

LIFE IN A SOVIET FACTORY

LIFE IN A
SOVIET FACTORY

by

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Translated from the German by

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DEDICATED TO
THE PUTILOV WOMEN WORKERS

“What do you imagine? It is not for bread, not for our stomachs' sake that we toil. No—no, my friend, it is for life, it is that life may flow in its right course.”

Karavayeva : *The Factory in the Wood.*

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July 1st, 1931.

So that is what a Soviet workshop looks like !

Through the glass roof stream patches of light ; the coloured cloths round the heads of the workers glow like lanterns. Are those bright heads illuminations for some festival ? Yes, indeed they are ! The shimmering machines that reflect the light's rays also provide the music for this festival ; they vie with one another in providing it. Here is a mightier orchestra than ever the Tsar had ; the dancers are the slim steel implements that turn at lightning speed and smite the iron so that the metal sparks fly out as they valiantly strip the outer garments of brown from the blocks and levers and lay bare their gleaming silver bodies.

The men and women of the tractor proletariat follow this game attentively, with cigarettes between their teeth because smoking is permitted on premises where no explosives are stored. Some of the men wear ordinary cloth caps, others embroidered Caucasian caps . . . all the women are in black or grey aprons . . . hither and thither go the sorters, testing the metal pieces, making notes.

Faster, comrades, faster!

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There hangs the red board; on one side of it is Lenin's portrait, on the other the figures representing the output up to date under the Five-Year Plan. The Putilov workers will give 32,000 tractors this year to the collective farms. And over the doorway stands written in white on red: "Tractor proletariat, into thy hands is given the fight against the kulaks. Fight valiantly for every tractor, for every component part of a tractor!"

"S-s-s-s," answer the machines.

Towards mid-day the rhythm seems to accelerate, as good horses increase their pace when they know themselves to be near their stables. To the machines comes a girl in her little car and removes the finished parts. It is an electric car; she stands in front and steers it with a bar, looking for all the world as if she were riding on a roundabout. And why not? It is a festival, I have said, and there is even no lack of confetti—you can see it fly up in gleaming showers from the workers' benches down below. It is a festival, a true festival of labour.

Only I sit idly there. For the last three hours a couple of men have stood talking by the machine allotted to me. Not always the same couple of men; they are continually changing. Often they fiddle with the machine a bit, loosen the side-guard or manipulate the belt. But nothing comes of it, and if I go to the foreman—or brigadier as they call him here—and ask him when I can begin work, he looks at me over his spectacles with those patient, resigned, doglike eyes of his, the eyes of a pre-revolutionary proletarian,

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and suggests "Have a rest." What does he mean?

Well, I am resting. I am sitting on the edge of a packing case full of metal cylinders; the sun warms my neck, chest and back. I have borrowed a green washing dress from Vera, but as she is shorter and stouter than I am, it falls away on my shoulders and only reaches to my knees. I console myself with the idea that this gives quite an early eighteenth-century effect.

One of the sorters working at the table opposite suddenly comes up to me. She has a pretty, round face, with kindly blue eyes. Underneath her bandeau blonde locks straggle out. A typical Russian beauty. She smiles through her dimples!

"You won't be angry, comrade, if I say something to you?"

"No, I shan't be angry."

"Really not?"

"Really not!"

"Well, you see, it's not usual here to . . . to come to work in such smart dresses. I saw the young fellows snigger, and then I thought: 'Well, you ought to tell her.'"

"Yes, but what am I to do? I couldn't get an apron. Your foreman—or whoever is in charge—told me there were none left."

"Put on a long-sleeved blouse to-morrow. And to-day—wait a moment; I'll have a word with Polia, who's leaving after the mid-day interval. Perhaps she'll lend you her apron."

Polia agrees, and behind a packing case I rearrange my dress.

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“Yes, that’s better,” says my new friend. “Come along; I must see what’s the matter with those cylinders. What is your name? I am Varya Timofejeva. You’re not from this part of the world?”

I have a whole story ready that will prevent me attracting undue attention. I am going to give myself out as a German colonist from the Volga sent from the Marxstadt factory for practical work here. But I cannot resist Varya’s smiles.

“So you’re a foreigner?” Her dimples beam. “I like foreigners very much. I’ve had a child by a foreigner, a Frenchman. How did you manage to get work at our place?”

I knew this question would follow. At home I thought the answer to it would be so easy and self-evident. Well, yes, I have come to the Putilov Works partly for the sensation of being there, and partly because my friend, an American engineer, has got a post there. But I can never give such reasons to Varya or her friends; if I did, I should be finished for ever as far as they are concerned. And so I give a practical reason which is true in the second or third degree: “I came here to get to know the life of the Soviet workers.”

Varya beams: “That’s fine of you, yes, I call that really fine. Wait a bit; I must tell Nastya at once; she will be so pleased. She belongs to a shock brigade. The shock brigades contain our best work people and set an example to everyone. Oh, you know that; you’ve been some time

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in the Union. Nastya, here is a foreigner who wants to work with us so as to get to know our life."

Nastya is no longer young. She smiles and apologises for not giving me her hand. "Ask anything you want to know," she advises me; "we will give you all the information you want, and you in turn must tell us a lot about the comrades abroad. Is it a bargain? Splendid!"

"To-morrow you had better order your meal from the Tartar woman." Varya points to a woman who has entered with a tray containing portions of minced meat, black bread, herrings and the potato and carrot salad known as *vinai-grette*. "But to-day I'll take you to the buffet. Wait a moment; I must introduce you to Subinsky. He is also a foreigner—a Pole. We got him in exchange for a Catholic priest."

"For three priests." The man laughs. He is tall and very handsome, although no longer young, but his appearance is marred by the absence of many teeth from his mouth. "Yes," he continued, "they had to give up three priests for me; Communists are expensive."

Then I make the acquaintance of other workers—Valentine Shimko, the head of the 'Workers' Correspondence Brigade,' a woman with extraordinarily deep, serious eyes and a firm, warm handshake, Katya, the Young Communist who is preparing for the High School in addition to her ordinary work, the corpulent Masha and Fima, the blonde storekeeper with the powdered nose. Finally I am introduced to the wrinkled, aged

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Jewess who looks after the teapots in the corner, and Fenika, who steers the electric car.

All these introductions take place during the mid-day interval as we sit on wooden benches in the courtyard between the tractor machine shop and the forge, eating our lunch, drinking tea and listening to a lecture about the Red Help Department. Varya has found me a good seat and likewise apologised on behalf of the works for the failure to provide me with an apron. She tells me that our workshop has not been going long; many new workers have been engaged for it, and it has not been possible to look after them properly. "Have you seen the old workshop yet?" she asks. Then she suddenly stares at me and smiles.

"I am so glad you're one of us," she admits. "When I first saw you, I thought to myself: 'That's one of the former ladies who has dressed herself up.'"

Varya's sincere affection makes me feel ashamed. I wonder whether I have not obtained her friendship on false pretences by concealing the real reason for my presence in the works.

Nastya declares the meeting closed. Then she comes up to me and asks me whether I enjoyed the lecture, also what I thought of the lavatories, which have been equipped with new washing accommodation this year. I continually have the impression of being on a visit to Nastya, Varya and the others, because they seem so like hostesses anxious to show their guest all their new household arrangements.

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Then we return to the workshop. The others hasten to their machines, but I go and sit down on my packing case again. Varya says I must not worry about being idle; 'more haste, less speed' is a proverb that may well apply to my machine, and I shall be paid for my time.

Towards the close of the afternoon a man in a leather jacket makes his appearance and asks Nastya about something. I can see him nod his head in my direction. Then he comes up to me. He is a tall, raw-boned man, with sharp features and a look in his eyes that tells of a life full of hard work and self-discipline.

"Good afternoon," he greets me. "I have heard you are a foreigner. What interests you most in our works?"

"Everything, I should say."

The man puts a cigarette in his mouth, and by the way he shields his lighted match with both hands it is easy to see that he is accustomed to smoking in the open air. The flame colours his brown face a brick-red.

"Would you like to see the bench where Comrade Kalinin worked?" he enquires.

We proceed to the old tractor machine shop, through which everyone has to pass on the way to our workshop. It is a large room, but gloomy and dirty; the machines in it are crowded close to one another. Before the Revolution it was a cannon foundry, for in those days the Putilov Works were mainly occupied with the manufacture of armaments. In 1898 Comrade Kalinin was dismissed because he refused to contribute to

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the building fund for the church, which is now our works cinema, 'Iljitsch.'

The man tells me that at the beginning of the present century the Putilov Works were ruled in truly patriarchal fashion. The workmen were pious souls who prayed a lot and kissed the directors' hands when they met them. But when the deputation they sent in 1905 with a petition to the Tsar was shot down at the Narvski Gate, there was an end of prayers and hand kissing. Suddenly the whole works became revolutionary; during the war strike after strike took place, and the Putilov workers played a decisive part in the October Revolution.

When he takes his leave, the man asks me if I will speak in the forge on the position of the working classes in capitalist countries during tomorrow's interval. I reply that it would be very difficult for me to deliver a discourse in fluent Russian.

"That does not matter so much," he replies. "If you don't know a word, say it in German, and I will translate it."

"Then you know German?" I ask eagerly.

"I am learning it. Then to-morrow at half-past eleven in the forge. Ask for Soloviov." He shakes hands with me, but does not raise his cap.

I have not seen Ralph to-day.

July 2nd.

The white nights of Leningrad are beautiful—beautiful, but dangerous. At whatever time one

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wakes up, it is broad daylight, even though there is no sunshine. As the whole house possesses only one alarm clock, getting up is somewhat of a problem. The girls have promised to waken me, but they get up much later than I do because the Skorohod Shoe Factory where they work is quite close, whereas I have a tram ride of three quarters of an hour to the Putilov Works and then another fifteen minutes' walk from the entrance to the tractor workshop. The trams are always full because they pass three stations and the 'Red Triangle' rubber shoe factory. I was so anxious not to be late that I got up too early and arrived while the night shift was still at work. I sat down at the sorters' table and began to write a letter home.

Suddenly I caught sight of Soloviov, the man in the leather jacket, who nodded to me as he was making the round of the workshop. I cannot tell why I am so anxious for him to come up to me and remind me about my lecture in the forge. But he passed by without taking any further notice of me.

Meanwhile eight o'clock came. The workers cleaned up their machines. Then they washed their hands in oil and afterwards in soapy water. The only clock in the whole workshop is the one in the store where the tools are kept, but everyone seems to know the time, and so at eight the workers write the date, their names, numbers and the tally of their piecework on red slips, which they put in a letterbox. Some of them go off to the lavatories to change, while others who are in a

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hurry get into their other garments behind the cupboards placed between the packing cases.

The day shift has arrived. Katya, the Young Communist, rushes past me with an oilcan, while Nastya converses with a young fellow wearing an embroidered cap—he is the culture-organiser, *i.e.*, the workman responsible for the cultural work in the factory. The stout Masha is having words with a workman about the buckets; there are only a few of them that do not leak, and if anyone gets hold of a sound bucket, he naturally wants to stick to it, even though he only uses it twice a day to throw soapy water over the machines. The old man with the pre-revolutionary eyes whom I met yesterday pretends not to see me when he passes by. I therefore hasten to Nastya and ask her whether the brigadier may not be a ‘wrecker’ who deliberately sabotages the work, but she shakes her head.

“No, no, all the wreckers have been smoked out,” she tells me. “Semionov is a good fellow, even though he’s not class-conscious.”

I return to my packing case in some perplexity and begin to make notes for my discourse in the forge. I find that the even hum of the machines helps me; thoughts and ideas come clearly and precisely, clothing themselves in suitable words—German words, which I then translate into Russian.

Subinsky, the Pole, comes up to me and smiles. He is always smiling and talking, so that he forms a contrast to the Russians, who are silent, serious folk. He asks me to write an article for the

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Pravda about the tram service, telling me that there are too few cars and that most of them follow an unproletarian route, especially No. 29, which goes through the main streets and makes many digressions instead of taking the direct line that the workers need.

"You must take a strong tone," he says. "If the tramway managers are incompetent, they must be replaced. After all, we Putilov workers number 32,000, so that the trams should accommodate themselves to us and not we to them."

At half-past eleven sharp I enter the dining-room belonging to the forge. "Next year we shall have our own dining-room," Nastya assures me. Next year . . . who knows where I shall be next year?

Soloviov was standing at the buffet; he nodded to me with his mouth full, and hastily swallowed what he was eating. Then he clapped his hands, called for silence, introduced me and said a few words about the international solidarity of the working classes. Like all Russians, he was a good speaker; even his ungrammatical sentences were full of such genuine warm emotion that I felt myself irresistibly drawn to him.

Then came my turn. I spoke of the spectre of unemployment that haunts the bench where every proletarian works, even if he is one of those well-paid American workmen who arrive at the factory in their own cars and are adduced as the strongest argument against Socialism. Then I touched on Fascism, the last hope of salvation for bankrupt

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Capitalism, and the war of liberation waged by the proletariat.

The moment I finished questions poured in on me from all sides, for these workers wanted to know as much as possible about their comrades in foreign lands. I felt as pleased as though I was in a circle of intimate friends, and yet something was lacking. Not until I met Soloviov at the door and saw him nod approval did I feel really happy.

I told him about my machine, which still refused to do its work, but I did this in order to be near him for a moment and not in the hope that he would help me. He replied that I ought to report the matter to the office at once and escorted me to its door. I requested the man at a desk to transfer me to another shift or employ me in some other workshop because there was no work for me to do where I was at present.

"What! No work?" he replied indignantly. "There's plenty of work to be done!"

He promptly sent a round-faced fellow to the foreman. My machine was dismantled and quickly put in order, so that at last, about half-past one, I was able to begin work.

My machine was supposed to bore holes in levers, which it also filed and polished. I found the levers too heavy for me to fix in position; every time the old man had to come and do it for me. I became quite impatient.

"Yes, my dear child," he consoled me, "manual labour is not so easy."

Just at that moment I saw Ralph enter, followed by an elderly, sour-faced woman who is his inter-

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preter. He strolled through the workshop with his pipe in his mouth, his hands in his trouser pockets and the sleeves of his bright green shirt rolled up to the elbows. Presently he halted in front of a machine where he watched the man at work for a while ; then he suddenly thrust him aside, pushed the bench away and began to do something to the levers. At last he crawled down underneath the bench, where he shouted up instructions in English which his interpreter translated. The workman pressed the electric button and set the machine running. "Switch off!" shouted Ralph a few seconds later, but the workman kept it going, whereupon Ralph reappeared, dusted his trousers and explained something to him so rapidly that his interpreter could hardly keep pace. Then he went on, passing quite close to me, but I could not tell whether he really failed to see me or merely pretended to do so.

The old man sighed as he watched him go. "Yes, if the Tsar had let us learn things," he said, "we shouldn't need the Americans now."

He was right. The foreign specialists cost the Soviet Union large sums of money. Not only do they receive high salaries (which are paid to them partly in their own currency) and the best housing accommodation, but the authorities have even opened special stores where they can buy everything cheaply. Ralph lives in a hotel, where the rooms are paid for in foreign currency and where one hears every language but Russian.

Varya came up to me. "Have you seen the

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American?" she whispered. "What a handsome man! And what nice clothes he wears! Why are you laughing?"

"Because I'm pleased you think him handsome."

Ralph always attracts women. His movements and gestures are virile; he is amiable and always ready to do anyone a favour. In the streets he looks at all female passers-by, but fundamentally he is not a woman-hunter. He is far more interested in his food.

Varya states that the workpeople are afraid of giving me a machine. "You'll understand," she says, "they think you'll go off abroad again and leave us with a damaged machine."

I fail to see how I can damage the machine. One screws the steel drill in its holder, fixes the lever in position, presses the button, and then the machine does its work automatically. The only risk I can see is that one might waste material by fixing the lever incorrectly so that the hole is not drilled in the exact middle or by letting the drill work too long and thus boring too big a hole. One must therefore carefully watch the scale where the millimetres are marked. At first the novice who does not know the machine and its working tempo stands there like a statue, afraid to take an eye off the scale for a second or touch the lever; this fear of doing the wrong thing is far more wearying than the work itself, which is not very arduous.

Nevertheless I feel quite exhausted when I take my number from the board at four o'clock,

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although I have hardly done a couple of hours' work.

Varya tells me the way to the Putilov restaurant outside the factory in Strike Street. She does not patronise it herself, because she has to cook a meal for her boy—the Frenchman's son. The father visits her often, although he is now married to another woman. Varya vows she trapped him into marriage.

"Well, then he can walk out of her trap," I reply, "for a divorce is not such a difficult matter as it is in our country."

"That is his private affair," murmurs Varya and relapses into silence. In addition to her Frenchman she has an Italian sailor who charmed her by calling her 'Signora.' She thought 'Signora' sounded so pretty, but not long ago she asked him to dress like the men abroad do, whereupon he made himself scarce.

In the restaurant there was a queue in front of the cash-desk, as there always is when work finishes, but my turn came quickly. I paid 40 kopeks and took my seat at a table as one of a group of eight that were let through. We obtained knives, forks and spoons at the entrance door when we showed our works tickets; the waitress, a chubby girl with green combs in her hair, brought the soup-tureen and our plates. Our menu consisted of meat-soup, with gherkins in it, minced meat and mashed potatoes, coffee and cakes, all of which were excellent except the coffee, which tasted like sweetened dish-water.

Next to me sat a peasant, a new recruit to the

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Putilov Works, who praised all the food in a loud voice and asked for everything that the others left on their plates. I noticed at once that no one crossed himself like the Russians always used to do before and after meals and thought of Soloviov's words. He is an interesting person; I must make Varya tell me more about him.

July 3rd.

Boom—crrra—a—ash! The wheel in which I have just drilled twelve holes slips as I am about to put it down and falls back on to my fingers. For a moment I seem to be falling into an abyss; I can see nothing, but the machines hum in my ears. Then a hand touches my shoulder and Varya's voice says: "Have you hurt your hand?" She leads me off to the 'Medpoint' (First Aid Department), which is located behind the teapots in a room shut off from the workshops. The Jewess who is the doctor here examines my hands and talks to me in Yiddish because Varya has informed her I am a foreigner. A nurse paints my bleeding fingers with iodine—the favourite remedy of all Russians. My hand begins to swell, and the pain abates.

"Nothing serious," says the doctor in her Yiddish. "It will be better in a couple of days, and to-morrow is your free day in any case." She knows this because she belongs to our shift.

She hands me a certificate which must be countersigned by the overseer; otherwise I shall miss my pay for the time off. So I climb up to

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his office, which is nothing more than a platform somewhere in the neighbourhood of my machine. If the brigadier represents the type of down-trodden pre-war proletarian, the overseer may be classed as one of the so-called 'superior workmen' that are to be found in all capitalistic countries. He still retains the characteristics of this type; although at the age of 63 he is a candidate for membership of the Communist Party (for which he is at present undergoing the required period of probation) and a Communist at heart, he cannot get rid of his aloofness and his habit of swearing at his subordinates. The Young Communists want to get him pensioned off because he makes the workers nervous, but that is by no means such a simple matter, for he is good at his job and has thirty years' experience behind him, while the only thing which can be urged against him is that he obtrudes his personality. Moreover Nastya told me that when he shouts at her she just shouts back louder. Then he calms down and says: "Well, I didn't mean any harm."

It is a curious experience to wander round the mighty town of Putilov during working hours. From their platforms tractors roll down to undergo their first trial run; if they pass it, they are covered up with the tarpaulins for their railway journeys, which are marked with the letters "F.P.," *i.e.*, Ford-Putilov, because they are made on the lines of the Ford model.

Then a whistle attracts my attention—a parade of the engines. Luckily the tramcars, resplendent in their new coats of paint, are not on the move at

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the time. And so I continue my tour of the workshops—Sum—sum—sum sing the machines, while from the depths of the forge the fireworks shoot up.

My hand hardly hurts at all now. I am sitting in an empty car of the No. 29 with the unproletarian itinerary, *en route* for the 'Hermitage.' First we pass through Strike Street, which is really part and parcel of our works. Tall new buildings alternate with low old ones, which, however, are not so old after all, because fifty years ago the wealthy citizens built their villas here in the midst of luxurious greenery. But now as we pass I read the signs: 'Co-operative Hairdresser,' 'Stadion,' 'Metalworkers' Club,' 'Restaurant for Persons Suffering from Stomach Diseases,' '9th of January Garden.' The latter refers, of course, to the notorious 'Bloody Sunday,' when the peaceful delegations that went to petition the Tsar were welcomed with volleys of lead.

The Narvski Gate is the frontier of the Putilov kingdom, which is bounded here by two huge buildings. One of them is an up-to-date general stores, with a pleasant restaurant attached to it. In the Soviet Union most restaurants belong to various organisations and may only be used by the members; the same principle applies to the shops and stores.

Opposite the stores is the Culture House, with its big theatre. It was built on the drained bed of the Tarakanovka river, which formerly spread pestilence through the whole district. Several years ago, before the railway was laid, the Eldorado

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Hotel stood on the bank of this river and provided accommodation for persons of importance who visited Peterhof. At that time, too, Strike Street was known as Peterhof Road, and the workers in the Putilov Arsenal were illiterate serfs.

Everywhere in the midst of proletarian Leningrad one still sees traces of old St. Petersburg. The farther one goes into the city, the finer are the buildings. The Nevski Prospect—now known as the 25th of October Prospect—stands comparison with the main streets of any European capital, the only difference being that one sees no parades of fashionably dressed women. Everyone is in working clothes ; as regards the younger generation, it is no longer possible to distinguish the intellectuals from the manual workers. Classes are beginning to disappear in the Soviet Union.

Nevertheless I feel uncomfortable when the cloakroom attendant at the ' Hermitage ' takes my dust-coat, leaving me revealed in the green dress to which I owe my friendship with Varya. Well, what does it matter ? No one knows me here.

No one ? I have scarcely put foot inside the first gallery when I see a face between two other faces. It blushes when it becomes aware of my presence, and I want the earth to open and swallow me. Then the second face turns in my direction, and sweet Mrs. Haring calls out in her American accent, " Hallo," and something else that I cannot catch.

Mrs. Haring would look elegant enough in New York; here, amid this Spartan simplicity, her effect is positively dazzling. Her black

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straw hat, her dress cut according to the very latest fashion and her broad patent leather belt are too resplendent for words. Yesterday she returned with her husband from the holiday which they spent in Germany ; soon they will be off to the Urals, where Mr. Haring is employed as an engineer in a factory. He knows a little German, but never speaks it ; generally he smokes his pipe in stolid silence.

Mrs. Haring means to be kind when she comments on my childlike appearance, but I observe that, although the first to recover from the epidemic of blushes, Ralph is not at all enthusiastic about my garb ; he does not even seem to notice my bandaged hand.

He carries on a lively conversation with Mrs. Haring, while I walk beside the silent Mr. Haring, to whom the paintings are Greek and Hebrew. I ask him what is happening in Germany and how things are going on there in view of the widespread unemployment.

" Oh, all right," he answers.

Then, as I have often done before, I question him about his work in the factory, but it is not easy, because he never understands what I really want him to tell me. If I enquire about the state of the output there, he starts to tell me how unpractical the Russians are ; when water leaks through a roof, it never occurs to them to put a bucket down to catch the drops. That was all he had to say about the Five-Year Plan.

The Americans have brains which can form no conception of Communism ; that is why they work

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so loyally in Soviet undertakings. If exceptionally they grasp its true nature they are horrified, like Eddie, Ralph's friend. Ralph is different; he likes to be made a fuss of, and therefore feels very much at home in the Soviet Union because Americans are specially pampered there. He likes the Russians so well that he forgives them their Communism.

The bright porcelain that formerly belonged to the Tsar and Tsarina reminded me of our workshop when the sun shines through the glass roof and bathes everything in its radiance. Famous art treasures of former princes and millionaires are also to be found in this collection—including the Easter eggs of finest Russian mosaic which they used to give one another at the Pascal Festival. The Americans nodded approval and remarked, "I see."

We then went into St. Isaac's Cathedral, which now houses the anti-religious museum, and saw a number of documents that prove the close connection between the Church and Tsarism. There is, for instance, a chromograph depicting Christ blessing the Imperial Family.

I arranged to go for an excursion to Sestoretzk to-morrow with Ralph. As I started work on the second day of the five-day week and the whole shift has its holiday on the same day, I am free to-morrow.

July 4th.

Insignificant people often try to attract attention by a loud, obtrusive manner. In just the

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same way the Gulf of Finland endeavours to pretend it is the Atlantic Ocean; it spits foam, tosses black waves high into the air and generally makes a great to-do. It is so rough to-day that the holidaymakers who replace the fashionable clientele of Tsarist times prefer to play chess in their Rest Home. The only occupants of the beach are a few soldiers of the Red Army, lounging about with their girls.

Ralph dips into the American magazines he has brought with him. At the moment he is engrossed in an article about Ford, which gives statistics of the number of brooms and mops and the quantities of soap, soda and sand per year that are needed to clean his premises.

"And yet these Russians reckon they can lick America," he observes with a condescending smile. "Well, I wish them good luck, for they are sympathetic fellows, but they've a lot to learn yet."

His eyes wander across the expanse of water to the Finnish coast that shimmers blue in the distance. I imagine he is still thinking about America and the Soviet Union, but suddenly he exclaims :

"As I am here, I'll have a bathe."

"But it's so cold, Ralph."

"Doesn't matter; it's windy. Maybe that'll make the water warm. I just want to get into that water."

He knocks his pipe out. In the twinkling of an eye he has stripped off his coat, shirt, shoes and trousers, and is now about to remove his pants.

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“ Won't you keep them on, Ralph ? There are women sitting about.”

“ Say, what am I to do with a pair of wet pants ? I can't put them in my pocket.”

He waded into the water stark naked and began to swim and splash, shouting out his impressions to me every now and then. Luckily Russians never trouble themselves about their neighbours' affairs, and so the bathing 'Spez' (the abbreviation by which qualified specialists are known in this country) excited no particular attention. At last he came out, looking for all the world like some animal of the seal species with the water dripping down his body and plastering his hair all over his forehead.

“ Guess I'm as hungry as a wolf,” he remarked as he rubbed himself down with sand. “ Go and ask that Red Army guy where one gets a decent feed here. He probably won't know; Russians never can give you any definite information.”

We wandered into the town in search of a restaurant. Sestoretzk is the Soviet Ostend, but most of its fine, handsome villas have now been turned into sanatoria and Rest Homes. Between them one sees the less magnificent wooden houses known as 'datchis.' In the old days they were the summer homes of middle-class families, but now they have become apartment houses which let off single rooms. The Kursaal and its park can only be distinguished from similar amenities in capitalist seaside resorts by the public that frequents them. The people who have left their mark on Sestoretzk are simply-dressed folk who

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convey the impression that their idleness is not a habit but a recreation. The former note of aristocratic boredom has vanished; the visitors enjoy their holiday hours and fill their lungs joyfully with sea air in order to make the most of their interval between yesterday's and to-morrow's work.

After our meal we set off on our homeward way. At the station a little incident occurs, for Ralph steers me towards the entrance placarded : " ONLY FOR SOLDIERS OR WOMEN ACCOMPANIED BY CHILDREN."

" Hi! Where are you going, citizen ? " calls out the official who bars his way abruptly.

" I am an American and want to get through this way," explains Ralph in broken Russian.

And so we succeed in catching the train which is just about to depart, a feat impossible to the good folk who enter the station by the ordinary way. I know that I can always get through first everywhere in this fashion when I am with Ralph; I have only to let him lead me about and trust his guidance with childlike faith. I believe, too, that the care-free serenity I acquired in his company bound him to me. But why do I say " bound " ? Is it all over between us ?

In the train he begins to read his magazine again. Well, after all, we have not acquired many topics for conversation in the last few weeks, and it seems to me that matters have become worse in this respect during the brief days I have worked at Putilov's. How has this come to pass ? I cannot help remembering those eighteen days

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we spent together in the Rest Home at Abhazia on the Black Sea coast. At the beginning of May there were but few holidaymakers, so that the free places were given to outsiders who could pay for them.

This Rest Home was a large monastery before the revolution. To the shrine of its miracle-working Virgin came pious pilgrims all the year round, folk of all degrees ranging from poverty-stricken peasants to the voluptuous wives of wealthy merchants who enjoyed the beauties of nature and flirted with the monks. Alexander III originally founded this monastery as a means towards the russification and final subjection of the native population. The Abhazian children were forced to attend the monastery school which was to educate them into God-fearing Tsarist officials, but many years later it came to pass that they utilised the knowledge they acquired from the monks as weapons against them and the Tsarist yoke for which they stood. One of those children was Lahoda, the revolutionary who afterwards became chairman of the Soviet commissars of Abhazia.

We did not see the miraculous Virgin because the monks took her with them when the monastery was broken up. In her they rescued their dearest possession—in the literal sense of the word—as her value was estimated at 100,000 roubles. But otherwise everything was outwardly unchanged; every quarter of an hour the church clock in the courtyard played its set of chimes; the refectory walls were still decorated

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with their gorgeous frescoes of old and young saints. The pulpit still found an occupant, but instead of preaching the remission of sins to those who made suitable gifts to the monastery, he proved to be merely the culture-organiser announcing an excursion to Sukhum.

The lofty, bright cells contained the beds of the holidaymakers; the monastery farm had been turned into a Soviet establishment that provided the Rest Home with milk, butter and eggs. Unfortunately the cook suffered from a lack of imagination which caused him to vary our four daily meals as little as possible, and I afterwards learnt from the editor of 'The Godless Worker' that he was suspected of deliberately spoiling the fare he served up.

Ralph made friends with a Russian engineer who was in charge of building operations for the new sanatorium. This man had lived in America for some years; he discovered Ralph's presence by the magazines he left about and made the woman in charge of the bathing establishment introduce us. He took us round the scene of his activities, for he was proud of his work. The building was constructed according to the very latest American methods; it looked beautiful, it was comfortable, and everything had been done to economise space. The baths had just been finished; they were resplendent in their bright, clean colourings.

We sunned ourselves on the seashore and went for many walks, either by ourselves or in company with other holidaymakers, most of whom were

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clerks or petty officials (workmen, artists and savants—the last word is made to cover a wide field—have their own Rest Homes), but their cultural level and interests were far higher than those of our own *petite bourgeoisie*.

I shall always remember those walks. Ralph, who has travelled a lot, maintained that neither the Riviera nor any locality of Southern Europe could compare with Abhazia for beauty. A most remarkable feature of the locality was the difference of vegetation within a short distance; on the slopes facing the sea it was quite tropical, but on the farther side of the mountain where the cold wind from the snow-peaks blew unchecked it was of a Central European type; with trees such as beeches, birches and even firs. Yes, those were wonderful days; we were hardly separated for a moment, and yet we were never bored with one another.

July 5th.

I do not know whether it was my own fault or that of circumstances that I did not go to work to-day. At two o'clock I went to the Authors' Restaurant, which is twice or three times as dear as our works canteen, but provides much better food. There is no regular menu but a bill of fare from which everyone chooses what he likes. One sits at small tables with clean tablecloths, and all the waitresses are dressed in white. The patrons of this restaurant are not only authors, but also artists and their families. At four o'clock it is hardly possible to find a seat in either of the two

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rooms; you have to wait your turn behind the chair of someone at a table. But at two the place is still fairly empty, because the Russians take their mid-day meal very late.

On the walls hang texts such as "Who is not with us, is against us," and "Do not be deceived by peace; the class enemy never sleeps." But the patrons are by no means so hundred per cent. proletarian as the texts, for they include many typical representatives of the old *régime*. One old gentleman, for instance, whose acquaintance I made, was formerly a teacher in the Imperial Pages' School. He told me how highly his superiors esteemed him for his incorruptibility; he refused to allow even the sons of the Grand Dukes leave of absence after midnight. He actually showed the Soviet Government the testimonials given him by many high officers who had been his former pupils, but they did not help him to any position, and now he plays the piano at a cinema.

