halting, three-legged pace.

Peter, although silent, was evidently very excited. He took Mother's hand, led her into the house, shut the door, and said in a low voice:

" Aunt, soon I am going away with this man."

She gasped. " Oh, Lord! Oh Peter! With this man? You two?"

" No, there are about ten altogether."

" I — I cannot—I do not know-r—" And she began to tremble.

He took her hands and slowly kissed them.

" Aunt, it had been agreed upon. You remember? I must!"

" Where shall you go?"

" I cannot tell you where, when, and how. Know only this: I am going to Russia, homeward."

They sat on the sofa—Granny's sofa. Peter was saying in a low voice:

" To live in Russia—and to die there. Never again will I leave my country. Even to die—even the tombs in Russia are different. Plenty of space! Every beggar can lie all his length."

" What must I prepare for you?"

" Prepare nothing. I will take nothing with me. I only have to pay twenty-five dollars. That is all."

This was a blow.

*/ must think it over, Mother thought. But when? Where? Where to find privacy and solitude? And she decided to go to Granny's tomb to-morrow, and there in quietude to think it all over.*

EARLY IN the morning the Countess and her son left the house. They had found a small apartment near the Arena where Leon had to appear the same evening, under the name of Rodrigo Fernandez. This put Mme. Klimova into a state of vivid regret; she was sure that the name of Count Diaz da Cordova would add much to Leon's success in *jai alai*. It would look gorgeous on the posters. The Countess and Mother, Peter and Leon, had become close friends during their short acquaintance and the departure was warm and friendly. Mme. Klimova was eager to deepen the intimacy of it and assured the Countess that she would soon, very soon, call on her, although nobody had noticed her being invited.

Mother was not able to leave the house and go to the cemetery until in the afternoon. On her way there she kept thinking about Peter. She decided that everything about his plans must remain an absolute secret. Even Lida and Dima should not know the truth, at least for a while. After Peter's departure she would say that he had unexpectedly gone to Shanghai, where he had been offered a job. She would try to say this in an even, noncommittal voice.

*He went to Shanghai. One of his friends—they belonged to the same football team here,—helped Peter to find a job. You know how much a recommendation means, and Peter had to hurry.*

And then she would proceed:

*Why in such a hurry? That letter, although registered, was detained on its way. There remained hardly enough time to teach Shanghai before the opening of the new office.*

All this she must carefully think over and prepare beforehand, in order not to be at a loss for words when asked. It is not easy to satisfy people like Mme. Klimova.

Then perhaps one day somebody would ask bluntly:

*And the passport? How could he go without a passport?*

She would smile and say:

*Oh, you know, he never told me exactly how he managed it. There was a paper sent to him from his new place. That being a foreign firm, they sent a kind of document or something for the protection of their employees.*

And people would envy Peter. *Lucky boy*, they would say. She kept on with this imaginary conversation until she reached the cemetery.

There could hardly be a sadder sight than that of a cemetery in the early evening hours of February. Not a blade of green. Bare was the ground, bare were the trees. No other colours, except the different shades of grey. Why does wind sound so desolate in cemeteries?

Mother went hastily towards Granny's tomb. There she knelt, her hands on the small mound and her head on her hands, and she began to pray. She needed a close, warm contact with Granny. She needed her love, her help, her advice,

"Are you listening to me, Mother?" she said in a whisper. "Do you hear me? In this ever-changing and deceptive world there are only a few things true and reliable. Your love for me has been one of them. Now I need it more than ever. Wherever you are, come to me, listen to me, and help. Do not leave me alone. Tell me, where is my duty? In this haphazard life, I have not time to stop and think. Perhaps I am making a wrong decision, and the children must remain at home, after all. Where shall I find strength? Do not fail me now, Mother! Send a sign, a word—oh, something visible, palpable, that I may feel your presence. I am longing for your presence, longing to see, or hear, or touch something of you."

She was crying, and her tears fell down on the cold earth of the tomb. Each made a small round hole in the dust. **Then** those wet spots became more and more numerous, closer to each other, and finally formed one long, moist **hollow**. From time to time the wind made the leaves of the

metallic wreathes tinkle on the tombs and a jarring noise passed through their glass flowers.

"Do you see me, Mother? Are you listening to me?" she repeated again and again. But she could not pronounce words, only disconnected syllables, for she was shivering from cold and tears.

While she knelt, silent now, a vague movement stirred in her soul, as if something were rising in her, growing and pervading all her being. It was not joy, it was not warmth, it was the calmness of resignation. It was not happiness, but it was strength, a support—as if the clouds of sorrow faded away, and she could see clearly the path before her.

"Thy will," she whispered, and arose. While rising, she saw the cross on Granny's tomb. She had seen it before, all white and high, but now in the sad twilight, on the background of the darkening sky, it acquired a new significance for Mother.

*Is not this an answer?* she thought. *Is not this the meaning of life, the sign of a leading?*—and the feeling of peace took possession of her more and more.

She remembered Granny's words, "You must learn to love it—this is your path to heaven," and her mind was strangely void of ideas. She lived on her emotion, and it was peace. All was rest.

Mother left the cemetery in a daze. She took a rickshaw, and did not notice the long way home. She came to herself at the gate of her house and felt completely rested.

While Mother was absent, Miss Pink made her second call on Ira. This was another day devoted to the benefit of the slums, Friday, 2-4 o'clock.

At her precise pace she entered the house and asked for Irina Gordova. Ira had heard her voice from above the stairs, but she was reluctant to repeat the experience of a visit with her. Hastily she tapped at the Chernovs' door, **and** said that a missionary lady was in the house. In the moment the old Professor was on his way down. He understood that the visitor wanted to see *him*. Eagerly he

shook Miss Pink's hand and said how very glad he was to meet her.

"I am very glad, indeed," he repeated, "for you see, Madame, it is high time we did something to save humanity. This situation is intolerable. The world is going sadly wrong,"

The Professor invited Miss Pink into an empty room, shut the door, and seated her in a chair. Then he took the opposite chair and, all warm attention and expectancy, waited for her to speak. But Miss Pink was silent. A little astonished, the Professor asked:

"Will you kindly mention the purpose of your visit, Madame? "

"I came to see the lost girl."

"The *lost* girl? But to *whom* is she lost? To *what* is she lost? "

"The girl of loose morals," explained Miss Pink.

"But we have none such! "

"Yes, you have, Irina Gordova."

"I—we—never thought of her in these terms. Why do you need to see her again if you have branded her thus?"

This naivete affronted her. Miss Pink patiently explained that she came in order to offer her moral guidance to the lost girl. She belonged to the benevolent society which supervised that branch of sin in China. This was her district for guidance, so would he please send the girl to her.

"Pardon me," the Professor said, "you are offering *what*? "

"My moral guidance."

"You? To her? "

This really was annoying.

"To her, to everybody who needs it."

Now the Professor was all aglow.

"Moral guidance to everybody! I am proud to make your acquaintance, Miss Pink I I have been waiting for you all my life! I am one of those, you know, who try to lead and yet see that they cannot. Something lacking in me. Nobody wants to follow. It seems people hate to be guided.

How *do you guide?* , Where is your starting point, what is your basic principle, and to what goal do you lead? "

" Christianity," said Miss Pink shortly.

" But, Irina Gordova, the ' lost girl/ as you call her, knows everything about it. And then Christianity is not your discovery. It was tried as a moral guidance long ago. And what right have you to use it for your ends? "

" I am a Christian," said Miss Pink solemnly.

" But you are not, Miss Pink! " said the Professor with wonder. " There is nothing of the Christian in you I "

This was something unheard of.

" How dare you? What right have you? "

" I dare, Miss Pink I And as to the right, it is the same on which you entered this house: my wish to *give you a piece of my moral guidance.*"

" What do you mean? "

" I mean exactly this: you are not a *real* Christian, Miss Pink. You lack the fundamental qualities: charity, first; humility, second. Let us test your Christianity. Coming here with ' moral guidance ' in your pocket, how many beggars have you met and passed by? Why have you not given, for instance, your fur coat to those who were cold? You ought to. And not only your fur coat, but your dress, and even your shirt. A true Christian would go naked in these times, in this part of the world."

The insolence—the idea. Miss Pink began to rise.

" No, no. You cannot go," said the Professor. " Give me at least your ' guidance,' if you do keep your fur coat. Why do you bother that girl? Why is she *lost?*"

" Because she lives in sin."

" But how does that concern you? That is her private life. She never behaves indecently in society."

" Those in her vicinity may be shocked."

" Why? Who? In this house nobody has complained. And the American army also can stand it."

Miss Pink was on her feet now. But the Professor barred the way to the door. Between the table and the wall was

only a narrow passage, and Miss Pink could not walk out without touching the old man.

"Wait, wait a minute," he said to her. "You are bound to explain yourself. You enter a private house, uninvited, you call people names—and then you are ready to depart in indignation. You are my age, Miss Pink, or very near it. I have a right to ask some questions. Are you paid a *salary* for your activity? Or is your sense of superiority your only reward? In any case, you receive something, but you urge others to be good, free, just in order to please you, to feed your emotions and pride. You are not *very* successful, Miss Pink, are you? Let me tell you *why*. Your weak point is that you know nothing about human sufferings. You are leading a sheltered life in bodily and moral comfort. This affects your whole attitude. You cannot be an apostle, Miss Pink! "

Miss Pink's face flushed. She made two decisive steps forward, but the Professor did not step back, and she found herself only the nearer to him.

"Beware of the comfort and ease you are living in! " exclaimed the Professor. "You are tightly caught in that net. The climb to heaven is harder than that, Miss Pink! "

"Let me pass! " cried Miss Pink, half choked.

"What are you *really* giving? Your time between dinner and tea."

Miss Pink made a sidewise movement, trying to slide between the wall and the table. But suddenly her courage left her, and she uttered a shrill cry. This sobered the Professor.

"You may go, Madame! " said he gallantly, opening the door for her. "I will not detain you any longer." And he made a magnificent gesture as if dismissing an audience.

But Miss Pink was far away. Red with indignation (for the Professor failed to arouse any other feeling in her) she rushed along the street. Suddenly a child's voice called after her: —

"Miss Pink! Miss Pink! "

Dima, bareheaded and blue from the cold wind, was running after her.

"Miss Pink!" he began, and then shyness took possession of him. He stammered something and then grew silent.

Indignantly, as if expecting further abuse, Miss Pink was ready to turn away, when a small, trembling hand caught her sleeve.

"Miss Pink I Please do not be angry with our Professor. He is very, very kind. He never spoke so angrily before. Never. You see,"—and Dima's voice lowered to a confidential whisper—"perhaps he will like you better the next time. Do not be afraid of him."

But Miss Pink went away speedily. She had no intention of listening to any more nonsense that day.

ALL IN THE HOUSEHOLD had heard the Professor's loud and excited voice when he admonished Miss Pink, and her shrill cry at the last. Anna Petrovna was upset at this new evidence of his lost self-control. Miss Pink gone, she tried to calm him. She invited Mme. Militza into their room. Then Irina came to say how uneasy she felt, since she was the real cause of all this unpleasantness. Then Lida came with her mending, and in half an hour Miss Pink was forgiven and forgotten.

The Professor always enjoyed Mme. Militza's presence, although she lacked much of her former vitality and decisiveness. The uncertainty of her situation had been hard on her. For the first time in her life she lived in the present only, deprived of occasionally peering into the future. A fortune-teller without cards I Like a small and silent mouse she tried to keep out of sight, to glide into darkness and solitude. The old Professor was the only one whose company attracted her. Usually it was she who spoke, and the Professor listened with great interest. She had a kind of fascination for him; her opinions about current events made him shout with wonder and delight.

On this occasion Mme. Militza was saying that she did not approve of travel.

" Wise men sit at home. They like quiet. Only fools rush around the world and parade their stupidity. Wherever one goes, one can never see more of human nature than one can see from one's own windows at home."

" But experience, experience . . ." cried the Professor.

" Experience! " Mme. Militza's voice clanged disdain. " Only fools need experience. Wise men prefer to comment on the mistakes of others, rather than commit them themselves."

Thus Mother, returning from the cemetery, found all quiet in the house. Dima was in Mrs. Parrish's room. She heard the voices of the rest of the Family in the Chernovs' room.

Irina, who opened the door for her, came with her into the Family room.

"You look tired, Aurora/" she said. "Let me give you a cup of hot tea." She brought tea and a piece of cake/ The cake was hers.

"It is cool here," she said, and put her shawl around Mother's shoulders.

*She is unhappy. She has something to tell me,* Mother thought.

Irina stood silent for a while. Then, turning to the window, in such a way that Mother could not see her face, she said slowly:

"The American army is leaving Tientsin on the fourth of March. Ten days from now."

Mother said nothing. Irina looked out of the window. The round alarm clock standing on the cupboard was clumsily ticking away long uneasy minutes.

"Ten days is a long time," said Mother at last.

"Is it not?" said Irina quickly, She turned toward Mother and smiled.

At that moment the high and sad sound of Lida's voice cut through the house. With pure and youthful melancholy she sang one of her lovely romances:

*In my dreams I saw you dying . . .*

It was like a signal. Whenever someone began to sing in the house the voice invariably attracted the Family like a magnet. They would all come, either to help with the singing or to sit in the room working and listening.

"And the sweater for Harry? Is it ready?" asked Mother.

"Only the sleeves are left."

"Sleeves! But you will have to hurry, Irina. Let us begin them now."

And they went upstairs, to the melody of Lida's song.

It was a perfectly serene gathering. They felt as if they were all one family—all children of different ages, all belonging to Mother. She was the one who tied them into a family and transformed the poor boarding-house into a cosy home. They were content among themselves, all loving each other, all poor and sad, and yet happy in a sweet melancholy way, known only to those who keep the mind pure and the heart clean

First Lida sang. Then she and Irina sang together. Then Peter came and helped. Even the old Professor participated. Only Mother and Anna Petrovna were silent. Mme. Militza, although not singing, beat time by nodding her head in a most emphatic way. Dima sang, although he was not urged to do so, for his childish treble spoiled the effect. Only Mrs. Parrish kept to her room. But she heard the songs, and her heart beat in tune. In her time she had loved singing.

Mme. Militza told one of the episodes of her last voyage. The place was somewhere near Hankow; the setting the barracks of the Chinese army; the atmosphere, fighting, battles, guerrilla warfare; climax—the arrival of the Soviet-Russian airplanes with Russian pilots.

There were, in the Chinese army, several White Russian officers who had fled from the terrors of Civil War in Russia long ago, and had spent about fifteen years in the depth of China as military instructors, having never seen any other Russians except themselves. When the airplanes landed, and gay, young; stalwart pilots came out, those Russian officers ran to meet them, and with tears and embraces they greeted these pilots fresh from Russia, only a few hours out from their native and so deeply beloved country. Politically mortal enemies, they spent a most friendly and gay evening—supper, wine, songs.

"Brother, how is the harvest this year?" asked one.

"Sing us your new songs," begged another.

And the pilots rose and sang their pilots' march:

*Oh, higher, and higher, and higher  
We fly into the deep blue of the sky.*

And they all wept; they loved each other like brothers. The next morning some one said something concerning politics, and in one moment all was hatred and hostility between them. In one hour they were no more on speaking terms. They asked the Chinese officials to give them quarters in a different place.

Here a loud, imperative bell rang at the entrance door.

"Who can it be?" asked Lida.

Again even a louder ring and, the button being continuously pressed, the shrill sounds filled the house.

The Professor, who sat nearest the door, rushed downstairs to let the late visitor in.

Under the light of the electric lamp stood the visitor—a perfect incarnation of Don Quixote in female form. She wore his hat. If she did not have his lance, she held an umbrella in the same belligerent way. Tall, thin, and gaunt, she looked with burning sombre eyes at the Professor. She was, perhaps, Quixote's age.

Seeing this child of Cervantes on the threshold of the house, the Professor could not restrain himself from quoting, "At a certain village in La Mancha," as he stood barring the entrance.

"Clear the way!" she said in English, and prodded him with her umbrella.

Yes, it was Lady Dorothea.

## 15

THE THREE DAYS that Lady Dorothea ruled the boarding-house made an epic in themselves. She rushed over their lives like a storm, with thunder, lightning, and wind.