He told me with a deep sigh that he had no family. As long as his mother was alive, he never felt the need of a wife; besides, she was always angry when he showed a liking for any girl. After her death he always prayed to her whenever any danger threatened him. Not long ago, for example, it was proposed to refuse him admission to this restaurant on the ground that he was not a creative artist. The variations he had composed on the 'International' were sharply rejected by the committee, who told him that it ought to be a simple, unembellished tune. There was only one

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way out of his difficulty; he went to the cemetery, knelt down on his mother's grave and prayed to the deceased for help. And when he returned home, he found a letter from the committee, informing him that he might continue to use the Authors' Restaurant.

I can quite understand that the late lamented did everything in her power to preserve her son's right to dine in our restaurant, for few organisations serve such excellent meals. Every day magnificent fish and most appetising pies filled with fish, vegetables, eggs or meat figure on the bill of fare, and often chickens and geese.

Authors belong to the privileged classes in the Soviet Union when they are supporters of Bolshevism. As the focus of public interest has been shifted from the destiny of the individual to the collective enterprises, the work of reconstruction and the immediate problems of Soviet everyday life, the poet who lives in a garret and the literary man who spends all his days in cafés are now unknown types. Authors and journalists live in close contact with the masses, work in factories and form 'authors' brigades' to study the work of the large government and collective establishments. Literature 'from below' receives special encouragement; the public like to hear workmen speak on their own life and work. The latest slogan is 'a shock brigade for literature'! According to Timochin, the editor of 'Red Students,' who asked me for an article on the status of female students abroad, the literary faculty must henceforth comprise a creative chair

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in addition to those for criticism and journalism. I tried to prove to him that no one can teach or instruct poets from a professorial chair, but was silenced by his look of irony. Finally, however, he invited me to visit him and his friends at the Students' Home some time in the immediate future, an invitation which I gladly accepted.

To-day my old gentleman with the Œdipus complex was not in the restaurant, but I met fat Natasha and her thin husband. The latter looks just like a caricature drawn by some boy in an elementary school—just a circle for a head and two thin lines. Together they remind me of herrings and potatoes; they supplement one another admirably, but she is very dissatisfied with him. In the first place he spends all his free hours in the day and a greater part of the night in fishing in the Neva; whenever he catches a fish, which is not often, he presents it to the hall-porter's wife because they take all their meals in the Authors' Restaurant. But her chief grievance is his rudeness; when she asked him at what hour he was likely to be home, he muttered something about not being able to tie himself down, which was very inconsiderate as he always keeps the key of the house. When he went off to fetch a plate of compote (the sweets always have to be fetched at the buffet) she said to me: "Did you ever see such a brute? Well, I shan't be able to stick him for long!"

The thin man is her fourth or fifth husband. Repulsive, neurasthenic men are always attracted to her, and she finds it very hard to shake them

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off. She is not beautiful, but she has a warm, affectionate nature. She addresses everyone—man and woman alike—as “my golden treasure” and mothers all and sundry. Once and once only did she want to play the jealous wife, but when the time came, she could not find the notes she had made for her impassioned speech, and so said nothing.

She speaks in a deep, manly voice and writes stories for children, but at present she has been commissioned to write a series of articles about collectivisation and is on the look-out for material.

Her thin husband returned with his compote and asked me about fishing customs in Austria. Afterwards we passed the time in pleasant conversation, and when I looked at the hour, it was three o'clock. I took a hasty leave of Natasha, who invited me to her mother's apartment, and made a dash for the tram, hoping and praying that something would happen because I did not feel well and dreaded the long period of standing my work involved.

Strangely enough some Soviet deity answered my prayer, for while we were still a long way from Putilov's the electric current failed, and the tram stood still on the lines for about three-quarters of an hour or perhaps longer—how long I do not know because I went home. Vera was amazed to see me and asked why I was not at work. I replied that I was too late and should not have gained admission, but she suggested that if the tram service had broken down, others would be late too and therefore no one would be excluded.

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"Well, that's all right then," I replied. I lay down on my sofa and tried to think about Ralph, but suddenly remembered how he had said, "I am an American and want to get through this way." What did the official think who let him through? I can never make out whether the Russians really admire or despise foreigners.

July 6th.

I had hardly bored five levers before Varya came up.

"Why were you away yesterday?" she asked.

"I was ill."

"Have you a doctor's certificate?" I replied that I had none. "Then you must get one; otherwise that won't count as an excuse. Anyone can say they've been ill." She remained silent for a moment, and then she added: "Soloviov was looking for you yesterday."

I was embarrassed. "Which Soloviov?" I asked stupidly.

"Victor Michailovitch."

"What did he want?"

"I don't know."

"And . . . did you tell him I was away?"

"Yes, I told him that you wouldn't be there to-day."

"What time was it when he asked for me?"

"I can't remember."

She does not take the trouble to rack her brains. She does not tell me any of her love affairs, as she usually does, but goes straight back to her

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work. Well, let her! When Soloviov comes, I shall explain the matter to him myself.

But what am I going to explain to him? That I went out with my friend on my free day and consequently felt seedy the next day? What will the works care about that? I thought that because we are on piecework instead of receiving fixed wages, it would not matter if I—no, that was not what I thought.

Before my eyes rise up the pictures of Eisenstein's splendid film, 'The General Line.' I see the poor peasant woman who has no horse for her plough, and the one who yokes her cow to hers. I see the perspiration on the forehead of the old white-haired peasant who tramps wearily along furrow after furrow in his best shoes, and the rows of tractors in the Armenian fields.

When we were in Erivan we went out into the country in the car of an engineer who had studied in America and made friends with Ralph. The driver took us to the fields of a collective farm where tractors hummed like gigantic insects as they went up and down. Suddenly our engineer friend began to swear in Armenian; he jumped down from his car and held up the driver of a tractor because the sound made by the machine told his ear that there was something wrong with it. It was not long before the peasant who wore a party badge on his 'professional' clothes decided to alight and examine his giant insect.

Then we went on, past endless furrows, and when dusk fell the tractors carried carbide lamps that shed gleaming strips of light across our way.

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And when we returned to the town, there was moonshine on the fruit trees in blossom and the snowy peak of Mount Ararat!

When I went into the old tractor machinery room to fetch soapy water, I caught sight of a placard with words in large lettering underneath the blackboard:

“THERE IS NO ROOM FOR WRECKERS OF THE FIVE-YEAR PLAN AMONG THE RED PUTILOV WORKERS.”

I had the impression that everyone was staring at me in the same queer way that Varya did.

And Soloviov did not put in an appearance.

July 7th.

I woke up this morning with the feeling that I had suffered some very sad experience and remembered at once that I had not seen Soloviov, that he despised me. I felt indignant; what right had he to treat me in that way?

He does not know why I did not turn up; I may be dead for all he cares! He is not at all interested as to whether I shall be there to-day. He is a heartless man, a mere party official. After all, I am not just a machine; better for me if I were, for when a machine's driving-belt breaks, as it does occasionally, at least it gets a rest while it is being repaired.

I felt a need for some sympathy with my mood and so stole out of the bedroom quietly in order to avoid waking Vera. Barefooted and clad only in my pyjamas, I made my way to our working

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room, where the telephone is. It was about half-past eight, and I knew I should find Ralph at home at that hour. I did not need to give my name, because he always recognises my voice at once in spite of his large circle of acquaintances. When he called out "Hallo," I felt quite cheerful, but was determined to air my grievance.

"Listen, Ralph; I didn't feel well the day before yesterday, and so didn't turn up to work. Was that very wrong of me?"

"You were quite right. What was the trouble?"

"Nothing particular. You wouldn't consider me contemptible for cutting a day's work?"

"Contemptible!" I heard his hearty laugh at the other end of the telephone. "You don't need to turn up at all if you don't feel like it. What do you want to worry about those few kopeks?"

Ralph's reasoning does not satisfy me, but he evidently considers the matter settled, because he begins to talk of other things.

"Say, I've discovered a Chinese restaurant. Naturally it's not as fine as those in New York, but all the same I dined there yesterday. For an *hors d'œuvres* I got a . . ."

At this moment the door leading to the girl's room opened, and Dussia appeared in her night-dress, with an angry, sleepy face. "Are you going to stop telephoning soon, comrade? We have come off the night shift and want to sleep."

"Ralph, I must ring off now. When shall I see you? Will you be in the works to-day?"

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At once a serious tone comes into his voice. "No, I can't talk to you at the works. That doesn't go down; everyone's got his eye on me."

"But what doesn't go down? Surely we can just speak to each other. If we can't, why were you so keen on me going into the works—into the tractor workshops where your job is?"

"I was keen on that? Say, that's fine!" He laughs, and I could kill him for that laughter. "You wanted to go in, and I said to myself that a bit of manual labour would do no harm to a girl like you that's such a recluse."

"What? Me—a recluse?"

"Well, you don't need to be insulted. It's rather charming in a woman, but it's bad for a man."

"Why? What's the difference between a man and a woman?"

He laughed again—a heavy, unctuous laugh. "Say, I can't explain that over the telephone. You'll have to come and see me."

"Idiot!" I wanted to scream out, but I controlled myself and merely said "Good-bye!"

Dussia was waiting for me at the door. "Comrade, I desire to make an energetic protest on behalf of the whole room against your conduct. We requested you to stop, but you went on talking for another half-hour."

"Oh, leave me alone!" I shouted hysterically. "Leave me alone—the whole lot of you!"

Late in the afternoon he came to me.

It must have been about half-past six. He

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stood behind me for a while; although I did not turn round, I could sense his presence. When I had finished drilling the lever and switched off the machine, he came forward. "How are you getting on?" he asked.

I was so embarrassed that I could not fix the next lever in position. Soloviov stood there and looked at me; my hands trembled so much that it was a torture to me to fit it in the stand—always a difficult business for me. At last I looked up; our eyes met, and I felt that he understood me.

Without a word he turned and went. And I did not fix that lever. I left my work and went off to the lavatory. My heart was beating so violently that I wanted to rush away and run all down Strike Street to the Narvski Gate without stopping.

July 8th.

To-day I got a proper ticking off from the brigadier of the night shift that follows us. At ten minutes to twelve I had just started to remove the iron waste from the apertures in the machine, when suddenly I heard a voice behind me:

"Ah, at last I've caught you!"

I turned round and saw a young man wearing a blue jacket over a *rubashka* (Russian blouse); from the pencil and notebook he carried I judged him to be a foreman or headworkman of sorts.

"There have often been complaints about you," he continued. "You don't clean your

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machine properly. You never wipe it. Don't you realise that machines rust?"

He was very excited. I imagined him to be one of the Young Communists that the authorities put into responsible positions, and therefore told him that I was not a professional worker but merely a 'practiser' (*i.e.*, a person sent by some external organisation to learn the work) and that as no one had shown me how to clean such a machine I had imitated the others as well as I could. Whereupon the newcomer turned his wrath upon our overseer; the latter, being unable to answer him back satisfactorily, merely swore at me, while the brigadier, who had been called up to give his explanation, simply stood there and blinked his eyes like a goose flapping its wings. At last the Young Communist took a piece of felt and cleaned the machine properly. He then told me to oil it, after which he calmed down and allowed me to go.

When I arrived home, I found Vera still awake. The members of our community had held a meeting, and she had only just got to bed. She invited me to the performance which is to be given in the house to-morrow—as propaganda for the 'Young People's Educational Movement.' They are to play 'Mobilise the Base,' a good piece which they have revived. During the last few days I have heard the strains of that popular song, 'Oh, why are we laughing when we might be making love?' The tunes were composed by Volodia, the musician of our community house, but the words were written by Vera and two of the

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young fellows from material supplied to them in the works.

July 9th.

Yesterday I bought some cakes in the Foreigners' Store as a bribe for Aunt Tania, our cook. She could get the same sort of things in any shop open to the general public, but because she thinks they are tit-bits reserved for foreigners, she likes them better and shows her gratitude by allowing me to do what I want in the kitchen. And so I can get as much hot water as I need from her boiler.

Aunt Tania is somewhat surprised at my toilet habits. The Russians, who are still untouched by European civilisation, generally wash their hands and faces only (and perhaps their necks) on four days of the week. On the fifth they have a bath; formerly Saturday was the bath day, but the introduction of the five-day week has made them clean their bodies more frequently.

When I came into the kitchen with my purchases I found that Aunt Tania had gone out, leaving her domain in charge of our divorced couple, who were giving each other pieces of their minds. Dina was furious because she said the Community showed a heartless disregard of her maternal feelings by trying to take her child away. Kolya told her she ought to be thankful to the comrades for taking the child and saving him from growing up a cripple.

As Dina works in the factory, she leaves the child to be looked after by a nursemaid, a stupid

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seventeen-year-old girl who is always gossiping with the neighbours in the courtyard when she ought to be attending to her charge. When Dina returned home three days ago, she found the child's hands badly injured, and now our younger comrades have decided that he must be sent to the crèche. Dina will not hear of it, and when I entered the kitchen I saw that her blue eyes were quite black with the hatred they contained.

"I know you, Dina," Kolya kept on repeating. "You refuse the offer merely to annoy me." Whereupon she burst into a torrent of abuse and accused him of having ruined her whole life.

"And you're only angry because I won't go on living with you," he said after listening quietly to her for a while.

Her face flushed red, and she began to scream so loudly that I picked up my cakes and washing and fled. We are very unlucky as regards the married couples in our community house; the other pair live on fairly good terms with one another, but the husband is dissatisfied. His wife is a year older than he is, and her pregnancy has spoilt her looks.

"But what can one do?" he said to me one day. "One is passionate by nature, and one wants a friend. And then, all of a sudden one finds oneself tied up."

"What do you mean by 'tied up'?" I asked. "It's so easy for you to get a divorce."

"Yes, of course, but one can't leave a woman like that. They begin to cry, and then you're done."

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I told him that in our country men do not marry until later in life and that before marriage they generally have several *affaires*. It was very difficult to make him understand the difference between an *affaire* and a marriage because all couples living together in the Soviet Union are considered to be married. Alimony orders are only imposed by the courts when one or other of the partners is prevented by disablement from earning a living.

Vera borrowed my long green chain. She is playing the *petite bourgeoise*. She attired herself in a crumpled black lace dress, torn and patched in many places, but from a distance it looked quite elegant because Vera is so pretty that anything suits her. When I look at her, I am reminded of that play, 'The Circle Squared,' in which a Young Communist sings to his friend "When a girl is pretty, she is the pride of the community," whereupon she answers: "If you're a young fellow with ideals, don't marry a girl who belongs to no party."

At eight o'clock we repaired to the performance. Our young comrades went on the stage, while I took my seat in the audience. Volodia, the composer, and Pavlusha, the producer, did not take part in the performance, but the latter delivered the opening oration. Over the proscenium was written the slogan: 'WE HAVE RECREATED THE WORKS; THE WORKS WILL RECREATE US.' In the hall there were a number of new members of the company. They had only recently passed their test, which is not an easy one, for great artistic

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versatility is required of candidates for membership of the 'Young Workers' Theatre.' Its performers must be able to sing and dance as well as act. Among the guests that evening was a member of the Tiflis branch of this theatrical association, which is known as the 'Tram,' and he received a hearty welcome.

Pavlusha rose. His remarks were mainly directed to the newcomers. He told them that 'Tram' does not merely mean 'Young Workers' Theatre,' but also 'Young Workers' Movement.' In this very hall, he said, the first group of the Komsomol* met during the October Revolution. He reminded us that the League had a good tradition for activity and combativity; the task of the youthful workers in the 'Tram' was to present this tradition in dramatic form.

Then the performance began. It was a play about the cultural revolution, based on the idea that everyone must be revolutionary in life as well as in their daily work. Aliosha, who was made up with a grey beard, played the part of a factory manager who runs a private workshop of his own as well, while Iliusha was his son. Vanya, the dissatisfied husband, took the part of a Young Communist who had been bribed by this manager; he represented the type of worthless fellow who contrives to dodge his share of the community's work and reports sick when he ought to be on duty, etc. He did a dance with a bottle of vodka in his hand and sang a song: "Manya, don't go with the other chaps, for I'm a gay young spark."

* Young Communist League.

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The play ended with the Young Communists coming in and expelling all the slackers from the shoe factory. Our comrades acted very well, and the singing was excellent. When the performance was finished, the chairs were cleared away for the dance that was to follow, but I did not stay for this part of the entertainment, because I wanted to write home.

July 10th.

To-day is another holiday for me, because the night shift does not start till twelve. In the Authors' Restaurant I met Natasha, who took me to see her mother, a slovenly, genial old lady with stockings that hang down over her worn slippers, and a tousled mop of hair from which strands straggle all over her face. She and her husband occupy a large room, divided into two by a curtain, the second compartment being the bedroom of their other daughter, who is an art historian. Their third daughter sleeps in the dining-room, where they have made her a sort of cubicle out of bookcases and cupboards. It is a tiny enough room, but it has a window, and here dwells Ludmilla Nikolaevna, who is a doctor.

The whole family were gathered round the tea table, on which stood white and black bread, jam and various sweet things that one always finds at Russian meals. In addition to the women I noticed a youth with pale blue eyes and a pimply face whom Marya Petrovna, Natasha's mother, treated with the lordly condescension meted out

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to an unwelcome son-in-law. Later on Natasha told me that he had obtained or was intending to obtain this status, but that Marya Petrovna was against the match because although only 22 years of age this Kostya was already 'out of date.'

Kostya is a painter whose main subjects are dogs and moonlit landscapes. "Not the sort of thing anyone is interested in nowadays," Natasha explained to me, "and then he's still stuck in that silly old futurism which we've all got over long ago. If only he'd take a job! My sister Lyuba is also a painter and musician, but she works as a translator. He's too superior for anything like that and prefers to vegetate as a Bohemian—well, he's the type we don't appreciate particularly here, my golden treasure."

Having thus delivered herself, she squinted across at me to see what impression she had made on me and whether I drew any conclusions that might be unfavourable towards the Soviet Union. In order to tease her I assumed a stolid, impenetrable mask of indifference, whereupon she started to explain with some heat that Kostya's work was uninteresting and unoriginal, "Otherwise he'd get on; most certainly he would, my golden treasure."

I put this last statement down to the new Soviet patriotism, which is common to both the workers and the intellectuals. The latter, indeed, are very strongly impregnated with it, but that very same afternoon I was to see a proof of the way in which it works.

At the tea table the conversation turned on the

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“Tshistka” or “purge” which the second daughter (the art historian) had to undergo; when she had withdrawn to her room, the others told me that this was the reason why she was so silent and nervous. As she seemed to me a very decent girl, I asked for an explanation of this incomprehensible procedure. They told me that every two years workmen’s commissions are sent to the public offices to scrutinise the work of the officials, whose antecedents and loyalty they endeavour to ascertain. If they suspect any particular person, they cite him or her to a public tshistka, where anyone can bring forward accusations. After the evidence has been heard the commission then makes its decision, according to which either the ‘purged’ one may be declared innocent, let off with a warning or dismissed. In specially bad cases he may be forbidden to take any other post for a certain period. However innocent he or she may be, every official trembles at the thought of the tshistka.

Marya Petrovna thought the ‘party purge’ was a still more trying ordeal, because it shed light on even the most insignificant details of Communists’ private lives. Many women were known to burst into fits of hysterical tears when faced with it.

The idea of this tshistka was thoroughly repulsive to me, and probably my face betrayed the disgust I felt, because Natasha, Marya Petrovna and the doctor overwhelmed me with their explanations. The tshistka, they maintained, was necessary as a means of unmasking bureaucratic and corrupt officials.

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The doctor related an incident from her own experience. A Georgian who was married to one of her friends was of a very jealous nature; he made a scene whenever his wife came home late and refused to believe her when she said she had been to party meetings. When the tshistka took place, she (the doctor) denounced this man, although he was a colleague of hers and she was friendly with his family. He was hauled over the coals very thoroughly and threatened with expulsion from the party. Whether he saw the error of his ways or whether he was afraid of what might happen next time, the fact remains that he ceased to molest his wife.

"Communists have no private lives," said the doctor; "in fact no citizens of the Soviet Union have private lives. Every individual belongs in the first place to the community, which has a right to know what sort of a person he is. The persons concerned should recognise this fact and help the commissions in their work instead of getting nervous and having hysterical breakdowns." She cast a reproving glance at Marya Petrovna, who was trying to push a loose lock under her comb.

The latter nodded. "That's true. Workmen behave quite differently in such cases. They just say: 'I'm so and so, comrade, and I've made this and that mistake,' and there's an end of the matter. But an intellectual thinks it terrible to be spied upon and questioned and called to account like a schoolboy."

"Because they consider it a personal insult," said the doctor. "Every intellectual imagines

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himself to be the centre of the universe and a sort of little independent god; then suddenly he finds his divinity called into question and impugned. And by whom? By workmen who can't speak good Russian and were illiterates only a few years ago. Naturally he feels himself insulted and goes off into hysterics."

"But what about the slanders and lies to which proceedings of that sort open the door so readily?" I put in.

"They are seen through far more quickly if the persons undergoing purges do not make the commissions suspicious at the outset by their fears and hostile attitudes."

"If anything happens to Tania, she can always appeal to the R.K.I.*, can't she?" asked Marya Petrovna dubiously.

"Certainly, but if she behaves sensibly and doesn't turn obstinate, nothing can happen to her."

I imagined what would happen if Ralph and his friends were 'purged,' and the idea made me smile.

It was ten o'clock when I rose to go home and change my clothes for the night shift. A kind of twilight pervaded the streets; in an hour darkness would fall upon the town. Already the days were beginning to shorten.

July 11th.

"The moon shines bright : in such a night as this
When the sweet wind did gently kiss the trees
And they did make no noise, in such a night . . ."

Thousands of times have poets sung of the night's intensive beauty and the pulse of the dark

* Workmen and Peasants' Inspectorate.

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earth, of the whispers of lovers, the allure of the nightingale, the footsteps of some wanderer on a lonely path, the groans of those in misfortune, the clink of glasses, the dreams that soothe the hard lot of captives, the death-rattle of the slain and the howl of the storm-wind. But as yet no poet has found words for the roar of the machines gleaming in the electric light, the wild dance of the steel or the bright northern dawns that descend slowly through the workshop's glass roof, infusing the workers with a healthy tiredness until at last the lamps are switched off and the first rays of the rising sun flame out on the red slogan: 'Tractor proletariat, into thy hands is given the fight against the kulaks!'

Then the workshop is swept out and the blonde girl in the cap comes to inspect your work and accept or reject its various pieces. A workgirl, fresh from her night's rest, comes up and asks: "How much have you done? What! Only a hundred pieces? Why, I did a third more than that yesterday!"

And then out into the sunny morning. In the tram you begin to doze, but are wakened up by the knees of the people moving past you. You get out; at home you drop down on to the handiest bed or sofa and sleep dreamlessly, voluptuously, luxuriously . . .

In reality it is not quite as simple as that. In a communal dwelling where twenty-five young people of ages between seventeen and twenty-four live in close contact with one another the place seethes like an ant-hill at this hour. Down below

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the divorced couple are quarrelling; over yonder I hear the chirping of Dina's boy, who rejoices in an unpronounceable name formed of the initial letters of the following words: Vladimir Ilyitch Lenin Dictatorship of the Workmen and Peasants. Meanwhile Aunt Tania, the cook, voices her loud complaints about the unsatisfactory quality and tardy delivery of the materials out of which she is to prepare the community's mid-day meal and takes occasion to remark that there are too many housewives in the establishment and that they all have their heads too full of other matters to attend to their business properly.

Just at that time, too, Volodia must needs improvise on his piano the tune for his new song: 'I'll only kiss you if you're a red.' Then Raya comes in to fetch a book, after which the last straw is added to my burden, for underneath my window I hear the strains of a balalaika, and Petya, the Young Communist, serenades me in strange fashion with

" We don't want to go to war,
But if you fancy one on the jaw,
All right !"

One on the jaw indeed! All right! I echo his words most fervently from my soul as I spring up—all the bedclothes slip down from the American cloth surface of the sofa which is my bed—and rush to the window. . . .

"What! You can't sleep, comrade?" enquires Vera, my room-mate, sympathetically. "Never mind. At four they'll all be off to the

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afternoon shift; then you'll be able to rest." At four o'clock! Good God!

July 12th.

Our bear with the sore head has gone off on his holiday. When I came into the shop to-day, his place was occupied by a youth with luxuriant locks. Varya, who knows everything, maintains, however, that he is not quite so young as he looks, that he has been through the war and the revolution and joined the party in 1914. In any case we are all pleased to have him there; he cannot possibly be so high and mighty as the old man, and we can come to him in all our difficulties. In fact he has asked us to do so, and when I could not find a file anywhere in the shop, he went along to help me look for one. The old man would never have done such a thing; what a pity his substitute is only a substitute! At 3 a.m. we have our mid-day break, when a meeting always seems to take place. At the last one Malyshkin announced amid murmurs of general satisfaction that within the next few days we shall have completed our 25,000th tractor—which means that we have maintained our scheduled output. He followed the news up with a most sensational announcement that a letter had been received from Henry Ford, who bought a couple of our tractors a few months ago and spoke very highly of them. We were naturally vastly proud of such praise; someone brought forward a resolution that we should 'wet' the letter, which was carried amid

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loud laughter. Of course Malyshkin immediately seized upon the opportunity to denounce such wettings as mere excuses for drinking bouts. He then launched out into a speech about the cultural revolution . . . but soon his words grew fainter until at last I barely caught the tones of voice . . . then they died away . . . I was sleeping as soundly on the hard component parts of a tractor as in any fine lady's bed.

A hand touched my shoulder. "Forgive me for waking you, comrade, but would you like to join us in the 'Basis of the Fifth Day'?"

While I slept the meeting had discussed what ought to be done in honour of Ford, and it was decided to organise an excursion to 'Dyetskoye Selo,*' the former Tsarist palace which was once known as 'Tsarkoye Selo.' We were to spend the night in the palace, which had been specially fitted up for the use of associations whose members were desirous of spending their fifth day in 'Dyetskoye'—hence the nickname of 'Basis of the Fifth Day.'

Kolya, the Young Communist and our culture-organiser, relieved us all of 2 roubles 80 kopeks for the night's lodging and four meals, with fee for visiting the museums included. Railway tickets (return fare 80 kopeks) extra.

Nastya decided to take part in the excursion, but Varya naturally refused because the 15th was her Frenchman's free day. I requested both of them to let me go to their homes after the close of

* 'The Children's Village.'

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work in the morning so that I could have my sleep out, but Varya explained that I should get no rest if I went to her place because her mother was on a visit from their native village. Nastya, however, gave me a cordial invitation, but when I called for her at 8 a.m., she told me I would have to wait an hour or so because she had a party committee meeting. I cannot understand how she has the vitality to call a committee meeting after working a night shift.

But the others also seem in no hurry to go home and sleep. Katya is going the round of the women with pencil and notebook to enter up the names of those who want Young Communist dresses, because there are several dozen of these garments available for distribution; they cost 14 roubles for a complete outfit of skirt, blouse, belt and leather shoulder straps. I tell her not to put me down for one as the khaki colour does not suit me, and in any case such a uniform would be as good as a free ticket to the nearest police station when I return to Vienna.

Nastya calls me back. "If you have no money, I can lend you some." Very kind of her; she is nice to me, but as formal as Soloviov. I should like to ask him to join in the excursion to the 'Basis,' but have not the courage to go and look for him in the committee-room. Only when I am leaving the premises does it occur to me that I might have sent a message by Nastya.

My last hope of refuge is Marya Petrovna. Impossible to look up Ralph! I am far too dirty

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for his company! I ordered a dress and apron of a black material and was proud of it when it was made, because I could wear it outside the works. But my pleasure did not last long; whenever the water from the radiator squirted on the garment, it left discoloured marks. Black water had flowed down my bare legs, leaving splashes on my red socks and drenching my shoes, which in any case were suffering severely from Putilov mud. When I passed my hand over my face, I found myself transferring dye from my socks. I cannot understand how the others manage to emerge so clean when they have finished work; Katya's beautiful curly blonde hair and white complexion, for instance, make her look more like an assistant in a hairdresser's shop than a metal-worker. Our work is not actually injurious to health, but the fine metal-dust permeates the skin and stops the pores. One ought to rub one's whole body with machine oil.

Marya Petrovna clasps her hands together when she sees me. "My dear child," she exclaims, "what's up with you?" Then she introduces me to her husband as a Putilov worker.

"You are easy to recognise as such," he states, "for on your face the heavy footsteps of the Five-Year Plan are imprinted."

He is drawing plans for his new home. He is an architect, inventor, technician, painter and many other things as well; as a 'highly qualified specialist' he has been allotted an apartment with a separate room for his study.

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I inform Marya Petrovna of the real purpose of my visit. She nods. "Yes, the intellectuals sleep so lightly," she says; "can't you arrange to be on night shift at the same time as all the others in your house?" Then she fetches me a rug and cushion.

"Excuse me, but how did you get so dirty?" enquires the architect, dipping his brush in water. "Washing facilities are provided in all the factories; I can't understand your begrimed appearance."

"Leave her in peace; can't you see the child is dead tired?" says Marya Petrovna. "Come into the dining-room, my dear; there's no one there, and you can have your sleep out. Would you like some tea?"

The buzz of the telephone wakes me. A moment later I hear Marya Petrovna speak, and even though I am still half asleep I cannot help noticing the unfriendly, snubbing tones of her voice, which is usually so kindly. "No, she is not at home," she says sharply, "and I don't know when she'll be back. After her work she has a committee meeting, and to-night she's acting at the Railwayworkers' Club. To-morrow she's busy too, and the day after as well. Good-bye."

I am quite awake now; I sit up and see her standing before me with a red, excited face. "I really don't know, my dear," she says, "and I'm an old woman, but all the same such an individual would be far too uninteresting for me." I guess that she refers to Kostya; probably she assumes

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that Natasha has informed me of the state of affairs.

"It's her own private business, of course," she continues, "but when I think back on my young days . . . when I was Lyuba's age . . . why, I was in prison at that time . . ."

"You were in prison, Marya Petrovna? Oh, please tell me about that!"

"There's nothing particular to tell. We took it for granted in those days that every decent person went to prison. We students looked upon the prison as our real university; when we were at liberty, we never had time to learn anything, because there were always so many other things to do. In prison we had peace and leisure to study.

"The Government knew that and tried to make things uncomfortable for political prisoners. They put shutters on the windows so as to make our cells too dark for us to read. In vain we protested; finally we started a hunger-strike.

"I was nineteen years old at the time. Every evening the prison governor came to my cell with a glass of milk and tried to persuade me to drink it. 'If you're shy of drinking it in my presence, Marya Petrovna,' he used to say, 'I'll go outside; perhaps you won't mind drinking it then.' He was a kind man, but he understood nothing of the revolutionary movement. But you can imagine, my dear, what a torture it was for me to know that that glass of milk was by my side all night. I dared not pour it away for fear he thought I had drunk it.

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“But only the first few days of the fast were so trying. Afterwards I felt quite light and airy, just as if I had no body, but I was too weak to move. I lay on my mattress all day and slept most of the time. On the twelfth day they came to forcibly feed me. One of them said: ‘Look, her cheeks are quite red; I’m sure she has eaten something.’ And then they tried to pour milk down my throat; I had hardly the strength to turn my head away, when I heard a voice that seemed to speak from a great distance: ‘All right; we’ll take the shutters down; we’ve orders to remove them.’ They did it because the son of some ‘big noise’ was in prison and on strike with us.”

She paused, and appeared to be searching her memory. Then she continued: “In spite of everything I must say that I was lucky in prison. Others had far worse experiences. Once, a long time ago, a political prisoner was insulted by the officer on duty; she boxed his ears, and they flogged her for it. As a protest against this outrage she took poison, and all her cell-mates with her. And then the things that used to happen on the way to Siberia! Rapes were quite common occurrences, but all the same no one gave in; such things only stimulated us to go on fighting. . . . Yes, yes, the young folk of to-day have no idea of what it was like then. They still have to fight, of course, but they are fighting a winning battle.”

“Marya Petrovna,” I said, “can you explain to me why the Russian intellectual was ready to

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give his life for the revolution as soon as someone pushed a leaflet into his hand, whereas we others read Marx and Lenin and still remained philistines?"

"I can't say." Marya Petrovna shrugged her shoulders. "There must be a historical reason for it, because I don't believe in the uniqueness of the Russian temperament. Besides, you are unjust to your own people; how many genuine revolutionaries are now languishing in Fascist prisons? Why do you see only the hosts of the *petite bourgeoisie* and ignore the nameless heroes who try to force the world to progress?"