Her scale of the personal values of the people in the boarding-house was quite her own. She never once noticed Lida's existence; but she took a great liking to Irina, and dragged her about wherever she went. She shooed Anna Petrovna away. And every time she met Mme. Klimova she mistook her for a servant and gave her small commissions, either to brush her coat or to wash her handkerchiefs, and to do it quickly. Of course, the handkerchiefs were passed on to Khan; Mme. Klimova would not wash them herself. In vain Mme. Klimova tried to bring the high rank of her deceased husband into the conversation. She failed to impress Lady Dorothea at all. If the old Professor happened to repeat to Lady Dorothea one of the maxims of his most beloved theory, she would look down at him with pitying eyes and make no comments. Behind his back she referred to him as the "son of the Absolute." She commanded Dima to keep out of her way, himself and his dog. Once, when she needed a telephone, Mother took her to Mrs. Parrish's room and duly performed the ritual of introduction. But Lady Dorothea was, evidently, unable to remember proper names, since she thereafter referred to Mrs. Parrish as "that woman with the telephone," and saw no other merits or peculiarities in her. Khan trembled under her 'gaze. Peter became the "boy around the house," but Mother aroused a kind of wondering sympathy. Lady Dorothea constantly tapped her on the shoulder with her bony hand and asked whether she had a toothache or something.

Although Lady Dorothea was actually staying at a hotel, she had an odd quality of omnipresence, and long after she

had retired to her quarters the boarding-house seemed to echo with her voice, her steps, and her fussy, activity. The first thing she did was to restore Mme. Militza's property to her. The chest and the handbag were brought in a taxi. The things looked tired and a bit older. It was evident that they had not been treated with due attention and respect. Mme. Militza shut herself in her room with her regained property, and when she finally emerged she was Mme. Militza of long ago; for she was once more wearing her masses of curls and locks and ringlets, and she carried a pack of cards in her hand. Of course, Lady Dorothea was the first to avail herself of Mme. Militza's art, and their conference took an hour and a half, spent in profound secrecy and retirement in one of the empty rooms.

Lady Dorothea issued an immediate order to Peter to bring the old General with the maps to the house. The General's name was written down in her pocket-book, which was bursting with names and addresses. Meanwhile, she used Mrs. Parrish's telephone and spoke to the English Consulate. If she had used her full voice she could have done without the telephone, for the distance to the Consulate could not have been more than half a mile. But her voice, subdued to only half its volume, gave information of her intentions to several houses in the immediate neighbourhood. It became known, instantly, that she had asked the British Consul to send her a "man with a head" to settle the matter of her attendant's—Mme. Militza's—visas. And she thanked him, she was well herself, only she kept wondering why they employed so many of the moronic type in the offices, that man in Hong Kong being a perfect specimen. ... He could act, but he could not think, which was sometimes really very hard on the public.

When Mme. Klimova understood that a gentleman was due from the British Consulate she hurried to refresh herself and apply more make-up; for she planned to open the door for the visitor herself. *Will he wear a silk top hat, or will he not?* she thought, all in a flutter, for next to a gentleman

in a military uniform there could be nothing more irresistible than a gentleman with a silk top hat.

But it happened that the Professor, who did not aspire the honour, opened the door for the man from the Consulate. It proved to be the same Vice-Consul whom he had visited not long ago, and the Professor greeted him with a hearty statement of the fact. The Vice-Consul was not much in love with life on that day, and this business of visiting a lady known on three continents for her oddities and extravagance, and yet a lady too high in social rank to be treated as a nuisance—this business only aggravated his suspicions that life was not all roses after all. To the Professor he was cold, as only an Englishman of the diplomatic circles can be on a windy afternoon in February.

His presence in these quarters enhanced even Khan's importance. The cooks of the neighbourhood filled the kitchen in search of information. Even though the King of England can move in London without being noticed, his Consuls in China cannot. Every movement in the official circles of the Foreign Powers immediately arouses the vivid interest of the Chinese population and becomes the matter for much pondering and discussion. Therefore, dinners were late in the neighbourhood of Number n that day while cooks spent an exciting hour in Khan's kitchen.

The old General with maps arrived, and was greeted by Lady Dorothea with the utmost cordiality. The news he could communicate to her was of the greatest importance: he had seen Lieutenant Bulat there, at Tientsin, three years ago. Yes, with his own eyes. Yes, in this very town. They had even been in partnership, selling Russian *kvas* in a booth across the Hei-ho River at a place where the ferry-boat stops. The profits Ming to cover the expenses, the partnership was dissolved, and Lieutenant Bulat left for Shanghai with the receipts of the *kvas*. The General was not too enthusiastic about sharing the whole news, for he had seen more than Lieutenant Bulat with his own eyes: with him there always was a girl, referred to only as "Masha." He was too much of a gentleman to release this news also;

yet he had a vague feeling that, under the circumstances, this kind of information would have vital importance. The General was very glad when, at last, he could say that, according to rumours, Lieutenant Bulat, disappointed in the *kvas* business, had obtained a situation as a porter in one of the hotels at Shanghai, and in all probability could be found there.

Being asked no more questions, he produced his maps, and called Lady Dorothea's attention to the technical absurdities of the Sino-Japanese warfare. If put on a sound scientific basis, the hostilities would shortly be brought to an end, crowning with glory the one side and completely annihilating the other, all depending upon which should first use the principles of science. He was not partial, and took neither side. The problem existed for him in the sphere of pure abstraction.

Lady Dorothea was struck with the newness of his ideas, and horrified at the waste of time and materials.

" Thank you I " she said to the General solemnly, and shook his hand in profound gratitude. " We will attend to it, General I My present task completed, I will make all this my own, special concern."

This unexpected success made the General wildly exuberant.

" Of course," he cried, " if they want to carry on wars, let them. But do it according to rules. This is not an asylum, this is a well-ordered planet, built on the firm principles of the exact science. Living on it we have to behave accordingly. Why! If you fight—*fight!* If you retreat, well, then *retreat*. But drop this nonsense which is scandalous in this era of civilisation."

Mme. Militza, in whose presence this conversation had been carried on, was also asked her opinion.

" Why interfere? " she said ominously. " Let them fight in quiet."

But Lady Dorothea decided to act on her own sound judgment. In order, to arrange the preliminary steps for further co-operation with the General, she asked him to

give her some of his personal information. Was he a free man? Could he move wherever their mutual undertaking would call him? Had he a post, and would he be able to get rid of all his previous obligations on short notice? It proved that the General was all alone in the world. He would go wherever and whenever asked. His maps were his only movable property. As to the situations, he had several. Mornings, from six to seven, he delivered milk from a Russian farm; at 12 o'clock he acted as an agent for a small Russian hotel, meeting the railway trains and inviting the passengers to patronise it; from four to six he gave out books in a Russian library; on the evenings and in the mornings of holidays he stood behind a candle box in the church; and sometimes he sang in the Cossacks' ohoruses, for he possessed a basso voice of a remarkably low register. Yet he was willing and able to leave behind all those occupancies on Lady Dorothea's first notice.

They parted on Lady Dorothea's request that the General should write accurately his criticism on the Sino-Japanese warfare, base it on facts, support it with historical references, prop the whole with statistics—all this would make the first volume. In the second, he was to expound his theory of decent and decorous modern warfare and, in the conclusion, make practical suggestions on the approach to the current hostilities between Japan and China.

When the old General left the house he looked a changed man. He dropped his usual manner of walking and stepped forth with a new, belligerent pace, becoming to a Mars or an Ares, or to one of those later gentlemen who believed, as the ancient practitioners in medicine did, that a good bleeding is a sure means of bringing mankind to its senses. His long moustaches bristled and moved slowly like tentacles feeling the "approaching bits of his new problem.

The last day of Lady Dorothea's sojourn was extremely busy. People coming in and out; things bought, brought in, and then sent back; the constant buzz of the telephone, which Mrs. Parrish answered and Dima had to report; Mme.

Militza dealing cards in the intervals—and packing, packing, packing. Experience in running expeditions into savage and deserted countries had made Lady Dorothea very particular about the things she carried with her.

At last the moment of departure came. The surplus of the unpacked things was given to Mother as a present. It consisted of half-a-dozen hot-water bottles, ten pounds of dry, bitter chocolate, one half of a double boiler, and several pairs of fur gloves. Mme. Militza, equipped with her old handbag and a new hat in the shape of a beret, left her new handbag behind, a present to Lida. Khan was given a noisy rebuke on account of the deficiency in change, and then was tipped with a ten-dollar bill. At the last moment the old General came with a rough draft of the introduction to the first volume, and the man from the hotel kept inquiring of everybody *how many* pieces of the baggage would be under his supervision, to which question nobody could give even an approximate answer.

It was Dog who first dropped out of the activities of the house. His food being eaten, he could not give a sound *raison d'ere* for all this fuss going on. Then Mrs. Parrish took Dima and Lida, and they went to a cinema. Finally Anna Petrovna took her husband for a walk. The house being emptier, the situation became clearer cut. *Those* two people are going; *these* are the things they take with them, Peter played the role of porter and helped the chauffeur, Khan, and the man from the hotel to carry out the baggage, while the "man with a head," fresh from the British Consulate, helped Lady Dorothea into the car, paying no attention to Mine, Militza's persistent attempts to get in the opposite door. At last they departed in clouds of general awe and bewilderment, the gentleman from the Consulate looking a perfect Saint Sebastian sitting between the two ladies and their baggage.

If Lady Dorothea was leaving a broken heart behind her, it was Mme. Klimova's. She felt completely excluded from Lady Dorothea's plans and confidence. In vain<sup>1</sup>, in a fit of sudden inspiration, she promoted her deceased husband **even**

to the post of a Minister of Foreign Affairs. She knew the risk of such a *demarche*, for there always could be some persons present who knew the ministers personally, them, and their names also. Yet Lady Dorothea was not interested. This she resented bitterly. Really, why could some people never achieve the miracle of a lasting interest and friendship? Why cannot one make others believe in one's superiority? This Lady Dorothea, for instance, old and ugly and wearing almost rags, why did people give way to her in the streets? Why was it quite impossible to imagine that she needed anybody's support, or help, or pity, or advice? What are the secret rules of social procedure?

In all her desolation Mme. Klimova had two things with which to console herself. First, she *was acquainted* with Lady Dorothea, and had a right to refer to that acquaintance in her conversation, and, the second, she could from time to time mention the day — " Ah, well, when the *British Consul*" (according to her habit she promoted the visitor to the next higher rank) "*visited us*" With this thought she left the house and departed to preside at the meeting of the Russian Women Emigrants' Society.

IRINA ENTERED her room and slowly shut the door. With distracted unseeing eyes and thoughts turned within she moved mechanically about the room. She took off her hat and suit and put them into the wardrobe. Then she put on her blue dressing gown, embroidered with white birds in flight. She removed her walking shoes, dusted them, and then put on slippers. She washed her face and hands and combed her hair. When all this was performed and there remained nothing of the ritual of coming home, she found herself standing in the middle of the room looking around aimlessly.

She tried to find something of urgency to busy herself with immediately. There was nothing. And there was no escape; she was alone with her thoughts.

A heavy feeling of loneliness hung over the small room. Irina felt it like a pressure. She needed somebody in whom to confide her sorrow. Harry was going away soon. They did not speak much about Ids departure, each sparing the feelings of the other. It was decided Harry would write, would send her money, would try to find a way to join her again and marry her. And she promised that she would answer his letters promptly. She would try to find a job, she would wait for him to return and marry her. But the general uncertainty of their future made all these words and promises seem childish.

Irina went to the window and knelt before it. She remained there listlessly, absorbed in the vision of her sorrow. And suddenly she felt coming from nowhere, but coming and rising, an insistent yearning to pray. She had known this longing before. She had felt it approaching during the silent **and** desolate sadness of these last days. She knew how to meet this mood, in silence, all attention, as if looking down

into a deep well, trying to see there her own reflection which, though not clear, slowly formed itself in the trembling ripples of the water. She waited. A feeling of the emptiness of the outside world filled her consciousness. She felt heavy, laden with her sadness, as if she were the centre of gravitation in all the hollowness of the external world. She looked upward into the low, leaden-coloured sky. A bitter thought sounded from outside. It seemed that somebody at a distance said:

"In this cheerless day, any miracle is simply impossible."

"No, no," she whispered, "*this is doubt*. I will not listen to it."

And she began to pray:

"Jesus, show your grace to me now! I am one of your sinners. One of those who have no other hope but you, no other merit than yours, no other help."

"Declamation into emptiness" said that other voice. It seemed nearer now.

"No, no. I won't listen." Irina pushed the voice aside. And again she began to pray from her heart:

"I am not asking you to spare me suffering. I am ready to bear it. Only—oh, Jesus! Do not leave me alone! Take away this feeling of loneliness, of this utter solitude. Do not leave me alone! Give me the joy of perceiving your leading hand. Let me feel that not my will to sin, but your holy will to redemption leads me. Spare me deeper perils! "

The other voice, now within herself, was saying with desperate bitterness:

"Oh, leave it alone! What's the use? *What* can happen to help? He has to go; you have to stay. Face it! Don't go into hysterics."

It made an echo of despondent bitterness in every word she said, as if words struck against a closed door and fell down on stones.

Suddenly, in a fit of despair, she began to cry aloud:

"Do not be silent! Oh, don't make me ashamed of my

childish faith in you! Open thy hand, give me grace! fulfil thy promise—now."

And beside herself with tears and fighting her despair,, she cried in a terrible voice, heard outside of her room:

"Help! Help me! Help!"

At this moment Harry was coming upstairs to see Irina. His face bore an expression of scarcely controlled agitation. When he heard Irina's cry for help it struck him like a blow. He rushed up and tore the door open. He could not imagine what could be happening to her. So he stood at the door with his face all distorted with fear.

Irina saw him and rose. At a slow, staggering pace she approached him and looked straight into his face. She could not understand why he had appeared there. Her face was livid with tears. For a while they stood thus, looking at each other and trying to understand what was happening to them, and a poignant fear like a current flowed back and forth between them.

"What happened?" she said in a blank, dead voice. "What happened?"

. And then he suddenly remembered *why* he had come to Irina now. A wave of joy swept away all his fear.

. "Irina," he said, and his face flushed with hot emotion, "we can get married. Some of us sent a petition to Washington. A telegram. To-day we got the answer. They have given us an okay. We can get married any time you say. We can go home to the States together."

"What?" she said in the same blank voice. "What? Say it again."

"A bunch of us soldiers have got permission to marry and take our wives back home with us. I didn't want to tell you before, because I knew how you'd feel if they turned us down. But we've got an okay."

She stood silent.

"Ira," he said in a low *and* gentle voice, "now we can marry."

She took a step forward. She tried to smile. She stretched her **arms towards** him **and** with a deep sigh and a happy

smile on her face she fainted, falling heavily to the floor at his feet.

That telegram from Washington met with great enthusiasm at Tientsin. In the poorer European circles of the town the joy rang the highest; for the forty brides to marry came from those quarters. Yet even the people who had no connection with the American army felt happy. In times like those everybody who could go away was looked upon as a lucky being. Now forty girls could dry their tears and make hasty preparations for weddings and departures. Tailors, shoemakers, laundrymen, also blessed the telegram from Washington.

In the boarding-house life suddenly rose to high tide. All the household was busy with Irina's wedding. Those who could manipulate a needle helped with the wedding dress. After a short discussion a simple yet elegant affair of ivory satin was planned. The budget could not stand a good veil, so it was decided to omit it. In the planning of the menu Dima's and Lida's voices prevailed. Two helpings of ice cream per person were assured.

The wedding was fixed for the second of March. Irina had to wait for her turn; for there were, altogether, about thirty couples to be married in the Russian Church, and the priest, Father Peter, took the affair with great seriousness: brides had to make their confession and communion. Only then could they be married.

On the eve of the wedding the inhabitants of the boarding-house had a kind of family gathering below stairs. They kept remembering old rites and traditions connected with marriage. As Irina was an orphan, Lida sang for her, beautiful and moving folk songs appropriate to the occasion. She did not know the melody; so Mother sang them first in a low, hesitant voice. Mrs. Parrish brought her present—an embroidered tablecloth.

On the second of March, at four o'clock, the procession went to the church. Irina was silent and self-brained. At the church Harry was waiting for her. Three soldiers, his best friends, were with him, Peter and Leon had also

been invited and were present at the church. Anna Petrovna was left at home. With difficulty she managed to keep the Professor at home also.

"Someone must meet the newly married here," she said. "You will say a nice address to them on their coming from the church."

In reality, all were afraid lest the Professor should interrupt the ceremony with one of his unpredictable speeches.

He gaily helped Anna Petrovna and Khan to arrange the table and quoted something about the wedding at Cana.