"Perhaps because one doesn't come into contact with them, or perhaps because I'm a pessimist."

"No revolutionary must ever be a pessimist. Don't let such things discourage you, child; stick to the line you have taken."

"Marussia," called the architect from the next room, "come here. I want to show you something."

Marya Petrovna went to her husband. I remained behind, immersed in my thoughts.

July 12th.

When Varya arrives at half-past eight, she comes straight to me (she never has much to do before the mid-day interval), and we tell one another all that has happened to us during the sixteen hours since we last met. To-day she

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came to me in a very depressed frame of mind and said:

“Just fancy! My Frenchman has beaten his wife!”

I stopped the machine, removed the finished lever and began to adjust the next without replying. I cannot stand the fellow; I am convinced that he is a rotter. She continued:

“He fell down and hurt his head. They took him off to the hospital. He was a bit tight, of course.”

So that was that. I started the machine off again and said peevishly:

“Chuck the boozer out. Take the Italian; he is nicer and much fonder of you.”

“Yes, you know,” she whispered, “he’ll kiss me all over. Could you have a greater proof of love?”

I shrugged my shoulders. “That means nothing with a Frenchman.”

“How do you know when a man is in love with you?” asked Varya. Well, how does one know these things? They depend so much on vanity, comfort and sexual hunger. Meditating on the theme of love, I forgot to watch the scale, with the result that the drill went in several millimetres too deep, so that the works had to suffer a loss of several roubles on account of that idiotic Frenchman. And just at that moment Soloviov chose to put in an appearance. Now did he or did he not notice me throw the damaged lever on one side? At any rate he seemed in high spirits when he came straight up to my

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machine. "How are you girls getting on?" he enquired.

"Look here," said Varya, "it's about time you began to pay a bit of attention to the co-operative. They're making a horrible mess of things there."

"We—why should we? Pick out several of your women to see after the business."

"All who could do it are full up with social work—simply full up."

"What about yourself, Timofeyeva? As far as I know you don't exert yourself particularly."

"Oh, you——" Varya gave him a playful dig in the ribs. "Get along with you."

She went off to see after her cylinders, but Soloviov remained at my side for a few moments. I plucked up courage.

"Victor Michailovitch," I said in as unconstrained a tone as possible, "we are going to Dyetskoye to-morrow. Wouldn't you like to join our excursion? I should be so pleased." I suddenly wondered why I said "pleased." "Stupid of me," I thought.

Soloviov smiled. It was the first time I had seen him smile. His face grew quite bright and youthful; he attracted me very much.

"I'm sorry I can't," he replied. "I'm busy to-morrow." Then (perhaps he saw me change colour; yes, that must have been the reason) he added: "I'm very sorry indeed; I should have liked to come." He said something else; I cannot remember what it was, but it sounded unnecessary. What need was there for further

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words? I knew sufficient. If he had really wanted to come, he would have made time. At least that was what I always did in similar cases, and other people would do the same. I was quite glad when he went.

"What's up with you?" asked Varya, when she came along with the teapot we shared for our breakfast. "You look quite green. Have you and Soloviov been having words? You mustn't mind if he teases you a bit; he doesn't mean any harm. He's a fine fellow. Do you know his wife? She fought in the civil war; they were together when our people beat Wrangel."

So that was the reason. Well, I ought to have thought of it. Such alliances are bound to be for life.

What do I want from him? I cannot understand myself. I have Ralph, but he and I are going different ways. And Soloviov will go his own sure way.

I wandered out on to a country road, where I listened to the unintelligible hum of the telephone wires. I did not know where I was going along that road; I was as chaotic and helpless as the old broken-down western Europe from which I come. I only find my true self in the works, for there everything has significance. Do I work there to earn my living? Yes, certainly, but that is not the main purpose. There they are realising dreams of childhood, building up a genuine world which does not rest on foundations of snow or sand. "Tractor proletariat, into thy hands is given the fight against the kulaks!"

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July 15th, evening.

What lovely days they were! Yesterday we finished work at 8 a.m. and were told to assemble at the station at 6 p.m. The trains were filled to overflowing, although there is a half-hourly service and only one-fifth of the working population is on holiday. But that is quite usual in the Soviet Union; there is overcrowding in all spheres of life such as housing accommodation, business premises, ^{convenience} transport facilities. The State is not yet in a position to satisfy its new customers, the first, however, is human avalanche which for centuries did not express any wishes now fills up the museums and theatres and devours newspapers, ^{stories} periodicals and books. Editions of a million copies disappear in the twinkling of an eye.

And what a thirst for knowledge there is! It leads to continual quarrels in the trams when seated and standing passengers peruse scientific or economic text-books or repeat in English or German, "Have you seen Comrade Schmidt? No, I have not seen him, but my sister has seen his uncle."

And now we are on our way to the residence of Nicholas II, whom our young fellows nickname Nikolasha. We want to learn the history of the near and distant past while enjoying the present.

Five and twenty minutes in the train—and we are there. So now we must bustle. Another group wants to snap up the omnibus.

"We are the Red Putilovs!"

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“ And we are the Red Triangles! ”

At last we come to the following agreement. The Red Triangles shall enter the bus from the back, and the Red Putilovs from the front. Then they can continue the fight when they meet in the middle.

Fima, the storekeeper, refuses to budge from my side; she is dazzled by my Vienna shoes. Katya is endeavouring to console the weeping Masha; to-day all the girls except Nastya appeared in their new Young Communist garments which have the badge “ KIM ” (Communist International Youth) embroidered on the blouses. “ But why do you wear our badge when you are not a member? ” Malyshkin asked the stout Masha, who replied by bursting into a flood of tears. Is she unworthy to wear the organisation's badge, Masha asks continually, but Malyshkin is obviously scared by the effect his words have created and keeps in the background.

The ‘ Basis of the Fifth Day ’ is located in a wing of the Alexander Palace, where the Imperial Family resided until their deportation to Siberia. Our dormitory has whitewashed walls and seventeen spotlessly clean beds, with clean sheets, new woollen blankets and a hand towel apiece. There is a full-length mirror on one wall, and a golden chandelier hangs from the ceiling, for we are housed in the apartments of the Tsar's daughters, but we have started to curse them because we have discovered the washing accommodation to be located in the cellars, while

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another and no less necessary apartment is situated near a distant back staircase. One of our predecessors in this room has, we discover, expressed his dissatisfaction with this state of affairs in the 'Basis's' 'wall newspaper.' His verses are entitled "The Shock Brigadier's Holiday":

" I'll curse you all with might and main ;
By day and night shifts I shall swear
That I have searched your place in vain.
There's no convenience anywhere."

This statement must, however, be taken as a poetic exaggeration.

During our evening meal—representatives from several other factories and offices are also present—the leaders of the various excursions announce the programme drawn up for our twenty-four hours' sojourn. Our attention is drawn to the benefits of the morning gymnastics, a class for which will take place before breakfast, and explanations are furnished concerning some of the remarks printed on the backs of our excursion cards underneath the notice forbidding us to smoke in the 'Basis' or behave rudely to fellow holidaymakers or the staff. We thus learn that we have come here to learn how to make the best use of a day of leisure as well as to satisfy our cultural needs in collective fashion by inspecting the palaces and other state property and by organising games and rowing parties on the lake. We are informed that the club is at our disposal, along with its piano and library, but that we must take care to vanish before 5 p.m.

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the next day in order to make room for the next group of holidaymakers.

So there is a piano on the premises! We hasten through Her Majesty's salons, and eventually I sit down to the beautiful rosewood grand piano on which the Grand Duchesses once practised their scales, and play a Viennese waltz with the tasteless patriotic words, "Oh, Vienna, you alone!" And then I launch out into the tune:

"The Lord in Heaven knew what was best—

Six days' work and a seventh to rest."

To these the Putilov girls dance, but if Nastya and Malyshkin understood the text, they would draw my attention to the fact that the Soviet Union knows far better than any Capitalist deity, for it has ordained a day of rest after only four of work. What could I reply? But our Young Communists do not bother their heads about the meaning of the words; they dance away, and when I stop playing there is an enthusiastic request for 'another foreign waltz.'

When we go to bed I notice that all the girls are wearing very clean underclothing of white material instead of their usual coloured garments. Some wear woollen garments, as *crêpe de Chine* or art silk are unknown materials here, but the straps of Fima's chemise are embroidered with beads.

In the morning the men waken us and summon us to the gymnasium. I notice that our breakfast menu is exactly the same as the one in the Caucasian Rest Home, to wit, tea, bread, butter, two eggs and *kasha* (gruel, the Russian national dish).

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This apparently is the traditional breakfast menu of all Rest Homes.

Afterwards we go through the palaces. The Catherine Palace resembles all eighteenth-century buildings of its kind, although it is larger and more magnificent than Schönbrunn. But the Alexander Palace is the haunt of tragedy, for within its walls was enacted the history of the last Tsar, together with that of the Revolution.

It is the mansion of a landed proprietor with religious views but a very low intellectual standard and a bad conscience—wherefore otherwise the many ikons? In his bedroom there are no less than 700 of them on the walls, as well as numerous photographs of the children and the German and English uncles and aunts. In the Tsarina's apartments there are many pictorial representations of the Annunciation—witnesses of the long period that the imperial couple had to wait for a son and heir. A tragic impression is created by the picture of Marie Antoinette and her children—a present to the Tsarina from the French ambassador. "What was possible in France is impossible in Russia," she thought in her self-confidence when she chose it out of several that he offered her.

We see the beautiful tapestried screens behind which the employees of the Okhrana* stood, even though the palace was most efficiently and carefully guarded. Terror haunted its inmates daily, hourly; they sensed the imminence of the catastrophe and tried to escape it by mysticism,

* Russian political police in Tsarist times.

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by the ministrations of the monk, Rasputin, and by the system of terrorisation practised by the police.

But none of us can feel genuinely sorry for them. There stands the writing-desk at which so many death-warrants were signed; here hang the shields and banners presented to the Tsar and his son by the 'Black Hundred'; here are the lists of requests made by the Tsar to the 'Black Hundred's' representatives in the Duma and to various heads of the Church for *pogroms* and other reactionary activities. And there—his malicious folly is really amazing—is the Tsar's speech to the workmen's deputations after the 'Bloody Sunday,' the speech in which he graciously forgives 'his beloved people' for the revolution and promises to consider their 'real needs' while at the same time warning them to behave submissively towards his subordinates and the landed proprietors.

When the Tsar ordered the Okhrana to form the deputations to hear this speech, they found so few workmen for this repulsive comedy that they were forced to fill the gaps with their own policemen. The letter of an aged workman to the police sheds clear light on the fate of those whom ignorance or weakness prompted to respond to the Tsar's invitation. "Give me a new passport," writes the old man, "and let me disappear, because I cannot go on living here. Everywhere in the works I see nothing but black looks and hatred around me."

In the hall there is a copy of the speech with

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which the Tsar welcomed President Loubet as his guest in 1902, together with the menu of the state banquet on that occasion. Below them hangs the declaration of the French Socialists that they will not hold the Russian people indebted to them for the millions which their Government lent the Tsar!

We emerge into the beautiful park, with its old trees and dainty ponds. We wander through the avenues leading to the bandstand. The girls decide to go for a row before the mid-day meal, while Fima suggests that we should spend the evening in Dyetskoye on the plea that we can stay in the park even if we have to evacuate our lodgings in the 'Basis.' But Katya wants to study to-night, and Nastya is expecting her husband to arrive from Kronstadt.

"Oh," Fima gives her a friendly pat on the back, "you're still in love with your old bald-headed chap?"

"I will not deny that I am still on friendly terms with him," is Nastya's good-natured reply.

And now all the girls begin to chatter about their family affairs. They are proletarians whose parents went to work at an early age, but all of them have been through the Seven-Year School or the Factory School, with the exception of Nastya, who grew up before the Revolution.

While the others are rowing, she tells me her history. Although her age is only 34, she has twenty-three years of work behind her, for at the age of eleven she became errand-girl in a dressmaker's shop. Later she was promoted

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to a post behind the counter, where often she had to be on her feet from early morning till midnight and smile and look pleasant all the time. She had nothing to wear but a shabby skirt and a patched blouse which she used to wash at night and hang behind the window to dry.

This was her life at an age when we were dodging our school attendance. While Nastya trudged through snow and rain, carrying a huge cardboard box to the house of some lady of fashion, we were studying Cicero's speeches. To-day the fashionable ladies have disappeared from the world and Latin from our school curriculum, but Katya, the working girl, goes to the high school and the intellectuals come to the factories to learn from the workers.

I bestow a pat on Nastya's thin shoulders. 'You Russians did your job well. All honour to you.'

Her answer was the one that might have been expected. "Then follow our example!" And she quickened her pace, as though showing me the way.

July 16th.

All the workers in our factory except myself were paid to-day. I learnt that newly engaged workers do not receive any money until the end of their fourth week; generally they borrow something from the Works Aid Fund or their mates to pay their way. This measure is enforced in order to make it difficult for workers

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to change their occupation; at one time many of them were continually wandering from factory to factory. No sooner had a man learnt his job than he was off somewhere else, thus costing his former employers much time and money.

When the girls saw my long face, they all offered me money. I was greatly touched, but preferred to go to the editorial offices of the 'Vokrug Svieta' (Round the World) and ask for an advance on my articles.

During the mid-day interval we heard that the Pioneers were coming to see us, and later our workshop was invaded by a number of boys and girls of ages ranging from ten to thirteen. They were schoolchildren who had been placed under our guardianship for the benefit of both parties; we were supposed to teach them our work and help them with their organisations, in return for which they gave cultural assistance, aided us in the war against the illiteracy of our peasant elements, worked with us on the wall newspaper and in the 'godless corner,' conducted political campaigns (for example, they saw to it that we returned a hundred per cent. poll for the new elections for the Soviets) and agitated against alcoholism and absenteeism after drunken bouts.

Valya Shimko told me how one of these schoolgirls had challenged to a socialistic competition an old workman in the foundry, notorious for his drunkenness. She had been present when the child said to the old fellow: "We will make an agreement. I will learn my lessons well, and you will take no more days off."

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The workman agreed, but made one condition. "I can't promise you to stop drinking," he said, "but I won't cut work any more." And so far—for 28 days—he has kept his word.

These children are allotted to individual workmen for propaganda purposes. They compete with one another as to who can instil into the minds of their *protégés* the most developed class-consciousness and educate them into the best and soberest workers.

A twelve-year-old boy wearing a red tie accosted me. "I have heard you are a foreigner," he said. "Wouldn't you like to give us a lecture in the Pioneers' Club on the status of proletarian children in capitalist countries?" I agreed to do so. "Good. I shall call the Pioneers' Collective together for the day after to-morrow, as it is too late to arrange it for to-morrow. I shall come to the works for you to make sure that you do not miss the way. Wait a moment; I must make a note of your name. I am Joseph Finkelstein, a Jew—that is to say, I belong to a national minority. My father is an invalid and draws a pension. I have sent my mother to school; in our school we have organised a course for women who want to qualify for a trade. My mother will become a metal-worker. As we are so short of workers nowadays, it is important for everyone to qualify for some trade. And how do you get on at work? Do you spoil many pieces?"

"No, not so many. But tell me, Comrade Finkelstein, would you like a penknife? I

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have a spare one at home which I could turn over to you."

The boy's eyes gleamed. "A real penknife with steel blades?" he enquired.

"Yes, certainly. A real penknife with three steel blades."

Joseph thrust his hands in his pockets. "That sounds all right," he admitted. "Then I'll call for you at four o'clock. Do you agree?"

He turned to go. Then a new idea suddenly occurred to him. "You mustn't think I'm dependent on your penknife," he said. "When we are through with the Five-Year Plan, we shall have many far better knives than the boys abroad. Our present lack of such commodities is solely due to the need for developing our heavy industries."

"I know that, Joseph. I am offering you the knife purely as a token of sympathy and international solidarity."

"Good. From that point of view I shall accept it." Joseph nodded. "Well, good-bye, and take care of your machine. It comes from America, where it was bought for dollars." He took his departure.

"And what do you think of our rising generation?" Varya asked me. "My own boy was just such a one. Now he's grown up; he's nearly fifteen."

"Fifteen years old! But you're only about thirty yourself, Varya!"

"I married very early in life." She feels herself a married woman. An 'illegitimate

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child' is a conception which does not exist in the Soviet Union, and as church weddings are private luxuries and divorces extremely easy to procure, marriage as such has lost its social significance.

In the restaurant I made the acquaintance of a broken-down actress who ordered a portion of meat to take home to her cats—the 'only persons' who had 'remained true' to her. She was very surprised to find that I felt so comfortable in the Soviet Union and could not understand why anyone should leave a country such as Austria, where nice clothes were so cheap. I explained to her that we had many actresses out of work, who were not in a position to buy any nice clothes, but she merely shook her head incredulously. Then Natasha came along with her churlish husband. While he was at the buffet getting his *hors d'œuvre*, which consisted of cold sturgeon, she showed me a letter another man had written her from Siberia. I saw the beginning: "Natalia Alexeievna! We have played with the question long enough! It is now high time to be serious about it!"

How the letter went on, I could not tell, for at that moment her husband came back with his cold sturgeon, and she thrust it hurriedly into her bag. When he went to get her cloak from the cloakroom after the meal she told me that firstly it was no concern of his and secondly she had not yet made up her mind about the other man because she had no particular desire to live in the provinces.

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"Besides, he is another hypochondriac," she said. "And as for going into the provinces, well—it's out of the frying-pan into the fire!"

Then her husband came back with the cloak. Whenever the conversation begins to get interesting, he always comes back. I fear Marya Petrovna has no luck with her sons-in-law.

Natasha also asked me whether I would care to go to a party on the 20th at the country house of a young painter. The 20th is my free day, and I can have my sleep out on the 21st, so it suits me very well. I asked Natasha what she meant by a party.

"Oh, the usual sort of affair," she replied. That may mean anything; well, we shall see.

Ralph rang me up this evening. He asked me to call on him to-morrow, but would not give any further details.

July 17th.

We have a new girl—a Turkoman from Baku. She caused a great sensation in the workshop by appearing in a veil which served her as hat and cloak as well as covering her face. Like all foreigners, she was at once surrounded and subjected to a shower of questions.

She just stood there smiling. Her white teeth gleamed in her brown face as she answered in her comic broken Russian. Nastya came up and suggested she should give a lecture during the mid-day interval. The Turkoman girl—her name is Tetch-Gasel—agreed, whereupon

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the others went back to their machines. I noticed that Varya followed her about and made a fuss of her, which hurt me. Probably her friendship with me will begin to cool off. A Turkoman is so much more interesting than a mere Central European.

"We are now very well off," Tetch-Gasel began her lecture. "Before last October we were always having fights with the Russians and Armenians, but all that has stopped now. The Government support us because we were formerly an oppressed race. Whenever a Turkoman and a Russian apply for the same job, the Turkoman always gets it."

"What about the women? Do tell us something about the women in your country!" called out the girls.

"All we younger women have left off our veils; we study or work in the factories. Now we have got a Latin alphabet. But . . ." and all at once her face grew grave, "you must not imagine it is easy for us. We have a much, much harder time than you because the prejudices against women have deep roots in the East. I have grown up free, but when my elder sister unveiled her face, there was a dreadful row with my father and elder brothers. It is very difficult for the men to grow accustomed to the idea that we are their equals. Our contemporaries are quite different, of course, but the old people are very obstinate. They will just have to die out."

Having enlarged on the prospects of this drastic remedy, Tetch-Gasel proceeded to relate

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to us the story of the ghastly murder that took place in the Ali Bairamov Women's Club in Baku, whose president was killed by her husband because she refused to give up her Communist activities. Her headless body was found in a pool of blood.

All faces grew grave. It is terrible to think of this civil war that goes on in the midst of peace. Nastya asked if anyone would care to reply to the Turkoman comrade, but when no one volunteered to do so, she suddenly called out my name and requested me to say a few words about the women workers in capitalist countries. Her invitation took me completely by surprise, but I was loath to refuse it because I had been greatly affected by the tale told by Tetsh-Gasel.

"Unfortunately I cannot tell you of an unveiling as Tetsh-Gasel can," I began. "Although our women's veils are invisible, they exist none the less. They are woven of the unjust laws that stifle women's lives, of the difference in the rate of payment of male and female workers, of the conjugal rights which place the wife in subjection to her husband. In many cases women are even deprived of their rights to love and marriage; in Germany, for instance, women teachers who marry are dismissed, but woe to the woman who indulges in the so-called 'free love.' She is branded as 'a bad example to the younger generation,' and her name is noted for dismissal when the next retrenchment scheme comes into operation. The steady growth of unemployment drives many women to prostitution, but

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the man who is the 'patron of prostitution' is not called to account as he is here in Russia; on the contrary the blame falls upon the woman, who is treated as an outcast by society, harassed by the police and taxed by the State." The women listened to me with much headshaking.

When I finished, the mid-day interval came to an end. The brigadier, whose eyes had blinked continually as he listened (perhaps he saw himself as a member of the older generation that had to die out), escorted Tetsh-Gasel to her machine. She naturally had to remove her veil, which could have easily caught in the machinery.

And now Varya put in an appearance. During the mid-day interval she had remained invisible.

"I heard that you spoke," she said. "I'm sorry I wasn't there. I was in the fitting department, where I have a Tartar friend, you know."

"Varya, I can't understand what interest you can find in a little slit-eyed, yellow man."

"That doesn't matter. He belongs to a minority race. I could even love a negro."

"Wouldn't you be afraid of getting a black child?"

Varya shook her head. "No. We must whitewash the negroes. They have been painted too black."

I must tell that to Ralph. He is more liberal-minded than hundred percenters such as Eddie and even admits to having negro friends in America, but all the same he was wild when I asked him whether he had any black blood in

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him. It was the only time I saw him in a real passion.

This evening Ralph and I called on a certain Herr von Wichmann, who formerly owned large estates in the neighbourhood of Riga and St. Petersburg; as I learnt later, he defended them with weapon in hand against the Bolsheviks. Ralph knew his brother in New York, who asked him to visit the Russian Wichmann. He did so this evening, and took me along as his interpreter.

My services were unnecessary. In addition to fluent French and the German dialect of the Baltic barons, Herr von Wichmann spoke very excellent English. I cannot say whether he knew the language of the country, but over his sofa was a notice: "IT IS FORBIDDEN TO SPEAK RUSSIAN HERE."

His wife, who was still fairly young and wore her hair brushed back and fastened in a knot behind, explained to me that this veto applied to their two daughters, its intention being to make them learn foreign languages. The younger of these two girls was fourteen, her elder sister sixteen, and both curtsied to me, although they were at least a head taller than me.

I learnt that neither of them had ever attended a public school, as their father had educated them. The elder is now taking private lessons in languages and training as a teacher of German. She has been promised a post in this private school when she has passed her examination (so

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that her life will continue in private circles and she will only have to take the minimum of notice of the Bolshevik topsy-turvy world), but the younger one is now to go to school and will have to imbibe all the political instruction which for obvious reasons her father did not include in her previous curriculum.

Ralph asked the old man how he lived, and received the reply that he drew an old age pension which, if not large, was at least no smaller than that allotted to other Soviet subjects. He also received ration cards.

His wife gives private lessons for very low fees. When I enquired whether she would not prefer to take some post—with her knowledge of languages she would have no difficulty in procuring one—she replied that her husband was too old and infirm to be left alone for long at a time. As a matter of fact he lay on the divan most of the time.

Their room looked bare and poorly furnished, but was a large one, the girls' bedroom being partitioned off by cupboards.

"Well, how do you get along now that you've accustomed yourself to the new state of affairs?" asked Ralph, who was interested, but the old man changed the subject in a way that showed both tact and caution.

"He was in prison for a long time as a White Officer," Ralph explained on our way home. "That's why he's so cowed."

"Cowed! I wonder they didn't shoot the reactionary old dodderer instead of paying him

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a pension. Fancy your taking me to see such people!"

"He belongs to the vanquished. I always take the side of the weaker. In America I was the only one in my locality to vote Communist."

"But you're not a very reliable ally; you desert as soon as the cause gains any sort of success. As far as I'm concerned, I've not the slightest sympathy with people who are fighting for a state of things in which little girls have to carry heavy boxes about the streets from morning till night."

"What boxes? Ever since you've been working at Putilov's you've become so one sided. It's amazing!"

Ralph says these words in quiet, friendly tones. He never quarrels on matters of principle, as he is far too indifferent to them. Ralph is wearing a dark blue suit which gives him a slim look and goes well with his sunburnt skin. His views may be open to dispute, but there can be no two opinions about his superficial appearance, for he is exactly like the type of film actor with whom one falls in love at fifteen.

I can see his sort of film in my mind's eye. Early morning in the suburbs: a blonde maiden opens the shutters and waters the flowers in her window-box. At an opposite window appears a young workman, who smiles at her. This workman is Ralph, but later on he marries a countess, or, better still, he rejects the countess and marries the poor but honest blonde. Alas, I am neither a countess nor a blonde, and simply

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cannot imagine how I came into such close contact with Ralph. In reality I am still waiting to see how the film is going to end.

When we part, Ralph informs me that he has tickets for the theatre for the day after to-morrow. "The 20th is your free day; you can have your sleep out then." It was on the tip of my tongue to tell him about the party to which I am going, but I checked myself.

"It's none of his business," says Natasha.

July 18th.

To-day the brigadier went off on his holiday—Fima as well. She ended up by telling me about her newly bought chamois leather shoes; my own footgear was obviously the cause of her unrest. When she told me the price, I had such a shock that I very nearly spoilt another lever; such shoes are classed as luxury articles and therefore enormously dear in the Soviet Union, but as they do not stamp their wearers as belonging to the best society, there is no need for anyone to buy them. Varya told me, however, that Fima's mother was just as fond of decking herself out; the father spent 32 years in our works and is now in receipt of quite a decent pension, the greater part of which his wife and daughter spend on clothes.

In the place of our old man we have a foreman named Baranov, a man with straw-coloured hair, whose expressionless blue eyes and monotonous voice remind me of a village priest. He has a

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slow, trailish kind of walk, and is by no means so kindly and affable as our old man, who always had a chat with me when he came to look after the machines, although he seems to have more initiative.

For instance, he told me I must always polish the foot-lever on its inner side, and put me on to another machine. It was not so easy; you have to hold the lever firm with your left hand, while you keep on pushing the mechanism under the revolving polisher with the right. All the same I should have managed it if the fair-haired man in the cap had not appeared and called out, "What are you doing there? That's no work for women!" Whereupon I suddenly felt absolutely exhausted.

"It's too tiring, comrade; it's no work for women!" I said to Baranov when he passed by again, whereupon he murmured something and vanished quickly, thus giving me to understand that I could stop whenever I felt tired. He was naturally too lazy to change the mechanism on my machine—just as bad as the old man in that respect.

It is a stupid business with this machine. It works three separate constituent parts: the hand-lever, which has only to be drilled; the foot-lever which must be drilled, filed and polished, and the cylinders. Each of these separate parts needs its own mechanism; the mechanism for the one which is to be worked must be screwed in on the work table after the one previously in use has been taken off.

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This is fairly exhausting work, wherefore the old man liked to arrange matters so that the mechanism was not changed until the next shift came on. Baranov appears to be a worthy successor to him, and I wondered whether I ought to put something in the wall newspaper about this procedure. It is nothing better than sabotage, even if the culprit does not realise it. But I always felt sorry for the old man; moreover I could not assume that Nastya and the others had not noticed the trouble.

I came to the conclusion that it was better to be patient with these old workmen, who are worn out with many decades of drudgery in pre-revolutionary works. Also there were not enough young hands to replace them; besides, in any case the pace set by the shock brigadiers eventually speeded up the slower workers, and good work was a matter of honour with us.

At four o'clock to the minute Joseph Finkelstein appeared. We set off for the Pioneers' Club.

Youths and maidens wearing red ties sat in the hall and on the platform. Joseph led me up and introduced me to the meeting. The children began to clap; I stood there and did not know what to do. Ought I to bow to my audience?

Luckily the president, a girl of some twelve years who wore a wind-proof jacket, opened the meeting by reading the agenda:

- (1) Education of parents.
- (2) Report on progress.

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- (3) Lecture by a foreign comrade on the children's revolutionary movement in Capitalist countries.

After the president had warned a certain Nina not to chatter, a discussion took place on point (1). The secretary whispered to me, "I hope you're not angry with us, comrade, for putting your lecture last. But most of the children have only come to hear you, and we're afraid they'd go off afterwards if we'd let you speak first."

A small girl gets up to speak. "I am of the opinion that the class-consciousness of our mothers leaves much to be desired. The last time we went out to a collective farm to help dig up the vegetable beds, this defect was shown up only too glaringly. Every mother was afraid her son or daughter would catch cold. Certainly they did not express their fears to the boys . . ."

A boy sitting in the front row sprang up triumphantly. "Because we wouldn't stick it!"

Shouts of protest from the girls: "No! Nonsense! Middle-class prejudices! No one trusts us to do anything!"

"Silence!" The president rings her bell.

The speaker continues: "Lena's mother wept and said Lena was far too feeble to take part in agricultural work."

"My mother also cried," shouts a small boy at the back, "but my father gave it to her hot. My father is the strongest man in our

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works. 'You unkempt goose,' he said to her, 'how long must I go on trying to explain to you that children have to live a different kind of life nowadays?' " Loud laughter.

"Silence!" the president bangs on the table. "Anyone who wants to speak will ask my permission. Are you finished, Sasha? Then Comrade Samoilova has the floor."

Comrade Samoilova is a seventeen-year-old Young Communist, who leads a Pioneer group; the children look up to her as to a grizzled veteran. To-day she tells them that anyone desirous of gaining influence must work at his own character. But how did the Pioneers behave? At the last celebration Misha shouted up from the stage to the gallery: "Well, what are you waiting for? Turn out the lights!" Such an utter lack of discipline! Such a bad example to the parents!

The second item on the agenda was debated no less keenly. The instruction work done by the Pioneers in the Kindergartens was said to be a failure. Comrade Samoilova reported an incident that had recently come to her ears. A number of children had proclaimed themselves as shock brigadiers, which meant that, like the members of all other shock brigades, they were supposed to set a good example. They always had to wash their hands before meals, lie down after meals and go to sleep without chattering. But the other children said to them: "If you're shock brigadiers, we must give you a shock!" Two little boys, who were covered with bruises inflicted

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by the others, then wanted to leave the shock brigade. Whose fault is this? Naturally, it is the fault of the Pioneers on duty, who neglected to instruct the children fully about the real significance of the words 'shock brigade.'

At last came the 'any other business,' *i.e.*, myself. After the discussions which had taken place, my own words to the children seemed to me pale and lifeless, but the interest in the affairs of foreign countries is so great in Russia that anyone who can say something about life on the other side of the frontier is always sure of applause. Children and grown-ups alike want to hear the same sort of thing—tales of fights with the police and Fascists and the prospects for a world revolution.

When I finished, the children asked many questions, some of which I was unable to answer, as for example: when would the revolution break out in capitalist countries? At the close of the proceedings the children presented me with a red tie and a copy of their newspaper, the 'Pionierskaya Pravda.' In the tram I opened this paper and read that the dockyard at Perm in the Urals had concluded an agreement with No. 9 School, whereby the works agreed:

- (1) To collect 13,000 roubles to build a carpenters' and locksmiths' shop in the school and 10,000 roubles to equip the laboratories and study rooms.
- (2) To provide the school with instructors.
- (3) To give 80 pupils from the higher classes

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opportunities for practical work in the dockyards and arrange for other pupils to study in the works school.

- (4) To give five children holidays at the sea-side.

Below this contract was written: "We shall carry out our obligations 100 per cent. Signed on behalf of the dockyards, Ivanov."

July 19th.

This evening I arranged to go to the theatre with Ralph. I longed for a good bath and a chance to attend to my toilet, so that I could enjoy the pleasures of bourgeois life properly, but I knew that it would show a lack of conscience if I cut work on that account. My subconscious self came to my rescue by causing me to oversleep; when I came down to the kitchen this morning, I saw that it was a quarter-past eight.