In the church the wedding rite was performed with great solemnity. Father Peter was famous for his majestic appearance, his grey lion's mane, his beautiful voice, and his solemn way of performing a church service. Peter and Leon, standing behind the bride and bridegroom, held golden crowns over their heads. Dima, who was seeing the wedding rites for the first time, was dazzled by the crowns. He was aflame with curiosity. Why crowns? Did they belong to Harry? Could Harry be a king? Or a duke? And they never had told him of it! But he knew that he was not allowed to speak in church, so only his wrinkled nose and sparkling eyes revealed his inner agitation. Then Ira's and Harry's hands were united and the priest led them thus thrice around the analogion. Suddenly a sharp and hot smell of wine reached Dima's nostrils and he saw the newly-married couple drinking in turns from the same cup.

*So that is how they marry!* thought Dima, full of excitement. *No wonder you cannot find many unmarried people!*

Lida stood demurely.

*So in this way, she thought, I will be married to Jimmy. Only I will wear a white dress and a long veil.*

When the ceremony was performed, the priest congratulated the couple and addressed them. He spoke to the bride; for his words were Russian, thus quite unintelligible to Harry. Father Peter was considered a great orator, and yet he was not eloquent at all; He had the knack of saying the right thing at the right moment, and this invariably

moved his congregation to the extreme, and a sobbing audience was a usual sight in his church.

Now he looked deeply into Irina's pale face; then he looked at Mother, Peter, and Leon, at Dima's eager eyes, at Lida's smile. Then he sighed deeply and said in a sad, moved voice:

" Not here, not in this alien country, and not to a foreign soldier I should like to marry you, Bride, the daughter of an old and noble Russian family. I see neither of your parents here, and none of your brothers, sisters, or other relatives—none of the friends of your childhood. Fatherless and motherless child, a lonely orphan you came here to wed a foreigner and to go to an unknown country and, perhaps, to enter an unfriendly family." And he sighed.

Tears began to glisten in the women's eyes.

" Where is your home and who will meet you on the threshold when you come home with your bridegroom? In two days you are leaving, you will be going farther and farther from your native country. Russia was a cruel stepmother to you; now you are going to another stepmother. Is this happiness?"

The words cut deep into Irina's soul. The subconscious fears and pains were drawn out of her breast and shown to the clear light of reason. Her shoulders began to tremble. She pressed a handkerchief to her quivering mouth.

" Is this happiness?" asked Father Peter in an anxious and sorrowful voice, and then suddenly he cried brightly:

" Yes, it is! *This is happiness.* God now is guiding you. You marry for love of your free choice. Forsooth you have a husband, a friend, a protection tied to you with the unbreakable bonds of marriage, of a true love and devotion. When there is conjugal love, every place becomes a home, every event a joy, and every pain when shared becomes happiness. Now I bless you for a long, long life. Go to America. Be a worthy daughter of that country. Love her. Bear children for her, educate them to be honest Christians and loyal citizens. Bright days lie before you—building your life in freedom, in hope! Rejoice, you and your bride-

groom and all your friends! There was a lonely orphan and what is die now? A happy woman, with a loving husband, going to a new country to build her home I And remember, try hard to merit the love of your husband's family, the esteem\* of your new country's people. Live and work for the good of America, for in these dire days she gave you her hand and adopted you."

Now all was bright and happy. Through wet eyes, the women beamed their smiles' of joy back at Father Peter. Harry could not guess why it was all so moving. Every time the priest pronounced " America " Harry bowed slightly. For he was the personification of America in this case.

The rite having been performed, now was the time to congratulate the newly-married couple. But here Father Peter produced a substantial English dictionary from the pocket of his ample robe and word for word read and verified Harry's documents and his civil certificate of marriage. Meticulously he entered all their names in the church register. He felt responsible for the bride's future. What Harry made of this was hard to say, for the priest pronounced all the letters of the English words as if they were Latin. But his good intention was evident and Harry thanked him warmly.

When they came home the Chernovs met them on the threshold and threw hops upon them. The Professor spoke to them.

" Live in the realm of dreams!" he said. " Let the narrow-minded materialists take care of wars, of trade, of industry; leave the bitter disillusion, falsehoods, and betrayals to them. The idealists live in a world where men are brave and chivalrous, where women are beautiful and sweet, friends are true and love is eternal."

But the word " sweet " reminded Dima of the double portions of ice cream. He rushed in, and the ceremony ended in confusion.

The dinner was grand. Even Mrs. Parrish ate ice cream. Harry's friends were gay and paid their best attention to

Lida, and she entertained them with her eulogies to Jimmy. A victrola was hired for the evening and there was dancing.

And the tea was hot, and the cake was swept, and all were happy, happy, happy.

"ANNY," said the Professor, standing behind her chair and looking over her shoulder at the letter she was copying for him, "really, I cannot understand what is happening to you. Is that *your* handwriting? Are you not ashamed of those scrawls? I cannot stand this any longer. Tell me exactly what is the matter with you."

"Anthony," answered Anna Petrovna quietly, "perhaps it is because I am growing older—shaky hands and all that."

"Nonsense. Have you no other reason?"

"No, Anthony. None."

What else could she say? Could she tell him that his letters were the reason? They brought tears to her eyes and made her hands tremble. This she was copying now, addressed to his "brother Cain;" and signed "Abel, still alive, still stretching forth his hands in quest of understanding"—was not this letter one proof more of the insane conditions of the Professor's mind and imagination? Could she tell him, too, that she never mailed his letters now but secretly tore them to pieces? And he was eagerly waiting for answers.

And Anna Petrovna decided to do then the thing which she had considered for a long time, but had hesitated and postponed doing. She would go to a doctor for advice. She would tell him her fears and suspicions on the Professor's account: his fits of unprovoked anger came more often; the idea of being pursued grew stronger, his speech was strange, and his behaviour inconsistent. She knew that he would resent any word about seeing a doctor and having a regular treatment. Therefore, she would go alone and ask for advice.

Dr. Isaak was the only one to whom she could apply in her misery.

He received her instantly, and in a few words she made the situation clear to him.

"Well," he said, "I will come to your house to-day in the evening as a guest. Try to bring your husband in as soon as I arrive. We shall have a party. The rest of it leave to me. To-morrow you will come to me and we shall discuss the question."

"Doctor," said Anna Petrovna humbly, "there is one thing more. I do not see when and how I shall be able to pay you at all."

"Oh, don't, Mme. Chernov!" the Doctor interrupted her. "I am happy to be able to help you and your husband. I remember the pleasure and interest with which I have read his books. I feel obliged to him for that."

When Anna Petrovna came home she took Mother into her confidence.

"This comes opportunely," said Mother. "To-day is Ira's last evening in our house. To-morrow morning she leaves. Harry is too busy, he cannot come. We have plenty of cake and some meat from yesterday. And there is always Lady Dorothea's chocolate. We shall arrange a party. The Professor will suspect nothing."

In acute anxiety Anna Petrovna spent the hours which remained till evening.

Yet when they all gathered downstairs for the party Anna Petrovna and the Professor appeared like other people, bearing all the outward signs of sanity and reason. Tea, on that occasion, was served in the big room previously occupied by Mr. Sung. The Doctor came, and Mrs. Parrish civilly drank her cup of tea also.

The Professor led the conversation. He addressed the Doctor chiefly.

, "Is the world sane?" he was saying. "Look at this town here. Whose is the country? Chinese. Who rules it? Japan. Whose is the spot of land on which we are sitting? English. Who am I? A Russian, disowned both by the

Soviet Russia and by the Russian Emigrants' Society. Now I have no master whom I serve; yet all those five aforementioned powers bully me. They rule *over* me, although I am' not their property. More, all of them pass conflicting laws and orders and expect me to obey. If I should honestly try to be loyal, whose orders would I obey first? All of them, or none of them? To whom bow first? Do you know, Doctor?"

" No, I don't know."

" We go further. If I do not obey orders I instantly become a criminal. Even sitting here and drinking tea, in one way or the other I am offending the rights and laws of four powers: Japan, China, England, and Russia. If I go to Russia, I would be put in prison there; if I cross the border of the English Concession, I would be put into prison here. My simple existence is in some mysterious way an offence to Japan. But I am alive because the English Concession protects me. Yet they give me this protection not out of pity, or of esteem for human life, or, personally, because I have been a man of science. No, they protect me only because I happened to sit here, in the English Concession. They protect me on the same basis as we protect our dog. Now, China, the real owner of the country, has no say in all this."

" Oh," interrupted Lida, " it sounds really awful!"

the Professor disregarded the interruption.

" Who made life so intolerable for average people? Governments? Why? Is not their chief business to smooth life for their peoples? Why all this mess in politics? Are governments sane or are they mad? What do you think, Doctor?"

" That is difficult to answer."

" I continue. Well, if someone in the government turned mad, why not put him in an asylum, as they do the average man? Here you doctors of medicine come in. What says you exact science? What is the criterion upon which you let some go free and put others behind locks? How do you

know *which* person is dangerous to the community? And if you *know*, why do you not *always* lock them up?"

The Doctor was silent.

" Now, we come to you personally, Doctor! I take my hat off to you, Doctor, and I bow to you," and the Professor rose and bowed. " I have heard about your talents in brain surgery. I have heard also about your kindness, and I surmise how great is your love for humanity. Now, one man like? Stalin persecutes you, and you—being sane and courageous—you run away to another man, let us say Hitler. Then Hitler begins to persecute you, and you—again quite sane and brave—fly away here where any Japanese Caesar or Napoleon kills everybody on whom he can lay his hand, with a pistol. You look around and do not like it. And again in a sane mind you send your wife to some nondescript country, where people run amuck between tea and dinner, and you hope to find peace there. In this case, who is sane—you or your persecutors, Doctor?"

" Really," said the Doctor, " if you put it like that. . ."

" Professionally you must know everything about the human brain, and you cannot answer a single one of my questions. Let us put it all on the ground of morals. Is mankind sane in treating a brain specialist of your value in this careless way? You are a necessity in times like these. We, perhaps, can afford to lose a Hitler or someone else, for there are always people ready to rule their country. But they would refuse an offer to perform a, trepanning of the skull upon those dear to them. Here we need *you* badly. So they invite you when their skull needs treatment, then they beat you until the next need."

Dr. Isaak felt uneasy.

" Suppose," he said, " we do not give so much attention to my person."

Here, quite unexpectedly, Mme. Klimova appeared.

" Hallo, everybody," she said in an amiable voice.

As she entered Mrs. Pairish rose, thanked Mother for tea, made a slight bow to the company, and left the room. On her way to the door she passed by Mme. Klimova but

took no further notice of the newcomer. This was Mrs. Parrish's constant attitude. She never acknowledged knowing Mme. Klimova in person. She never addressed her as a separate being, leaving it to the latter whether to accept or refuse her part in a general greeting to the company. This treatment had always been like a dagger in Mme. Klimova's "delicate heart."

"So England is retiring," she said in a sneering tone. Her smile was wry now. She suddenly felt a desire to poison the pleasure of every one there. These people seemed so independent, so happy, in spite of the misery of their situation. Sitting and chatting and enjoying themselves, like millionaires!

"Where is your husband?" she addressed Irina. "Does he appreciate your society so little? Or that of your friends?" And waiting for no answer she turned to Dima.

"Hallo, grown-up boy I Big enough to be sent away to a foreign land!"

A cloud passed over Dima's face. He wrinkled his small freckled nose. Something glistened in Mother's eyes.

Peter hastily tried to smooth the situation over:

"Professor, you were coming to the most interesting point of the political situation at Tientsin."

"Situation! Political situation!" cried Mme. Klimova. "Phew! In a short time the Japanese will take the foreign concessions, and there will be peace and order everywhere. The *loyal* Russians, I mean those who did not go over to the Soviet Consulate, will co-operate with Japan. Away with poverty for them! All will be given work and salaries. China being completely defeated, the Japanese will lead the Russian emigrants victoriously to their native country and restore the monarchy. Oh, at last we see it nearing, the coming glory I May China soon be on her knees I"

"Allow me, please," said the Professor. "I think it is not altogether decent, this expectation of China's being soon beaten. We all came here in bitter moments of our lives; we were met with friendliness by China."

"Decent, indecent," cried Mme. Klimova. "The word

has meaning according to who is saying it. Just now, that drunkard of an English lady went away without so much as a nod to me! I see several gentlemen in this room. Would it not be simple decency if one of them would protect me against such an affront?"

" Oh," said Mother gently, " you must excuse her. She never meant to hurt your feelings. The English are like that."

" Then somebody should teach them manners I Soon they shall have their teachers! After China will come their turn. Major Tanaka said to me the other day . . . "

" We are obliged to England, too," said the Professor. " Whatever happens, if we keep on living here at Tientsin, it is due only to the protection of the English."

" The Japanese are the most savage people here/' Peter suddenly burst out. " Savage and cruel!"

" Ha!" cried Mme. Klimova. " Savage and cruel! The tact that you were beaten by a Japanese officer . . . "

Every one gasped. Mother, the only one who knew what Mme. Klimova was speaking about, arose, pale and trembling, and said:

" Mme. Klimova, I ask you . . . please, do not," and her voice broke.

" Peter I Peter!/" cried Dima at the top of his thin voice. " Oh, Peter! Did it hurt much? And he burst into tears.

Lida approached Peter and put her hand on his shoulder. She was trembling. Dima rushed to Mother and buried his head in her bosom. Anna Petrovna pressed her hand to her mouth.

Peter slowly raised his head. Looking at Mme. Klimova with darkening eyes, he said:

" You have offended every one in this room. Perhaps, now, you will kindly leave. Have you said all you intended?"

" All?" cried Mme. Klimova with indignation as she arose. " Oh, no! I have not told all! Far from it! I must add how happy I am to leave this house of vice and treason. Don't stare at me!" she cried at Irina. " You

are the one to be stared at. The kept girl of the American army. American dollars, my dear! *Hein!* Six local dollars for one, my darling I Now hurry away! Here is another girl with a liking for the American dollars! Is it not so, Lida? And the tender Mother, sending her boy to England, her girl to America I And the philosopher, the old fool, the mad Professor, ready for a free asylum I You preach revolutions, but when they come you are the first to flee and hide in foreign countries! And you, a Jew doctor, a danger to every country I Traitor to all, with six passports in your pocket! A company I A party! Sitting round the table like a family! Who paid for that cake? Peter? The money he got from the Soviet Consul? Whom he betrayed? Whose blood is on this cake?"

"No!" cried Anna Petrovna. "Don't . . ."

"And you, old imbecile, everybody's victim!"

Peter looked around, then quickly went to the door, tore it open and said, in a calm but terrible voice:

"Get out!"

Mme. Klimova walked boldly to the door, then turned her face towards Peter and hissed:

"*Schizophrenic!*"

The door banged loudly after her. A dead and heavy silence hung over the room. Suddenly the gay silvery laugh of Irina shattered the tension. She laughed loudly? happily, gaily, choking With laughter and tears, and, one by one, they all began to laugh also. The basso of the Doctor, the falsetto of the Professor, Mother's gentle laugh, Dima's shout, Iida's giggle, the dry, breaking laugh of Peter, the tinkling laugh of Anna Petrovna—all were mixed into a whirl of sounds. Even Khan appeared at the door, and the pale full moon of his face began to ripple with low, almost soundless Chinese laughter.

"Well," said the Professor unexpectedly, "almost all she said was the truth!"

"What?" they all gasped.

"Almost all she Said was, in a way, true," repeated the Professor. "It is her interpretation of our lives. But look

at the facts, my friends, look at the facts I She kept strictly to the facts . . . and then made her guesses as to what their meaning might be. . . . Happily, we all have sufficient humour to see the humour of it!"

Now all was quiet in the room.

" My friends," the Professor went on, " let us not be afraid of words. We are not the *best* in society, my friends. Let each of us remember what Mme. Klimova said about him and, in all sincerity, consider whether the fundamental fact is true. Yet we were horrified not because of the fact, but because of what she had made of it."

" Well," said the Doctor, " for my part, I really am a Jew and a doctor. As to the passports, I have none of those six she assumes that I have. And I do not see that I am a danger to any country."

But the Professor's mind deviated.

" What a woman I How she knows life, people, situations, . . . And what a poor application she makes of her knowledge 1 That is the way with all knowledge not guided by high ideals. It turns into a nuisance, a danger."

" Oh, dear!" said Irina. " I think we have had about enough of Mme. Klimova for to-day. Let us have our tea in peace. How clever of Mrs. Parrish to go away in time. She did not receive her piece of Mme. Klimova's ' truth.' "

" Anny! Anny I" the Professor cried suddenly in great alarm. " You heard what she said about me—' mad ' and even ' ready for an asylum '? Did you hear? / *am mad*? I? Jfever had this idea come to my mind, and that is a bad sign. Yet she must have a *reason* for saying it. Some fundamental fact about me. Oh, Anny, tell me now: am I mad?"

" Anthony," said Anna Petrovna, " she just threw at you the first cruel remark that came to her mind."

" Oh, no! This—no! Doctor!" And he turned eagerly to the Doctor. " Tell me, professionally, is there any suspicion of insanity in me?"

" Well," the Doctor laughed, " I cannot tell you that straight away. You are not, evidently, insane enough. We

doctors have our tests, methods. . . . If you are interested in them, come to me one of these days . . . I should like to show you what is at the disposal of science, concerning insanity. We shall put your question on the scientific basis."

" Thank you," said the Professor simply. " It must be very interesting. But let us begin now, without your scientific methods. How could I seem mad to that woman? 'What is strange in me ? My love for humanity ? My pity for those who suffer? The fact that every injustice makes me willing to fight for them—is *this* madness? Or is it the fact that I left my career as a man of science and devoted my life to the immediate cause of serving humanity in an active way? That I write books, against superstitions? Or that I write letters to those in whose power it lies to alleviate the misery of mankind? Is that strange? Or is it strange that human sufferings became my chief concern and I cannot step aside and wash my hands of the responsibility? That I cannot look at human pain, be moved, and then dismiss it, as if it were a scene at the cinema? That I failed to develop a protective shell for my soul and hide within it when the sight of misery is too poignant? Or is it insane that, in order to understand human misery better, I have doomed myself to live in the midst of it? That I left behind my rank, my property, my opportunity of earning a decent living, my ambitions in the fields of science, and have come to live and share poverty? The feet that I now feel at home with every soul in pain, that all the afflicted are my family—brothers and sisters? Or, finally, am I insane because, in spite of all I see and feel and share, I love life—I see it proceeding in grandeur and light and splendour to better and loftier ends? Is it strange that *I—old, poor, destitute—* am ready to sing hymns to life every moment of my existence? Tell me, Doctor!"

" A sane human being has a certain moderation in everything/' said the Doctor calmly.

" Very well then," answered the Professor. " Thus if I would, on one hand, love suffering humanity, and on the other hand earn, my living at its expense—if I would first

shed tears and then draw my salary for it—you would call me a 'normal human being.' But why, Doctor, do you not act accordingly, yourself? Why does not the reward of normal and comfortable living tempt your soul? Why cannot you express your personality as Miss Pink does, and go about administering the things which cost you nothing? Why do you not take the easiest way? In order to perform a surgical operation you study long years and you must have special abilities, too; while in order to operate on souls in the way she does requires only a half-hour of her time and the misuse of the words of One who lived long ago and was crucified for His *living* charity, not a stuffed image of it. And observe that she receives more reward for her doings than you do. She is accepted by society, while you are barely suffered in it. Why does not this kind of a human being—benevolent and sane—attract both of us, eh? It is a standardized, danger-proof specimen of a ready-made type of respectability/

"But who is Miss Pink?" asked the Doctor.

"Really, I think that Mme. Klimova and Miss Pink are too much for one evening," said Irina irritably. "I decline to consider the 'truth', of Mme. Klimova's words and the self-righteous ways of Miss Pink." "

"Peter," said Dima, now half asleep, "what was it Mme. Klimova said about you as she left? Her last Word was terrible—terrible!"

THE AMERICAN ARMY left Tientsin on the fourth of March, a cold and crisp morning. Although always referred to as the American army, in reality it was only a regiment. In all it spent one hundred seventy-five thousand Chinese dollars per month, thus feeding a huge mass—really an army—of the Chinese population: coolies, rickshaw men, laundrymen, tailors, barbers, shoemakers, house owners, and servants. Americans were very popular in China. They had none of the English snobbishness and remoteness, and none of the French excessive thrift. They were neither poor, as the Italians there were, nor officious and arrogant like the Germans. They lived and gave a means of living to others. They paid their money when it was due, and paid it with a smile—which is a kind of miracle in China.

But it was not only their money that made them popular. There was a special American charm about them. They were democratic and behaved accordingly. They met every one with a smile and that smile was the same for all—rich and poor, white and yellow. This made them irresistible to the Chinese, and to work for an American was a kind of privilege for the labourers of Tientsin. Now this privilege was being withdrawn and there would be no more income in many Chinese families. Sincere tears were shed even by those who had not been in personal touch with the American army. For those parents of a coolie, those children of the laundryman, the only source of ready money was drying up.

The population was eager to say their good-byes and offer their best wishes to the soldiers. It was announced in the newspapers which way and at what time the regiment would move from the barracks to the railway station. They were to start at seven o'clock in the morning, and long before **that** time all the population of Tientsin was awake **and**

standing in crowds all along the way by which the regiment was to march. Every one was there—white and yellow, people of all the social standings and professions, people of all ages and descriptions. And all of them came of their own accord with the one desire to see once more the departing Americans. As there could be no parade except that of the soldiers in uniform, and with music from time to time, the waiting of the people was without any selfish interest. It was a purely sentimental impulse—to see once more the departing soldiers. . . . Expressed by the masses of tens of thousands it was both impressive and touching. As an end to the years of intercourse between the Americans and Chinese it was a kind of eulogy to America, and a visible witness to the fact that just and humane ways are the most potent in the establishment of friendships.

It was an eventful day in the boarding-house also. All were up at six o'clock. The breakfast was enlivened by Khan, who solemnly brought in a special Chinese meal, his gift to Irina.

Although happy to go, Irina wept on departing. She felt as if she were leaving her own family. The ceremony of departure was performed in the house, according to the old Russian tradition.

For several minutes they all sat in silence in the Family room. Then Mother, being the oldest, slowly rose, went to the icon in the corner, and silently began to pray. She asked for the Lord's grace and guidance on the travellers. Then she addressed, her prayer to Saint Nicholas, patron saint of those travelling on land and sea, entrusting Irina to his loving, paternal care. They all stood behind Mother, Irina in front, and the rest of them in a group. All prayed. Then, standing beneath the icon, Mother gave Irina her blessing and kissed her thrice. After that all, one by one, approached Irina, kissed her, and offered their best wishes for a happy voyage.

Leaving the house, Irina went first, then Mother followed, and the rest of the Family. They planned to go with Irina to the railway station, see her on the train, say good-bye;

then, on their way home, to find a comfortable place from which to have a last look at the marching soldiers. But the crowds on the street were so immense that they could not reach the railway station, and the police announced that only those who were departing would be allowed to move forward. Thus the last good-byes to Irina were said at the corner of the street. When she drove away, the Family was glad to find room enough to stand there waiting for the regiment to march by.

The air was cold and exhilarating. This standing in the midst of crowds was unusual for the citizens of a town with so many racial, social, and political differences. Voices, colours, movements—all blended in a kind of holiday mood and for a while life seemed simple, and gentle, and easy.

It was nearly eight o'clock when the regiment was heard approaching the place where the Family stood. First came the sounds of music and whistling, then, with flying colours, the soldiers passed by. Loud cheers greeted them; but as the first rows passed by, the mood of the crowds changed quickly. There was something sad in that moving away of rows and rows of soldiers that the town was so unwilling to let go. Culture, civilization, democracy, were leaving the town at a moment when it needed them the most. With the Japanese posing as masters, with the foreigners in a hurry to go, the Chinese felt a poignant sense of their menacing fate.

There was Harry, also marching away with the rest. Dima was the first of the Family to see him.

"Hurrah, Harry! Hurrah!" he cried enthusiastically.

Lida also laughed and cried: this was Jimmy's army.

Harry looked at them—the Family standing on the pavement: Peter holding Dima in his arms in order to give him a fuller view of the soldiers; Lida clinging to Mother. A bit aside stood the silent English lady; the Chernovs, also, were there—the Professor shouting something and his wife watching him anxiously. Harry looked at all of them; and felt a prick of pity in his heart. There was something unreal and pathetic in that group of people quite alien to him; he

hardly knew them, and yet they were looking at him with loving and admiring eyes, as if they were proud of him.

Harry smiled at them all. But he had to move onward. He smiled again and passed by, disappearing for ever from the life of the Family.

" LETTERS! Mother, letters!" cried Lida, rushing into the room with a pack of letters.

It was always like that: mail was detained by the Japanese censor for perusal. In order to have a better insight into the life of the citizens, they first accumulated all letters sent to the same address, then read and delivered them all at once. Thus mail received at Tientsin on different days and from different places was usually brought in the same pack.

There was one letter from Jimmy. A thick letter. Lida opened it and instantly ceased to exist in the external world. She flew over the Pacific and landed at the university at Berkeley, with Jimmy. Passing through the tension of a difficult test in English composition. Seeing a game. Celebrating the victory. Driving a car in a parade with other students. And all the time loving, loving, loving him.

Mother looked over the rest of the mail. One was from Mme. Militza. This must wait until the Professor was at home. A post card for herself, a red and gold Chinese card, which meant congratulations for the New Year.

Usually Tientsin celebrates no less than four New \*Years annually. The series opened with the Jewish New Year, early in the autumn. This was a noisy affair, but without a special interest or importance in the course of life. Jews were not very numerous in the town. It was true that they had a way of going about the streets in groups; of shouting loud greetings to their friends; of speaking too much and too loudly; of being too sensitive about any mention of their nationality. Yet their life and their holidays were usually racial affairs.

Then came every one's New Year on the first of January—several days of preparations and one day of celebration\*

The next was on the fourteenth of January, the New Year of the Russian emigrants, who lived according to the calendar of the pre-War and pre-Revolution era. This was a poor thing, With more remembrances of the past than hopes for the future.

And at last came the Chinese New Year, which had no fixed date, but occurred somewhere between the end of January and the beginning of March. Its coming was determined by a complicated system of the religious and astronomical data, with a side glance at the approaching spring. It was a great show of rank and economic standing. In good times, and in the rich families, the celebration took about two months.

But at present the season of the New Years was closed. Mother turned the card in her hands with a vague feeling of wonder, and suddenly she saw an inscription. At first sight she had taken it for an ornamental design, but looking at it closely she deciphered Mr. Sung's name. The card came from the Yunnan Province, which was out of the sphere of the Japanese influence. Mother understood. In this unobtrusive way Mr. Sung was sending a message that he was safe. Mother smiled with relief.

The other letter bore an odd address: Tientsin. Long Street. Number 11. *To the Englishwoman*. It had been written, visibly, by a beginner in the English language. Possibly by a child.

*How very strange, Mother thought. I suppose they mean Mrs. Parrish. Maybe some tradesmen are writing to her like that—and she sent the letter with Khan to Mrs. Parrish's room.*

Mrs. Parrish was likewise astonished by the unusual address. She opened the letter and read:

Bestial Cat: Why are you hiding away from me? If you want to steal Vassiatá Bulat say it plainly. We can come to terms. Come and see me.

MASHA GOOSAROVA, the Unhappy  
Russian Woman.

Mrs Parrish was thunderstruck. She had never heard the story of Lady Dorothea's life in detail, and had never heard the name of the Lieutenant Bulat mentioned. Thus she was unable to guess that the letter was sent to another woman. She was sure it was addressed to her. "Masha Goosarova," she whispered, and no image arose in her memory. *What? What?* And she read and reread the letter. Could it be possible that she had met Masha Goosarova and had forgotten it? *And who may Vassiata Bulat be? Another woman? A girl? A boy? Steal Vassiata? Why?*

Mrs. Parrish tore the letter in pieces and then burnt the pieces in an ash tray.

In the twilight, Mme. Militza's letter was read. It looked long, solemn, and this time it was written more clearly than usual. It contained quite unexpected news, as always.

She and Lady Dorothea had travelled to Shanghai in first-class comfort. Lady Dorothea was full of animation, because she thought she had found a distinct trace of Lieutenant Bulat. The cards were most promising as to the nearness of the meeting. They came to Shanghai in the evening and proceeded to the hotel. They had spent that evening in high spirits and in great bodily comfort, the two of them in a luxurious suite of three rooms. Having eaten an hour-long supper, they drank excellent coffee all the rest of the night, for Lady Dorothea could not sleep. The cards were so definite that Mme. Militza, said that Lady Dorothea might consider Lieutenant Bulat as found and the engagement as concluded. At six o'clock in the morning they had their final cups of coffee, and one hour later they left the hotel to search for Lieutenant Bulat at the address received from the General with the maps. And there, at the entrance to the avenue, on a magnificent porch, stood Lieutenant Bulat with a broom diligently sweeping the steps.

When Lady Dorothea saw him, she recognized him at once, with her heart more than with her eyes; for Lieutenant Bulat had changed during the last twenty-five years. She ran towards him and encircled him with her outstretched arms. His first movement was that of startled fear, then

he recognized Lady Dorothea, tried a grin, failed, and burst into loud childish sobbing. He, evidently, had not acquired manly ways of shedding tears; for the last time he had wept was very long ago, sitting on his mother's knee. Perhaps he suddenly saw himself again sitting on those comfortable knees, or perhaps Lady Dorothea had startled in him, too suddenly, the visitor of that magnificent life of long ago. Who can tell? . . . Lieutenant Bulat sobbed and sobbed, supported by Lady Dorothea and still tightly clasping his broom.

Nothing can astonish the residents of Shanghai, so the passers-by showed no curiosity at the tableau on the steps of the hotel. Mme. Militza was the sole spectator of the last act of this human drama.

Lady Dorothea came to her senses first. She snatched the broom from the Lieutenant's hands and threw it aside. She exclaimed, addressing humanity as a whole, that they need not count on the Lieutenant's service any more, and then she dragged him back to her rooms. He was given coffee with a little brandy and then asked to express his immediate wishes. He wanted some good roast beef, more brandy, and some tobacco. When his needs were supplied, Lady Dorothea braced herself, and the great argument began.

Lieutenant Bulat did not want to marry. Humbly he declined the honour. Certainly, he was no more young and no longer a gambler. There was no Ivan near by to supply fresh arguments, for Ivan had long since been lying in the deserts of Mongolia under one of those crosses made of stones. As to Mme. Militza, she was not the one to interfere where Fate herself had been spinning the yarn. She kept silent, for she knew more than she dared tell.

Left to himself, Lieutenant Bulat was not a match for Lady Dorothea, and two hours of argument were enough to make him capitulate. He made only one condition: there was somewhere a Masha Goosarova, " an unhappy Russian woman," and he asked an annuity for her-six hundred local dollars. Lady Dorothea accepted the terms. Lieutenant Bulat was given a leave in order to arrange his per\*

sonal affairs and it was settled that he would come back early in the afternoon in a decent suit

Lady Dorothea was in a state of great excitement. She even had a glass of brandy, which was quite unusual for her. Yet it did not help. She had a cup of fresh coffee—no help either. Then a sudden trembling took possession of her body; she could not keep on her feet any more and went to bed. Yet her head worked feverishly and she was all the time writing something in her pocket-book. Suddenly she threw the book and the pencil away and asked Mme. Militza to call a doctor. This was the first time in her life that Lady Dorothea had wished to avail herself of the help of medicine. Yet she did not, even then. When the doctor came Lady Dorothea was dead'.

Mme. Militza was still staying at the hotel. The English officials were very anxious to know every detail about Lady Dorothea's life and death. It seemed that she had a great many cousins in England all sending telegrams. Mme. Militza was promised by the officials one month's salary in advance, and, of course, they would pay the bill at the hotel. And she loved them all, meaning the Family, and remained their affectionate fortune-teller, Mme. Militza.

Tears glistened in Lida's eyes.

"Oh, cruel! Cruel! Life was cruel to lady Dorothea!" she cried.

"Yes, Lady Dorothea was a great woman," the Professor said. "Mankind must be proud that she existed, that daughter of Cervantes. She was a kind of Doctor Faustus also; for it was not Lieutenant Bulat whom she pursued. No man is worthy of such devotion. She had been pursuing not a man, but her youth, the time when she could love, believe in illusions and feel passion. She ran after that fleeting vision over the three continents, across the rivers; and steppes, and deserts. . .'. There was no chasm too deep, no mountain too high. . . . I am proud of her!"

"And people found her ridiculous!" said Peter.