My face showed consternation, but inwardly I rejoiced. The only things that worried me were the troubled faces of Varya, Nastya and the others.

I went off to the bath-house. It contains proper baths, but most ordinary mortals here prefer to wash their bodies in large rooms (separate ones for men and women, of course) where hot and cold running water is laid on. There is also a hot douche, but it is always besieged by a crowd of children.

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A naked woman sat on a bench and suckled her baby; she looked just like some animal mother. I noticed that with the exception of the old women no one wore the cross round the neck that is obligatory for the faithful of the Orthodox Church. The anti-religious propaganda has already taken deep roots in the population.

I had to wait a long time at the hairdresser's, but one has to get used to that in the Soviet Union. Leningrad and Moscow contain quite as many hairdressers' establishments as Vienna and Berlin, and their staffs work uninterruptedly in two shifts from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m., but still the supply is unequal to the demand. The girl who did my hair told me that she was on a fixed wage, for which she had to attend to a certain number of heads per day; for any work over and above the regulation number she was paid extra, and thus earned quite a decent sum every month. When she had finished me, I put a tip in the pocket of her white overall, and promptly got into hot water! She followed me into the cloak-room, and gave me back my money.

"You must never do that again!" she reproved me with maternal severity.

Tips are forbidden in the Soviet Union, but the porters in the railway stations never stick to their fixed tariff despite the notices warning passengers against tipping them. I remember our Armenian porter in Baku Station and his contempt when Ralph refused to give him anything extra. "What! You call yourself a foreigner!" he shouted. "It's scandalous!"

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Vera shook her head sadly when I reappeared at our community house and urged me to hurry off to the works, as latecomers were let in during the mid-day interval. She was afraid I might get into trouble as I had been absent without leave once before.

But to go and work after I have had a bath—impossible! Besides, to-morrow is my free day, and as we do not begin work until 4 p.m. the day after to-morrow, they will have forgotten all about my absence by then. So I put on my silk dress and admired my appearance for some little time in the girls' long glass.

Afterwards I went to the editorial offices of the 'Vokrug Svieta,' where I learnt that my story 'General von Lynch does us the Honour' was being set up. I received an advance of 100 roubles, and still have another 75 to come in, as the story is 20 pages long. This sum represents about the monthly wage of the smartest shock brigadier, although the foremen naturally get more.

The scene of the story is laid in Jena, and its theme is the impression created among the students when they learn that a certain General von Lynch, a hero of the Kapp Putsch, proposes to visit their university. The Nazi students want to give the general an ovation, but the Communist students join with the younger workmen in the Zeiss Glass Works to organise a counter-demonstration, while the Socialists make light of the affair and urge everyone to keep quiet. The general atmosphere, however,

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grows more and more warlike, but eventually the general cancels his visit at the last moment.

The editor observed that it was a clever trick on my part to make the general suddenly cry off, but he was sorry I had done it, because he would have preferred the story to end with a fight. He enquired whether I had written anything on the subject of unemployment, whereupon I gave him the plot of one of my short stories which ends with the suicide of an unemployed workman. He did not like that and asked me whether I could not alter the end so as to make the man become a revolutionary. I replied that it would not be at all in keeping with the man's character, whereupon he suggested that I could depict him differently, because the Russian public prefer to read about proletarians who refuse to admit defeat and stigmatise any other type as middle-class. I promised to steel my hero's heart and character for Soviet consumption.

I arrived at Ralph's hotel too early. As he was still out, I pushed a note under his door and went into the music salon. This hotel is patronised solely by foreigners who can pay in their own currencies. When I am there, I have always the feeling of being on a capitalist island in the middle of the Soviet Union. The hall, the hall porter and the public rooms all look exactly the same as they do in western Europe; the guests are also similar, except that they seem more inquisitive and suspicious because they have come to a country where, according to the stories circulating in their own lands, bears run about in

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the streets and any well-dressed person is liable to be hanged. Ralph told me that an American lady who came from Stockholm with her daughter brought tinned food with her for the whole eight days of her sojourn and prepared her meals in her room because she was afraid of being poisoned by the Bolsheviks.

In a room on the ground floor of this hotel there is a branch of the 'Torgsin' trust which sells for dollars sundry splendours of the monarchical past, such as bed-quilts embroidered with the huge "N" and "A" of Their Late Majesties, velvet and silver writing-cases embellished with their monograms and gold-embroidered ecclesiastical vestments of various Archimandrites and Metropolitans. There are actually people who buy these things—mostly Americans.

Two youths in plus fours entered. One sat down to the piano and played a Charleston, while the other beat time on the adjacent grand piano and gave utterance to the sounds that negroes make in jazz bands—a mixture of clicks and neighing. The brutality and unrestrained force of their performance was positively overpowering.

Then Ralph came in. He was in such an elated mood that it was impossible to ask him to sit there and listen to the music. With a beaming face he related to me that he had received an electric toasting-machine from Helsingfors.

We went up to his room, where he put water on to boil for coffee and cut slices of bread. He wore a lilac-coloured shirt to-day instead of the

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green one; when he bent over his new machine, the electric flame threw a red glow over his face.

When the toast was ready, he produced butter, and we enjoyed the delicious hot slices. While we drank our coffee, he told me stories of the various good meals he had enjoyed at different times all over the world. He cherished most loving memories of a beefsteak he ate in Madrid on the day the war broke out—"a beefsteak that could have washed itself," he described it. There was quite a melancholy note in this reminiscence.

The performance began at eight. The play was 'Fear,' by Afinogenov, a young Communist dramatist—a highly interesting piece, which is considered one of the best of the last Leningrad season. The characters were mainly intellectuals (as is so often the case on the Soviet stage at present) who worked in an Institute for the Study of Human Behaviour.

Professor Borodin, the head of this Institute, holds that the main motive for all human actions is fear, a theory which is opposed by Clara, the old Bolshevik, who can quote so many examples of the fearlessness displayed by both the champions of freedom and the counter-revolutionaries. Not so long ago someone criticised this Clara adversely in our wall newspaper, maintaining that she could not have been a genuine Marxian because human beings are not actuated by either fear or courage but by economic considerations. All the same there was a most effective scene when

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she described a bill that she found in the archives of the Tsarist Okhrana after the October Revolution.

It contained the expenses for the execution of her son. I have seen similar bills in the Revolution Museum in Moscow as well as in the 'Home for Former Political Prisoners.'

With a trembling voice she read out the items: cab—2 roubles, 1 rope—50 kopeks, 1 sack—1 rouble. Then she said: "They put a sack over his head because the executioners were afraid of his eyes. We dare to look our foes in the face, because we are fighting for a new world!"

The audience began to clap. The grey-haired old woman looked so genuine that it seemed impossible to realise she was an actress; as a matter of fact she is one of the best artists in the Union, which means a great deal when one considers the high standard of dramatic art in this country.

Another good character was Natalka, the Pioneer, who reminded me of Joseph Finkelstein; she threatened the professor with a notice in their paper when he refused to admit her and other children to a vivisection experiment in his Institute. The other characters were vacillating intellectuals who gradually developed into Bolsheviks, some scoundrels and adventurers who were unmasked in the last act (such characters are to be found in every Soviet play), a so-called 'Advanced Person,' who devoured book after book, and two women, one of whom was a pretty

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doll, while the other was one of the new intellectuals risen from the working classes.

But the main interest of the play was provided by the various examples Professor Borodin gave of the motives for fear. The chief of these was perhaps the non-party intellectuals' fear of denunciation—just or unjust—as a saboteur, but curiously enough his list contained no economic fears such as the fear concerning the impossibility of earning a living, the fear of what the morrow might bring forth, the fear of being thrown out of work or the fear of competitors, all of which would have to be quoted first of all in other countries if their official dramatic art dealt with the problems of the daily life of the masses, as the dramas of the Soviet Union do, instead of with eroticism.

It may be imputed as a great merit to this young dramatist that he has shed some light on the psychological problem of the nature of the fears that are called into existence under various conditions. Will fear vanish altogether when the golden age of Socialism arrives and no man is troubled by political pressure or economic need? Or is there one form of fear that can never be rooted out of us entirely—the fear of death? But perhaps we are so loath to leave the world because we feel on our death-beds that it still owes us so much.

How do matters stand in our old world? We seldom have opportunity to develop our talents to the utmost, our power for love remains unused while our longing for creative work and personal

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happiness withers away. Perhaps we should die more easily if we could accomplish everything that craves within us for fulfilment. . . . I bent over. "Ralph," I whispered, "Ralph, are you afraid of death?"

He did not answer. He was asleep.

July 20th.

One always thinks one ought to enjoy a long sleep on one's free day. It was therefore past eleven when I rang at the door of the dressmaker who for the past two weeks had been stitching away at my summer dress, for even the October Revolution has failed to alter the habits and customs of dressmakers. This branch of activity still remains mostly in private hands, because as yet there are few state dressmaking establishments.

Anna Moissejevna drew the dress over my head as carefully as if it was made of damask instead of washing material. Her mirror showed me myself as a sort of tapeworm in a white and blue striped sheath that encased me from neck to ankles. I could not conceal my surprise, whereupon she stated that long dresses were now fashionable abroad and so she thought that as a foreigner I should attach much importance to being garbed in the latest style. In any case the dress could be shortened by the belt, which would lift it up.

She began to pull at the dress, and it obtained its normal length when I had been provided

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with balloon-like busts in front and behind. I begged her to loosen the cloth belt a bit as it was too tight for me to breathe properly, but she firmly declined on the ground that if she did so the dress would not 'blouse out.'

In the evening I called for Natasha, whose husband was fishing as usual. We went out with the tram and then travelled two stations down the railway line. The weather was cool, the vault of heaven was a solid brightness and the marshy northern plain lay before us in all its desolation. To-day we shall drown its cheerlessness with the old, traditional alcohol; to-morrow we shall be part and parcel of the new system which drains and manures it.

The artist's 'country house' proved to be a wooden bungalow, of which only two windows showed lights. We entered into a peasant's living-room; along the walls ran wooden benches, in one corner was a huge peasant's stove, equipped with niches that could be used as sleeping bunks. On a wooden table there was bread, potato and carrot salad, the famed '*vinaigrette*,' cold mince-meat, the yellow Russian lemonade that tastes of soap, kvas (a national beverage prepared from bread) and vodka. Several girls and youths clad in Russian blouses with broad leather belts stood or sat about the room, and among them I saw Kostya, the unsuccessful painter. At his side was a girl with a depressed face—Lyuba, Natasha's sister.

Our hostess, a lady with smooth, shining hair and green eyes, introduced me to the others,

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several of whom I already knew by name. As usual, I received a lively welcome, and for a good five minutes I was the centre of attraction. In earlier days this would have embarrassed me, but by now I had come to recognise that such attentions were not intended for me personally but as a representative of the westerners friendly to Russia. I therefore accepted their manifestations of sympathy with a similar impersonality.

A youth with a blonde, shorn head brought us plates of *vinaigrette* and glasses of vodka. "Let us drink a glass together, foreign authoress," he said, "let us drink a glass together!"

"Yes, but I can't stand alcohol," I protested.

"What! A little glass like that! Let us drink to the unity of the working classes of all lands."

After that I could not well say no. A refusal would have shown a want of tact towards both the Russian youth and the working classes of all lands. We clinked glasses.

The vodka burnt my inside terribly. It was as though I had swallowed liquid fire. But almost immediately afterwards a pleasant warmth pervaded my whole body, which seemed to have lost its weight.

One of the lads took a balalaika and began to sing; the others joined in. It was a stupid song that I had heard everywhere and differed only from the western popular ditties by the fact that its theme was not eroticism but domestic economy. But the tune was a jolly one which might have come from the Tyrol.

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The blonde youth began to dance. He hopped about the floor like a flea, and revolved on his own axis at incredible speed. Then Natasha joined him; like so many fat people, she was a graceful dancer; she moved in front of the lad with small, dainty steps while the others beat time. Then another fellow, a swarthy Armenian, joined in, and the trio evolved a sort of ballet in which the newcomer tried to take her away from the first dancer; all three carried out their parts as perfectly as if they had rehearsed the movements for some time. Then suddenly the music stopped; Natasha returned to me and demanded a glass of the soapy lemonade.

“That Armenian is going to get into trouble with the State Publishing Trust,” she whispered to me. “He made a contract to translate a German book, but was too lazy to do the job and made an arrangement of his own with a third person who knew hardly any German and turned all substantives that he did not know into family names.* The result is a scream. The dockyard workers talk of a certain Herr Shipowner, while the police introduce a Herr Thief.”

Someone started a new song—with a jovial melody, for the melancholy airs of former times are fast disappearing. The words of the first verse were: “We read Marx together, my golden treasure, but not a word did we understand;

* In German all substantives are commenced with capital letters. (Translator's note.)

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don't shake your head, brother!" The second verse started: "We fell in love by wireless, we were married by wireless, and our daughter will be born by wireless."

Meanwhile Kostya had withdrawn with Lyuba to a darkish corner, where he kissed her hands with an affection that would have been most touching if his face had not contained so many pimples. The Armenian sat down beside me and began to talk German.

It appeared that he had studied German literature in Heidelberg. He raised his glass of vodka, pressed one hand to his heart, rolled his eyes and declaimed:

"Alt Heidelberg, du feine,
Du Stadt an Ehren reich,
Am Neckar und am Rheine
Kein andrer kommt dir gleich!"

Whereupon I suddenly grew sentimental. I generally mourn over my student years as a wasted, expensive time which gave me nothing and did nothing to equip me for life or my profession, but now in the twilight of that northern night and after the alcohol I had consumed they acquired a halo of their own. I saw nothing of the scarred faces of the duelling students; I only saw the glorious town of Heidelberg, at which, by the way, I had never studied.

"Auch du stehst mir geschrieben
Ins Herz gleich einer Braut."

the Armenian trolled, and the spell grew stronger and stronger. I was homesick for Heidelberg;

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I wanted to get away . . . away from these people who did not understand me.

I threw away my glass, mounted on a chair and climbed up on to the stove. It was alight inside; a kindly warmth stole over me. . . .

"Ich reit ins Neckartal . . ." came the voice from down below, but the further words did not reach me. . . .

"She is judged, she is saved!" I stammered. Yes, now where did that quotation come from? Or did I compose the line myself? Yes, surely I must have, for am I not saved? How beautiful that is. . . . Alt Heidelberg, du feine. . . .

The blonde, shorn head suddenly appeared in my immediate neighbourhood. "Comrade, foreign authoress," it whispered, "excuse me if I'm disturbing you, but I have such a big request to make. Please can you tell me what are the goods that Austria exports?"

I sat up and made strenuous efforts to pull my thoughts together. "Leather goods and knitted goods, I believe," I said at last. "Yes, decidedly knitted goods—Viennese fashions! Oh, if you only knew how beautiful those Vienna fashions are! They can't beat them even in Heidelberg! You just get hold of a jumper, and it's so soft, so warm . . . it's written on your heart—like a bride. . . ." The blonde youth sat there with a troubled face. "Oh, these foreigners, these foreigners!" he murmured. "They come here; we feed them and show them the best we've got, and then they are all middle-class, yes, middle-

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class Philistines! They will never abolish Capitalism!"

After making this unflattering discovery, he clambered down dejectedly. From below I thought I heard the strains of the balalaika and that jolly song "Bricks":

"At first I said, 'It irks!'
But now I love the works,
All for the sake of the bricks we make
And the jolly old row of the works."

"I didn't take long to fall in love with my works," I thought, and then it occurred to me that when I felt homesick for Heidelberg, I naturally meant my Putilov Works . . . nothing to equal them on the Neckar and the Rhine . . . and we don't export knitted goods, but tractors . . . even Ford himself is a customer of ours . . . but I haven't got that lever properly fixed in . . . I'm afraid it'll break . . . why didn't Professor Borodin put the fear of breaking a lever on his list . . . nothing to equal our tractors in Germany and America. . . . My eyes were wet with tears . . . not merely vodka tears . . . and then luckily I fell asleep.

It was broad daylight when I awoke; the sun's rays were reflected in the mirrors and gilded the wooden walls. Our hostess and another girl were asleep on a wide bench; Kostya and the Armenian lay on the floor, with their overcoats for blankets.

The Armenian was already awake. He came over to me. "You have no head at all," he said.

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"Fancy getting knocked over by just one glass of vodka! We had the gramophone on and danced, but you did not hear a thing!"

I was furious. I had been given an opportunity to take part in a Russian orgy, and I had slept away my chance. But had they only danced? Where were all the drunken kisses, the bottles the drinkers broke on one another's heads, the knives and all the other accessories that European music halls always produce as evidence of the demonic Slav? Then I noticed that Natasha, Lyuba and the blonde youth were missing.

"Natasha, her sister and two fellows who work in a factory went off by the last train," the Armenian explained as if divining my thoughts. "Would you like a wash? Through the door on the left into the kitchen, please."

I did not wait until my hostess woke up, but wandered my disillusioned way to the station.

July 21st.

I caught my breath when I saw Varya at the works. Was she going to scold me for playing truant the day before yesterday? But she seemed to be occupied with troubles of her own; her face was long and sad. All the dimples had vanished.

"Just think, my man has embezzled some money!" she said. "It must be paid back as quickly as possible. I gave him 50 roubles, and he borrowed the rest!"

Fifty roubles! Half her monthly pay! But

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further comment is superfluous to anyone who knows the words of that old Russian song, "Women are always so silly!"

About mid-day my supply of levers came to an end, and as no further supplies were sent in by the metallurgical department—no cylinders either—there was no work for me to do. That often happens; in such a case you get a "Running empty" ticket from the overseer, which you put into the box along with your piece-work sheet and you receive payment based on your piece-work average for the period of inactivity.

Occasionally you are assigned to some sort of 'running empty' work. This time the brigadier took me along to a peasant girl, who was working with a hand-file on small wheels supplied to her by an elderly woman at an adjacent machine. I got a file from the store and set to work.

I recognised Marfa as the peasant at once. Her face wore the stolid expression common to persons engaged in heavy manual work that leaves them no time to think. Oh, no, I was wrong; Marfa could think! "Not so quick," she warned me, and then added the explanation: "This isn't piece-work; as soon as we're finished, we get more work shoved on to us."

"But we are making the tractors for you peasants," I observed.

"Not for us." She shook her head. "We run our own farm."

"Why don't you join a collective farm?" I asked inquisitively.

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She readjusted her bandeau. "Why don't we join up? Why should my horse work for Michael Koslov?"

I learnt from her that only the draught animals and agricultural implements are common property in the collective farms; poultry, cows and small animals are left to their original owners. It was hard to get her to discuss the matter because she was only interested in the events of the moment. She told me she had come to the city to earn money, but disclosed nothing further, and I gained the impression that she only talked to me in order to waste time.

A Young Communist came along from the old tractor machine shop and asked Marfa to join a class for illiterates.

"Well, I won't say I won't," was her reply.

"Then I'll put you down on the list at once," he said.

"Why such a hurry?" she protested. "There's plenty of time."

"But why do you want to put it off?" asked the Young Communist. "The sooner you learn to read and write, the better for you."

"Yes, naturally it will be a good thing." Marfa nodded indifferently. "But why hurry? 'The fellow who hurries, makes a fool of himself,' as the clever folk are always telling us." The Young Communist had to retire beaten.

"I'm not going to start learning things at 33," she told me, and shrugged her shoulders. "If I haven't learnt yet, it's too late now. My head isn't fresh enough for such things."

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She rose and went off to the lavatory, which in our and other works is always the refuge of the work-shy. Perhaps the Government will take measures to limit our time in the lavatories; then the foreign Press will scream out that the Soviet Union is going back to Capitalism.

July 22nd.

Diagonally opposite the Winter Palace, on the farther side of the Neva, gleams the golden lance on Tsarism's stronghold, the Fortress of St. Peter and St. Paul. On this side of the river is the granite embankment lined with palaces that was the resort of the fashionable world; here in the olden days one saw the uniforms, furs, laces, carriages, lackeys and pedigree horses with their gorgeous trappings. This embankment has its haunts of blood; here, hard by the Catherine Canal, a bomb laid Alexander II low, there Plehve, the Minister of the Interior, was murdered, and here fell Count Ignatiev, one of the pillars of reaction. On the big magnificent square before the Palace the Government tried to suppress the discontent of its defenceless subjects with the rifles of its soldiers on the 'Bloody Sunday.' Slowly the black bridges across the Neva swung up whenever it was deemed necessary to isolate the suburb and pen up its revolutionary ardour. Here the cruiser 'Aurora' steamed up from Kronstadt and—boom! a cannonball announced the advent of Leningrad! Boom! Boom! the Fortress of St. Peter and St. Paul

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fell; the traitorous allies occupying the Winter Palace decamped, and when the gates were open, the dread prison was turned into a museum . . . quite an ordinary museum. . . . The way across the bridge to the gates of the fortress was the Golgotha for all the best in Russia. Keenly they peered out through the shuttered windows of the prison vans—the death-vans—and took an eternal farewell of the world, for it was said that though anyone might walk into the fortress no one left it on foot.

Over the gateway there is a memorial tablet; here, on December 14th, 1825, were hanged the five Dekabrist who were the forerunners of the middle-class revolution. The executioner was so clumsy that three of his victims fell to the ground at his first attempt to hang them. Sergei Muraviov broke his foot, and could only say: "Poor Russia! They can't even hang us properly!" Fifty paces from here Dubrovin, the officer, was hanged for propagating Socialism in the army.

The Government always inflicted heavy punishments upon those who endeavoured to revolutionise its strongest prop, the army. Dubrovin's company was compelled to witness his execution; when he ascended the scaffold, the ailing victim, whose nerves were torn to shreds by four months of rigorous imprisonment, still had the strength to call out to the soldiers, "My children, I am dying for you!" And then, as one man, the company presented arms to render the last honours to their officer whose death was supposed to serve as a terrible warning to them.

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A few steps farther on we come to one of the most genuine pieces of old St. Petersburg—St. Peter and St. Paul's Cathedral, where the Russian rulers were buried. Here a young page kept watch at the bier of Alexandra, the widow of Nicholas I, while the folk passed by to take leave of the Tsarina they were never permitted to approach during her lifetime, and admire her golden crown and purple mantle trimmed with ermine. The boy noticed that the crown above the baldachin of the bier was made of wood and paper, while the mantle was a cheap satin and the ermine white cotton embroidered with squirrels' tails.

The page thought of the men and women languishing in prison only a few yards away from the cathedral and wondered whether their hearts would beat faster when the cannon rendered the last honours to the deceased Tsarina—perhaps, perhaps it is the revolution—liberty—they might think. And he said to himself, "Who knows whether I might not belong to them one day?"

In 1874 the boy was arrested and consigned to the Fortress of St. Peter and St. Paul. His name was Kropotkin.

The prison gates are open. Before them stand soldiers of the Red Army, but inside everything remains as it was in those days. . . . The reception-room where prisoners were searched and addressed for the first time in the second person singular, as a sign that they had lost all personal rights. Here is the prison courtyard, and there the bath-house, whither the police accompanied the prisoners and supplied them

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with luke-warm water to prevent the possibility of their evading captivity by killing themselves in boiling water. And here, in the visitors' room beyond the barred gate Alexander Ulianov, the brother of Lenin, said farewell to his mother on the eve of his execution. Once upon a time there were no bars; the prisoner was not partitioned off from his relatives. But one day Narodnik Senegub's wife put a small pellet into his mouth when she gave him her farewell kiss. It was a letter written on thin cigarette paper and wrapped in tinfoil; when she visited him again Senegub had another pellet ready for her. Other prisoners followed his example, but it was not easy to exchange pellets under the eyes of the police, and one day one fell to the ground. After that the barrier was put up.

The staircase leading down to the cells is protected with high wire-netting to prevent the prisoners from throwing themselves down; they were not permitted the happiness of a voluntary death because they were doomed to a lingering end brought about by the hardships of the prison *régime*, and the martyrdom of idleness, boredom and silence. When a prisoner had been condemned, he was allowed no more visits, and the police took away from him all his little possessions such as tea, sugar, tobacco, soap, brushes and combs—and, above all, his books. The only intercourse left to him was that which he obtained by communicating with fellow-prisoners by a code of knocks. The paternal care of the prison administration saw to it that the partition walls

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of his cell were padded, but the stone of the outer wall, in which the window was set, was a good conveyor of sound.

A prisoner engaged in a conversation of this sort leaned against the wall, with his eyes glued to the spy-hole in the door and his hands behind his back. If the warder's face appeared in the hole, he took several steps forward, as though pacing up and down his cell, for knocking was strictly forbidden. Deprivation of exercise, the punishment cell and other heavy penalties were the consequences of detection, but none of them could deter the prisoners, who in time communicated with such facility that Kropotkin imparted to his neighbour the contents of his book on the Paris Commune in this fashion. It was considered a great misfortune to be confined in cell 55, although it was brighter and less forbidding than the others, because on either side of it were the storerooms, so that its inmate was completely isolated. Vera Figner lived in this cell for a time.

All these facts were related to us by our guide, and my thoughts went back to the small, delicately built old woman whose acquaintance I had made in Moscow. I was in the Electricity Workers' Club on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the January days of 1906; on the platform sat the veterans of the revolution—mainly white-haired old men and women; among them were several younger ones, some of whom were Bolsheviks, while others belonged to no party. A greybeard rose and told us how in 1878 he

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obtained a warder's post in order to help the imprisoned comrades to escape. Everything seemed to point to success, but in the end the moon's rays—sung by so many poets—betrayed them. "Yes, the moon, the moon!" the old man kept on repeating in a prosaic but despondent voice.

But close to me sat two unromantic heroes of modern times. Each of them had from eight to ten years of *katorga** behind him—served in this present century. One of them had a position in a scientific institute, the other (a bearded pater-familias) was an apothecary. He laughed and asked his companion whether there was a buffet, declaring that he was dying of hunger. Then he disappeared; ten minutes later he returned with full cheeks and thrust a sandwich and an apple into my hands.

Meanwhile Vera Figner had risen to speak. A hurricane of tumultuous applause greeted her. She curtsied—yes, with her hands folded in front of her she curtsied—then she held up one hand, and dead silence reigned in the hall. In her birdlike voice she spoke a few words of greeting and thanks; then she stated that she was tired and could not speak to-day . . . another time perhaps.

Cheers and handclapping answered her; she curtsied again, gathered up her skirts and sat down modestly and politely in her chair. I saw her again in the cloakroom. She had wrapped a woollen muffler round her head—like an old

* Penal servitude.

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peasant woman. "Would you like to know her?" the apothecary asked me, and without waiting for a reply he hastened to her.

"Vera Nikolaievna, here is a German authoress who wants to greet you."

"I am very pleased," piped out Vera Figner's birdlike voice as her hand rested in mine.

I told her how we appreciated her book abroad. "Yes," she smiled, and her eyes gleamed with something of an author's pride, "I have received lots of letters from abroad." We exchanged a few sentences and shook hands again.

The apothecary winked as he held out my overcoat. "Well, have you kissed the holy relic?" he enquired. These heroes have no sense of pathos!

To think that these men and women, who can eat, laugh and write books like the rest of us, sat idly in those cells for years, cut off from the world . . . sat in the fearful, nerve-wracking silence that conjured up hallucinations and drove the weaker victims to madness! No wonder that the prison officials took so many precautions to prevent them from committing suicide!

They did not always succeed. Vetrova, the student, drenched herself with petroleum from a lamp and set fire to herself. Two other prisoners in the Schlüsselburg (where those sentenced to imprisonment for life are confined) found another way; they boxed the superintendent's ears, which offence brought them ultimately to a court martial and execution.

My heart beats as I enter the works. It is

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close upon four; the left entrance is thronged with workmen holding blue pass-out tickets in their hands, while from the one on the right flows out the homegoing tide of the first shift. Onward I go, past the party and works committee-rooms, past the kiosk of the State Publishing Trust, over rails and heaps of upturned earth, until at last I am greeted by the odour of warm oil and the restful hum of the machines. We are continuing the work begun by those who sat in the prison cells. Tractor by tractor, lever by lever, we are helping them to create the new world. To-day the work comes easier to my hand, the steel revolves rhythmically as it sings with its metallic voice the song that Morosov, Vera Figner's companion, composed during his twenty-five years' imprisonment:

“ Though the prison bars be strong,
Though its silent walls be grey,
Though I sit in twilight dim
Day by day, day by day,
Though idleness of dragging years
Mind and muscle power has lamed,
Yet by thoughts of freedom braced
The soul remains untamed.”

July 23rd.

How could I be such a fool as to think the others would not notice my absence! What is going to happen now?

Yesterday we had a new sorter, a woman from Siberia. To-day she came up to me—the sorters are wont to stroll about before the mid-day interval, as their strenuous work does not begin

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until just before we finish—and said suddenly, “You’re not a worker by trade.”

I looked up angrily; her tone sounded contemptuous. But she continued with a smile: “Do you know what you seem to me like? Like Charlie Chaplin as a metal-worker.”

I had to laugh then. “But you’re no regular worker either,” I said. She shook her head. “No, I only came into the works so as to get a better chance of being taken into the high school. My father is an apothecary. In our country the workmen’s children get the first chances.”

There was a note of reproach in her voice, but I took no notice of it. I searched for the gauge that lay concealed under the mass of iron filings; while I poked them away with a bar, I marvelled as usual at the beauty of the silver spirals that the drill had cut out of my lever.

“Why do you work as a sorter instead of at a machine?” I asked. “It’s much jollier, and you earn more.”

She shrugged her shoulders. “Such dirty work!”

“Not when you’re accustomed to it. Look how pretty and clean Katya, our Young Communist, manages to appear.” I turned towards Katya, and then she came up to me. Her eyes had a frightened look.

“Listen,” she said, “Is it true that you have cut work twice in three weeks? The cell wanted to put your name on the black board.” On the black board! Where everyone entering the works could read my name on the list of the idlers

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and 'wreckers of the Five-Year Plan'! I would rather chuck the business and clear off straight away. "We told the comrades you would work off those two shifts. Are you ready to do that?"

"Yes," I stammered. "And then I shan't be put on the black board?"

"No, no. Wait, I'll have a talk with Valya. But you mustn't cut work again. It's not done here; only the rotten workmen do it."

"I shall never miss another shift. No, certainly not!"

I was full of sympathy and a sort of gratitude. What happens in other countries when a workgirl fails to keep an important appointment with the boss? If he can dispense with her, out she goes; if not, she gets a severe reprimand. If she is a skilled, irreplaceable worker, he may perhaps grind his teeth and mutter: "Swine!"

I also remembered that we had rush orders to fulfil. The collective farms were waiting for the tractors, and the present scarcity of workers in the Soviet made every hand more than indispensable. Katya, Varya and the others who considered themselves as belonging to the management felt that a heavy responsibility was attached to each individual worker. Nevertheless they did not think, "Swine!" They treated me according to the principles of solidarity. Never did I feel so conscious of the bond that linked us to one another and the works—it was a stronger and happier bond than that which unites ordinary individuals to one another, for neither death nor desertion could break it.

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Varya came to me with her charming smile. I did not know whether she had heard of the business. Suddenly she broke off in the middle of a sentence and stared at me.

It has been very hot in the last few days, so that I generally take off my blouse and skirt, and work in an apron. Varya had noticed my pink silk chemise peeping out. "Silk," she whispered. "Do you really wear silk underclothes in the works?"

"But they're quite cheap old things, Varyusha," I explained.

"I like that one so much. I say, would you miss it if you sold it to me when you went?"

"What! Sell it? I shouldn't have dared to offer it you as a gift, Varya. It's laddered in so many places, and the lace is all torn."

"Never mind! I can patch it. Pink silk! I'll wear that when my man visits me."

In all probability she must have told Valya, for when I went to the table to get my portfolio, I saw the scowl on the latter's face as she reproved Varya.

"You don't realise what you're doing, Timofeyeva," she said. "What sort of impression must that make on her, do you think? Do you want her to take us for beggars?"

"Oh, that's all right; she's a comrade," Varya pleaded in her defence. "And it's no disgrace to us if we can't make silk goods."

"If we can't make them, we don't need to wear them. We ought to be above cadging foreigners' silk underclothes. We must assert our proletarian dignity, Timofeyeva."