"Let them! Let them!" the Professor cried, "Mockery is the easiest and the most vulgar way of dealing with a

problem. Let them who wish laugh at Lady Dorothea, but I feel grateful for having known her. Her type of a woman is rare nowadays. A museum piece. She should be cherished like a jewel. Such people keep the balance against pusillanimity and cowardice and doubt. She never turned back in spite of all the sacrifices her search for her ideal entailed. She never counted the cost. Is there not something refreshing in the story of her life?" This question he addressed to Anna Petrovna. But Anna Petrovna looked at him sadly and said nothing.

"Lady Dorothea is a tragic Muse of human passions," said the Professor finally. "She paid in full for the futility of human illusions. I bow to her memory, my friends!"

" MOTHER," said Lida, " have you ever noticed that there is a kind of uniformity in the way life goes on—as if in Circles? Then the circles repeat . . . . Every circle takes about seven days; for instance, one week we have letters, and they come in in packs. And every week we have a different kind of news, too. Another week it may be passports.' And everybody is shouting: ' My passport! Your passport!' Then may come a week of visitors, and we have them coming in crowds."

*And if we have departures, we have departures,* Mother thought, looking at Peter and Dima.

*And if we have sorrows, we have plenty,* thought Anna Petrovna; for the Doctor had confirmed all her apprehensions concerning her husband.

" And if we receive presents, many come at once!" cried Dima aloud. He was clad in a new suit, brushed and combed, with his watch on his wrist and a handkerchief bearing his initials in his pocket.

They had their morning tea. Now the Chernovs also had all their meals downstairs. Who would pay for them, when and how, nobody knew. There was some tea in the tea caddy and the Family drank it and shared it with everybody.

This was Monday morning, and Lida, full of joyous expectation, had been trying to guess what kind of week this one would be. She always hoped for a week of letters, but this week, evidently, turned out to be one of visitors.

First came the Diaz family.

Count Diaz was a gentleman of medium height, dark, calm, silent, and dignified. He would walk with the same unhurried pace towards any event in life, whether it might be a guillotine or a fancy-dress ball. This excess of outward

tranquillity appealed powerfully to a romantic imagination\* Maria Fedorovna brought her husband in order to introduce him to the Family.

Although Count Diaz could speak Russian, Professor Chernov addressed him, to the general astonishment, in Spanish. Even Anna Petrovna was startled. Of course, there had been a spring spent in Spain, but long, long ago—their honeymoon trip. A man with a memory like that. .. was not that a hopeful sign? She must tell Dr. Isaak about it.

To be sure, those two gentlemen were not speaking about current events; for to minds with broad horizons the present never holds exclusive importance. The dramas by Lope de Vega seemed to them a topic as vital as the hostilities in China or Spain. Both of them were excluded from active participation in the current political life. Their native countries gave them but a poor choice—White tyranny or Red tyranny. Whether it was *White* or *Red* was not essential; but they could not accept the *tyranny*. So there they were: starting with the past, jumping over the present, and conceiving the future in wonder and glory.

Now the Professor was orating in Russian:

"The fact is that nowadays all honest men, earlier or later, are exiled from their native countries. And this, exactly, makes me hopeful. . . . We will become a power soon., The ideas of justice and a lawful life belongs to us. All the honest youth in the world will look to us, and will follow our leadings. Only obsequious egoists will allow the tyranny of government. But the system will topple. Even now, sir, where are the lofty geniuses of humanity? Where are idealists ready to give their lives for ideas? Galileo? Pasteur? Mediocrity, sir, mediocrity is its self-poisoning quality. It fills the universities, colleges, schools of art—mostly self-seeking pygmies, with one eye always on future rewards for their efforts. But however high a salary, a commonplace brain cannot strike out the law of gravitation or split an atom. They are bound, from time to time, to pardon one of us, and give him, perhaps, a place in the

government, or a laboratory, or a studio — and a good salary, too. But no . . . we refuse? Why? *We are universities, and laboratories and studios, ourselves; Science and art need no buildings of stone with signboards over them, and clerks counting expenses and profits. We — people having no country, no passports no money—we are the creative forces of mankind . . . for the freedom of thought is ours . . . and, sir,*"—here the Professor thrust his face close to that of the Count and said in a passionate whisper—" Did you ever feel the grandeur, the splendour, the nobleness, the purity, of a free human thought? This divine gift to a human being? This link with the Absolute-Creator? Is not that worth dying for? Dying in joy, and staging hymns to it, while dying? What is a passport, and even a native country, money, respectability, fame, and comfort, to compare with this? "

At the same time the Countess was saying to Mother:

" We have to live on the English Concession, for my children must go to the English Grammar School. And I am delighted to live nearer you and to see you more often. Really, it seems as if bonds of kinship tie us together. We have so much in common."

The next visitor was Amah of the " bad thinking."

Mother was alone with Lida. Sitting on the floor, they were quilting a, red bedspread, as a present to the departing Dima.

Amah tapped at the door timidly.

" Coming to say good-bye . . . going away."

" Oh, Amah! Very glad to see you," Mother greeted her. " Come in and have a cup of tea."

" Daintily Amah took her cup, and with refined manners, common to the Chinese of all classes, she began to sip her tea.

" And where are you going, Amah?"

Instantly Amah's eyes lit up from within, as if two small electric lamps were switched on in her head. She put her cup on the table, smoothed the front of her blue cotton

Chinese dress, took out of her pocket a big white folded handkerchief, dried her lips with it, and then said:

" Going to heaven . . . to paradise," she added, in order to make it completely clear where she was going.

" What? . . . How? " Mother was at a loss as to how to put her question.

" Not right away. First I go to Shansi Province. Our convent is sending help—medicines, food, clothing. . . . They will also take destitute small children into their hospitals. . . . I was born in Shansi Province. I go, I help in conversation. I help everywhere. . . . Suppose children would be afraid of nuns—all in black, nuns can scare everybody. Here I help. . . . I say, nuns are all right . . . no killing . . . helping those who are not yet killed, . . . Must not be afraid to go to the hospitals . . . not a very bad place . . . I tell all, I help."

And Amah cast her eyes down, modestly.

" But the paradise? Where does it come in—the paradise? "

" Looking forward to martyrdom," she said subtly . . .

" many chances it happens.. . . Japanese do not like interfering. . . . They try to kill, we try to help to live. . . . See? Japanese maybe very, very angry . . . and I helping everywhere, so much . . . many chances for martyrdom . . . and then nun or no nun, paradise is the only place I go in."

And again for a fleeting moment Amah's eyes shone and faded, as if a flash of lightning had passed over her face.

" Amah," asked Lida, " are you not afraid? Cannot you refuse to go? Why do you take this way of life? "

" All the ways lead to death," said Amah simply. " And I want to go . . . there are not many chances of being a martyr nowadays. . . . And think: everybody has to die. Cannot escape. And death is kind of hard on anyone. Yet one dies at home and receives nothing. Martyrdom, perhaps, will be much worse, but it is well rewarded . . . straight you go to paradise. Is not that a great temptation? Without it I will live, maybe, eighty years, live and live, toil and toil and never be sure where I go after. . . . And in

eighty years I will have more pain, maybe, than in martyrdom. . . . No, no. Martyrdom is the easiest way to . paradise, and the quickest.

" Amah," said Mother sternly, " I do not like the way you think about it. It does not sound Christian at all."

Amah sat for a while silent, with downcast eyes. Then she lifted her head, and said in a voice shocking in its sincerity, simplicity, and sadness:

" I am kind of tired. Here I am left out. . . there I am not accepted. Everything I like is a sin . . . I am much too lonely for a woman."

Mother rose and quickly came to her. She put her hand on Amah's shoulder and said:

" Amah, people do too much fussing about religions here below. But over all there is a real God. He loves all who love Him. You *need* not be so anxious about your salvation. He never refuses His paradise to those who want it. Tap at that door and it opens."

At the same time Dima was entertaining another visitor in the back yard. This was a boy about his own age. His father had brought washed linen for Mrs Parrish, and the boy helped him. He did not enter the house, but was waiting for his father in the yard. He stood motionless, with his eyes cast down. His poor Chinese clothes were dirty, and his small brown hands bore calluses and blisters, witnesses of hard work.

Dima was taught to be civil to all who came, notwithstanding their social rank. He approached the boy, and with an effort, trying to And the right Chinese words, he started the conversation. Not in vain had Dima been the Professor's pupil. He liked to put toy conversation on the scientific basis.

" Do you know," he asked, " that the earth is *round and that it turns?*"

The boy lifted his eyes to the level of Dima's, made a sniffing sound with his nose, and smiled a shy yet sly smile. Then he looked attentively at the spot of ground on which he was standing and asked:

"Which earth? " This one? "

" Yes," affirmed Dima, " the earth. It is round and it turns."

Again the boy looked down at the ground under his and Dima's feet. Then he smiled a broad smile and said triumphantly:

" Nonsense. A joke."

While Dima was gathering in his memory the Chinese words proper to explain the phenomenon the Chinese boy tried to be civil also. He was evidently, not a poor conversationalist, for the expression of his face and the sound of his voice changed completely. He was imitating some one old and wise:

" There is one old man and a white hare living on the moon."

" Superstition," Dima would have liked to say, but he did not know the word in Chinese, so he also said: " Nonsense. A joke."

They stood for a while in silence, facing each other. Then Dima tried another subject, much simpler, yet no less vital:

" What will you have for supper to-day? "

" I have eaten to-day," answered the boy.

Dima did not understand clearly, so he asked again:

" How many times do you eat in a day? "

" We eat once a day," said the boy, and seeing surprise and pity on Dima's face he hastened to add, with dignity:

" We eat once a day, but we do it *every day*," and he smiled triumphantly, now sure that he had not " lost his face " before the white boy.

But the last visitors came late in the night.

A low and cautious bell at the entrance door awoke Mother. Startled she began to listen. Somebody was lightly knocking at the window in the hall. Dog snarled. Then she heard Peter's hasty and cautious steps, heard him calming Dog and opening the entrance door. Mother rose **and** began to dress herself. Peter tapped at her door, then opened it and beckoned her into the hall.

"Aunty/" he said tenderly, in a whisper. He hesitated for a moment, then added: "Now I go."

"You are going? Where? Why?"

"I am going away. The man has come for me."

"What? What?" She began to tremble, and her teeth chattered as if with cold.

He took her hands and kissed them.

"It was decided before. I must go."

Mother made a tremendous effort to overcome her emotion.

"I must prepare you a parcel. . . some food . . . linen."

"No, Aunty. I cannot take anything. I will put on my coat, and that is all."

They stood in silence, trying not to look at each other.

"I will go to my room for money. Then I should like to say good-bye to the children."

- When he kissed Dima the sleeping boy made no movement. But Lida opened her eyes, smiled sweetly, and said:

"Peter . . . Mamma, . . . what is happening?" But she was so overcome with sleep that she closed her eyes at once and was far away.

Mother gave Peter her blessing and kissed him. Then holding his shoulders with her hands, she stepped back and looked straight into his face. She wished to impress his features upon her memory forever. She knew that she would not see him again in this life.

"Aunty," said Peter in a low voice, "remember always that I am going with joy and hope . . . that I am looking forward to a new life, . . . Do not be afraid for me. I am ready to meet my fate."

Mother looked at him with yearning eyes.

"Aunty," said Peter haltingly, "anything may happen. If I should meet Uncle, what shall I say to him from you and Lida?"

"Oh, nothing... our kind regards."

There was more knocking at the door. Mother and Peter went out, The beggar with one eye was standing on the

steps. Another figure—tall and broad—was seen at the gate.

The night was still and sad. The moon kept her moody vigil over human sorrow. A light mist arose as if breathed out by the earth. It softened the stony outlines of buildings and walls and deleted the colours of things. Rising higher, the mist absorbed the moonlight and became a liquid pearly radiance. All the world was made up of light from above and shadow below.

*It is not real, Mother thought. It is a dream . . . I must make an effort to awake.*

She looked around. Two bare trees in the Garden accentuated the melancholy of the scene. She looked at the house. Number 11 with no light in its windows was like a face with closed eyes. It gave no response to Mother's appeal. Light, shadow, silence—all was mysterious, cautious, even hostile.

*It must be a dream. The world was never like this before . . .* Mother thought.

A clock began to strike somewhere. The sounds fell heavy and sterile . . . they called forth no echo and held no promise. There were many of them, disconnected lonely drops of time.

*Midnight!* thought Mother all trembling.

"Got the money?" asked the beggar in a whistling whisper.

Peter gave him the money. He lit a match, looked at the money, and hid it somewhere in his shirt.

"Now we go!" said the beggar in louder tones.  
"Good-bye, Madame I"

They went away. Out of the Garden. The gate clanged. Their steps sounded heavy and discordant on the bare stones in the narrow passage. Into the street... out of sight. . . out of life.

Mother took several hasty steps. She stood at the gate clutching the cold iron in a convulsive grip. The sterility of human endeavour to pilot one's own life. . . .

The door squeaked, and Dog descended the steps slowly **and** heavily. . . . His head hung low. He approached

Mother. She did not notice him. He growled lightly. She did not hear him. Then he began to lick her now lifelessly hanging hands, as if to say:

"Let us go in. You will find your sorrow with you there, all the same."

AS IF PERCEIVING misery beforehand, Dog spent the days before Dima's departure in a state of constant anxiety and foreboding. Quite unexpectedly he would start a low howl, or a short barking, or some strange squeaking sounds in a high falsetto. He sniffed suspiciously every trunk where Dima's things were packed, then walked away and sat on the steps in dire immobility.

Dima paid little attention to Dog now. Deep in the anticipation of the long trip across the continents and oceans he could hardly think of anything else. Fresh information about his travel was supplied by the Professor daily. Dima would have one day less than the Family at Tientsin. And Dima almost understood why. He would see sharks, following the liner. If he should throw an empty can at them, or a bottle, they would swallow it, and nothing would happen to them. If a monk should embark on the liner, going up the gangway the first, the sailors would curse and prepare for a storm.

Mother tried hard to keep life gay and smooth all the last days before Dima's departure. She wished to spare him any nervous tension. Even the last evening the family spent in the usual way with not too much movement and noise.

His last night in the house Dima slept on Granny's sofa. Mother was lying quietly on a mattress spread on the floor, pretending she was sleeping.

Up in her room, Mrs. Parrish was sitting in an armchair, pretending that she was knitting.

*How does it happen, she thought, that some people fail to tie anybody fo-themselves or to tie themselves to anybody, while others are centres of human joys, and pain, and affection .. as Cranny was before, as Mother is now? Why are*

*some people like that? What makes them so? Suffering? But have I not suffered? Have I not? Yet my pain was evidently vain, it led me nowhere, taught me nothing. It never resulted in anything, but remained a pain which 'ate into all of my being . . . there was no other side to my suffering.*

Stitch after stitch Mrs. Parrish dropped in the thing which she planned as a sweater for Dima.

*Now I shall have Dima . . . I will warm my loneliness with his eagerness and his enjoyment of life. I will try to look at things through his wondering eyes. But will he love me? Shall I only glide through his life like a shadow, seen once and then forgotten?*

Again she dropped a stitch, and went on knitting without noticing it.

*Why are some women mothers and grannies to everybody, so much so that even their proper names are forgotten? Why do other women fail to be mothers even to the children they have borne? What makes a heart sterile? Why cannot I be even an aunty to Dima, only "dear, dear Mrs. Parrish?" And I had to beg this child from Mother . . . and she in all her poverty and desolation, could give me what I most needed. In this Family I have found everything—health, sympathy, loving care, attention . . . and now I am carrying away hope and joy for the rest of my life. . . . Mother gives sympathy and compassion to all, as she offers her poor tea to every' one who enters the house. Why does no one ever tap at my door and ask me for a cup of tea? Or tell me his sorrow? Or shed tears on my bosom? What separates me from the rest of the world? Am I not kind? Am I an egoist? Am I? . . . And would I like to change? No, I would not. I do not understand their exuberance of feeling their openness toward all people coming to them. Their hearts as open as the doors of their house. They open both together, ready to like everybody, to sympathise with every pain, to share every confidence.*

And she dropped more and more stitches in her knitting. She wondered whether it was perhaps because they were

Russian and she English, both doing things in their own way. Here, at Tientsin, she had been working for charity. Rummage sales, charity balls, Christmas presents for destitute children. In this way she had given thousands of dollars **for the poor. . . .** *We have our methodical English way of helping, she thought. So wherein lies the difference? My heart had no part in it. . . . But is that necessary so long as I give money?*

Suddenly she felt a stab in her heart:

*And I, myself, was I in need of money when I was brought here? Could money save me?*

She put her knitting away and looked vacantly before her.

*It was not for my money that Granny nursed me as if I were her own child. Yes, yes, beside the ordinary relations between people—that of being brothers, sisters, husbands, wives, children—there is another kind—the ties of charity, of sympathy, of pity . . . and those ties bind people into another kind of group, a Family in spirit.*

The morning which Mother and Lida could not face even in thought, that morning came, as all mornings do, in due time and quite unobtrusively: first, a faint stirring in the kitchen, splashing of water and smell of smoke; then the low voice of the newspaper man, and the louder one of the boy from the bakery; the jarring noises of the garbage car; Khan's cautious steps in the hall, the morning tea brought in—and there you were facing a new day, with no possibilities of hiding yourself from it.

Yet that eventful day began smoothly. The morning tea was luxurious, with buttered toast, fried eggs, and even slices of bacon. This unusual treat produced an exhilarating effect upon the participants. Since all the inhabitants were going to see Dima and Mrs. Parrish off, Dima had to say good-bye only to Khan and to the house. And to Dog also. Dog could not go to see Dima off.

Dog had to be locked in the cellar, as had happened to him before, and usually only Dima could do it quickly and **without** any protest on Dog's part. To-day Mother asked

the Professor to help Dima with Dog and to try to divert Dima's thoughts from the events of parting.

" So long! " said Dima to Dog. " Behave. See you in the future. Don't grow old too soon."

" Dima," said the Professor, in order to give Dima no time for emotions, " do not forget the new map I have made for you. It is on the table in my room."

And finally the moment came when they all were standing on the embankment of the Hei-ho River. The Professor explained the map to Dima. He would leave Tientsin in a small steamer, which would bring him to Shanghai. There he had to change for a liner going to Marseilles, then cross France, and finally the Channel, and land in England. The Professor moved his finger over the map, and Dima's small nose closely followed every movement. Meanwhile the baggage was taken in, and everything was ready for - the departure. A signal was given for the passengers to so aboard. Only at this last moment did Dima suddenly understand the significance of all that was happening to him. He turned pale, and looked around with widely opened eyes.

" Now go, go, Dima dear," said Mother and Lida, and they lightly pushed him toward the gangway.

" Good-bye, dear boy, and wire often," said the Professor.

" No! Not No! " suddenly cried Dima in a loud heartbreaking voice. " I am not going! I won't."

Here they all surrounded, speaking together in quick and unsteady voices:

" Why! What a nice steamer! There is your cabin with your name written above the door. Mrs. Parrish is waiting. . . look, look! The captain, the sailors, all waiting for you. . . . No, Dima likes travelling. Mr Stowne is coming for you."

"No! No! No! " cried Dima with all his might, his thin little face distorted with tears and despair. Convulsively he clutched the rails of the gangway, twisted his legs around the post, and, livid with effort, he tried to keep his place and not give in to the pressure toward the steamer. There was

a shade of cruelty in this urging the boy to go, and his shrill childish sobs made it almost unbearable.

Then Mother pushed all of them away and embraced Dima. She put her face, hot with tears, close to his, cheek to cheek, and began to whisper:

" Oh, Dima, I never expected this. . . . Peter went quietly. Won't you also be a man? You will earn money and take us also to England. . . . I was so much looking forward to that "—and she kissed him all the time. " Have we no more *men* in our Family? "

Dima's hands left the rails, his legs untwisted from around the post. . . .

" It is time to go. All the steamer is waiting for you," said Mother.

Dima looked at the gangplank of the steamer, at Mrs. Parrish standing there and beckoning for him to come up . . . then he turned back, in one glance taking in all of them, his dear, dear people . . . then he vehemently embraced Mother and whispered:

" Don't be afraid . . . I will never forget that I am Russian " . . . and bravely and resolutely he went up the gangway.

The gangway was taken away, the throbbing steamer began to move . . . slowly. Mother looked at the steamer, and her lips moved also . . . Dima made a final chivalrous gesture; he took his handkerchief and waved it to the Family. Mrs. Parrish put her hand on his shoulder in sign of possessiveness. The Hei-ho River was bearing them away.

Exhausted with emotions, Mother sat down on a pile of sacks filled with cotton, which were lying on the embankment, and silently looked down the river at the steamer, which grew smaller and smaller.

Lida tenderly took Mother's arm and said:

" Look, Mamma, what our Professor is doing there. And Aqna Petrovna also." .

**The Chernovs were standing motionlessly at a distance, absorbed in something they saw. Lida led Mother to them, and they also looked down.**

A vessel was taking on coal. A file of coolies were lugging coal in heavy baskets. Each had two baskets on a pole balanced on his shoulder. They moved in an unbroken line, bent under the load too weighty for one man. The first impression was that of efficiency, of well-measured steps, of almost mechanised movements. . . . There was even a kind of beauty in that rhythmical motion, if one were to take in the picture as a whole. But if one looked at those coolies separately, seeing them not as parts of a machine, but as human beings, the picture suddenly acquired a terrible significance. This was slavery in its most cruel form. Could free human beings wear those rags and lift such sweating, exhausted, and strained faces towards the boat? Was there ever a piece of bread so sweet as to be worthy of this inhuman effort?

" Friends," said the Professor in a low and moved voice, " it seems that their baskets of coal weigh heavier than our baskets of sorrow . . . and we hear no complaint from those quavers."

THE BOARDING-HOUSE was almost empty. Its vitality and joy had ebbed. There remained, to remind one of the former sounds and the former pace, only the lonely sound of Dog thumping about.

Having more time for herself, Mother went to church almost daily. There she found a cure for her physical and mental weariness. In those hours of peace and prayer she felt all her worldly ties loosened. She was nobody's wife, nobody's mother . . . she felt no pressure of cares and anxiety... she was a free soul at peace with herself, free and happy. She wished nothing more for herself. As to the Family, she left it in God's hands. She was ready to live and ready to die . . . at any time, on any call. The long years of suffering and privations told on her now. She felt independent of her own body, of its sensations, fears or pains, intensity of wishes. She could go without eating or without sleeping and work and move all the time. Serenity became her habitual mood, and she grew invulnerable to the pricks and pettiness of everyday life. Her body and soul felt perfectly healthy. Life became a flow of something warm, soft, and tender, as if to live meant swimming slowly adrift, down a calm river on a beautiful sunny day. She made human contacts with exceeding ease. She learned to understand human nature and read freely other people's hearts. A kind of tenderness became her chief feeling toward all living beings. She liked to talk to people, but in her intercourse words never had the foremost importance. Underlying the words, whatever they were about, was her feeling of sympathy and understanding. And she usually received the same response. She would speak to beggars, to groups of Chinese mendicants, refugees and paupers, not in order to convey a message to them in words, but to share

their burden of sorrow, bringing to them her drop of sympathy.

" Will you kindly take this, Old Lady," she said, giving her last ten cents to a gaunt and haggard old Chinese woman in rags. " I am sorry, I have no more to give." She spoke in Russian.

" Thank you, Great Lady, your gift is magnificent," the old lady answered and bowed. She spoke in Chinese.

" It is hard, dear Old Lady, to be without support in one's old age," Mother said in Russian.

" Privations weigh heavier in one's old age, to be sure . . . but this happens to me," said the old woman with resignation, in Chinese.

" Yet we have a wonderful spring day . . . the sun shines warmer. . . . Best wishes to you," said Mother in Russian.

" Same to you, Great Kind Lady," said the old woman in Chinese.

It was of no importance that they had spoken in different languages, since they had understood each other. This was one heart speaking to another heart in the universal language of human pity and compassion.

" Mother," said Lida once, " do you know that you are becoming more and more like Granny? In every way—your eyes, your voice. . . /"

" And it seems to me, Lida, that you acquire more and more resemblance to me, in my youth," answered Mother.

" Oh, Mamma! " cried Lida in rapture. " Oh, say that again! Every one says that you were a beauty I "

If Mother had one sore spot in her heart, that was her thought about Peter. Yet even this pain was alleviated.

Once, in the night, she felt as if someone had touched her shoulder. Instantly she awoke and opened her eyes . . . Peter was standing before her.

" Peter! " She was quickly on her feet. She embraced him with her arms. " You are home again . . . it cannot be a dream . . . no, no. I feel you . . . you are real. . . Here are your strong hands . . . in flesh and bone."

"-No, Aunty, it is a dream," said Peter, tenderly and low.

" But why? It cannot be! I see you so distinctly."

" That is because I am thinking of you now," he whispered.

And Mother awoke. All was dark and calm in the room. She was lying on Granny's sofa. Lida's quiet breathing brushed the silence at regular intervals.

Mother arose. She put on her dressing gown and went to the door. The cool and tranquil night met her on the threshold. She moved out into the blue, opalescent freshness of a serene spring night. . . The two trees brooded in silence, all fragrant with their newly born leaves. . . . Stars trembled above, iridescent, alive. . . . The splendour of the essence of life lay opened as a great, a final peace above human sorrow.

Mother slowly approached the gate. . . . She put her hands on the same place where they had been clutched on that night. *Here Peter stood, she thought, then he went thither, and she heard his steps on the bare stones of the pavement. He disappeared behind that house.*

She looked into the sky above. . . . All the splendour of the flaming universe answered her glance. *Where is the polar star?* she thought. *At home, in Russia, we were taught to orient ourselves by it.* She found the polar star with her eyes. *It is lower here than in my native town, she thought. So there under those stars is Peter now . . . and there under those—she moved her gaze southward—maybe Dima . . . on his liner waring France.*

A heavy thumping approached. It was Dog. Sad . . . mournful. . . . He did not look into the sky . . . his eyes kept to the ground. He stood beside Mother, deep in his animal sorrow. Night accepted him, also.

At this very moment Peter was standing on the top of a hill. . . . He had crossed the border under the darkness of night. . . . He was in Russia. The approaching dawn sent forth the first hesitating flickerings of light. They

showed to Peter the village there . . . down the hill. In a state of exaltation he looked at the river, the forest, the houses. . . . All were sleeping in peace, in quiet. The early morning wind bathed all with freshness. It roughened Peter's hair. It played with his torn shirt and caressed his bare breast.

Peter sighed deeply and happily:

" Oh, Russia I Oh my first, my only, my eternal love! "

PROFESSOR CHERNOV was visibly declining. He had changed both mentally and physically. An acute anxiety became his habitual mood. The more frequent changes were either a profound nervous depression full of fears and suspicions, or fits of wrath which always arose without sufficient cause. Sometimes, in the climax of his anger, he would suddenly pause, as if listening to the inner thin stream of reason. Then he would look around with wondering eyes and calm down. Anna Petrovna's timorous attention and cares vexed him, while Mother's presence was always beneficent.

He grew thinner, looked haggard, and lost his appetite. Insomnia also often tormented him.

One cloudy afternoon he strode along the Asahi Road, the chief street of the Japanese Concession. In a kind of mental distraction he paid no attention either to the time or to his way. Suddenly he was startled by a strange noise in the air above. He looked up. A huge cloud of black ravens was settling down on to a house. In the chorus of their angry voices were drowned all the sounds of the street. The beating of wings produced a wind all around.

Those ravens were one of the mysteries of that country. Early at dawn they flew over the town to some unknown destination, silently, in thousands, in clouds. In the afternoon they would return home. They lived somewhere in the hills, in the ruins of a temple. Nobody could tell exactly where. Sometimes, on their evening journey, they would make a halt and have a short rest in the town. With sudden cries they would soar high and choose a big house.

The Professor, seeing the ravens for the first time, stood spellbound by the unusual sight. Some of the birds, flying lower, almost touched him with their outstretched wings.

When they flew away, the Professor was still standing before the big building of the Japanese Municipal Council.

" Your pass? "-asked a heavy voice in English.

A Japanese patrol was on his rounds over the concession. Foreigners had to have a pass in order to visit there. The Professor heard nothing. He was far away, deep in thoughts of his own.

" Your pass I " repeated the Japanese officer, and his yellow hand pulled the Professor's sleeve.

Slowly the latter turned and looked with sad eyes at the officer and the two soldiers with guns, standing behind him, and asked gently, " Brothers what do you want of me? "

" Who are you? Your nationality? "

" I am a Utopian," said the Professor after a slight pause.

" The name of your country? " insisted the officer.

" Utopia is my country," said the Professor in the same low and sad voice.

The Japanese officer had evidently never heard of Utopia. For one moment he was in suspense, then he asked, " Where is it? What kind of a country? "

" It is a small isle," said the Professor. " We are the smallest nation in the world . . . we Utopians."

" What is it famous for? " asked the Japanese officer.

" What is manufactured there? What kind of goods? Whayort of trade? "

" Friend," said the Professor, " we have no factories, no trade, no armies, nothing. We are poor."

" But what are you doing there usually? "

" We are all poets and philosophers there," said the Professor, and his voice broke.

A slight movement went across the officer's tense face. It began near the eyes, and died out somewhere behind his cheek bones. Again he looked at the Professor, but said nothing more. Asking neither pass nor passport, he trod heavily away.

**The** Professor looked around. There were no more birds. Gathered into clouds, they were far away on their mysterious pilgrimage. Shivering the Professor walked home.

Once in his room the Professor stood quietly listening to his thoughts. He forgot to take off his coat or hat. Anna Petrovna gently approached him, and with light, careful movements removed his hat and unbuttoned his overcoat. The Professor came to himself, looked at her with misty eyes, and said, " Ravens. What has a raven to say? "

She thought that he was looking for a quotation. Her mind began to work and she said aloud: —

*" Is there—is there balm in Gilead?—tell me, tell me, I implore!"*

*Quoth the Raven, " Nevermore."*

He smiled. " A raven is but a poor philosopher. Fed on corpses, he knows little about life: a pure materialist. No Anny, no! Looking at those thousands of ravens I felt with a new joy the glory of being an idealist, keeping away from carcasses, living in Utopia, in freedom, in light, in beauty."

Anna Petrovna looked at him with anxious eyes.

" You are tired, Anthony," she whispered.

" Gentle Anny," he said, " leave me alone now. Go downstairs. Go, dearest. I have an important thing to write. I must be alone."

Anna Petrovna being gone, he took a sheet of paper and wrote, " My Testament."

" After a long life I am approaching my dismissal," he wrote. " I do not bring much to that day. Life is simple, at its core. After all the different and complicated human relationships I have experienced, having known so many people, seen so many places, read so many books, after having studied, explored, and experimented with all I have met in life, after having been a son, a brother, a husband, a father, a student, a teacher, a scholar, a judge, a prisoner, a writer, a traveller, a leader, after all that I find myself back in the primordial phase: myself and my wife.

" To you, Anny, the other half of my universe, I address this my testament. I look around and find nobody else. All has faded away like a shadow; only you, my gentle friend,

you remain. I met you in your paternal home where you had been living in luxury. Among the flowers of your garden you dreamed of coming happiness. I took you by the hand and promised you that happiness. From your world of music, flowers, and reverie, the world of luxury and joy, I led you through poverty, misery, despair, exhaustion, and desolation, straight away to this poor room of Number 11. With me you have known all: tears, sadness, humiliation, fears, anxiety, privations, famine—all, Anny, except happiness. Yet you never turned upon me a reproachful glance; you never said a cold or unkind word. From the day you gave me your trembling, small hand until to-day when I sent you away from this poor room, you were only love and devotion. You were the pure spring of water which refreshed me all my life. The baseness, the cruelty, the falsehood, the slander, the injustice, the persecution, all the crimes of mankind, I could stand them all, because of you, Anny. Wherever I went, whatever I saw, you were waiting for me at home, and met me with your gentle smile. You kept the balance for me: you, dear, alone, against the vices and depravity of mankind. Because of you I never lost my love and faith in human beings. Women like you, Anny, keep the world of love alive, and the greatness of the human heart realised. It all is balanced on your frail shoulders, dearest, and you bear it without complaint. All the warmth and tenderness I met in life was given to me by you. Now I begin to perceive the end of my path, Anny. I am leaving you all alone and I have nothing to bequeath you.

" And what could I bequeath? I, a man, who failed to acquire a single follower, a sole listener or disciple. My words were sterile seeds in all the souls where they were sown, yet I have something else to say. To-day I have been searching for the hidden meaning of my existence. Why had I been created at all? Had it no purpose at all, this complexity of atoms, cells, tissues, ideas, experience, faith, hopes, that is I? Could it be only the careless lavishness of nature?' Why have I been ground in every possible mill of physical and

mental trials, shown life and humanity in so many varied attitudes . . . why?