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Just before twelve—I had already begun to clean my machine—Valya came along with the young brigadier of the night shift.

“I have spoken to the comrades,” she said. “Your machine is free; you can stay behind and work on the night shift.”

I was scared out of my wits. I was ready to work off those shifts on my free days, but not to do two shifts on end—and one of them that wearisome night shift into the bargain! The seven and a half hours of a shift were long enough for me in any case; my back ached from bending to pick up the levers that the young workman at the grinding machine threw to me, and I wanted to sleep.

“Oh, I can’t possibly work fifteen hours on end; I simply couldn’t last out!” I cried out desperately. But Valya did not move an eyelid.

“Very well; another time,” she conceded. The brigadier moved on, and Valya left me. I wanted to call her back—I felt ashamed of myself—what will the girls think of me now?

July 24th.

They do not think much of me; I do not belong to them any more. Now they realise that I did not come into the works to help and learn, but merely to gratify a whim. In their eyes I am one of those intellectuals who play with the things to which others give their lives and health, but back out horrified as soon as any sacrifice is required of them. It is not my fault; life has always been kind to me. They all

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understand that, and they bear me no grudge—certainly not, but I just do not belong to them.

Varya is very busy to-day. That, of course, is the reason why she does not come to pass the time of day with me. And I would have been so glad to make her a present of my silk chemise. Well, perhaps I can do it in the mid-day interval.

I long for her to come, but stay where I am. When all the others have left their machines, I am still finishing off a lever. My tea stands ready on the table, but Varya is not there. Is she perhaps visiting her Tartar in the fitting department? I wait; I shall not go to the meeting that takes place in the courtyard to-day. It is sultry in the workshop; there will probably be a thunderstorm. I have a headache, but no one enquires what is the matter with me. No one comes to fetch me to the meeting.

Subinsky comes along, munching his sandwich. He favours me with his usual friendly smile. Comrade Subinsky is very obliging. When I have to clean my machine and cannot find a cloth anywhere, he sometimes brings me one. He always shakes hands with me and enquires how I am getting on. Even to-day he is friendly, although I notice from his very first words that he knows everything.

“The work is very hard for you, isn't it?” he remarks. “I thought so. You have to get used to physical work in your childhood's days.”

Of course. The work is too hard for me. I don't belong to the workers; they are sorry for me. That is the last straw!

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"I cannot say that the work is too hard for me," I reply. "But two shifts on end are too much for me."

"Of course, of course, I quite understand that. It's very praiseworthy of you to take so much trouble."

He would never tell Nastya that her work as a shock brigadier was praiseworthy. On the other hand he can praise me, because I do not belong to them. But he persists, for he wants to say something to cheer me up.

"I read your article on Fascism in the 'Red Help's' wall newspaper. It interested me very much. You write in a lively style; I'm sure you're very good in your own profession." Dear old Subinsky! He wants to make me understand that I am of some use!

"You ought to write something about Fascism, Comrade Subinsky. Varya told me you got five years' penal servitude in Poland." The mention of Varya's name is painful, but I pass over it quickly. Subinsky appears pleased to have diverted my thoughts into other channels.

"Yes," he says, "it's quite a story—how they caught me. They were on my tracks for a month, but I hid in the neighbouring villages. Then I heard my little daughter was ill; I couldn't stick it any longer, but went home. The August evenings are dark, and there weren't many people in that part of the country—which I thought was all to the good. I slunk along the byways, and I had only once to cross a main road. Then I had bad luck. Just at the turn of the road I

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ran into one of our farmers with two gendarmes. Someone had broken into his barn the night before; the police had come to investigate, and he was driving them back to the town. Even then it would have gone off all right if his dog hadn't begun to bark. The police were after the thief and they found—me. I was a real find for them. They were so pleased that they knocked out three of my teeth at once; the fellows at the police station knocked out the others later.”

Subinsky smiled and drank a mouthful of tea. I gazed at his toothless mouth in horror.

“Yes, and afterwards I heard that my little daughter wasn't ill at all,” he continued. “They spread the rumour on purpose to decoy me into their trap. I was fool enough to walk into it.”

“And what happened then, Comrade Subinsky?”

“Then? Oh, they locked me up on remand and knocked me about whenever they questioned me so as to force me to confess. Then came my trial and the verdict—five years' penal servitude.”

“And then?”

“Then—then came a bit of luck—a great joy, for I was told that I was to be exchanged. They didn't tell me at once—let me cool my heels for a couple of months first. I shall never forget how we said good-bye to our old country that treated us so badly when we travelled to the new one. Our escort left us at the Polish frontier post. When the soldiers jumped out of the

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train, our chains seemed to fall away from us. Then I was afraid—I was in a blue funk that the train would suddenly be kept back for some reason or other. Then it gave a jerk and moved on—we left Polish soil for ever—no, not for ever—only until the workers of Poland rise in revolution. We still had to pass the neutral zone. We stood at the window with clenched fists as the train rolled over the plain; it seemed to us as if it was hardly moving an inch, and all at once it slowed down . . . our hearts were nearly bursting . . . now we passed under the arch, with its welcoming inscription: WORKERS OF THE WORLD, UNITE! and beyond the arch—we saw soldiers of the Red Army in their long overcoats, with the Soviet star on their caps. We screamed like lunatics; some of us sobbed, and others called out all sorts of things in Polish to the Red soldiers—words of greeting and fraternisation. At last some of us struck up the Internationale and immediately we all joined in. The soldiers stood to attention, with their big, round faces turned towards us, and presented arms—our voices trembled with happiness. When we had finished the first verse, we sang the second—it was pure joy to sing the Internationale right through without fear of some policeman coming down on us with his curses and his life-preserver . . . we were still singing when the train went on—and in Nyegoreloye, the Russian frontier station, a group of workmen welcomed us with red flags and speeches—a whole orchestra played the Internationale—and

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the people lifted us up for everyone to see—it was like a dream—out of prison to freedom!”

Subinsky lowered his voice; somewhere in the workshop a machine began to hum. We were no longer alone; men and girls had gathered round us and stood there in silence. Among them I noticed Varya. All faces were bright, as though illumined by some flame; all felt themselves one with Subinsky and his comrades.

It suddenly became easy for me to go up to Varya and take her hand. “Varya,” I said, “don’t be angry about yesterday; I felt that I couldn’t do another shift straight off.”

“Nothing could have happened to you for refusing,” Varya replied, firmly, but she did not withdraw her hand. “We all worked two shifts on end, sometimes three—at the beginning when we were just starting on the tractors and things went wrong. We had to adapt ourselves to the production—not the production to us, you know.”

She addressed me in the second person singular. That meant we were friends again.

“I understand all that in my head,” I assured her, “but it’s so hard to slough one’s old skin and fit in with the principles of collectivity. We intellectuals are all individualists.”

“What are individualists?” asked Varya.

“That is hard to explain. For all practical purposes they are people who consider themselves centres of the universe and have a very good opinion of their own feelings and ideas.”

“Then they can go to the devil! We can

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never move forward with such folk. But you have proletarian feelings, and so you must never go along the lines of such people."

Varya's dimple beamed again. We went off to our respective work. It is a joy to be alive.

July 25th.

I devoted my free day to the Red student fraternity.

The pre-war Russian student was a well-known phenomenon in western Europe and an object of ridicule to satirists on account of his slovenly habits and revolutionary opinions. And then the female student—that creature who was a slap in the face to all ideas of femininity—who despised corsets and church marriage ceremonies with equal fervour, what an object of derision she was to the students of the duelling corps, whose heads were so full of beer-born happiness and anti-Semitism! But what has happened to her and her long-haired, half-starved male associates that filled the cells of Tsarist dungeons?

In the editorial offices of the 'Red Student' I am welcomed by Comrade Timochin, whose rotundity and cherubic disposition I consider most unsuitable to his faculty, for he is a philosopher. I observe his unctuous face while he peruses my article 'The German Female Student on the Green Bough' and decide that he can have no perception of the metaphysical. He takes a lively interest in the German female student and the anti-Semitic riots at our university and considers it quite natural for anyone studying

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pure philosophy to obtain a post at once. I learn with some astonishment that the high schools are in direct contact with the organisations that need brain workers and pass along to them a certain number of their students as soon as they are through their finals. These students have a rich choice of vocation; this year there were 375 posts competing for 90 candidates. That does not sound like a land of lotus eaters!

Comrade Timochin suggested taking me at once to see the Students' Home, which is located in a large and fine villa, formerly the residence of a wealthy merchant. First of all he showed me into Philosophy Room No. 33, which was inhabited by three persons, Li, the Korean, an elementary school teacher delegated to the university by the Young Communist cell, Petrov, the deputy-dean, the son of an illiterate cab-driver and his illiterate wife, and Comrade Onuffriev of the Litfak (Literary Faculty). In our country all three would be designated simply as 'stud. phil.,' but there is far more specialisation in the Soviet Union; the literati and the students of other faculties all reside in the separate houses set aside for their communities. The course of study is arranged on different lines to ours; the theoretical element is eliminated in favour of a practical course to fit the student for his future profession.

The Litfak, for instance, is divided into three branches, the critical, the editorial and the creative, the last mentioned being reserved for persons who have already been active in the literary world. Here they receive a thorough

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grounding in the knowledge that a Soviet author must acquire if his creative work is to remain in close touch with the masses; of the fifteen courses obligatory for Litfak students some six deal with political and sociological discipline. Only 70 per cent. of the work is theoretical; the rest of the students' time is spent in editorial offices, in directing the literary circles of workmen's clubs or at the theatres. The students are by no means 'listeners' in our sense of the word, because set lectures have been abolished in favour of discussions and seminary exercises.

All this information was imparted to me by our comrade of the Litfak, a red-cheeked lad who wore a Russian blouse. All the students had a fresh, robust appearance; in type they were indistinguishable from the young workmen, which is not surprising as they all come from the ranks of the workers. But their rooms look very intellectual; on the walls one sees maps of Europe and Asia and photographs of Lenin, Krupskaya, Marx and Engels in addition to those of the shining lights of their own faculty such as Hegel, Diderot and Feuerbach. Books, books everywhere—on the table, in bookshelves, in corners of the room and piled up on the floor. These students receive stipends which they do not use up on their board and lodging because they housekeep collectively and are members of a co-operative store which supplies them with food at low prices. Clothing and other necessaries they buy wholesale. Therefore they spend their money on books and subscribe for large numbers

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of newspapers and periodicals. In addition to the works of Lenin, Marx, Plechanow and the philosophers (Hegel and the French materialists occupy places of honour) I saw in their collection many authors and dramatists such as Pushkin, Gogol, Tolstoi, Shakespeare, Anatole France and Goethe—also a German grammar, for a foreign language is one of the obligatory courses of the Litfak.

The direction of their studies is not dependent on the fads of their professors, but rests absolutely on a basis of dialectical materialism, the validity of which is as little questioned as the fact that twice two is four. Discussion is only allowed on the various methods of analysing and applying this dialectical materialism. Proceeding from this standpoint, the students then attack a vast mass of material—political economy, sociology, history, and philosophy. They do not merely attend prescribed courses of lectures, but delve right down to the very heart of their subjects.

The next room is occupied by a married couple, for married students have the right to their own apartments. Room 20 houses two girls, a doctor and a biologist; the biologist has finished her course and now works as assistant to a professor. She becomes quite embarrassed when the dean's deputy tells me that she is considered a very promising scientist. For five years she worked in a factory; then she was sent by the management to a Workers' Faculty, where she was prepared for the high school, passing thence to the university.

She is now in her thirtieth year. Generally the students are a few years older than those at

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our universities because they seldom pass in directly from the schools. Some enter after working in the factories, like our biologist, while others have served in the Red Army or taken part in the civil war, like the inmates of the philosophy room.

Olga, the biologist, shakes me warmly by the hand and invites me to supper. The repast consists of unlimited quantities of caviare sandwiches, with coffee and milk. The scene in the dining-room is a lively one; the comrade on duty for the day arrives from the city with a huge packet of gloves, which promptly disappear. One of the male students observes with some sarcasm that the female gloves are of superior quality because the purchaser is a great friend of the ladies. The gentleman referred to, however, appears to be suddenly afflicted with deafness, and placidly attacks the huge pile of caviare sandwiches on his plate.

Afterwards the deputy-dean takes me back to room 33, where he tells me of their various difficulties. His complaints never vary; there is always too little of everything. They have not sufficient high schools to satisfy the country's need for brain workers and impart knowledge to all who desire it. At present there are about 500 universities in the Soviet Union as well as 2,000 technical high schools with a total of about a million students.

Schools grow like mushrooms in Russia, especially in the eastern regions. In Tsheta, for example, there was only one high school a year ago; now there are seven. Other places which

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never had such an institution, now have three "And yet we can only take a small percentage of the applicants," my mentor continues, "only a very small portion of those sent to us by the various organisations and the workmen's schools. We give preference to manual workers and their children because we need to create an intelligentsia that we can trust. You know how greatly our work has been hindered by 'wreckers' . . ."

He pauses deliberately to let me express my opinion on this point. For two hours he has been telling me facts and giving me explanations; with a school teacher's patience he strives to convince me that the Bolsheviks are pursuing a correct policy with regard to their students; he dilates on the prospects for the future and recounts what has been done and what has been left undone. He anticipates all the counter-arguments I may be likely to advance.

He wonders whether I have understood everything aright or whether I am going to be another Panait Istrati and overlook the birth of a new world because my attention is too much concentrated on its birth-pangs. Am I likely to misunderstand or distort anything he has told me, and above all shall I remain a friend when I have crossed the frontier and put up an energetic opposition to the views of those who press for intervention in Russian affairs? He does not want a display of cheap enthusiasm from me; he desires me to gain a practical understanding of the whole business.

"Do you know, comrade," I say to him, "what

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in my opinion is the hardest for me? To gain a clear conception of revolutionary dialectics. Panait Istrati, whom you were thinking about just now—yes, you did think of him, and I'm not angry with you for that, no, really not—was one who could not or would not see the wood for the trees. But at our works there is a girl, a young intellectual named Euga, whose main desire in life is to study at the high school, but its doors remain closed to her on account of her social origin. She feels that her life has been ruined. And yet I understand why Olga may study there and not Euga—apart from any considerations of talent. Olga will be more useful because she is a daughter of the masses. She is in closer contact with the masses and knows their needs better."

The dean's deputy beams. "Well, I'm glad you understand our tactics. But you may rest assured these individual injustices will disappear as soon as we have sufficient high schools. We need ever so many engineers, doctors and teachers, though the teachers must be no pedants. Anyhow, all our efforts are concentrated on seeing that the man of learning does not lose contact with the masses. Right from the very first term the students go in for practical work. We send culture brigades into the villages, while during the summer holidays all faculties take practical courses in the provinces. . . ."

He breaks off. It suddenly occurs to him that I may have misunderstood something. "You must not believe," he resumes, "that we are barbarians with no appreciation of art and literature.

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Look at all the books we have. And tell them in Germany," here he takes up a book from the table, "that your 'Faust' is one of our favourite works."

The copy of 'Faust' appears to have undergone hard wear and tear. The margins are full of pencilled notes, while here and there verses are underlined.

"What? 'Faust' your favourite book?" I exclaim. "Tell that to your grandmother! Faust is the hero of middle-class individualism, who—for the greater portion of Part I at any rate—seeks pleasure and knowledge only to gratify his personal desires and . . ."

The student laughs. "Well, yes, we are as critical of 'Faust' as we are of everything we read. But you know what Lenin said: we must take from the old culture everything that serves our purpose. Marx made use of old Hegel, whom the reactionaries also quote in support of their theories."

"I am curious to know what you can usefully extract from 'our' Faust." He shows me a quotation encircled in red ink: "In the beginning was the deed!" and then, several pages farther on:

"My friend, thou soon shalt lose all such misgiving;
Be thou but self-possessed, thou hast the art of living!"

When I take my leave, they make me a collective present—Lenin's 'Empirical Criticism,' on the first page of which they all write their names in memory of my visit.

July 26th.

I went for a stroll in our works garden before the night shift began. It is not particularly

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large, but it is well kept; there are some beautiful flower-beds and some splendid pieces of trellis work from the Winter Palace. A covered veranda has been arranged as a reading-room; papers and periodicals lie on the tables, while chess sets and pamphlets may be had from the librarian. These are lent free of charge, but the worker's pass-out check must be left as a pledge that they will be returned. Among the Putilov workers in this reading-room I noticed two soldiers in their long overcoats.

When it was dark I went into the works and visited our neighbours in the forge. The smiths were busy; two workmen dipped buckets into the liquid metal from the furnace and poured their contents into the rickety vats which held the moulds. Suddenly the metal hissed up, and a shower of sparks flew out in all directions. One scorched my foot, and I fled hurriedly, accompanied by the laughter of the workmen, who wore special clothing.

Many of them, however, wore their goggles thrust up on the foreheads instead of over their eyes. They maintained that their intense perspiration dimmed the glasses and interfered with their work. I remembered that the same complaint was made by the workmen in the agricultural implement factory at Rostov, but it is to be hoped that 'Institute for Workers' Safety Appliances' at Moscow will soon solve the problem by bringing out a 'non-perspiring' glass. I marvelled at the ease with which the smiths bore the fierce glare of the furnace.

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I went to the lavatory and lay down on the platform which seems to be there for the convenience of those who want to rest, but could not sleep on account of the chatter of three women in the corner. One was complaining about the saleswoman at the co-operative, while another's grievance was her mother-in-law.

"And so I said to him, 'Do you call it decent to tell your mother tales about me?' A fine member of the party he is!"

"And then I said to her, 'Don't you try to tell me the butter's all sold out, when I know you baked a cake for twelve persons on your birthday!' There's red tape for you!"

"And so I said to him, 'Do you think I'm going to stand your mother telling everyone that I went to the pictures with Piotr Ivanitch?' And if I did go with him to see that latest American picture, well, what harm was there in it?"

"And then I said to her, 'The days are over when one person could swill down butter by the tub, and another could only pat his empty stomach!' And a person with no sense of justice, who bakes cakes herself, such a one, say I, is no proper shop assistant. She is incompetent, say I, and a wrecker, if you want the plain truth!"

"And so I said to him . . ."

It must have been nearly twelve. More and more women came into the lavatory. Pieces of soap were fetched and all the taps were turned on. The women chattered, laughed and snorted as they dipped their faces in the cold water. Many were in a hurry; living in suburbs, they

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had to catch the night train. But now it was our turn to work; I yawned and stepped down from the platform.

"Well, have you had your sleep out?" a young girl called out to me derisively. Such an impudent piece of baggage! I did not answer her. Off home to sleep in her own bed, and jeers at the night shift!

As I passed through the store-room I saw a notice displayed in extra large letters: "ALEXIEV! ON THE 23RD YOU SLEPT FOR FIVE HOURS DURING THE THIRD SHIFT! GIVE THE STATE BACK THOSE STOLEN HOURS BY SHOCK WORK!" Underneath this there was an announcement to the effect that a Comrades' Court had been held on the 24th to deal with the case of a workman accused of anti-Semitic utterances. These Comrades' Courts are public affairs, presided over by members of the cell, but they are by no means as harmless as their name would suggest. They have the right to inflict fines and in extreme cases can compel the management to dismiss the offender. I was unable, however, to think of any anti-Semitism in our midst because the only two Jews in the works were the woman who looked after the teapots and the editor of our works newspaper.

The first night shift is generally the worst because one does not usually get any sleep the day before. Fenika of the fitting department came round with her little car to collect my levers and asked whether Kolya had invited me to join the excursion to the Peterhof 'Basis of the Fifth Day.' "You must come along; I told him to

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see that you did, because you're so sympathetic to me." She smiled as she stood there with one arm full of levers; then she got into her car and went off like any great lady in a Rolls Royce.

Then the new sorter from Siberia asked me whether she could come too, and I asked Kolya to take down her name. She is quite a nice girl, though somewhat pretentious. Her name is Eugenie, but she insists on being called Euga, instead of Genia. I believe she imagines this makes her extremely interesting.

All that shift Varya was very silent and thoughtful. In the early hours of the morning she came to me and whispered—quite unnecessarily as the noise of the machine made it impossible for anyone to overhear her: "Do me a favour and stay behind for a few minutes after work. I have to write an important letter."

When I had cleaned my machine, washed my hands in oil and soapy water and filled up my piece-work slip, Varya took me off behind a packing case to explain the trouble.

"You know my Italian won't come and see me because I said he must visit me in his foreign clothes. I've got an idea of writing him a letter in his own language. That will give him a homely feeling, and as you're a foreigner . . ."

"Yes, but, Varya, I know hardly any Italian. Only a few words!"

"That'll do. We'll write a very short letter. Shall I dictate it? 'My dear Antonio, Why don't you come to see me? I have been waiting for you in vain on my last three free days. When

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I said that about your clothes, I only wanted to test your love . . . ”

“ I can't write that, Varya. I don't know the Italian for 'test,' but . . . wait a moment . . . can't I put 'I was only joking'? 'Da scherzo,' that is.”

“ Just as you like. 'I was only joking, and did not expect you would feel insulted . . . ’ ”

“ 'Feel insulted'? That's rather complicated for me. Perhaps 'that you would be angry'? 'Angry' is 'furioso.' ”

“ All right. 'That you would be furioso. With love from your Varvara Timofeyeva.' Have you got that? ”

“ Yes. You can send him a kiss if you like. I know the Italian for 'kiss.' ”

“ No. The love will be enough. Well, thank you so much. I shall address the letter to the Foreign Seamen's Club. Let's hope we'll soon get an answer.”

When I reached our community home, there was a deathlike silence that pleased me. Hurrah! The others had been working and were now asleep. The Skorochod Works had introduced the 'broken night shift,' which meant that every ten days two working nights were put in. And thus it followed that our night shift coincided with theirs.

I lay down and enjoyed a delicious sleep until half-past one.

July 27th.

On the long idle days that follow strenuous nights I love to wander along the granite

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embankment of the Neva that divides the old palaces from the softly flowing stream. There stands Peter, the copper man on horseback, with his hand outstretched as if to protect the city he founded . . . Peter the Great, who started a revolution 'from above' in order to turn mediæval Russia into a European state.

I always carry Akop Akopian's poem with me on such rambles. Several months ago I promised the Armenian poet to translate it into German.

I met him in Tiflis one day towards the end of April. I shall never forget the occasion. His wife asked me to wait a while, because her husband was indulging in his usual siesta after the mid-day meal, but would soon come down. A few moments later he appeared; standing in the doorway, he extended both his hands to me.

We had met at the Authors' Congress at Charkov, where no person or thing escaped his keen eyes. Forty years before that time he heard the stormwind of the coming revolution amid the din of the machines in the factory where he worked fourteen hours a day and set it down in words—at a time when even in Germany no one but Hauptmann found poetic themes in the lives of the poor, while the Armenian poets could only sing of love, roses and the bulbul. But Akopian was not the man to confine his activities to lyrical protests as others have done, for he was a mighty fighter as well as a great poet. When the archives of the Okhrana (secret political police) were laid bare after the October Revolution, his photograph was discovered with a bundle of others, and under-

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neath it was the remark, "Special feature: walks at a very quick pace."

Even in the years of direst reaction his poetry—"mighty as a hammer stroke or a peal of thunder"—gave signs of his rapid progress towards the bright future, and now, in his sixtieth year, his whole personality radiates power, brightness and unshaken optimism.

He asked us about the revolutionary movement in America, whereupon Ralph (polite enough to repress a shrug of the shoulders) told him that most of the Communists there were not real Americans but Jewish emigrants. Akop Akopian turned to me with a smile. "These Jews!" he said. "Everywhere they are pioneers of the Revolution!"

In his study there is a portrait of Lenin, signed by the great man himself. "I was the first to write a poem about Lenin," Akopian proudly informed us. "It appeared in 1918; no one had ever written one before." Akopian has indeed marched quickly towards his goal; ever since 1904 he was Lenin's comrade in the party. They fought side by side, and Akopian has never swerved. . . .

His wife brought refreshments—some salmon and a tin of coarse-grained caviare. "Eat, eat," he urged us, "I can get more if I want it. The Government gives it all to me!"

Akop Akopian draws a monthly pension of 300 roubles, which is the party maximum (*i.e.*, the highest sum that a member of the Communist Party is allowed to accept), but he also has a free pass for the trams and railways as well as the

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yearly holiday bonus given to invalids which enables him to spend two months in a sanatorium. He has also a spacious house.

"And the next time you visit Tiflis, come straight to me," he told us.

That evening he wandered with us through the streets that were already decorated in honour of the coming May 1st. A flower girl came up to him; he felt in his pockets. "Oh dear, oh dear," he murmured, "I have forgotten my purse. Can you lend me five roubles? I want to buy you some flowers."

He suggested taking us up the Hill of David, from which one gets a good view of the whole town, the river Kur and the distant mountains. It is the view that roused Barbusse to such enthusiasm.

"What a splendid fellow Barbusse is!" exclaimed Akopian. "And then the young German authors that visited us! That congress was such a pleasure to me! I am so happy, for I have lived to experience what I dreamed and sang!"

I had to think of these words of Akopian when I sat down on a bench beside the Neva with his poem in my hand. This is the third afternoon that I have been here, but I have made no progress with my translation. Certainly I have a night shift behind me and I have not had my sleep out . . . but Akopian worked twice as long in his youth and wrote his wonderful poetry as well. The poem I have with me is a tribute to the memory of George Atarbek, the Armenian airman who joined the Tcheka and fought in the civil war. Akopian compares him to Vahakin,

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the Armenian legendary hero, born of a sea-plant—a red-haired, fiery-eyed being who came into the world to combat evil and injustice. It is by no means a sad poem, because when Akopian mourns for the dead he gives us an apotheosis of life.

To-morrow I am going to Peterhof, the old Tsarist palace. I shall take the poem with me. Perhaps I may succeed there.

July 31st.

We missed each other at the railway station. The only persons I met were Euga and the comrade who works at the polishing machine. I hardly recognised the latter, who wore a smart suit, with a tie and a white collar; if Varya had seen him, she would have been delighted with his foreign appearance. In any case none of our girls took part in the excursion, and so, in spite of all there was to see and do, it was not as jolly as our visit to Dyetskoye Selo.

We arrived late, and so had to get clean bedclothes and make our beds before we did anything. At Dyetskoye we found them ready for us. After supper there was a concert, at which a Schubert impromptu and a Beethoven sonata were played; before it began, the announcer gave a lecture on the composers and their epochs. He told his audience that Schubert was a German!

An Ukrainian sees red at once if you call him a 'Little Russian,' while even Russians protest when you designate the 'Soviet Union' as Russia, because it sounds imperialistic to them. They attach much importance to the independence

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and cultural development of their 'minority races' and have even taken the trouble to invent more than 26 alphabets for their national minorities. They have also effaced themselves to the extent of using the universal Latin characters for these alphabets instead of their own Cyrillic ones, but because the Germans and Austrians use the same alphabet and a language that is practically identical, it is very difficult to make clear to a Russian the basic differences between the two peoples. The fact that we prepare our coffee differently and—I say it with pride—better than the Germans, appears to him as insignificant in comparison with the Five-Year Plan as the thousand other trifles which for want of real events we have thrust into the centre of our lives.

It was a curious experience to listen to the strains of the Moonlight Sonata, dedicated by Beethoven to a beautiful young countess, in a hall packed full of working men and women. With solemn calm the tones rippled onwards—rays of light that gleamed on a dark sea with the silver splendour of freshly stripped iron bars. Outside in the imperial park the jets from the illuminated fountains crossed like shining sword-blades, while veiled Tetch-Gasel sat there like a figure from the Arabian Nights, and below us the Gulf of Finland shimmered in all its metallic nudity—no wonder that Beethoven's music assumed visible forms for us.

"It's just like being at the pictures!" was the way in which Fenika expressed her enthusiasm.

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She had attached herself to me for the evening, but was in high spirits and spent much time in teasing Kolya, who could not separate himself from his embroidered cap even in Peterhof. When we three latecomers arrived from the station and met our contingent in the park, she ran up to us and kissed me. Nevertheless she can never replace Varya in my affections. She has grown up under the Soviet *régime* and lived the carefree life of the young workers who feel firm ground under their feet, for she knows that her existence is secured and that all ways of self-development are open to her.

But despite her youthful appearance Varya has behind her the hardest experiences that a woman can suffer. As a girl in her teens she came to the city and went into service. There she met her Frenchman. It was just like Varya to refuse to send her child to the foundling hospital; she kept it with her regardless of all the sacrifices, deprivations and difficulties she was bound to encounter in an age where the endowment of motherhood was unknown and unmarried mothers were only too often driven to prostitution. What a fearful struggle those first years must have been for her! She has never spoken of them to me.

Was the father of her child called up for military service? Or did he leave the country? She has only told me in brief words that the Revolution separated them and that when they met again she found him tied to another. She has never spoken of this other to me; she wanted

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nothing for herself; she has never had time to think of herself.

At half-past nine the following morning we were taken to see the sights. Peterhof is much larger than Dyetskoye Selo, and there is far more to see. We saw everything, from the summer residence of Peter the Great to the booby traps in Catherine II's garden. When two courtiers sat down on a seat in this garden to hatch some cunning intrigue, a jet of water might shoot out suddenly from behind them and send them away drenched from head to foot. All over the place there were devices for the practical jokes of this sort which amused the Tsarina when the peasant revolts had spoilt her good humour.

But in the eighteenth century the imperial throne was still a firm seat and so Catherine could allow herself the liberty of corresponding with France's free souls, Diderot and Voltaire. She proclaimed herself the pupil of these great men at the very time when she was strengthening the bonds of serfdom in Russia.

Not even in theory could Nicholas II indulge in such sidesprings into liberalism. His Villa Alexandria (named after the late Tsarina) reveals to an even greater extent than the Dyetskoye palace the low intellectual level of the last autocrat and his family. In the whole house—the middle-class comfort with which these apartments are equipped does not justify a more grandiose title—there is not one valuable picture or artistic object which would lead one to attribute independent or even average good taste to its owner.

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The furniture is just the typical ordinary stuff of its period, while the ornaments and lithographs are of cheap, inferior quality. Among the latter I noticed a portrait of the paintress, Madame Samokisch-Sudkovskaya, a member of the 'Black Hundred' who enjoyed a good reputation at court and was always warmly received there. Even the ikons, rosaries and Easter eggs which hang in such quantities over the beds of the imperial couple and their children are cheap trash.

And yet the upkeep of the imperial palaces cost 20,000,000 roubles per year. In 1916 896,600 roubles were spent on Peterhof alone, even though the Tsar was not once there during the whole summer!

In the writing-room there are portraits of Peter the Great—the unexcelled prototype of all Romanovs—Nicholas I, the Tsar of police and officials, and Alexander III, whose death-bed charge to his son bade him 'keep holy and unshaken the principles of autocracy.' And yet in this very room the last Tsar signed the manifesto that was supposed to give Russia a Constitution. This took place in the autumn of 1905, but the manifesto was a trick to save the monarchy from the high tide of revolution and satisfied no one. Throughout the country were heard the words of the famous topical song:

"The Tsar was in a funk
And wrote his manifesto:
The dead are free all right,
But those who live may fight,
So pop them in arrest-oh."

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But even that manifesto was too much for Nicholas. On October 17th of that year he wrote in his diary: "The day of the catastrophe. Nicholasha and Stania lunched with me. Witte was there. At five o'clock I signed the manifesto. After such a day my head is heavy and my thoughts chaotic. Help us, God; save and pacify Russia!"

To facilitate God's task of pacifying Russia he sent punitive expeditions to Moscow and all the revolutionary areas with strict injunctions to make no prisoners. "God and the army are our mainstays," he wrote to his wife. In order to preserve good relations with the army he sent various regiments congratulatory telegrams with similar contents: "I herewith express my heartiest thanks," and "I drink the health of my brave troops."

The guard regiments received special favours. Festivities that lasted three days took place in July, 1906, to mark the imperial thanks for the massacres which suppressed the December Riots in the Red Presnya, the revolutionary centre of Moscow. Lavish tables were spread for both officers and men; there were concerts, processions and benevolent addresses from Their Majesties. But while the Tsar entertained his loyal guards to tea, the revolt in Kronstadt broke out. The waves of the sea washed the corpses of the sailors who had been shot to the strand under the windows of the Tsar's villa . . . a menacing warning. . . .