" Anny, I know why I have lived! Human nature is the only constant phenomenon in this ever-changing life, constant exactly in its best traits, in that drop of the Absolute which every human soul contains. Our vices are changeable, transitory, they lure mankind here and there, they change, they pass. But the breath of the Absolute remains the same for everybody everywhere; our love of life, of freedom, of justice, of kindness, of beauty, of each other, the same for all the nations, races, and tribes. It is real, that unity so burning in my breast. It is eternal, and therefore, in vain are all the terrors of life—wars, persecutions, prisons, they will never kill this primal thirst in a human breast. Nothing can kill it. Nothing could kill it in me. I believe in all I have believed. I was put to test and went gloriously through it. I proved stronger than all the evils of life. '

" To you, Anny, I address this my testament, only I have nothing to bequeath you. I gave you nothing during my life, I have nothing to leave you after my death. Yet, even though I should live a century more, you would not die but follow me everywhere and keep me warm and radiant with your love and devotion. You would stand between me and the terrors of life and take the blows upon yourself and then soothe my reflected wounds. If I could be immortal, you would be immortal too. That is the miracle of love. You will need no justification when *you* face the Creator; you need no explanation; no words; you are beyond human understanding, as all the greatest laws of universe and life are. You are love. But why is humanity trampling over you as carelessly as it tramples over this precious planet, upon its tender fields and meadows? Could we live without you, Anny? Could humanity remain human without you? Is not your seeming febleness your greatest strength, only disguised as the majestic cosmic life is disguised sometimes in a modest blade of grass, in a minute bud, in a drop of water, in a thin ray of light? You are one of them, Anny,

simple, visibly insignificant, yet so marvellous, so necessary, and so strong, for in the last words of this my testament I have to say that in our mutual life you were the *strength*, and I was the *weakness*.

" Take this like a sonnet from me; this is my song to you. I end as I had to begin, with a love song to you. But we men are born far-sighted, and only defeat, weakness, old age, and death bring us home to that quiet glow from which we have started."

He folded the paper and distractedly put it between the pages of a book, which had to be returned to the library next day. Then he opened the window and looked up at the stars. His glance was steady, as if glued to the sky. From time to time his lips moved and he whispered something. But the air was cold and with a nervous movement he withdrew and banged the window shut.

The Professor's decline was swift after that. Having received no answers from the governments and leaders of different organizations on whose support he counted so much, he decided to put his last and final plan into action. He purposed to speak to people directly. He went around the town and addressed passers-by with ardent appeal, calling them to universal peace and brotherly love.

Some of his hearers would linger for a moment and think that, really, it was a great pity that a man once so intelligent, so clever. . . And they would go their own thorny way. The Europeans who were not Russian and did not know who the Professor was would sometimes take him for a street beggar and with an impatient movement they would turn aside or accelerate their pace. Some, mistaking him for a drunken man, would stop for a moment and orate to him about the shame and baseness of his behaviour. But his dignified manners, his magnificent voice, and his broad gestures frequently made him pass for what he really was, a learned man not quite sane. Those who thought so would carefully allow him to pass, and hurry off in the opposite direction.

For the Chinese he became an object of derision. Their usual self-control and great self-restraint made him seem

ludicrous in contrast. In a lull of the early afternoon the Professor would orate to the resting rickshaw men or coolies around the Public Market, When a guffaw was the only answer he would say:

" Laugh at me, brothers, laugh! You might also throw stones at me, for such has always been the practice. . . . All this happened many times before, long long ago. . . . Yet I will remain here and try to reach your hearts."

One day after a noisy scene with Anna Petrovna, up in their room, he came to Mother looking haggard, his hair all dishevelled.

" I am cold," he said, standing on the threshold. " All is darkness around me."

Mother rose, approached him slowly, arid took his hands. They were frigid. She led him towards Granny's sofa and helped him to lie down on it. She covered him with her coat, put a small white pillow under his head, and while doing so she spoke in a warm low voice:

" I see . . . spring is not good for us who are no longer young. I myself, also feel chilly half the day. Let me give you some hot tea . . . and we will have some jam with it. You ate nothing at dinner. How can you expect to feel well? A boiled egg is the thing you need now."

She called Lida and said to her:

" Keep company with our dear Professor. I will go to the kitchen for a while. You might sing for him, something quiet that he would like."

She put a shade on the lamp and went away.

" Lida," said the Professor in a sad and tired voice, " when I see your mother, as when I saw your granny before her, I always think that it is, perhaps, a mistake that mankind has done away with the matriarchy. If women like these were given the power to rule, . . . Look at your mother, Lida. Has she ever said that she is busy and could not listen to any one's sorrow? Has she ever asked for anything for herself? And have we ever given her anything? What do we know about *her* health, *het* pains? Has she ever complained to you? Tome? We have never tried to share her

burden. We just live in the house, take for granted her attention, her care, her compassion. We leave everything to her."

When Mother came back with a tray for the Professor, Lida was weeping.

"Oh, Mother, I love you so much," she said in explanation.

The Professor came to the end of his life on a clear and warm morning in May.

He slept fitfully the night before. He awakened early and began to dress himself. Anna Petrovna rose also . . . she would not let him go anywhere alone. She always followed him. Her constant fear was that the Professor would get into trouble in the Japanese Concession and be arrested. She cherished no hope that he would be cautious in his speech if arrested. On the contrary, she was sure that he would argue against war, against Japan, speak about universal peace and abuse the government. They would take him for a propagandist of communism, and that would bring about dire consequences.

So Anna Petrovna followed her husband everywhere, like a shadow hiding around the corners, slipping into the shops, standing behind the posters. Ready at any moment to rush forward and protect him, she was, at the same time afraid of being seen by him. If the Professor happened to see her following him, he would instantly fly into one of his fits of rage. He would shout at her, abuse her; and such scenes on the streets were misery for the timid Anna Petrovna.

On this morning the Professor was in unusual haste. He rushed over his morning ritual of dressing and washing and combing, all the time whispering, arguing with an invisible audience. Finally, ready for the departure, he said to Anna Petrovna severely:

"DO not follow me to-day, I order this. Obey. Do not hinder my work. It is my last hope."

But she followed him doggedly. On the Taku Road, long and narrow, the traffic is very turbulent, even in the early morning. The Professor tried to stop people and discuss

the problems of war and peace with them. He went from one potential listener to another, leaving commotion after him. And Anna Petrovna quickly and furtively ran from one hiding place to another, keeping her husband in view all the time.

The Professor was approaching the ex-German Concession, where the police were Japanese, and soldiers were standing on duty near posts. There was no barbed wire at that time, the border being marked with a broad white line on the pavement. One had to make only one step, and became liable to the Japanese rules and regulations. On the other side of the line, in the midst of the street, a Japanese policeman was standing on duty. In his direction the Professor was resolute making his progress.

With a sinking heart Anna Petrovna became aware of the situation. On this side of the white line he was safe, but in another moment he would step over it. Quickly her plan was made: she rushed forward . . . she would reach the place where the Japanese was standing sooner . . . she would appear behind his back . . . and the Professor, seeing her, would, as usual, turn and run away from her . . . back to the English Concession, away from the zone of danger.

She ran as fast as she could. When she reached her destination she saw the Professor standing before the Japanese policeman and talking to the latter in French:

" *Frere,*" he said, "*qu'est-ce que vous faites la? Pourquoi je vous vois arme de tant de . . .*"

And suddenly he saw Anna Petrovna standing behind the policeman,

" You!" he cried in wrath. And turning around he blindly rushed away. At that moment a huge truck rounded the corner and ran into the narrow street. The Professor threw himself forward as if to meet it.

He was killed instantly.

Breathless, ashen with horror, Anna Petrovna flew towards the body. She threw herself on the ground, beside him, and lowering her face near to his whispered:

" Anthony! Anthony! Rise,,. ."

And she tried to lift him and carry him off. But she could not. She was surrounded by the excited and horrified crowd. Whistles and alarm signals sounded somewhere in the outside world. Within were only the two of them.

"Anthony," she implored, "don't frighten me so much. I cannot bear this."

But he was dead. He had become gloriously united with the Absolute. That life once so full of energy now poured out, drop by drop, before the eyes of Anna Petrovna.

There was no money for the funeral. With Mother's help Anna Petrovna wrapped one of the microscopes—Anatole—in a napkin, and they went to the Jesuit College. Mother carried the parcel in one hand and with the other led Anna Petrovna.

Whether the College needed Anatole or not, they never knew; but they were instantly received by an aged monk who treated them with the utmost politeness, and expressed his profound compassion for Anna Petrovna, Anatole was sold. The money was paid at once.

The day of the funeral was radiant and almost hot. A crowd followed the Professor's coffin. Even Mme. Klimova paced solemnly in the group of chief mourners.

The cemetery was situated on the Russian Concession. There were some in the crowd who had no passports and would not risk crossing the borders of the English Concession. Therefore the Professor's coffin was lowered into the ground in view of the white dividing line.

Nothing of interest or importance was said over the Professor's grave. For who could say anything, since the chief speaker was lying there in the coffin.

## 24

LIDA'S BLONDE HEAD was bent low over a book. It was Pushkin. She opened it at random in order to have a peep into her future.

*And ev'ry day and year I ponder  
On what the future has in store . . .*

*Well, this is just the question I am asking,* thought Lida and closed the book. Something had happened to Pushkin. He evaded giving direct answers. He met her question with another question or offered something too vague to allay her inquietitude. The fact was that there had been no letters coming from America this last month. Was it because of the censor, only a delay in delivery, or had something happened to Jimmy? Lida even contemplated sending a radiogram, however exorbitant the price might be. Her only possible resource would be the pawning of the jade necklace and Jimmy's watch. Something had happened to the watch, too. As if weary of keeping pace with the eventful life of this house, it always lagged behind now, always late. . . . Yes, it seemed that that watch was betraying her, too.

Lida tried once more. She opened the book and Pushkin readily began to sing:

*In the blue sky stars are flashing;  
In the blue sea waves are splashing;  
In the dark sky clouds are shifting;  
In the sea a cask is drifting.*

This was not what lida expected. She tried a bit more:

*In the cask the Queen in weeping;  
In her arms the child is sleeping.*

She closed the book in despair. Ptishkin had no pity today. Was this an *answer* to her question? Yes, in some way it was, only Lida did not guess it.

For far away, in the Pacific, a liner held a speedy course towards the shores of China. It was bringing Jimmy's letter, too. In appearance it was quite an ordinary letter. Only registered, only a bit thicker than an average letter would be. But of a power should be given to the feelings and intentions of that letter, the liner would not drift but fly. It would fly like a bird in spring, with wild joy, with great speed. Like an arrow it would shoot the letter towards Lida's breast. It would explode there, darting streams of joy, of love, of hope around it. Because Jimmy had earned his first five dollars and was sending them to Lida as a present. And he hoped to earn more, too, and put them by for their future. Thus their meeting and marriage were not groundless dreams but real plans of grown-up people, put on the solid basis of money.

Of this coming letter, evidently, Pushkin gave a modest hint, but Lida failed to understand it. With the eagerness of youth she looked for something sure and palpable. She opened the book for the third time.

Pushkin, one of the best love poets in the world and, during his short life, always a gallant lover himself, had pity on Lida at last, and this time answered shortly and to the point:

*/ hear thy voice divine,  
My friend • • • my gentle friend . . . / love . . . I'm  
thine.*

With a sigh of relief Lida closed the book. Now she had acquired the equanimity she needed in order to think over her own problems. For many things of importance had happened to her.

It all began with the piano that the Countess had rented for her children. It stood modestly in the corner of the Diazes' dining room. Lida had had two years of music

lessons with Mother, long ago, when they could afford to rent a piano; so she asked permission to play a little. Once at the piano, she could not tear herself away. She remembered all . . . her fingers flew, as if there had been no interval of practice. She sang and fluently accompanied herself. She was happy. She felt as if waves of creative artistic power were rising in her. And she could not tear herself away from the piano.

The Countess invited her to come daily in the morning when her children were at school, and use the piano for two hours. She grew more and more attentive to Lida's playing and began to help her and to arrange her exercises into a system. She enjoyed especially Lida's voice.

One day, when Lida was at the Diazes', an old lady came on a visit. It seemed that this meeting was prearranged, for Lida was at once requested to sing one of Schubert's songs to the Countess's accompaniment. Hardly had Lida finished when the old lady approached and embraced her. Lida saw tears glistening in her eyes.

"Child," said the latter, "you have made me happy."

Lida was asked to sing another song, then the third.

"I see now," said the old lady. "Five years of hard work, and you will be an opera singer. I will help you. Child, let us work with love and devotion for the glory of Russian music,"

The old lady had been a brilliant opera singer herself. She had married and left the stage, but all of the time she had kept close to the life and development of Russian music. Now old and widowed, she led a simple and very modest existence. From time to time she could be persuaded to give singing lessons, but a talent was the only thing which could move her to accept a pupil. She proposed giving Lida her guidance and training free on condition that Lida would sacrifice all her time and strength to the art of singing.

And a new life opened to Lida. All her past memories, pains, sorrows, poverty, cares—all were swallowed suddenly in oblivion. Her thoughts were projected exclusively toward the future. **And** this future was all miracles and wonders

... She was not taking many with her to that future: only Mother and Jimmy. She had no more space in her heart, all the rest being given to her study and creative attempts in art. She spent two hours at the Diazes' piano each morning, and three hours with her teacher each afternoon. She had lessons not only in singing, but also in the subjects connected with the dramatic arts. She had to read much, to think more, to interpret, to personify.

Her teacher became her idol. Through her Lida began to comprehend what constitutes the life of a true artist: the pure devotion, the flaming love, the self-sacrificing, hot enthusiasm—these were an artist's life and her reward also. Success and glory were but poor things, just indirect results, not worthy of pursuit. The understanding of beauty and the creation of it were the only aims of real artists.

The old lady was quite another person during their lessons. She became young, sparkling—a fanatical priest in her temple. Her gray hair was like snow on the top of a volcano, still active, still full of fire, still melting stones into a flaming and boiling liquid.

Was not this Life? Was not this happiness?

Singing was for Lida all mixed up with love. She sang well because she loved deeply. In her imagination she never saw an audience; she sang for Jimmy. She was his Manon, his Juliet, his Lisa, his Tatiana. His name was never twice the same, either, yet he always answered her call. She sang all the great romances of the world, constantly finding herself and Jimmy at their core.

Once, listening to her performance, Mother said:

"Do you realise, lida, that a day may come when Jimmy may ask you to choose between him and opera?"

For a moment lida was painfully silent. A pink wave ebbed and flowed in her face and neck. Then sheened:

"I would choose Jimmy! I would always choose love, Yes, I would choose love from all that life has to offer me."

She was silent for a moment more. Then she added:

"Every woman is bom with the dream of *one* great passion in her life. I will keep to that dream."

DURING the thirty-seven years of their marriage Anna Petrovna had lived only for her husband. She had no expectations and built no plans for herself. In her imagination she could never see herself alone without the Professor. Dimly she perceived herself as dead when he was not among the living.

Now he was dead. She herself had written with her trembling hand on his white cross:

*Let fresh young life be ever playing  
Around the portal of my tomb,  
Let Nature ever be displaying  
Her careless charm, her fadeless bloom.*

Those verses were by his beloved Pushkin. He would never repeat them. He was gone, and yet she found herself among the living. Why? From whence came that mysterious force of moving and breathing and thinking? She ate almost nothing, she had no spiritual impetus, like joy or hope, but she awoke every morning with wonder to feel herself alive.

Now she shared the Family room and slept on Granny's sofa. Mother slept on a mattress on the floor. Lida was, given a separate room, for there was space enough in the boarding-house at that time. They all faced the hard problem of further existence. Anna Petrovna gave up trying to solve it. She sat quietly in the Garden, between the two trees, busy seeing the things in her past. Joys and sorrows. They were so mixed. Now, knowing the sequels of events, she could not discern which were joy and which sorrow. The one was so easily transformed into the other. All were *life*, going on and on, blindly flowing forth, hurting people, bruising them, raising them on a sudden wave of joy and then sweeping them

into dark depths of sorrow. All was painful at the very end . . . Joys were pale, dim and short-lived; pains were real and acute.

*I was not taught how to live, she thought, and I do not know how to die.*

The idea of suicide wavered before her, but she pushed it away as disgusting. Poison, a gun, a knife . . . there was something offensive even in thoughts of this kind. To wound this her poor flesh, to torture it . . . no, that was impossible.