Moreover trouble soon began to ferment in

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the ranks of the guards. The soldiers sent in a petition, requesting the release of their arrested comrades, dispensation from police duties and land for the peasants. Those who signed it were degraded and transferred to other regiments, but all these measures—this mixture of sweets and whippings—no longer availed, for one after another the reactionary ministers fell victims to the bombs of 'those scoundrelly anarchists.'

Nicholas was convinced that the whole revolution was the work of a few wrong-headed intellectuals who "incited his beloved people." When he was informed of a *pogrom* in south Russia, he rubbed his hands with glee: "Well, at last those Jewish agitators, those engineers, lawyers and all the other worthless fellows have got what they deserve." But when the Tsarina was in despair at another murder, she wrote to him: "Oh God, if only we could live a quiet life at last like ordinary decent folk."

The Tsar's contempt for 'those scoundrelly anarchists' even found expression in the toys of his small son and heir, for in the Tsarevitch's room we saw a Jack-in-the-box with the features of Bebel and a musical box in which a pantaloon danced to the tune of the Marseillaise.

The dining-room is decidedly the most passable of all the imperial apartments. It is fitted up to resemble a cabin on board the Tsar's favourite yacht, the 'Standart.' Nicholas often took refuge in this yacht when tired of 'reading the papers' (the expression he uses in his diary for the transaction of state business), for there

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he felt himself safe from the wearisome reports of his ministers and the assassins' bombs. Hence his love for the 'Standart,' as shown by the many photographs taken on board. These photographs are enclosed in frames made to imitate life belts.

From the windows of the dining-room there is a view of the Gulf of Finland, which Nicholas loved so well. The story goes that once he sat for a long time gazing out at the surface of the water dreamily and then said with a deep sigh : " Oh, if only we could drown all the revolutionaries there! "

Not far from Peterhof station is the last resting-place of the Tsar's special train, in which he signed his abdication. We saw the dining-room, and the bed and dressing-rooms; the Tsarina's long white dresses still hang in her wardrobe there. Euga clapped her hands with delight. " What a life! What a life! " she exclaimed. She began to get on my nerves, for her voice clearly expressed enthusiasm and a sort of envy with which the Tsarist luxury had infected her.

Very different were the exhibits which made impressions on Fenika and the other Young Communists. They could not stop laughing when they saw Rasputin's portraits and telegrams and read the letters of Philippe, the French charlatan who claimed to be able to help the Tsarina to an heir by his supernatural arts. And here Kolya discovered a book, entitled ' The Secret of the Suffering and Unrest of our Time, ' by a certain Madame Molochovietz who had made

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her literary fame with her cookery book, 'Advice to Young Housewives.'

We all had our photographs taken in the park. The Tsar's example was evidently infectious.

In the afternoon I got away from Euga and went down to the lake. It was a wonderful day; after my impressions of the morning everything seemed to me like the calm that follows a storm. I thought of the fearful darkness that had weighed upon Russia like a nightmare. What strength, what courage, what belief in ultimate victory and how many sacrifices were needed to dissipate it! I thought of Subinsky, the workman, and Akopian, the poet! For the hundredth time I drew from my bag the tattered copy of the poem, but this time it seemed as if the sound of the sea waves intoned a pæan of homage to the fallen warrior, George Atarbek. "You have died, but you are not dead. The new youth will defend its truths," the waves seemed to say.

"Of Vahakin, the Great,
A legend is told,
From the plants of the sea-caves he came;
He grew in the fire,
He fell in the smoke.
Atarbek, such as his is your name.

"You sped like the tiger
From slopes that were green,
You passed o'er the peaks capped with snow.
You soared as the eagle
Aloft in the cloudbank,
While the world seethed in fury below.

"Then downward you hastened
To the din of the tumult,
You plunged in the thick of the fray;

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Your locks like a beacon
Fluttered untrammelled,
To victory pointing our way.

"You fell, and your life's-breath
Fled out on the wind
That shrieked in despair at its flight.
Sleep well then, dear comrade,
Slain eagle, sleep well
In your tomb on the Bolshevist height."

August 1st.

August already! Only another month—then I must return home. It seems almost impossible because I feel myself so much a part of the life in the works now.

But to-day I was really angry. It was pay day, and we had to form up at the cash-desks. Now there is no one in the world who loves power more than the girl who officiates at such a desk. The queue of patient humanity goes to her head, and she begins to take revenge for all life's troubles on those waiting their turns to pass before her. She scribbles off bills and carries on long conversations with such a practical air that you could scream with rage, but you are powerless to protest.

And when at last my turn came, what a disappointment! I found that I had earned only 65 roubles in a month—less than an apprentice. And on the pay sheets of my colleagues I saw figures such as 125, 150, and even 175 roubles!

Deeply depressed, I took my troubles to Varya, who gave it as her opinion that my meagre wage was due to the fact that I always neglected to fill out my 'running empty' forms. I replied

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that it was painful for me to take payment without giving value in work.

"That shows you don't need the money," she remarked with a smile.

As a matter of fact there is no comparison between the money I earn by my pen and the wages I get in the works, although I have to toil far harder in here. I consider this an injustice, but Varya is of a different opinion.

"Writing is a job that needs qualifications; not anyone can do it," she explains. And Valya who has overheard our conversation adds:

"We are not yet living in the age of Socialism when payment for work will be in accordance with the worker's needs. At present the stimulus of earning power is still a necessity for all skilled workers."

PAY SHEET.

Works : The Red Putilovetz

Month : August

Name : KÖRBER

Working number : 2969

	Hours.	Payment.		Roubles : Kopeks	
		Roubles : Kopeks		Roubles : Kopeks	
Working ...	107½	47	73	Advance	20 :
'Running empty'	12½	5	55	Insurance	: 80
Night Shift bonus	4	1	78	Paid out	44 : 21
Sick pay ...	6	9	36		
Balance from previous month			: 70		
Total ...		65	12	Total ...	65 : 1

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"Many people abroad think the governing principle in the Soviet Union is State Capitalism. They argue that from the system of piecework with its different scales of wages."

Varya wrung her hands. "State Capitalism! What ingenious phrases these *bourgeois* invent! Do they think we work for some capitalist enterprise?"

"You see for yourself we are shorthanded," said Valya. "What would a capitalist government do in such a case? Simply lengthen our working hours, but here they shorten them instead."

"And the profit we earn is put back into the works, so that we get the benefit of it," added stout Masha, who had joined us. I wondered where she had acquired these words of wisdom.

"I am now a member of the Konsomol," she remarked, and strode with head erect to her machine.

All very well, but I must seek out my editor in his office and beg an advance. What pains me particularly is that I am so far behind the others; I suppose this is due to my 'intellectual doubts.' I spend minutes measuring my levers, and when I have checked off the measurements, I go through them again for fear of a miscalculation. Then, to crown all, I find when I have finished polishing that my holes are too small, and I have to drill them again, whereas my colleague in the following shift drills holes of the right dimensions straight off.

"Do you call that work?" asks Varya, shaking her head sadly. "Why! you're only playing at it!"

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"Well, it doesn't matter," she consoles me when she sees the injured expression on my face, "*nitshevo, nitshevo*; it doesn't matter at all for a voluntary worker with other prospects in view."

What 'prospects in view' have I really? Why did I come into the works? For my own amusement? To see Ralph? What an idiot I am! "Varya, what am I doing here in the works?" I ask.

Varya knows at once. "You want to see everything and tell the people in your country what things are like in ours."

"Do you think that's so easy? Have you ever heard of Plato, the philosopher?"

"A foreign philosopher? No, I've never heard of him."

"He wrote a beautiful story. He compared mankind with prisoners fettered in a cave and sitting with their backs to its entrance. Of the men and animals that pass by outside they see only the shadows on the walls, and so they think those shadows are living beings. Then suddenly one of them is freed from his chains; he goes out into the sunlight and sees what life really is. Do you think the others will understand him when he tells them what he has seen?"

"I see," said Varya. "The prisoners are the workers in capitalist countries, and the people outside are ourselves. And the man who goes out and then returns is a member of a foreign workmen's delegation. Plato explains that very well. Is he a Communist?"

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August 2nd.

When I went for soapy water with my bucket early this morning and was turning over in my head the first verse of a bucket ballad to be published in the wall newspaper to warn the readers about the holes in leaky buckets, I suddenly ran into Ralph and his interpreter. We were both embarrassed, but, contrary to his usual habit, he spoke to me.

"I never hear or see anything of you now," he said, and his eyes blinked.

"I have so little time, Ralph," I replied, and began to feel important. Only a person who has no time for love can be taken seriously.

"Won't you look me up this evening?" he enquired. "I'm going on leave in a few days."

I felt a thin stream of warm water soaking into my feet; for all its apparent soundness my bucket had a hole in it. I had to hurry back if my machine was to get anything of its contents.

"All right, I'll come," I said.

When I started work again, it occurred to me that I should not be there when Ralph returned from his leave, and the thought made me sad, even though I had seen very little of him in the last few days and not missed him at all.

During the mid-day interval I remained at my table and wrote the bucket ballad, sublimating my feelings of sadness at the thought of parting from Ralph into grief over the leaky buckets. The result was a most effective jeremiad, to which neither the management nor the cell could remain deaf.

As I sat there and wrote, a workman passed

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by. Seeing me alone, he pointed with his finger in the direction of the meeting that was taking place.

"Comrade, I've something important to write," I said.

"You'll have time for it later," was his opinion.

In the hotel corridor I heard Ralph's loud voice and laughter. His friend Eddie was with him. The two had played tennis together as boys; when they met here, they struck up a friendship. Eddie has an adventurous career behind him; he has been round the world and even worked in the wildest parts of Africa where the negroes eat raw elephant meat and have a vocabulary of only three words: water, food and wife. Every month thirty films were despatched to him from the nearest town. They lasted him for a month, but he did not invite the negroes to see them. He assured me that he felt very happy out there, in any case much happier than in the Soviet Union.

Alexei Borissovitch, Marya Petrovna's husband, to whom I related this anecdote, thought it quite natural for him to feel happy because the blacks treated him with respect, while here he was of no account. Alexei Borissovitch also asserted that the three words of the negroes were not "food, water, wife," but "go to hell." This statement of his seems, however, to contradict the previous one.

We drank coffee and ate the famous toast. Suddenly Eddie looked hard at me, stretched out his hand and pulled my lower eyelid down. "You are anæmic," he said, "you must eat

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onions. Why do you work at Putilov's? What do you earn there?"

"About 120 roubles a month," I lied.

Eddie shrugged his shoulders. "Rotten. It's true the work in Russian factories is not so intensive as in the American ones. How are the guys here to get a move on if every workman wants to argue his job with the engineer before he starts on it."

"That is because their hearts are in the work," I said, "while the American worker only cares about the pay he gets."

Eddie knocked the ashes out of his pipe. "I'm not interested in my workpeople's feelings. I want workers who carry out my orders promptly and intelligently and don't hold me up with discussions."

He began to refill his pipe. He has long, powerful fingers, and his whole personality reminds me somewhat of a jazz band.

"The Russian worker is intelligent," observed Ralph.

"He worries too much about politics and has his head full of ideas. The American works quicker."

The American darkness began to get on my nerves. "America! America!" I exclaimed. "You talk of your country as if it was a Utopia. There's no such blot on civilisation in the Soviet Union as your lynchings."

"You folk in Europe can't understand that. Lynchings are disciplinary measures. Every nigger has only one desire, and that is to sleep

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with a white woman. If we let them have their way, the white races of America would be ruined in a few decades."

I turned my head in Ralph's direction, but could not see the expression on his face because he was in the act of raising his coffee cup to his mouth. "Then you are probably in favour of *pogroms*?" I remarked to Eddie.

"Oh no, the Jews are the most gifted people in the world. They have produced the three greatest men."

"You mean Christ and Marx? And whom else?"

"Christ and Marx? No, certainly not. I mean Newton, Einstein and Rosenfeld."

"But Newton wasn't a Jew!"

"Of course he was. I made enquiries in an English institute which undertakes the special job of tracing the Jewish ancestry of great men. An enquiry costs seven pounds."

"And who is Rosenfeld?"

"Rosenfeld is a man who landed in New York with a dollar in his pocket. When he died, he had an income of three hundred thousand dollars a day. He was a genius!"

There was silence for a few seconds. The two men puffed at their pipes as they sat with their legs stretched out over chairs. Then Eddie turned to me again.

"You've got degenerate ears; it is evident that none of your ancestors did any manual work. When you marry, you mustn't have children."

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I rise to go. Ralph removes his feet from the chair and accompanies me to the door. "I'm leaving late on the night of the 5th," he informs me, "but will you come to see me before I go? I'm busy all day." I shall go to see him. For the last time.

I leave the hotel with the impression that I have just come from a circus where I was permitted to gape in wonder at dancing frogs, fire-eating men and other marvels of creation. In the works I heard a tale from Stalingrad concerning certain American specialists who maltreated a negro workman and inflicted severe injuries on him because he had the effrontery to come into their restaurant. A Comrades' Court in which 5,000 persons took part handed them their passports and requested them to leave Soviet territory at once.

There are certainly other types of Americans. Mr. Monger, for instance, who is employed in the Moscow 'Hammer and Sickle' factory, was decorated with the Order of the Red Flag for his devotion to duty. Now picture postcards showing him with the order on his chest and the inevitable pipe in his mouth circulate throughout the Soviet Union in honour of one of the few 'Spezs' to whom the Five-Year Plan was something more than just an opportunity to earn money.

To my astonishment I find the door locked when I return home. Well I never! Who would have thought it? "Are you asleep, Vera?" I call through the door. "I'm going downstairs to drink a cup of tea."

For a quarter of an hour I rummage about in

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the kitchen. In the courtyard someone is accompanying himself on a harmonica: "Come along with the competition, come along with the big, big plan, come along with the shock brigades."

When I went up again, I found the door open. Vera was in bed and so soundly asleep that she did not even wake up when I knocked over a chair in the darkness.

August 3rd.

What bad luck! Or what joy, I should rather say. My bucket ballad is not needed. When I arrived at the works early this morning, there was no sign of a bucket anywhere, and I learnt that they had all been collected. In future they will be given out only to applicants who deposit their pass-out checks as security.

I went to the store and found Fima there. She was back from her holiday, but seemed very nervous. Her hands trembled when she took my pass-out check and gave me the key. I opened the store and stared in amazement, for there stood row after row of shining, new buckets, with bottoms so thoroughly soldered that it did my eyes good to look at them. In my joy I filled one up to the brim and carried it off in triumph to my machine. But as I passed the wall newspaper, a large notice greeted me:

"TO-DAY IN THE INTERVAL A COMRADES' COURT WILL CONSIDER THE CASE OF THE STORE-KEEPER, IVANOVA, WHO IS ACCUSED OF PROLONGING HER HOLIDAYS WITHOUT PERMISSION AND NEGLECTING HER DUTIES. ATTENDANCE COMPULSORY FOR ALL."

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So that was why Fima was so nervous! Certainly a most unpleasant business for her!

When I returned the bucket, I found Fima surrounded by several female sympathisers, to whom she was pouring out her troubles.

"It's a plot engineered by Malyshkin, because I wouldn't let him paw me. He was always coming to the store every half-hour on some excuse or other. 'Oh, I've forgotten the ruler.' 'Oh, did I give you my pass-out check when I took the drill?' 'Oh . . .'"

"But he can't have invented that tale about your holidays," one of the girls interposed timidly.

"Well, what is there in that? I thought it wasn't worth while starting again on the 29th because we were free for the 30th and 31st. To court you for cutting one day—only Malyshkin could do a thing like that!"

"Please, I want gauge No. 488." The head of a young workman appeared at the counter. Fima began to search her shelves. I like her, for she is a friendly, bright soul, but the accusations against her are true. She never keeps her stores in order and is constantly holding up workmen while she rummages about for things they want.

"Yes-yes-yes," said the girls in dubious voices, and left the store.

No one would have missed the court even if attendance had not been compulsory, for all were interested in the business. The members of the court sat round in a circle on projecting pieces of machinery; in the middle Malyshkin had placed

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a table, at which the judges—our corpulent Masha and a young shock brigadier named Vedeneyev—were to sit. Were they the persons, I wondered, who would lend themselves to a plot organised by Malyshkin?

“Ivanova,” asks Vedeneyev, “have you any objection to the choice of your judges, and do you acknowledge your guilt?”

“No,” says Fima defiantly. “If I cut a day for once in a way . . .”

“It’s the second time you’ve done it,” Malyshkin corrected her.

“The first time doesn’t count, because I missed my train. That’s a thing that can happen to anyone,” explains Fima. Laughter in court, but the judges keep serious faces. The stout Masha, who has grown up a lot in the last few days, appears to be very angry, for she calls out to Fima:

“We had the same trouble last spring. Don’t you realise that when you don’t turn up, the whole shift has to go without tools?” And now Malyshkin requests permission to speak. All heads stretch out to catch his words.

“I have had personal experience of Ivanova’s negligence,” he begins. “Whenever one comes to her for an instrument, she is always so busy with her powder-puff or her novel that she forgets where she is. If one taps her on the shoulder, she’s prude enough to feel offended. I’m sure she’d have been sacked long ago in a capitalist business.”

Fima blushes to the tip of her powdered nose. The girls look at one another; not one of them

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now believes that Malyshkin is in love with Fima.

“And did it not occur to you, Ivanova,” says Vedeneyev, “that while you were powdering your nose the imperialist powers were arming for war against the Soviet Union? Why are we developing our industries? For fun, or because we want to make ourselves independent of the foreign capitalists who wish us ill? All the class-conscious workers are united with the peasants to exert themselves to the utmost, but you, a Young Communist, just sit there and powder your nose!”

“We condemn you all the more because you are a Komsomolka,” says the corpulent Masha sternly. “If you were raw from some village, it wouldn’t matter. But you are a child of working-class parents; you belong to the Young Communists, and so you are expected to set a good example to the peasant and middle-class elements in the works.”

The judges withdraw behind a machine to consult. When they return, Vedeneyev announces the sentence:

“In consideration of the fact that Ivanova had been previously punished—six months ago she was sent to the store because she did not make good at a worker’s bench—she is to be admonished severely and degraded to the status of an apprentice.”

This appears to us too severe. An elderly woman begins to reproach Vedeneyev. She calls him inhuman and urges that Fima is young

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enough to mend her ways. She reminds him of the film, 'The Way to Life,' which shows how the homeless children are turned into useful members of society by patience and sympathy.

At any other time Fima would certainly feel insulted by this comparison with the homeless children, but now she sits there, silent and insignificant. Her face is no longer red; it is green, and her blonde hair begins to straggle over her forehead.

Then Valya Shimko stands up. She is angry, but not with Fima. She turns on Vedeneyev.

"Do you realise what you are doing? You are turning a young worker out of Putilov's. She will never be an apprentice here; she will simply leave, and what will happen to her then?"

All eyes are turned to Valya, who is one of our most active workers and held in high respect.

"It is naturally easy to speak big words, and newcomers seem bound to do so," she continues without deigning a glance at Masha, "but what is the good of them? It is not our task to punish Ivanova, but to educate her. I therefore propose that she shall be removed from her isolated position in the store where she cannot see how our tractors are made and placed at a work-bench. The work done by the others and the joy of production will be a stimulus to her, while the piece-work system will enable her to gain an idea of her own output."

"She worked at a bench, but she was no good," persists Vedeneyev.

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"To-day she will make good. At least we must give her the chance to do so before we condemn her."

"The court has pronounced sentence," says Vedeneyev in a loud voice, but everyone can see that he is wavering.

"Indeed? We'll have a talk about that in the cell this evening, Comrade Vedeneyev." Valya turns to go.

Apparently Vedeneyev has no desire to wait till the evening because he follows her and commences an argument in which she takes her fair share. When I pass them, I hear her say:

"That is a deviation to the left. Such a severe, unjust sentence can only weaken our authority and nullify the educative effect of a Comrades' Court."

The women make a ring round Fima. All who condemned her conduct before the interval now regard her almost as a martyr and assure her of their sympathy. Valya was right; Vedeneyev's intention to make an example of her has produced the opposite effect, so that there is a large majority in opposition to the sentence.

August 4th.

The fourth day is always the nicest in the works. There is quite a Saturday atmosphere about the place. I must mention, however, that the names of the days of the week have completely fallen into disuse because they have lost their significance. No one bothers about them; one just enquires the date.

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This time I did not look forward so much to my free day because it meant saying good-bye to Ralph. In the books which depict fervent love women always break down after such a parting. I know full well that I shall not break down; after to-morrow follows the next day, which is August 6th, the first day of our afternoon shift. But never again shall I hear Ralph's careless "Hallo", and something that gave me peace and some measure of happiness for a brief period will vanish from my life.

I felt so sad that I was almost ready to welcome as a diversion the violent stomach and hip pains that attacked me about mid-day. I found it very hard, however, to go on working my machine and could scarcely wait until the brigadier from the fourth department began to munch his gherkin and tomato sandwiches—he is always the first to start his lunch, and the others take their cue from him.

I crouched down on a low form near the teapots and huddled up my legs. In such cases warmth always helps. The shabby Jewess sat down beside me and began to complain that although she had enjoyed a good education she was condemned to carry buckets of water about here. She also said she was ill, naming a disease of which I had never heard. As a matter of fact, she had asked for a change of work, but could not obtain it without a certificate from her overseer. "Very lazy. Has long ago forgotten anything she learnt in her antediluvian high school," was his testimonial.

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From the din of the machinery I noticed the mid-day interval was over, and got up. I felt better. Varya asked me where I had been and suggested I should go to the 'Medpoint' and get leave off, but I jibbed at doing that. In the first place my low piece-work record had been posted on the blackboard where the numbers of tractor parts that are urgently needed appear; in the second, we women can never expect to obtain equal treatment with men if we cry off once a month.

I managed quite well. While the machine was running I sat down on the packing case that happened to be near me, but all the same I was very glad when the Tartar woman began to sweep the place, as she always does a couple of hours before we knock off. When she came to me, I asked her in peevish tones whether she had any intention of paying me my change for the rouble I had given her to get my lunch with, but she did not reply and even swept her broom right across my feet. I flew into a temper and went across to Varya to complain; I shouted out that I would put a notice in the wall newspaper about the woman.

Varya tackled her for me, but she answered quietly that she had no change and was not likely to run away. She did not say anything about putting her broom across my feet. Of course it was stupid of me to make such a fuss; it was the pain that did it, and one is always irritable at such times.

When I got home I found on my table a letter

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bearing a Russian stamp, but failed to recognise the handwriting. I tore the envelope open, and could scarcely believe my eyes when I saw that it was signed by 'Your Eddie.' It began :

" Dear Lili,

Please permit me to address you as such. In this country advantage rather than propriety is the thing that counts. I have been tired of my cook for some time, as you know; would you care to take her job on? The work at Putilov's is too hard for you. I can offer you 80 roubles a month, together with board, lodging and laundry. As I am not often at home, you will have a lot of free time and so can continue your study of the Soviet Union. I hope you will take my offer in the spirit in which it is made, and await your early answer.

" With best wishes,

" Your Eddie."

Coming from a European, such an offer would bear an unmistakable significance, but with Eddie it is different. I did not doubt for a moment that he had made a purely practical proposition. But what will Ralph say if I show him the letter to-morrow?

August 5th.

" O parting, bitter parting, who remains from thee secure?
For us there'll be no parting while sun and moon endure."

That was the most popular barrel-organ tune in pre-revolutionary Russia. To-day everyone

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sings: "The lilac is a-bloom; weep not if he doesn't return."

Everything is full of hope, even the private lives of the individuals. But what are my hopes? First one must be sure that one really wants the other to return. I am not sure. I have changed. To-day I want a man who does something, not one who merely earns money. I want one of the master builders of the new world. With Ralph I am shedding the last of my old skin, but the process is painful. "Oh parting, bitter parting, who remains from thee secure?" And in the midst of this melancholy Eddie's letter supplies a cheerful interlude. "I've been tired of my cook for some time, as you know." I felt pleased at the idea of having something to laugh over with Ralph.

He was almost ready for his journey; some underclothing and a few papers only remained to be packed. On the table he had made a parcel of all the good things I was to inherit—soup tablets, chocolate, nuts, tinned meats. For the last time I wondered at the trouble he took over these things of everyday life.

"I've had a letter from Eddie," I announced, and waited for his exclamation of astonishment.

"What does he say in it?" he merely asked. I showed him the letter. He smiled.

"Say, Eddie is a fine fellow!. He hardly knows you and yet he is thinking how he can help you. Are you going to take his offer?" I could hardly believe my ears.

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"Do you really mean that?"

"Sure. It would be a good thing for you. I don't know what sort of a cook you are. Eddie is mighty particular."

"In any case, a fine profession for me! Cook to an American Spez!"

"Why not? How stupid these Europeans are. That Rosenfeld whom Eddie told you of the other night was once . . ."

"A shoeblack, I know. All American millionaires were shoeblacks in their young days."

"Do as you like. It's up to you. But write Eddie a nice letter, because it's not pleasant for him to be refused."

"He won't be so thin-skinned if he can stick up for lynching negroes."

Ralph turned red with anger. "Lynching negroes! Well, when you find a woman listening to you open-mouthed and open-eyed, you're naturally tempted to pull her leg. You'll swallow anything; I've never seen anyone with less knowledge of the world than you."

"You owe many happy hours to my ignorance."

"And some that were not so happy. Do you think one has an easy job with you? You're a little spitfire."

"Then it's a good thing we're parting."

"Why, certainly."

My valedictory mood is spoiled. I rise. "Good-bye!"

Ralph melts at once. What we said just now does not count. He draws my head down on to

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his shoulder. Act V, final scene; the audience will go home grumbling in a few moments, because the play ends badly. They have not had their "Oh parting, bitter parting!"

It is a ghastly moment when you get that choking feeling in your throat. The tears begin to flow, and there is such a warm gleam in Ralph's grey eyes. . . .

"When shall we meet again?"

"Never!" I reply rudely and rush away. It is high time to go. Tears are streaming down my face. A whole waterfall of them. And I have forgotten the parcel.

At the end of the corridor appear three persons. Two men and a woman—foreigners. They advance towards me and it seems to me as if I can discern lust of sensation and malicious glee in their eyes. Aha! At last they have gained a peep behind the scenes and found a victim of Bolshevik cruelty. Is that not a camera which one of the men holds in his hands? Soon I may expect to appear in an American magazine as 'A Weeping Woman in Soviet Russia.'

Nothing doing. I spoil the man's chance by a flank movement into the lavatory.

There I can indulge my grief without helping to make anti-Soviet propaganda. Where was I when I broke off? Ah yes, "Oh parting, bitter parting!"

I wish I could join the early morning shift in the works. To set the machine going, to clear the silver spirals out of the holes and to pile up the finished levers! How they shine as they lie

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there, twenty of them, laid crosswise, one above the other, as I have seen the workers put them while waiting for Fenika to come along with her car and fetch them. She takes them along to the workmen whose hands are blackened by their contact with the metal, the workmen in the fitting room who will consign them to the iron commissars that rule the ancient soil from the Polish to the Manchurian frontiers. "Tractor proletariat, into thy hand . . ."

Our life here is like water in springtime; it whirls forward over the stones and all other obstacles, washing away the decayed matter and spreading itself fruitfully over meadow and ploughland, forward, ever forward, and whoso lets himself be borne breathless along its current has no time to look back and hold on to the past. . . . "Oh parting, bitter parting. . . ." No, we don't sing that to-day; we sing something quite different:

"Shall broken love bring desolation?
No; however deep the pain,
Best and brightest consolation
In collective work I gain."

August 6th.

I should not have thought it possible.

Sabotage! I have gained a clear conception of this word's significance during my sojourn in the Soviet Union. A saboteur or wrecker is a person who . . . no, we can hardly call him a person; let us say a middle-class intellectual who cannot stomach the Bolshevists, who wants

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the old times back again and does everything possible to undermine the Soviet State and its industries. Since the famous trial of the industrial party, the word 'wrecker' has become a slogan and an insult. On that occasion the defendants made statements that read like detective thrillers and showed them up as more thorough-going villains than any conceived by Shakespeare. The suspicions and vigilance of the working classes were naturally aroused.

All the same, where is the border-line between Russian slovenliness on a grand scale and deliberate sabotage? Several people told me that Sablin, our technical manager, was a wrecker, and I heard similar accusations against the assistant directors of the metallurgical, engine and tractor departments, but I failed to see any grounds for them. Once I made a remark to that effect in the presence of Valya Shimko and even shrugged my shoulders. She gave me no answer.

Early to-day it looked like rain; a cold wind blew up from the nearby sea, and clouds gathered in the sky. There were no signs of any thunderstorm; no, it was the early northern autumn. I put on a 'foreign mackintosh' over my work-dress and extracted from my trunk my weatherhat and one of my pairs of blue Russian stockings. In the Soviet Union one buys everything in half-dozens, provided that the article in question is in stock. The first question one asks in a shop is "have you got this or that?" and the second "how many can I have?" The price is a minor matter, for everyone has plenty of money.

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The shops are always packed with customers, hence the rude behaviour of the assistants in them. Patience and politeness are virtues peculiar to the purchasers.

It was very windy in the Putilov quarter, which lies close to the seashore; formerly the works were under the same management as the neighbouring docks, but now the two concerns are separated. On such days the pleasant odour of oil that fills the workshops makes you feel you are entering a warm home.

But when I was at work I suddenly felt something icy cold dripping down on my head and shoulders. I looked up with a start and saw rain trickling through between the glass panes of the roof. In many places it was coming down as hard as in the open air and splashing on to the machines. The hum of machinery died away; many workers suspended operations and went off to fetch buckets, which they tried to place on their machines in positions where they would catch the drops. I got my mackintosh, climbed up the scaffolding and spread it over the machine; when I got down again, I found Varya there.

"Well," she enquired with apparent innocence, "have you got a notion now of what sabotage really means?"

I pretended not to understand the question and went to the sorters' table to get a handkerchief from my bag. While I was wiping the water off my head and neck, Subinsky came up to me.

"That's right of you to look after your machine," he said with a smile. "You see we

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are so shorthanded that we've not been able to repair the leaks in the roof. We shall have to attend to them in a few days, or our machines will rust. But now, I imagine, you have a concrete example of what sabotage means."

I did not answer. My dress was dripping wet. Those damned wreckers!

August 7th.

All the morning I could not get this sabotage business out of my head. At twelve o'clock I went to the works to go into it thoroughly and put in a request for information to the Party Committee. The comrade I interviewed gave me a side-glance, pushed his cap back, scratched his head and then called a tall, stout man to consult with him. They both looked me up and down with cautious, suspicious eyes.

"Are you a member of the party?" the stout man asked. At that moment I caught sight of Soloviov, who had been standing with his back to me. When he turned round, I got quite a shock; why, I could not tell.

"Listen, Vassiliev," he said, "I know the comrade. You can give her the material."

The two workmen looked at one another; the stout man's eyes showed consent, while his colleague also seemed in agreement. "Very well," he said, "I will look you out some cases; come back in an hour's time."

An hour's wait is a long time for our conceptions, but in Russia it means nothing.

I strolled through the streets. Around the

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gates of the works I saw a number of peasants who had come to seek employment. The walls were thickly plastered with printed and hand-written placards calling upon workmen to enter their names in good time for the various technical classes and club circles due to commence at the end of August. The latter consisted of the usual activities, such as the wireless and photographic circles, the literary, political and productive (a course in the art of speeding up factory work) circles, dressmaking and tailoring courses, the orchestral classes for string instruments and balalaikas and the 'Iso' (painting and creative art). The workers who take this last course make posters, decorate the halls for festivities and design the scenery for the dramatic society, which is the most active and popular of all circles.

Last winter there was a competition for the dramatic societies of all the Moscow clubs, the prizes being awarded to the winners by a committee drawn from the Moscow Trade Union Trust. Most of the societies gave short plays of a propagandist nature dealing with everyday life in the Soviet Union; these were written and played by workers from the various factories. The themes of these plays were based on topical problems such as the agitation for a finance plan for the various industries, the duty of every comrade to record his vote in the forthcoming Soviet elections, the necessity for punctuality at work, the crusades against alcoholism and middle-class modes of life. It was astonishing to see the effects achieved with scanty means by

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these players, who were all amateurs; costumes and properties were all of the simplest nature—ordinary dresses with gaily coloured facings or comic patches, characteristic caps, a vodka bottle for the drunkard, a huge cardboard clyster-pipe for the malingerer, a broom for the 'tschistka' to sweep away the purged persons, painted caricatures of the work-shy, the unpunctual person, the 'aviator' (nickname for the person who flies from one factory to another in search of the best wages) and the wrecker—while the stage was decorated with flags and painted inscriptions. Sometimes the dialogue was accompanied by harmonicas or balalaikas; a few of the productions used orchestras and choruses with rhythmic movements that developed into dances, but that was all. Nevertheless the vigour and humour of the performers infused life and a racy odour of realism into the brief playlets.

I learnt that the work of these dramatic societies was the basis of a definite programme. Last autumn their representatives gave the 16th Party Congress a solemn promise to 'utilise their art as an instrument to help in the great work we are building up, to combat the class enemies of the proletariat, to eradicate all trash and all non-political and middle-class ideas and to form new proletarian cadres to organise the spontaneous activities of the masses.' The societies were given an opportunity to show whether they had kept their word. Before each one gave its performance, one of its members reported on its activities, which were then criticised by a member

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of the examining committee. After the performance a discussion took place, in which all members of the audience participated.

The first performances began in December, but April was well advanced before all the numerous societies had obtained their turn; the building trade's workers alone had 66 societies, while the workers in the food industries could muster another 70.

In the R.S.F.R. (the Russian portion of the Soviet Union) there are about 90,000 art brigades in various clubs, village reading-rooms and 'red corners,' of which 5,000 are in the villages and another 10,000 in the Red Army. In the Ukraine the number of art brigades is even proportionately stronger, and as each society contains from 20 to 25 members, the 'spontaneous' theatre movement embraces some 2,000,000 persons. These figures are continually increasing. Thanks to the efforts which the societies have made to fulfil the artistic demands imposed upon them their amateur playwrights and performers are fast approaching professional standard, and it is quite conceivable that in a few decades the difference between the two will disappear and art become an affair of the whole nation. The works of art will then simply be the supreme achievements of the best collectives. In the same way that the dramatic society leads to the theatre, the workman correspondent of the daily paper will take up literature as a profession, while the 'Iso' will be responsible for the creative art.

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Unfortunately I had no opportunity to admire the achievements of our Putilov workers, as holidays, repairs, and so on, cause the clubs to suspend activities during the summer. We have not yet got new club premises, but are housed in an old building opposite the 'January 9th garden.' I found the journalist class located on a ground floor which smelt of oil-paint, while the newly laid-on sky-blue wash was peacefully drying on the walls of the upper stories. In one of the rooms I found a gaily coloured chart, 'The Creation of the World,' with explanatory text. On the one side of it was the heading 'What the Bible says', on the other 'What Science has ascertained.' I had stumbled on the 'godless corner.'

I went into the library, which was in process of reorganisation; it looked as if it had suffered from a Fascist raid, but luckily there is no fear of that here. The librarian is a workman, while his assistants are intellectuals with special qualifications. As is the custom in works and peoples' libraries, books are loaned free of charge, but owing to the fact that the few librarians have to serve about 11,000 readers, it is difficult to trace the fate of every book that goes out. Careless readers pay no attention to warning notices, while a system of fines is considered undesirable as being likely to scare away the readers, and so the consequence is that many books are lost.

Our library contains 50,000 books. I also learnt that we have travelling libraries for the individual workshops—58 in all—but these do not come to the tractor department because we

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have nowhere to house the books. In addition to the interest taken in *belles lettres*, there is an especially large demand for technical and topical political literature.

I cannot say that either the library or the rooms with blue walls made a particularly pleasing impression on me, and I thought with envy of the beautiful club of the municipal employees and the imposing 'Rubber' in Moscow where I spent Christmas Eve. It was the occasion of an 'anti-religious campaign,' which took the form of a brief lecture on the significance of Christmas, followed by a concert and a short play dealing with the events of December, 1905.

In one of the higher floors of the 'Rubber' club I discovered a fine refreshment room decorated with green plants that contained a loud-speaker and a lavish but cheap buffet. The club was filled to overflowing; after 9 p.m. no one further could be admitted, while around the doors loud discussions and much jostling went on. The women wore their best clothes, and I noticed many bright combs in their waved hair. It was a festal, but by no means a Christmas mood.

In the large gymnasium down below boys and girls in vests and shorts played handball and football, performed gymnastic feats on rings and jumped over hurdles. When will the Putilov workers get their new club?

In the committee-room I found only Soloviov, who appeared to be immersed in a newspaper.

"Where is the other comrade?" I asked in challenging tones.

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"He must have been detained," replied Soloviov casually. I smiled a bitter smile.

"I should like to experience an occasion when one of you does not keep another waiting."

"We have so few people; they are all overburdened with work. It is therefore quite comprehensible that those who have less to do must wait for those who do the most." Soloviov was quite right, and it made me furious.

"Victor Michailovitch," I said gloomily, "Victor Michailovitch, you seem to believe that I came to enquire about your horrible wreckers from mere curiosity and a desire for amusement. I am interested in the matter, firstly because I want to clear up my own point of view, and secondly because I want the information to give to anyone who asks me questions when I get home again."

"You don't really say so!" Soloviov feigned astonishment. "Then if you have such important reasons for desiring it, you will surely be able to wait a bit. Or perhaps you would prefer to make a little jaunt round here to-morrow morning."

"I have no time for such little jaunts," I retorted. "I shall be leaving soon, and I have still so much to see."

Soloviov put his paper down. "You are leaving? When?"

"At the end of the month." Ah, that hit him!

He stared at me for a long time. "All right, you can go as far as I'm concerned," he said, and took up his newspaper again. I sat down in a corner and considered what I could do to sting

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him. Without interrupting his reading he took out a packet of cigarettes, put one in his mouth and lit it. I rose and went to the door.

"Where are you going?" I heard him ask.

"To get some cigarettes. I want a smoke."

"Why didn't you say so? I've got a whole packetful."

"I don't want yours. I can buy some for myself."

"You will miss Novikov. Don't put on airs; I can't stand them."

"I don't care what you can stand or what you can't."

"Well, I'm. . . . Just like a woman! One never knows from which side to approach you women."

"Approach, indeed! You make an approach to anyone! We'll have dry rain first!"

"Well, after all, you're accustomed to the fine foreign gentlemen with their airs and graces." He spoke in ironic accents, but I detected the seriousness underlying them.

"Who would have thought that Victor Soloviov, the conqueror of Wrangel, was a coward?"

Soloviov pushed his cap down on his neck—the favourite gesture of the Russian workman.

"Yes, Wrangel was an easy business. One knew what one had to do, but here. . . ." We looked at one another and burst out laughing.

"Well, you appear to be amusing yourselves," said Novikov, who entered the room at that moment.

"And so your soul's tortures are ended,"

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remarked Soloviov. "Well, I'm off. Then for the present . . ." ('For the present' is the customary farewell greeting in the Soviet Union.)

"What do you really want to know?" Novikov began to rummage among his papers.

"Yesterday the rain came through the roof in our tractor machinery. Is that due to sabotage or not?"

Novikov turned round. "Yes, but how can I know that? Can one look inside people's heads? Perhaps in this case it was not intentional sabotage, but merely an instance of the piggish way of doing things that the wreckers have introduced here. The result is the same, of course."

"Piggish way of doing things? What do you mean?"

"I'll give you an example. The panes of your roof are joined with mortar of an inferior quality, but no one can be held responsible. Engineer Ivanov told his assistant, Muraniov, to order the mortar, adding naturally that it must be waterproof. Muraniov impressed it upon Fomin, who now works in the Stalingrad tractor factory, that he must test the mortar before it was put on. But when the stuff arrived, Fomin was in bed with a temperature and entrusted the business to . . . well, nobody can remember exactly whom. And that's how things always happen. The damage was done, but no one could be blamed for it."

"It may be simply carelessness."

"Of course. That's what we all thought at first. But these incidents occurred so often that

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we decided there must be some sort of system behind the carelessness. And then things happened which made us suspicious."

"What, for instance?"

"For instance, when the fitting department's orders were misquoted by the management. The fitting department wanted 15,000 blocks, but the tractor machinery department only supplied 10,000. 5,000 tractors were thus left without blocks—no laughing matter. 'Comrades so-and-so, you are no comrades, but wreckers of the Plan,' the one department accused the other, 'and we shall cite you before a Comrades' Court for unproletarian behaviour.' 'You're all off your heads,' was the reply, 'we have fulfilled the Plan down to the last block.' Then the matter was explained, but the sly Ivanov wriggled out of all responsibility."

Novikov stared meditatively into space. "There are cases," he resumed, "of our building such heavy engines that the rails can't hold them. But I ask myself whether or not an engineer is supposed to be able to calculate correctly. If not, what did he study for? And then there are the bad metals we turned out because the alloys were wrong." He lit a cigarette. "And the time when we rebuilt the workshops and were told not to alter their dimensions. All proposals made by the workers for rationalising the old rooms so as to adapt them to the new machinery were turned down. There's also the incident when Sablin paid in foreign currency for machines ordered abroad; some of

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them we could have got from Russian factories, while others were not needed or even quite useless. And I remember when they modernised the tractor machinery department and brought it up to date, but left the metallurgical department just as it was, so that it could not supply all the raw material we needed."

"Ah, that's why we have so many machines running empty. Now I understand."

"When the new machinery for working the blocks came, they had the old machines taken away at once, although the workers did not know how to handle the new ones. The result was that we only turned out 4 or 5 tractors a day instead of 80. And then the way they were always trying to sabotage our programme. In 1928-29, the first year of the Five-Year Plan, we were supposed to make 3,000 tractors; the active members of the party talked it over with the rank and file and the workmen made their propositions, in fact everything was going along beautifully until the engineers raised hell and tried to prove we were wanting to create a Utopia. Well, we didn't let ourselves be discouraged, and managed to exceed our set quantity by 50. In the second year, when we were supposed to turn out 12,000, the trouble began again, and once more we completed our programme. That's what our managers were like; instead of leading us on, they had to be dragged along with us and we had to watch out that they didn't lay any traps for us."

"And how did you finally unmask them?"

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"The workers got more and more dissatisfied with the engineers. Complaints got louder and louder; notices began to appear in the wall newspapers, criticising their activities and demanding that proletarian colleagues should be associated with them. There was a lot of correspondence in the works papers that reminded one of the Shakty case, but as long as we believed in the loyalty of our specialists the party committee refused to intervene. We didn't want to lower their prestige with the workers on account of any mistakes they had made, because there must be discipline, and any such action would only have made the production suffer. But the G.P.U. found the documents of the Industrial Party . . . yes, and at the trial Sablin and his colleagues admitted that sabotage work was very difficult in the Red Putilov establishment because the workers were so actively class-conscious."

"Well, and have you now got the works clear of all the wreckers?"

Novikov's face grew gloomy. "Early this morning I would have said 'yes' to that without hesitation. The head of the works is the Lett, Karl Markovitch Otz, who was formerly a commissar during the civil war. Our engineers are all young 'advanced' workers or old sympathisers with the cause, including quite a number of Communists. No, everything is all right in that direction."

"Then what has happened, comrade?"

Novikov did not answer at once, but stared down at the table before him. "Yes, yes, yes,

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that's what it is," he murmured at length, "and we'll discuss the business to-day during the interval."

"But what's the matter?" I shouted. He raised his head.

"Last night a machine in the tractor machine shop was broken."

"In our department? Nonsense! A drill or an awl perhaps—that often happens."

Novikov drummed on the table. "Someone stuffed felt in the openings so that the machine was bound to break the first time the wheel revolved."

"Which machine was it?"

"The one on the right of the foreman's seat. It's one used for working blocks."

"That's Kolka Svistunov's machine. He's our cultural organiser and a Young Communist!" In my mind's eye I saw the affable Kolka wearing his embroidered cap.

"Quite right! Kolka's machine. He will be pleased when his shift comes to work to-day."

"How could it have happened. Kolka wouldn't leave any felt lying about in the machine. No, certainly not!"

"It can't be carelessness in this case. The machine isn't used during the night shift. But it stands apart from the others. Someone goes along as if wanting to speak to the foreman, loiters a bit on the way, bends down as if looking at some machine—and in five seconds the job is done."

"I can't think anyone from our workshop would do it!"

"Maybe not! As a matter of fact it's less

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risky for the wrecker to commit his act of sabotage in a workshop where he is not employed."

"But someone would have noticed him!"

"Not in the early hours of the morning when everyone is fighting the desire to sleep and so the keenness of the watchers is dulled. A kulak's son would have an easy job then!"

"But why do you assume it must be a kulak's son?"

"Who else? It couldn't possibly be a workman, and one of the poor peasants wouldn't do such a thing, no, not even if he was religious and refused to work on a collective farm. His class instinct is too strong to let him contemplate sabotage. No, we know those farmers' sons, in whose eyes all tractors are thorns because they render the poorer peasants independent of them. They don't have to come to them for the loan of a horse now and pay for it with hard work. Our tractors are a great help to the peasant who farms his own land."

I rose. "Thank you very much for your information, Comrade Novikov. These sabotage affairs are most interesting."

"Yes, if only they didn't cost us so many sacrifices in time, money, energy and materials. From that standpoint they are not so interesting. Au revoir, comrade."

In the corridor I met Soloviov. His eyes twinkled merrily at me. "Well, have you cleared up your own point of view? Have you now got a concrete idea of sabotage?"

So he knew about my conversation with Valya

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on this point! But I was not in the mood to let myself be drawn.

"Victor Michailovitch," I said, "last night someone smashed a machine in our workshop."

The smile faded from his face. "How do you know that? Did Novikov tell you?"

"Yes. Good-bye, Victor Michailovitch." I extracted my foreign weather-hat from my bag, for it had begun to rain, and went to the door. "Comrade," I heard Soloviov call out behind me, "comrade, stop!"

I turned round, and he came towards me. "I am going to Moscow for a few days," he said. "When I'm back, we must have a talk, eh?" The tones of his voice told me that we were now friends.

"I think it's magnificent of you, Victor Michailovitch, to get over that trouble about the machine so quickly instead of letting it depress you."

"Why should I be depressed? We have conquered so many enemies; surely we'll manage to settle that kulak's son."

"Novikov also thought it must be the son of a big farmer."

"Who else should it be? Well, good-bye, my dear."

Life is certainly beautiful; life is wonderful. But it is a pity about the machine.

August 8th.

When I entered the Authors' Restaurant, I found Natasha sitting at a table with a small, chubby man instead of her long, thin herring of a husband. With them was also a twelve-year-

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old girl in an unwashed blouse, who was licking her lips over a chicken leg. Natasha did not pay particular attention to either of them, but attacked a pile of semolina slices with raspberry sauce, which she devoured one after the other.

"Order semolina slices, my golden treasure," she recommended me. "They are lovely; I'm on my third helping now. Oh, by the way, may I introduce Piotr Petrovitch Riskin?"

I took a seat at their table. Piotr Petrovitch exerted himself to make conversation. In my honour he directed the conversation to modern German literature and mentioned 'Wilhelm Meister.'

"My golden treasure," Natasha interrupted him, "you will get some compote at the buffet, also cakes and tea. Don't let them give you any coupons as change, because they are only available for to-day."

"How do you like him?" she asked me in French when the little fellow had gone off. "Don't you think he looks rather vulgar?"

"No," I said, "but what do you expect from him? At least he has read Goethe. But you'll have to teach the child better table manners."

"It won't get as far as that, my golden treasure," Natasha said. "Do you really think I want to wander into the provinces with that fat little man?"

"Then why did you start the business?"

"I didn't start it. He wanted to speak his mind to me. That's how it always begins. Thank heaven, there's the flapper; she's a good excuse. I'll simply tell him I'm no good as a

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stepmother. 'Mirror, mirror on the wall, who is the fairest of them all?'" At this moment Piotr Petrovitch returned with a beaming face and as heavily laden with sweet things as a Father Christmas. I remember having read on the back of some calendar (all the greatest words of wisdom are on tap on calendars) that under given circumstances a woman always goes through the same experiences with all men and under the same circumstances a man always goes through the same experiences with all women. This saying seemed to be true in Natasha's case.

The conversation turned on Bernard Shaw and the compote the man had brought back. Then Natasha asked me whether I would care to hear the case in the People's Court to-morrow—Dunia, Marya Petrovna's servant, *v.* Vassilissa Fokina, a neighbour who had libelled her and pulled her hair. Naturally I promised to come.

They are mending the roof in the workshop. Every now and then a head or a pair of legs makes its appearance on the glass panes. Autumn had to send its wet warning first; there is an old Russian proverb which says that the peasant never crosses himself until the thunder comes.

August 9th

In addition to Marya Petrovna, her husband and daughters and the doctors there are three other parties in the same house. The first of these is a Communist, a working-class student, with his wife who is employed in a bank, while the second is a numerous peasant family—father,

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mother, boy, nursemaid and grandparents, all of whom inhabit one large, unventilated room. Originally the room belonged entirely to the young married couple, but it is the custom in Russia for any married couple from the country who get a room assigned to them in a town to send immediately for their relations in their native village. The overcrowding does not worry them in the least; they are used to it in their own *isbas* (peasant huts). I thought of the Red Army song:

“ On the table see me squat
And tell the village what is what :
Who's got legs and feet is mad
If he don't sprint to Petrograd.
Though my togs may look a sight,
I'm the house's boss all right.”

Meanwhile the peasant family had acquired culture; the bathroom and lavatory in the house were as clean as one could wish. They were good-natured, quiet folk, with no interest in politics; opposite the ikon in one corner of the room hung a portrait of Lenin, which showed him with his eyes screwed up and a cap on his head; anyone who did not know him by sight would have taken it for the photograph of some peasant relation of the room's owner.

It is a queer thing about the various portraits of Lenin; they all seem to vary with the types of persons who own them. On Alexei Borissovitch's writing-table, for instance, Vladimir Ilyitch, photographed bending over a number of the *Pravda*, looks like a learned man, while in

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the Red Army barracks he appears as a warrior, a drummer of the revolution. At Putilov's he looks like a metal-worker. In Armenia I have seen a swarthy Armenian Lenin, in Tiflis a Georgian Lenin, and in the Volga Republic a German Lenin. And yet none of these pictures has sacrificed the resemblance to the original or lost the typical features of the beloved leader that every child in the Soviet Union knows at once.

The third, or, I should rather say, the fourth party in the house lived at enmity with the others. On every one of her free days the wife, who was a working-class woman, 'with lower middle-class deviations,' as Natasha was wont to say, turned the kitchen into a battlefield. This Anna Akimovna was always friendly to me personally when we met; she even smiled at me with her yellow teeth and asked me to sell her my red beads. At the same time she eyed me like the wolf about to eat Red Riding Hood. It was most alarming.

This Anna Akimovna, who was subject to 'lower middle-class deviations,' had assaulted the servant Dunia in the course of a battle of words because her vocal chords were not strong enough to give expression to the feelings that overwhelmed her. To-day the case came up before the People's Court.

We arrived a bit too late for the opening. At the door we heard the screeching voice of the defendant, who stood in court with glowing cheeks and gleaming eyes as she shouted out her invectives at the student in frantic efforts to prejudice

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the blonde judge—apparently a working-class girl—and her two associates against his evidence.

“A Communist indeed!” she screamed, “an insult to Communists, he is! When his wife was in the country, he brought whores into the house, yes, he did, the scabby Communist! I wanted to go to the bathroom, but the door was bolted; I looked through the keyhole, and lo and behold, there was a whore washing herself in the bath.”

“How did you know the woman was a prostitute?” asked one of the judge’s associates.

“How did I know? One can see that at once. What other woman would have the impudence to be washing herself in a strange bath?”

“May I state,” interposed the working-class student, “that the person in question was a comrade from Kazan. As the day was so hot . . .”

“The matter is quite irrelevant,” the judge interrupted. “The only question is whether the defendant assaulted the plaintiff or not.”

“I would only like to remark,” said the student, “that I could have you up for libel, Comrade Fokina, because you impute to me actions that are unworthy of a Communist. But the matter does not interest me. I shall, however, have a word to say about your husband in the cell; a comrade in the party who leaves his wife so unenlightened . . .”

“You—if we weren’t in court, you’d get it hot. Did you hear that, comrade judge, did you hear how he tried to come between husband and wife?”

“Call the witness Anutshkina,” commanded the judge.

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Our young peasant girl appeared with a smile. The judge asked her to state her name, social origin, profession and the party (if any) to which she belonged. She then warned her to speak the truth. But Comrade Anutshkina apparently thought it wiser not to mix herself up in other people's troubles and therefore denied having seen or heard any assault. She added that she had never noticed the constant quarrels and withdrew with a look of satisfaction.

Dunia, on the other hand, painted her sorrows with a thick brush. She said that Citizeness Fokina was always playing the grand lady, swearing at her and beating her. "My boss is a learned man," she said, "but he is always polite to me, while she is just as much proletariat as I am and wants to make herself important. That's because she has only become proletariat lately; in her village she was a farmer's daughter and . . ."

"You're a liar!" roared Fokina.

"Her father employed labourers; he was an exploiter. When they founded the collective farm, he got a nasty smack and was dekulakised."

"All lies!" screamed the excited Fokina. But the plump Dunia stood there, radiating strength and health. She had grown too big for her dress; between her stockings and the hem of her skirt I saw the strong, ruddy thighs peep out. I wondered whether she had been previously coached by the student because of the ingenious way in which she linked the private quarrel with the class war. No, it would have been unnecessary; such things were in the air.

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And now the working-class student brought up his heavy batteries.

"In any other house," he asserted, "the affair would have been of no importance—just a women's quarrel. But with us it's different. There's a foreign journalist who often visits our house; what sort of an impression will she get from our cultural backwardness? I am sure such brawls don't happen in Germany. . . ."

I was nearly interjecting a remark, but it would have been out of place. At any rate the mention of my person seemed to have told in Dunia's favour, as I gathered when the judges withdrew to consult.

"She's certain to win," said a peasant with a pointed beard and red, inflamed eyes. "It's not decent to go scrapping like that. What a mouthful that party fellow dished out! Cul-tur-al back-ward-ness, yes, that was it!"

"Don't stick your nose in where you're not asked!" Fokina shouted at him. "It's none of your business!"

"That's just where you're wrong, auntie. Cases in court are always my business. Whenever I have a free day, I sit here and listen to them, one after the other. This man says this, and that man says that, and often one doesn't know who is right. Now take the word 'alimony,' for example; it's a beautiful word, and I'm very fond of saying it. Well, just before your case we had a woman and her child, and there was a peasant they were suing for alimony. And he said: 'Yes, but how did it happen? I

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was drunk,' he said, 'and so I didn't notice how she got a child.' But she—oh, she's a sly one—she had a witness with her, and the landlady as well. 'Please pay!' says the judge. 'No mitigating circumstances! Pay up!' Yes, that's justice; always two sides to it. The child couldn't help it if he was drunk; anyone can say 'I was drunk, so good-bye, my dear!'"

Several people began to laugh. The peasant seemed offended. "What's there to laugh at?" he asked. "Cul-tur-al back-ward-ness. Justice is a delicate matter and wants some understanding. Yes, so it does, my good folk."

At this moment the judges reappeared. There was immediate silence in court. All hung upon the principal judge's words.

"The court declares Citizeness Fokina's guilt proven, and condemns her to a fine of 25 roubles."

"How proven?" Anna Akimovna sprang from her seat. "Who proved it? The court isn't fair. The fellow in the party made eyes at the judge, and then she said 'proven.'"

"Silence, citizeness, and leave the room. Do not hold up the court's business. Next case!"

"You call it proven! I'll tell my husband! He'll appeal to the highest court. He'll put a few things in the paper about you sitting there and saying it's proven. I'll go to Kalinin himself and ask him what he means and if it's decent for Communists to let whores have baths and then the judge thinks it proven that . . ."

"Citizeness Fokina, if you do not stop, I shall have you removed."

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"You clear off, auntie; you hear what she says," called out the peasant. "Don't you hold up our business; you've lost your case!" We left the court, headed by Dunia, whose face showed her pride and satisfaction. She felt herself the heroine of the day.

"A very good girl," commented Marya Petrovna, "but unfortunately we shall not keep her long, as she wants to go into a factory. The last one we had joined the workers' school and is studying to be an engineer. They are quite right, of course; domestic service gives them no future and no chance of developing themselves, but it's hard on us housewives who have been spoilt in the old times."

"What surprises me is that most of the workmen's wives have helps."

"Yes, they need someone because they work outside the house, and they find it easier to get a girl because they can give her lodging—to them one person more or less in a room doesn't matter. It's different, of course, for the intellectuals, because there are no maids' rooms in the new houses . . ."

"And how do you suggest the problem can be solved?"

"By a further development of our 'social sectors.' Given good restaurants, crèches for the children and the central heating we have in the new houses, the individual household will gradually be superseded by the collective one. Certainly it is a long process which cannot be completed overnight, but even now a large part

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of the population does not spend its free time in the home. The men prefer to take their wives and children to their clubs or to the parks for culture and recreation, where the parents deposit the children in a special playground and then go off to amuse themselves."

As we had by now reached Marya Petrovna's door, I wanted to say good-bye, but she insisted on my staying to lunch. Ludmilla Nikolayevna sat down with us, but declined to take anything, because she had already lunched in the Abortarium.

The strange name of this restaurant roused my curiosity, and on enquiry I learnt that Ludmilla Nikolayevna worked in an Abortion Clinic where future Soviet citizens were despatched to the next world. I had already heard that abortions are not illegal in the Soviet Union and that such operations are performed by doctors in the public hospitals, but I was interested to see something of them with my own eyes.

"If you have time, come to the clinic to-morrow morning and ask for me," said Ludmilla Nikolayevna.

It is much easier in the Soviet Union to see anything in which you are interested than it is in our country. Although everyone is very busy, they do not consider it waste of time to show and explain things to an author.

August 10th.

I feel so ill! I cannot pull myself together! Why did Ludmilla Nikolayevna take me into the operating room?

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From the steps I passed through the door into the reception room, where a number of women were waiting. On the walls there were brightly coloured prints, with explanatory text. On the left wall were pictures of the operation, with text that explained how the patient could not hear or see anything; on the right wall there was a display of various contraceptives, with text that explained their methods of use. On the back wall were glass cases containing embryos in various stages of development; the larger they were, the handsomer they looked. Over the door was the slogan—all Soviet institutions have slogans—“LET THIS ABORTION BE THE LAST.” At the door sat a small Chinese woman, who was being sick into her handkerchief, while further on a group of women discussed pregnancy.

“Do you want to be examined?” enquired the sister of me. “Then please go to the dressing-room and . . .”

“No, I’m quite well,” I said hastily. (How stupid! I suddenly thought. To talk of pregnancy as if it were a disease!) “I want to speak to Dr. Ludmilla Nikolayevna.” The sister went off to announce my visit.

“That means nothing,” one of the women remarked. “Anæmia can cause it. Once I thought I was caught, but it was nothing.”

“Yes, but the fits of shivering? I know them from my two previous children. The first time I thought I’d caught a chill and drank raspberry tea. Then I got to know.”

“Shivering! I never heard of that before. In me it comes . . .”

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"Ludmilla Nikolayevna will see you." The sister opened the door to the consulting room.

Ludmilla Nikolayevna wore a white overall, which made her look younger. Several other doctors were there, and the patients stood in queues for them. They stripped themselves without the slightest embarrassment and lay down on the examination couch, one after another; the Russian sense of modesty is strong, but only in respect to members of the opposite sex.

"Two months," observed a doctor cold-bloodedly, and threw her rubber glove in a basin of water. The woman she had examined showed no sign of emotion.

"You've come at a good time, my dear," Ludmilla Nikolayevna greeted me. "I have to go to the operating theatre at once; I only waited for you. Sister, give the comrade an overall."

On the way to the operating theatre Ludmilla Nikolayevna explained to me that operations were only performed in this clinic for medical or social reasons. Women who cannot adduce these are still entitled to have the fruit of their wombs removed by doctors in private practice, but it is then an expensive job, whereas the fee they pay for the operation, and three days' board and lodging here is a small one, and adjustable to the salary earned by the woman or her husband.

The instruments were sterilised in the ante-room. The operating theatre is a large room with a tiled floor and whitewashed walls. Here we see modern hygiene replacing the romance of the back stairs, the acid odour of cheap food and

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dirty underwear, the doors that are opened and shut so cautiously, the whispered, desperate negotiations with a fat, dirty midwife, the romance of a pierced uterus and a woman bleeding to death on a rickety sofa.

The patients appear in long white gowns; they look like early Christian martyrs being thrown to the lions, but they sing no psalms. Strange to say, they show no particular signs of fear or excitement, for here their collectivity produces a good effect; they have seen fellow-patients carried from the theatre and heard them say that it is "not so bad." They know that in a few days they will leave the clinic in a healthy condition. A fatal turn to the operation is practically impossible.

The women doctors are extraordinarily skilled. With long, blunt implements the uterus is forced open; blood flows and the patient groans. Then the scraping process begins; the metal slings extract bleeding lumps of flesh from the woman's body. Nature's ruthlessness is here revealed in ways that sicken us . . . and yet the human will is stronger than the material. To-day woman is the free ruler of her own body, and when technique and enlightenment have made further progress, she will be able to regulate her sexual life in a way that renders these operations unnecessary.

Next to a venerable mother of a large family with her heavy, broad body there lies a young girl of eighteen years. Her black hair clings untidily to her wet forehead, her whole body quivers with pain and her breath comes in sobs.

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"Oh, beloved," she calls out suddenly, "if you only knew how it hurts!"

"Just a moment, my dear, and then we'll be finished," the doctor says to soothe her.

The head doctor comes into the theatre, greets me and asks me how I like it. I stare at her in amazement.

"Like it! Can you really speak of 'liking it,' you cheerful person?"

"She's greener than the patients," laughs one of the younger assistants who holds the mirror and hands the instruments to the doctor. The head doctor appears displeased.

"Go into our museum and have a look at the rods and hooks which the quacks and bunglers formerly used on women's bodies—abroad they still use them—and you will understand what a blessing our abortarium is."

"But why do you give the women no anæsthetics?"

"The consequences of anæsthetics are often far more unpleasant than the operation . . . and it only lasts a few minutes. Our doctors are so skilled."

"Come here, my dear," calls Ludmilla Nikolayevna, "and look at this patient. She has already borne several children, and it is nothing to her. It is only the first time that is so painful." Apparently Ludmilla Nikolayevna is afraid I may have gained an unfavourable impression. I approach the woman to whom the operation means nothing; she lies there with distorted features and answers in stammers when

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the doctor asks her how many children she has had, where she works, etc. "She asked me to talk to her during the operation," says Ludmilla Nikolayevna.

"Can I see the wards?" I enquire.

I am taken to a room where three women lie in iron beds. Another bed stands empty. One of the women wears spectacles and is reading the 'Leningradskaya Pravda.' I do not know what to say to her.

"Are you a doctor?" My interrogator is a young girl with wavy hair.

"No." For the hundredth time I disclose my identity and nationality. I do so, not merely to justify myself, but because the word 'foreigner' has a magic effect upon Russians. It makes them talkative; some of them begin praising their country's achievements, while others tell the most hair-raising tales. But having now resided in the Soviet Union for several months, I am in a position to discuss points with them.

"Indeed? You are a foreigner?" observes a woman with a red, round face; she has a clean white cloth bound round her head. "Are there many operations for abortion in your country?"

I explain that such operations are forbidden in capitalist lands, so that the only statistics are those of the fatal cases. The figures show, however, that in Germany alone many thousands of women die in consequence of offences against paragraph 288 of the German Criminal Code (Paragraph 144 in Austria).

"The middle-class women have to pay a lot

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of money for the operation," adds the woman reading the 'Pravda.'

"And have you had a lot of operations yourself?" enquires the pert girl with the wavy hair.

I pretend not to understand so much Russian.