While she was brooding and groping for the exit door of life, Mother took Anna Petrovna's problems upon herself. Since she had acquired her new mood of inner peace and serenity everything succeeded with Mother. Her thinking was clear, her acting prompt. She discussed Anna Petrovna's fate with Dr. Isaak and they found the issue. Since a free place in the asylum had been ready for the late Professor, who had not availed himself of it, that offer was transferred to Anna Petrovna, and she was given a free place in a charity institution for old invalids. Now Mother prepared Anna Petrovna's mind for this new change, and their low murmurings and resigned sighs were heard late in to the night.

Another problem was the boarding-house. "Mother had to give it up. But where to go? Yet Mother refused to worry. She was even glad; for she could leave the house quite easily, thanks to Mrs. Parrish. With reticence so characteristic of Mrs. Parrish in the second phase of her life in the Family,\* she did a good deed in secrecy. Only after her departure was Mother informed that Mrs. Parrish had paid the rent for the house for three months in advance. Now these three months had come to an end, but Mother felt happy that she would not leave debts behind her. Her other debts she hoped to cover after having sold the pieces of furniture and crockery she possessed. Then she had to dismiss Khan. This news affected Khan very deeply. He became almost ill at the idea of parting with the Family and the place. But soon he also had definite plans for the immediate future, and he had built

them with more nimbleness than could be expected from one of his always practical and grasping nature.

"Wantchee go to war," he said to Mother once.

"Oh, Khan I I never expected this from you," said Mother with wonder.

"Me also never expected. Seen a very wise man. He knows everything. He says me must go."

"Will you have military training?"

"No. I not fight. Me only run away."

"How run away? From whom?"

"From the Japanese. Me come near. They see me. Wantchee kill very much. Me run away. They run after. Chinese run quicker. Japanese carry to much—guns, food, clothes—cannot run quick. Me hide myself. No. Cannot catch. China comes out victorious. Japan perish."

"Well, Khan, I do not understand all this. Is that how China carries on the war?"

"An old Chinese wise man said very long ago"—and Khan began to recite in a curiously high and singing voice: " ' There are thirty-six dignified ways of meeting one's enemy. The best is to run away/ " Here he changed to his usual tone. " China caimot fight—too expensive. We run away. Japanese moving and moving. Very tired. Spend much money. Cannot catch all Chinese and kill. If we take away Japanese guns we may fight a little, also."

"But they take your property."

"Not very much. Railways we take with us. Factories' plants also. Soldiers take . . . When the people run away they take their property . . . Japanese come—no town, no factories, no railway . . . They build new ones. Then we come and try to take those away, too."

"But, Khan, they kill Chinese, very many of them, while you are running away."

A cloud went over Khan's round face. Then he said:

"Asked the same to the wise man. He said: No fear. If Japan keeps killing at this same rate it would take one hundred and twenty years to kill us all. We shall last that long. We are many. We bear fifteen million babies a year,"

" Well," said Mother," really . . ."

" But Japan, cannot . . . killing is too expensive. One must buy a gun, and a bullet/ and keep it dry and keep it clean . . . Many expenses . . . Japan cannot keep killing that long. Our victory. China won."

" Very glad to hear it. I wish victory to China," Mother said.

"I am changed man," continued Khan confidentially. " Much changed. I thought before, war was not my business. I gather money and open a grocery store. I live. I enjoy. Not interested in wars. Never fought people. Japanese came and burnt my house . . . my people killed. . Now I see. China goes first. Second my grocery store. I attend to first business."

" And the wise man says the same?"

"same. I never begin war. I never hurt Japanese. They hurt me. Now I hurt them. See? I answer."

Thus did Khan find his place in life.

Meanwhile an event of considerable importance was taking place on the steps of Number 11. Dog was going through an ordeal.

Bulldogs usually do not die from disappointment or heart failure, and yet suffering makes deeper lines in their faces. Their eyes look deeper, too. He was a changed dog now.

And he was facing the greatest temptation of his life: he longed to lick Carlos's hand. Carlos was the Diazes' small boy. He had come to Number 11 with his mother, who was even now inside the house waiting to see Mother, but he had become so fascinated by Dog that he could not step over the sill. There he was standing, and with the eye of a connoisseur he scrutinised that perfect specimen of the canine kingdom.

Dog supported that critical examination without giving any outward sign of his feelings. Only small nervous ripples came and went in his shining skin. He tried, unsuccessfully, to look away.

Certainly this was *mother* boy. There was nothing of Dima about him . . . of unforgettable Dima . . . Yet is

there not something commonly *childish* in all children . . . something *boyish* in all boys? There is very little *difference* between them, after all.

And Dog's heart missed a beat when Carlos put a hand on his head. Is it not a balm to be touched by a friendly boy's hand? But Dog tried to fight this yearning for a living ideal in flesh, whom one can sniff and lick . . . Was this a betrayal or was it not?

" Why do they call you only *Dog*? asked Carlos. " Won't you be mine? You will be a Spanish subject. I will call you . . . well, Don Juan Terorio, and we will make a passport for you."

This was too much. Dog felt that only one movement separated him from a new devotion, a new slavery . . . The bitterness of loss was an open wound in his heart . . . No . . . no . . . never more.

And he started slowly to walk away.

But the boy would not let him go. He clutched Dog's neck with his hands . . . warm boyish hands . . . could any dog resist it?

And still with an aching heart Dog clumsily turned toward Carlos and licked his hand.

Inside the house, Mother had just come downstairs to greet Countess Diaz. The Countess had immediately proposed the solution to the last of Mother's problems.

" We never use that small room in the attic," she was saying to Mother. " We would like to have you and Lida in our house. I am sure that we shall be like one family."

" Perhaps you could let it to someone," suggested Mother.

" Oh, no. We would not like to have some unknown people in the house. And the room is so small that, really, it would be ridiculous to take money for it. Then we must think about Lida's future. She will have the piano almost all of the day."

" Thank you," said Mother simply. " That will help us very much."

" I am so glad you accept," said the Countess. " I think Lida should devote every minute to her lessons. Do

you know how old Lida's teacher is? Once she told me that having been the pupil of Mme. Viardot she met Turgenev twice in her house!"

"Really I" exclaimed Mother, her eyes sparkling. "How very interesting! What did she say about him?"

They belonged to the same generation and were brought up in the same culture. So there was no need to explain to each other that Turgenev was one of the best Russian writers of the last century and that Mme. Viardot had been his only love.

Thus the conversation was turned from the petty details of their everyday life. And this excursion toward arts, literature, music, toward beauty and high ideas, was their rest and relaxation. They kept their minds young and their interest in life vivid.

THEY LEFT NUMBER II early in the morning on the thirtieth of June. They were three living beings—Mother, Lida, and Dog—with three items of movable property—Granny's sofa and two trunks filled with clothing and linen. That; was all that was left of the household once so large, and its life *so* full and complicated. They had sold all the rest of their things and paid their debts. Jimmy's five dollars served for the milk, egg, and bread accounts. The jade necklace, when pawned, also helped. But Jimmy's watch still ticked triumphantly on Lida's wrist. Thus they were leaving Number n clear of any debts and obligations. They stepped into a new era of life, and two rickshaws brought all their things thither.

The room in the attic was just a room in the attic—small, uncomfortable, and bare. But those unattached to material things do not depend on their surroundings for happiness or unhappiness. The room in the attic was splendid. First, it was a *room*, a shelter from heat, rain, dust, wind, snow; a place to sleep in, to wash m, to eat, to work, to dream in; a nest to cuddle in in the days of joy or sorrow; an address to receive the messages of life—well, one's room is everything, be it in an attic or elsewhere. An attic room has one more advantage: it is nearer to the stars. In the measure of distance it is, certainly, almost nothing; but in the view that attic windows can offer, it is much. Nothing of the earth interferes with the view, and one has the starry sky for oneself. This helps in lofty thinking.

Three hours were quite enough for them to become established in that new abode and to accommodate their belongings to the space. In the place of the Family's jewellery they had Granny's three books; in the place of luxury, Lida's tea set. They had their library in the two books of Pushkin

and Lennontov. They had even livestock in the person of Dog. Were they not rich?

And they were happy, too. On the first evening the attic room acquired a homelike and even poetical aspect. The window was opened, and Lida was sitting on its sill. She looked at the gorgeous glory of the night sky. Mother, on her knees, prayed before the icon in the corner. The swaying light of the *lampada* made the icon look alive. The moving light and shadow produced continuous changes on the Holy Virrin's face. It seemed as if her lips were moving, her eyes smiling, her lashes trembling. Jesus in her hands was alive, too. They both not only listened to Mother's prayer, but answered it with no delay.

"Mother," said Lida when she saw that the latter had finished her prayers, "are we not wonderfully happy?"

"I think we are," answered Mother serenely.

"There are days when I feel almost ashamed of being so happy . . . now . . . when so many suffer so terribly. And all whom we love I Those wonderful letters . . . Dima's . . . Ira's . . ."

"Have you deciphered Mme. Militza's letter?"

"No, I could not. Only the dear Professor was able to do it easily. You know how she writes: either *baby* or *Babylon*—for her it is the same."

Mother sighed.

"I know what you were thinking about just now . . . you were thiaking about Peter . . . Yet I am sure he is all right. They cannot have much against him in Russia,"

They were silent.

"Mother," said Lida eagerly, "may I sing? It is not late . . . Nobody is asleep yet. . . It is so hot. Only one song, please, I promise—only one.

"What time is it?"

"No more than nine o'clock by my watch,"

"Well, Lida, one song . . . and not very loudly."

Lida looked up into the dark, starlit sky and began Mendelssohn's "On Wings of Song":

*On wings of song I'll bear thee  
Enchanted realms to see . . .*

At the sounds of her voice the Countess, in her room, put away her book and said:

" She is singing."

The Count stopped typewriting.

Somewhere on the first floor a sad and pale face appeared in the window, attracted by Lida's song. \*

The passers-by walked more slowly by the house, or even turned back and passed it once more. Soon a small group gathered on the pavement below Lida's window.

The first to stop was an Italian soldier. Having heard Lida's voice he only whistled in astonishment and stood there on the pavement until the end of the song, listening with the air of a connoisseur, the son of a great singing race. Near him an old Chinese gentleman stood, clad in a plum-coloured silk robe. His head was bent; the fine, delicate face was adorned with a very long and very thin silvery beard, the hairs of which were so few that they could be easily counted on the dark background of his robe. His eyes were half closed and his face wore no expression of appreciation of Lida's song. A true son of his people, he was not hasty in his reactions to the events of life. Very near the wall of the house, touching it with her pale hand, stood a blind Chinese woman, evidently of the middle class. Every evening she took a walk, accompanied by her amah. The blind woman, clad in black, wearing a pink artificial flower fastened with a long silver pin to her well-oiled coiffure, usually listened greedily to any manifestations of outward life. At present, her face and posture expressed undivided attention—an absorption of mind which is rarely achieved except by the peoples of Eastern Asia. Her amah's crude face was blank and stupid. She failed to understand why her mistress had halted in the midst of their walk. A little aside stood a Russian girl with her escort. Under the spell of the twilight of the evening and the lyric moment, he stealthily kissed the girl's neck near the ear; but she, looking upward with bright

glistening eyes, evidently did not feel the kiss at all. A Chinese boy in rags stood at a distance, as is becoming to the son of a pariah. He listened too, and his hungry lips moved, as if he were tasting a sweet. The light-footed rickshaws flew by the house, and their human cargo would turn suddenly attentive and softened faces toward the high window from whence Lida's voice came.

The last sounds of the song died away, and a starlit silence filled the room ft the attic. Lida sat motionless, and the pale light made her face uncertain and sad.

Mother's voice came suddenly, but she spoke slowly:

" The greatest gift a woman can offer is not her love. It is her tenderness and devotion. These keep families together."

## Epilogue

NUMBER 11 had not been empty for a long while. The new lodgers were waiting for the hour when they could move in. Hardly had the last of the Family's things been taken away when the new lodgers began to bring in theirs.

These were a Chinese family, or several Chinese families: for there came so many people of every possible age, so many children in every state of babyhood and helplessness, such a lot of boys of every description and girls of all degrees of attractiveness, that human imagination could not place them into the fraitework of one single family. It was a generous portion of those fifteen million babies born yearly in China.

In an intensive wave they poured into the house and filled it from the basement to the attic. Curtains and faces screened the windows at once, smoke instantly arose from the kitchen chimney, and lean, miserable dogs listlessly nestled in the corners of the back yard.

The new lodgers brought innumerable parcels, baskets, camphor-tree chests, and cedar boxes with them; many mattresses, rolled and tied with ropes, for only in this compressed shape could they be pushed in through the doors. Then came cots, tables, and chairs, all of the most haphazard combinations of styles.

As a sequel to the high pressure coming from the entrance door, the inhabitants poured out through the back door and lower windows. Number 11 groaned, swayed under the pressure, and shuddered at the pricks of the nails driven into its walls. It was painful. Yet the house tried to accommodate them all. It seemed to extend its breadth to the utmost, and thereby became lower until the ceilings hung just above their heads.

The two trees in the Garden welcomed the newcomers with its greenness so restful to sorrowful eyes, and their shadow, cool as oblivion. Amid all the turmoil and humdrum round of human life in Number 11, only those two kept time with the pulsation of real life, cosmic Ufe, holy and independent. Green in spring, bare in winter, they towered their heads above the hazards of civilisation, obedient to the older and wiser law of their Maker. Toward those two trees, as to a fountain, the nobler minds, the philosophers of Number 11, were invariably drawn for beauty, peace, and wisdom.

Now there came into the Garden a small and amazingly bent patriarch. He came from nowhere. It seemed as if he had always been living there, born on the same day as the trees. He was the third tree—as old, as wise, as peaceful, only not root-bound. His light blue cotton robe might have been a piece of the June sky above. He stepped softly between the two trees, as between two brothers, carrying in his gnarled hands a round cage with a tiny yellow bird in it. The bird was silent, enjoying the fresh air of the open. They enjoyed it equally, the old gentleman and the small yellow bird. The gentleman was one with the bird, too, ready to fly away at the very moment when the door of the cage should be flung open suddenly.

Several grannies or, maybe, grannies' grannies filled the rest of the Garden. Those Old Ones needed sun even in the hot afternoons of late June.

And voices filled the air. Everything was in them: songs, laughter, tears; pain, joy, courage, hope; malice, suspicion, suspense.

All this was a condensed life, the bare nakedness of its core . . . life looked at through a powerful magnifying glass. In short, there was another family in Number 11. The difference lay mostly in quantity, the essence of quality being the same. Exiled families, all over the world, are very like one another.

Under the starlight, deep in the night, Number 11 stood **dark and** quiet. The house was not sleeping. Its grey stones

were saturated with the emanation of human feelings and thoughts. Invisible, immaterial waves pierced through the walls and formed a sort of halo all around the house. Although invisible, it was distinctly felt: however dark and quiet the house might be, one knew instantly that it was *inhabited*.

Yet there was one sign more of its being dwelt in. There was the light of a single candle in one of the windows. A lonely candle . . . a lonely vigil. Why? What was happening there? Somebody in pain, trying to escape the entanglements of life? . . . Or a child born to it . . . to begin all over again?

Let us look into that window ! . . . Let us.

On the floor, on a matting, a woman is sitting. In a low desolate voice she is murmuring verses of prayers and swaying to and fro, to and fro, to and fro . . . She is praying . . . She is hypnotising herself and her sorrow by repeating those words and movements. Always the same, always the same. Her candle is a funeral candle. Her vigil is a ritual prayer for one deceased.

Who is that woman? A mother. She has recently lost one of her sons . . . killed somewhere, by somebody, for something. . . Those wise men know better than she why he had to be killed; but just now, for this fresh bleeding wound in her heart it is all the same, all the same, all the same. Now, sit the light of her funeral candle, she is not a patriot, she is simply a mother, one of us, our sister I

Good-bye, dear Sister I . . . We go away . . . we will not disturb your vigil. Pray in peace. Your prayer is wrongly addressed . . . to some non-existing god . . . but high above all the differences in rites and religions there *must* be a place where all sincere prayers rise, rise, and are heard and answered by God, the only One, simple, pure, and just . . . He is listening to you now, Sister.

And we can offer to you only our sympathy and understanding, we, here outside the window; for we all, in spite of our social differences, and national pride, and class distinc-

tions, we are all *one* family, quarrelling now and fighting and killing each other, and yet fundamentally one family of human beings, you see. . . .