"I know a woman who had ten operations in seven years," announces the woman in the corner, "but her husband is a Jew."

"Does that make any difference?" asks the wavy-haired girl.

"Certainly! The Jews are so sensual . . ."

"Well, I've had quite different experiences," the round-faced woman contradicts her. "They can go on talking all night, so they can, but . . ."

"Comrades, what an attitude to take!" The reader of the 'Pravda' lays her paper aside. "It depends on the individual and not on his nationality. Such anti-Semitic opinions . . ."

"Why anti-Semitic? It's not an insult to say a man is sensual."

"Or to say he's not sensual."

"It's the ridiculous distinction you make, comrades."

"I've nothing against the Jews," says the woman in the corner. "My husband is a Jew, and I'd have had eleven children if I hadn't been helped. One room and eleven children! That's how we used to live. And he always wanted it when I was unwell. 'God forgive me, but you're a swine, Petrovitch,' I used to say to him. 'Can't you wait a couple of days, my dear?' And he says, 'But it's just now that I like it.' Each time I know for certain that it means another operation."

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"Well, you're a fool, Gerassimova," observes the reader of the 'Pravda.' "In your place I'd tell this Petrovitch to go to the devil."

"If you send him to the devil, he'll go to another woman."

"You won't stop him doing that by ruining your health. You can have plenty of men, but only one health."

"Yes, when one is so enlightened as you, Comrade Ryvkina, but our sort . . ."

"I'm only a working woman like you, but I use my brain. Comrade Doctor," she turned to Ludmilla Nikolayevna, who had just entered, "can't someone give a lecture to explain these things?"

"On female hygiene? There's one to-night."

"It's not only hygiene. Women need a directing line in their relations to their husbands. Many of them ruin their health by going along the old lines."

"It's a good idea, Comrade Ryvkina. Do you know a capable speaker?"

"I shall make enquiries in the works. Once we had a very experienced man to give a talk on this question at one of our women's meetings."

They were no longer doctor and patient, but two comrades—Communists endeavouring to lead and educate the others.

"Where do you work, comrade?" I asked while Ludmilla Nikolayevna turned back the bed-clothes of the wavy-haired girl and felt her stomach.

"I'm in the tractor department at Red Putilov's."

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"What, you too? In what workshop?" I felt as though I had met a fellow countrywoman.

"In the old tractor machine shop."

"I've never been in there. You must pay me a visit some time. I work in the new tractor machine shop, on a drilling machine to the left of the overseer's office. Fifth section."

"Good, I'll look in some time," said Ryvkina. We shook hands. My conversation with these women had effaced my harrowing experiences in the operating theatre. But when I was in the tram they returned.

"What sort of impression did you get of our clinic?" asked Ludmilla Nikolayevna.

"I made a vow of perpetual chastity."

The doctor was visibly dissatisfied. "You are too subjective, my dear comrade."

"The social side of your clinic is naturally wonderful. I mean the fact that you are able to settle these affairs in a hygienic way. But the business itself . . . ough . . ."

"You don't think we are pro-abortionists, do you? Our Government is fighting against it with all possible means."

"You don't mean to tell me that the Soviet Government is fighting abortion just as much as our Government does? Impossible!"

"Certainly it is, but with other weapons. With a far-reaching scheme of maternity welfare, with crèches and kindergartens, with a solution of the housing problem. It is generally economic circumstances that drive the women to abortion operations. But we can do more to depopulate

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the Abortariums by raising the standard of living and encouraging the use of contraceptives than by any number of paragraphs in a criminal code. And in any case, how can one dare to force children on a mother when one doesn't safeguard their existence?"

"Ask the capitalist states, my dear Ludmilla Nikolayevna, but don't identify me with them. Your countrymen love to do that because they are so fond of arguments and need opponents for them."

The doctor smiled. "I'm sorry, but I must get out here. Are you coming to see Marya Petrovna to-day?"

"I don't know. I've got a headache."

I really have a headache. Is the Abortarium to blame?

August 11th.

I am no better. On the contrary, all my limbs ache, and I have fits of shivering. I cannot help thinking of the women in the Abortarium. Perhaps I have caught a chill.

The whole morning I lay on my American cloth sofa; I could not even read anything. About mid-day I pulled myself together and went to the Authors' Restaurant. In the newspaper room I found Natasha, who looked depressed. "Now fancy, my golden treasure," she whispered, "for love of me he's going to send the child to his mother, and I really can't think of an excuse to invent. And of course this trouble would happen just at the time when I've only got a few days left to finish my book. When

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shall I get old enough to stop being bothered by these men?" Old age—yes, that is certainly the most comfortable solution of the erotic problem.

When I got home again, I fell into a weary dose. Raya woke me up at half-past ten. I drank some tea and got ready to go to the works. How my back and hips ached!

August 13th.

Now I am officially ill; I have a doctor's certificate. If I had gone to our dispensary, I could have got off work yesterday. But I made the mistake of going to the 'Medpoint' for aspirin and lay there on a bench for a quarter of an hour before I found the strength and energy to get up. I felt better; the pains grew less, and I decided to go to the works dispensary. I found no patients there except a young fellow with a stupid but sly peasant face and a neck full of sores which moved the sister to much wrath.

"I see you've taken off the bandage. I know because I put it on quite differently yesterday."

"Sick leave is pleasant," interjected the doctor.

"But I assure you, comrade doctor . . ."

"Don't you assure anything, my dear boy. You're not the first case. If I find you've touched the bandage to-morrow, I shall get in touch with your chief."

"Can't even let a fellow be ill," he grumbled as he donned his greasy jacket.

"And what's the matter with you?" The question was not asked in a very friendly tone. I related my symptoms. The sister gave me a thermometer.

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There was a silence, broken only by the ticking of the clock, which seemed to me exaggeratedly loud, and the muffled sounds of the machines outside. The doctor scanned the pages of her consultation book. She was a small, chubby, graceful person; from under her white overall a dainty, high-heeled shoe peeped out. On her neck she had a birthmark just above the opening of her dress. "Is she married?" I wondered. "Of course. Firstly everybody in the Soviet Union gets married, and secondly these women with birthmarks never remain single. She will treat her husband with the same condescension as she showed to me just now. It will be, 'Misha, fetch my cloak,' and, 'Misha, hand me that book!'"

"Give me the thermometer," she commanded, without turning round and in exactly the tone that I had imagined her speaking to her husband.

"37 degrees. Hardly up at all." She gave me a reproving look.

"Look here, comrade," I said insistently, "I'm a voluntary worker; I'm not dependent upon what I earn at the works, and so I've no reason to try to fool you. My temperature has probably gone down because I took aspirin."

"Why did you take aspirin?" she asked in milder accents. "I can't give you a certificate now. By the regulations we can only give them when the temperature is at least 37.3. I'll give you an aspirin tablet to take early to-morrow morning, and if you feel worse in the course of the day, go to your district dispensary and get a certificate there."

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It is the only possible solution, for it is close upon one o'clock, which means that I cannot get a tram. I can't walk home; it would take me half a day.

Just as I am turning the door handle, the doctor calls me back. There is a warmer gleam in her eyes; that is how she looked at Misha when he fell in love with her. It must have been about seven years ago, when they were both doing their last term.

"Where did you buy your mackintosh?"

"It's an English make."

"Oh. Just turn round a bit. Very smart."

The sister comes in from the laboratory to look at the foreign mackintosh.

"Well then, you must go to the dispensary to-morrow," says the doctor sternly and bends over her consultation book again.

I hurry back to the workshop. There is slight perspiration on my forehead. Now I feel better, and I am glad I have stayed on; perhaps Soloviov will be back from his trip and pay me a visit in the workshop early to-morrow morning. Dear Victor! If I forbid myself to think of you often, it is only because I need all my strength to prevent myself giving you more than you want of me. I do not want to make myself too easy for you.

My work progressed well, but in the early hours of the morning I felt feverish, and my limbs began to ache again. Stooping over the levers became almost intolerable. I switched the machine off, hurried to the lavatory and crept on to the platform. I only meant to stay there ten

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minutes, but when I returned, the Tartar woman was going round to sweep up. I must have been away an hour, but no one seemed to have noticed my absence. I thought of that placard with its command: "GIVE THE STATE BACK THOSE STOLEN HOURS." Then Katya passed by and stopped at my machine.

"We are having a 'Saturday' on the first day of the morning shift. Will you join in?"

"What is it?" One is continually learning new things here.

"Voluntary extra hours that we make a present of to the works. There is a lot of waste matter in the foundry, which must be collected."

"How long are you going to work?"

"Till about six."

"If I'm well again by then, I'll certainly come along."

There was a buzzing in my head; I moved as though in a state of semi-consciousness. The desire to lie down overpowered all others and left me indifferent to everything else. I said a very cold good-bye to Varya, who was going off to a rest home for her holidays, and even felt that I did not care when I next saw Victor. It was a blessed release when I found myself lying down on my American cloth sofa at last.

Vera brought me my mid-day meal. We are supposed to get our board in the community house and pay half our wages for it, but as yet I have gained little personal experience of Aunt Tania's art. Russians can only cook well when liberally supplied with meat and fat. However small her

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family may be, a Russian housewife never buys less than a pound of meat at a time, for in the art of cookery she shows but little imaginative capacity. In general Russians are far less exacting than we are as regards the superficialities of life; convenience, comfort, good food and even good health do not seem to them nearly as important as they are to us.

But the Europeans who reside in the Soviet Union soon begin to alter their points of view in this respect. I noticed how unimportant my illness seemed to me and understood why the other inmates of our community house did not bother themselves about me particularly. Why should they? they were not works managers; they wanted to sing and felt a need of hearing their own voices, and so they sang: "Ah, why, ah why is there no love? Why are there only jokes?"

No, my dear comrades, it's no joke for me this time.

The dispensary was open until 8 p.m., and I debated with myself whether to go for a certificate and then be ill or the reverse. Finding it difficult to get up, I decided on the latter course.

But unfortunately our communal alarm clock stopped, and so the last doctor was packing up his instruments just as I arrived at the dispensary, and firmly refused to prolong his working day on my account because he thought I should have come before. Nowhere in the world is there so much education imparted as in the Soviet Union; the attendant at the theatre who refuses to let you into the auditorium when the performance

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has begun and the Soviet policeman who stops the tram with his whistle to demand a fine of one rouble from a passenger who has jumped on while it was in motion are permeated with the idea that they are fulfilling a cultural mission. The same thought inspired my doctor when he made for the entrance door, deaf to all my pleadings and reproaches.

I ran after him like a jealous wife and told him that the Vienna doctors were much nicer to their patients, even when they were panel ones; I waxed eloquent on their kindness and care. He did not even turn round to tell me to go and get treated in Vienna, but simply steered a calm course towards the tram-stop. My only satisfaction was that he could not get a seat. At least that was something!

But I was thoroughly ashamed of myself. In my excitement I had quite forgotten my illness. I did not know whether my cheeks were burning with fever or rage. Where did the psychical begin and the physical end? I could not presume to decide the point.

I ate a plateful of cold cabbage soup which was left over from the mid-day meal and swallowed a spoonful of burnt gruel. Then I went off to the works dispensary; this time I got my certificate without further ado and was back again by one o'clock. When I opened the door of our room, I saw Vera sitting on my sofa, while on the floor lay Kostya, one of our lads, with his head on her lap.

Vera was reading aloud to him. They both jumped up, and he began to apologise to me for

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"having used my sofa during my absence." Then he blurted out a lot of silly things in his embarrassment. I could not say: "Don't mind me!" because that would have implied that I was in the plot.

And now I am lying down and feeling as heavy as a sack of corn. Gradually everything is fading out of my consciousness, but one incident sticks in my memory. I am lying in a meadow in the hot, noonday summer sun; all around me insects are humming and chirping. A bee buzzes round my ear, but I am not afraid of him . . . how old am I? Perhaps ten years . . . I cannot recollect exactly . . . but one thing worries me, and I cannot tell what it is . . . my thoughts revolve like the bee around this one dark point . . . ah, yes, I must be home to lunch, but I have not the strength to get up . . . so what will happen? Ah, yes, on my certificate it says I must report myself to-morrow, the 15th, in the dispensary . . . to lunch . . . and I cannot get up . . . the sun is so hot . . . I am thirsty . . . I am so unhappy, I am bored with everything . . . I have been tired of my cook for some time. Who said that? Oh, if I only knew who said it, I should certainly get well again, otherwise I must die . . . as it says in the old fairy tale . . . if you cannot solve the riddle, you must die.

I adjust myself on the couch, so that I can die more comfortably, and then I know nothing more.

August 14th.

Vera has already tried three times to ring up the dispensary and call the doctor, but the

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number is always engaged. As it is a warm day and my temperature has gone down, I get up and go to the dispensary, which is in an adjacent street.

At the counter I receive a number and a ticket with the doctor's name—Dr. Weinstein on the third floor. About twenty patients are waiting in the corridor, all of whom have tickets for Dr. Weinstein. This physician forms the chief topic of the conversation carried on by the waiting patients, from which I gather that the subject of the discussion is a woman. Some say she is a terror who drives the dying back to their work; others praise her skill and kindness.

I notice a youngish woman with a beautiful but pale face and large grey eyes, who stands somewhat apart from the others. She looks very chic in her simple, black dress. I sit down next to her and try to start a conversation, but it is not easy because she is so reserved. She does not even ask me where I come from, where I work, whether I am a member of the party and what are my private troubles. An uncomfortable sort of person.

I tell her something about myself in order to draw her out, and, lo and behold! she turns to me:

“My parents and my brothers and sisters all live abroad—in Paris.” And then, seeing the unspoken question in my eyes, she adds, “Perhaps you have heard of Prince L——.”

Aha! A bit of old Russia! It is quite a shock when these isolated pieces of wreckage of a former world emerge from the ocean of the revolution.

Their resistance to the new order of things is

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amazing in its strength; they assume a protective colouring, but inwardly they remain unchanged. This girl in her twenties who has grown up in the Soviet *régime* is completely unaffected by the storm that turned the old earth topsy-turvy; she stands firm and unshaken, with both her feet planted on a ground that does not exist, and yet hardly notices its non-existence.

Her Russian remains untouched by the conversational expressions of Soviet everyday life, by its newly coined phrases and abbreviations, by the laconic harshness that originates from the factories, or perhaps even from the trenches. She has married a middle-class husband who is employed by some Trust, and she visited her former estate this summer. Alas! how the garden has run wild; no one prunes the trees. In one wing of the house the village Soviet has its headquarters, and none of them cares about such things. They have turned the music-room into a cinema . . . yes, they have!

"Number 15!" someone calls out impatiently. "Where is Number 15?" I jump up. "Au revoir, comrade. And I wish you . . . the best of health."

"You are wasting my time!" Dr. Weinstein thunders at me as she eyes me sternly from under her red tousled hair. "What's the matter with you?"

"I've got 'flu, with a temperature."

"How do you know that?" Her voice is cutting.

"Firstly I feel it, secondly they took my temperature at the works."

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Dr. Weinstein takes a thermometer from a glass containing a beautiful phosphorescent liquid and hands it to me. Then she examines my certificate with her shortsighted eyes. She is neither young nor pretty; her past life will have been something quite different from that of our works doctor. Probably she studied in Zurich and smuggled illegal literature to Russia; shortly before her confinement she married a colleague, and her son is a Young Communist who calls her by her first names. Lack of time prevents her from seeing him often; when they meet, they generally quarrel, because they are ashamed of their love for one another.

Dr. Weinstein stretches out her hand for the thermometer; her brow wrinkles as she examines it and sees that there is really a temperature—that I am not a malingerer. She pummels my back and chest; then she sits down to her desk and makes me out a prescription.

“They’ll give you some aspirin at the counter. Go to bed and perspire thoroughly; come here again the day after to-morrow, but if you still have a temperature, call me up.”

“My friend tried to get the dispensary this morning.”

“She should have waited at the ‘phone till she got it.”

“Anything wrong with my lungs?”

“No. Number 16! Who’s got number 16?”

As I went out I heard Dr. Weinstein’s stern question to No. 16: “What’s the matter with you?”

I have a blanket, a rug and the foreign mackin-

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tosh over me, and I feel as if I am in a furnace. It is quite quiet all round me, for our young people have gone off to a Pioneers' camp in the country to-day. Someone wanders through the courtyard, singing, "Buy me a cambric dress because a Communist loves me."

Has Victor come back from Moscow? I can picture him asking for me in the works and being told by Valya that I am ill. It is a good thing he does not know my address, because he might come here, and a perspiring woman is most unappetising. Will anyone be working my machine? I seem to hear its hum in my ears . . . but gradually it grows dimmer and more distant . . . I fall asleep.

When I woke up, it appeared to be late afternoon. I heard voices in the house. My head seemed most remarkably light; my pyjamas clung to my back. I got up to find a clean pair, and a lilac envelope fell to the ground. While I was asleep one of the comrades had been up and put a letter from home on to my pillow.

When one has lived here some months, it is very difficult to correspond with people abroad. The things that occupy the thoughts and time of our relatives out there seem unimportant to us, and we have a feeling that they do not understand our life here. When the Soviet Union is so unjustly condemned abroad, the criticisms are not merely based on deliberately false information, but arise mainly from the fact that things seem quite different when viewed through foreign eyes.

But this letter brought me news that touched

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me deeply. A friend of my own age had died in Vienna. At first I could not realise it; it seems inconceivable for anyone to vanish from the world so suddenly. It was a shock for me, but beside it there dawned another feeling—a feeling of joy that I was not dead, that I was lying in a clean bed, and that my temperature had gone down.

I must get better! Get better quickly! Waste no time about it! In the middle ages they used to adorn banqueting halls with frescoes of the Dance of Death. *Memento mori!* Think of death, enjoy life, drink and love! Drink and love! We of to-day enjoy greatly; for us the highest joy is that of creating something. But never has this joy in creation appeared so widespread as here in Russia.

“You are awake, comrade?” Vera enters with a cup of tea. “How are you?”

“Very well, thank you. And I’m so glad I’m not dead.”

August 16th.

“Very well” is certainly an exaggeration. My temperature is normal, but I have a frightful headache. Dr. Weinstein considers it a natural consequence of the ‘flu. I went to her for the last time to-day; I feel quite sorry I shall not see her again. She gave me to-morrow off; to-day I tried to take my aching head for a walk, but I did not get far. I am sitting in the courtyard, under its only tree; the leaves already have a yellowish tinge. Wildab is playing in the sand nearby. The yard dog comes along and

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tramples down the sand castles which are so beautifully decorated with bits of grass. Wildab does not cry, but pushes the dog away and tries to explain to him that he is doing wrong. What is he saying to the animal? It is difficult to understand Wildab's Russian, but one thing is evident: he does not consider the dog a wrecker but merely an unenlightened village element.

August 17th.

To-day I have been to the Authors' Restaurant for the first time since my illness. I was pleased to see Natasha again; as she did not know my address, she could not come and see me although she was anxious about me. She has 'liquidated' her Wilhelm Meister, as she aptly puts it, and is now quite happy again.

I told her that an acquaintance from Vienna was coming here soon and could bring me a few things; was there anything she would like me to get for her? She replied that she needed very little nowadays; at present she just wanted to have her sleep out, take a bath and begin a new life with new strength. She suggested that I should visit a children's art school, and we arranged to go there the day after to-morrow, because I shall be too tired to-morrow after going back to work for the first time. My headaches have stopped, but I still feel very washed out.

August 18th

Back at work again. Once more I am in the bright workshop with the smell of oil and the

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humming machines. It does me good to hear that monotonous hum!

To-day there was a particularly smart lad at the polishing machine. As we are short-handed only the most important machines are kept going under normal circumstances. When they are 'running empty,' the men on them look after the others. The polishing machine is one of these stepchildren; generally it is served by the fair-haired fellow who was in Peterhof with us; we work in the same rhythm because he needs about as much time to polish a lever as I do to drill it. Lever after lever he throws to me; I finish them off and pile them up on the ground.

But this other man worked like a devil; he did not need to make any calculations at all before deciding how much to peel off the lever. He just screwed it in—at lightning speed—and set the machine going; after a certain number of revolutions he stopped it again, and, lo and behold! the lever was just the right thickness. I gazed at him with envy and admiration—that was a metal-worker indeed, almost a 'Spez' at his own job! He was lord and master of the iron; he knew exactly how to manage it, and so it obeyed him. The silvery levers waiting for my machine grew to a considerable mass; the fellow cast a glance across, put his machine off and lit a cigarette; the ruffian was waiting for me. I felt most annoyed; that cigarette was the glove thrown down by one knight to another as a challenge to single combat. I accepted it and discovered little tricks to speed up my work;

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I measured off one lever while drilling the next and got another one ready for the machine so that when its turn came I could put it in without delay. Then I began to loosen the screw before the drilling was finished, which saved me another few seconds, and so I contrived to keep pace with the polisher. Finally I worked the machine continuously so that its radiator need not stop working.

For some time I kept on rationalising the work to save time. Then suddenly—I must have loosened it too soon—the lever began to dance about in its vice. I heard a well-known grating, crunching noise, and a blunt piece of steel that looked like an amputated human arm whirled round senselessly in the air, while the other half remained motionless in position.

I was helpless and in despair. When you have worked at a machine for a time, you begin to think of it as a living thing, more exacting, perhaps, but also more consistent than a human being. It shows you no consideration; it gives an inexorable answer to any mistake or negligence, but if one treats it carefully and lovingly, it is as gentle as a child and obeys you to a millimetre.

The long-haired foreman passed by; I showed him the two pieces of broken steel. "Comrade, I have broken a drill," I said.

He was silent for a moment. "Get another one from the store," he said at length, and began to fill up a form which he extracted from his waistcoat pocket. I saw a heading: 'Cause of breakage:—Malice, inattention, quick work.'

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Which will he underline—inattention or quick work? But he ignored all three alternatives.

When I returned from the store with my new drill, I found Victor standing by my machine. It is my bad luck that he always arrives when I have done something stupid.

"I have broken a drill," I announced gloomily as I began to fix the new one in position.

"You don't feel well?" There was a warm, deep tone in his voice. "You were ill for a long time?"

A long time! I have only been away six days. But it was nice to receive such sympathy.

"And I did not know anything about it! I got back again yesterday and was told you were ill. I had just got tickets for the theatre; Meyerhold's company are playing here." He looked at me questioningly. "Would you like to go? I've got tickets for the 21st—your free day." I could sense his embarrassment, but was unable to tell whether it was due to annoyance about the broken drill or his private feelings. In either case it made me also feel embarrassed.

"Victor Michailovitch," I implored him, "please go away now. I don't feel confident enough to start work again while you are looking on."

I thought he would answer me with some bantering phrase, as usual, but his manner grew more confused, and he replied hastily, "Yes, of course, I'm going, of course, of course!"

"And how shall I get my theatre ticket?" I stammered.

"I—I'll bring it along to you sometime to-

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day," was his stammering reply. What a couple of idiots we were!

I began to work again and noticed the foreman with the copious locks watching me from his seat with the look of a mother whose child is playing at the water's edge. But now I gave up my silly race and worked more carefully; all the same I was thoroughly proud of myself when the time came to count the levers, because I had exceeded my normal output by 20 pieces!

August 19th.

We had a very important mid-day meeting to-day, when we discussed Stalin's programme speech. Our machines had barely stopped before the active members of the party ran through the workshop, shouting: "All comrades in the courtyard, please!"

I went out with Valya and Katya; we sat down on the iron bars near the forge with our teapots and sandwiches and began to discuss the Meyerhold performance. Katya, who had seen it, told us it was one of those intelligentsia plays which, according to Radek's criticisms, do not interest anyone nowadays. About a year must have elapsed between the time when the play was written and its appearance in book form and on the stage.

A year is a long time in the swift life of the Soviet Union. Although authors take the most topical subjects for their themes, literature nevertheless fails to keep pace with life. But the sensation which "The List of Benefits" caused

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on the first night, the extensive correspondence in the daily Press and periodicals about the play and the frequency with which it was discussed by all sorts of persons, proved the tragedy of Gontcharova, the actress, to be topical enough.

Nastya appeared with the speaker, who turned out to be Victor. We all perched on the boards and beams like a lot of fowls in a poultry yard, but there was a little incident when several people declined to leave the iron bars in the background where they had made themselves comfortable because there was no room on the boards. "Are we to drink our tea standing?" they asked. "The shock brigade girls have spread themselves all over the place; standing-room is good enough for the likes of us, they evidently think!" Whereupon Valya, Katya and several other active members of the party rose to make room for the grumblers.

Victor began with an historical review of his subject. In Tsarist times, he informed us, the earnings of the specialists and managers were so out of proportion to the low wages of the manual workers—just as they are in the capitalist countries to-day—that after the revolution efforts had to be made to equalise these two classes of income. But those times were now over, although we were not yet living in the age of Socialism when all available products would be distributed among the workers according to their needs. To-day some sort of stimulus was still necessary, and it was therefore our duty to assure better conditions of life to those comrades who were the most useful for productive purposes. Consequently the

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wage-scale would be still further graded, while the best shock brigadiers would receive cash bonuses.

Victor paused; Nastya enquired whether anyone wanted to say a word, but all remained silent. The Russian worker has no money sense; he spends and borrows lightly, and his needs are most amazingly modest. Our Putilov folk regarded a speeding up of production as a matter of honour rather than a means to an increase of wages, and I am convinced that they valued the cash bonus mainly as a mark of distinction.

The second point raised aroused greater interest, because it dealt with the campaign against irresponsibility. Victor told us that Stalin had introduced the continuous working week as a means of speeding up production, but the Stalin-grad Tractor Factory had now gone over to a six-day week, with the same day of rest for all workers. The proposal to imitate their example caused some opposition.

A young fellow enquired whether it meant that we were to lose our fifth day of rest. "Well, if we do," remarked a woman, "I'll at least get free on the same day as my old man." But the youth still raised objections, although Victor told him that the new system would be accompanied by a curtailment of working hours.

Another point raised was that the storekeeper often gave out damaged tools, telling the recipients they had been handed back to her in such condition by the workers of the previous shift. It was naturally difficult to scrutinise closely all the implements handed in at the close of a shift;

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many workers realised this and deliberately refrained from reporting damages. Things were naturally different, however, when the outgoing shift gave the tools over directly to the incoming one, as is the case in the Skorochood works. I wanted to mention this point, but waited so long that Nastya declared time to be up and closed the meeting.

When everyone had risen, I went up to Victor. "I have a suggestion to make," I informed him.

"Indeed? What is it?" I told him of the system in use in the Skorochood works.

"That's very good. Why didn't you mention it in the meeting?"

"It didn't occur to me at once and . . ."

"One must train oneself to think quicker, comrade. Write your information down and put it in the wall newspaper's letterbox." He showed no trace of embarrassment. Once again he was the practical, self-assured man. Had he withdrawn himself inwardly from me? From the upper pocket of his black Tolstoi shirt he extracted a bright piece of paper and handed it to me. "There's your theatre ticket. Don't forget—the day after to-morrow, eight o'clock. We'll meet there." He smiled as he shook hands with me, and with mind at ease I hastened back to my machine, clutching the ticket as tightly as a child holds the first piece of money given it by its mother when she sends it out to buy something.

I had a most unusual experience in the tram. It was as full as it always is when a shift comes out; I was hanging on to a strap, wedged in

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between human bodies, while I exchanged good-natured incivilities with a workman whose cheeks were continually tickled by the ends of my red bandeau. The tickling interrupted him, as he had placed his English grammar on his neighbour's shoulders and was engaged in conjugating "to be."

Suddenly I heard a snort from below and, looking down, noticed for the first time that one of my knees was wedged between the thin legs of an elderly but dapper woman—a 'fine lady' as we should have called her in Austria. She was indeed one, for she turned, seething with rage, to the friend sitting beside her, and remarked in German, "What a mob! If one says a word to them, 'don't be impertinent, my lady,' is the only reply you get!"

Her voice and look were terrifying. The workman's anger is nothing compared with this cold, cutting hatred. It was the first time I had encountered such an unmasked example of it in the Soviet Union; all the representatives of the old world whom I met so far were cautious. But this fine lady would have gladly torn me in pieces—not because I pushed my knee into her, oh, dear me, no, but because I wore a red bandeau round my head, because my hands were black with metal-grime and because I looked happy and contented. I bent down to her and said in German with the sweetest smile in the world:

"I beg your pardon, madam; I can't help it, because I'm being pushed from behind."

The old woman's eyelids opened like the wings of a scared goose. "We weren't talking of

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you, citizenship," she stuttered in startled accents.

In the restaurant I encountered the beaming face of the White Guard Oedipus. "Do you know what Stalin's latest speech is about?" he asked.

"Yes. Liquidation of equality and irresponsibility."

He negatived me with a wave of the hand. "No, no, I mean what he says about the intellectuals; they are to be treated more sympathetically. I'm grateful to Stalin; he has often taken our part."

Whosoever gives much, will give something to many people.

August 20th.

Free play to the capable? The word 'capable' has a capitalistic savour of money-grubbing. Therefore we prefer to say: "Free play to the creative forces."

How much of this our vital inborn power is destroyed by the iron laws of capitalism? Little boys decorate the walls of their schoolrooms secretly with drawings of ships, engines, negroes—whole worlds of artistry—and we apprentice them to shoemakers. Girls with crystal-clear voices and absolute pitch must sew day after day until their fingers are sore. But the boys and girls in the Lilina School—named after the famous actress of the Art Theatre—have been enrolled there after passing a special examination. They attend twice a week for two hours after their ordinary lessons.

They have grown out of their little skirts and

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knickers; the soft skin shows gleaming above their stockings. Their tongues chatter; their little noses run. They are children like all the rest; the only difference is that they can keep time to the music when they join in a round dance in the hall.

It is their first lesson, so that no one has shown them how to do it. Undoubtedly these tiny mites have rhythm in their blood. Willingly and gladly they follow the instructions of their teacher; they stamp their little feet, squat on the ground and form with raised arms a gate through which the others jump—half play, half dancing.

Then comes the drawing lesson. The first course of instruction is the same for all; rhythmic movements and drawing are compulsory. Later, when the special talents become manifest, they pass into the classes for musicians, actors and creative artists.

We inspect the free drawings of these eight-year-olds. Their subjects are mainly taken from the industrialisation and collectivity movements, although some few have sketched subjects from the now remote civil war. One little chap is occupied with foreign affairs; his sketches show us police attacking a workmen's demonstration with their life-preservers, two policemen and a person in mufti (apparently a spy) creeping round a house. Before the house there is a solitary street-lamp; there is a mysterious, eerie atmosphere about this sketch. Another one drawn by the same boy depicts a peasant woman presenting a chicken to a village priest. The woman's curtsey and the priest's careless attitude are

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faithfully reproduced with a few strokes; have we here, perhaps, a future George Grosz?

I find older children in the elocution class. It is also their first lesson. Two girls at the end of the table begin to whisper, whereupon their instructress raps on the table with her pencil. "Children," she says, "we must learn as much as possible in the shortest time and then make room for the next course. The money the State has given for your training must not be thrown away, and so we shall consider anyone who wastes our time as a wrecker."

Not a whisper was heard after that.

The future of these budding artists depends solely on their talent. If it suffices, they will be passed on after four years' preparation to the musical, creative art or theatrical academies. If it is insufficient, they will become leaders of the artistic circles in the factories or offices where they must work. The thorough knowledge of the principles of art they imbibe here will put an end to dilettanteism. In twenty years the art world of the Soviet Union will be purged of all its half-competents. What a lot these workmen's children will have to give the world!

August 21st.

"Can a wild horse find a way
To gnaw the rope that binds him?
Can my loved one dare to-day
To put my love behind him?"

I must admit I thought more about Victor than the 'List of Benefits' while I dressed for the

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theatre, although Meyerhold is one of the most interesting phenomena of the Soviet Union. It is only an apparent contradiction when one asserts that nowhere is life so governed by theories as in this land, which looks up to America's practical achievements as examples to be imitated. Yes, nowhere else is life so dominated by formulæ and solutions, from which the reality that its citizens would create must first be deduced.

It is therefore quite comprehensible that the theatre represents a symbol of society. Every character on the stage is the representative of a social group; the workman, the intellectual, the kulak, the poor peasant, etc., are all endowed with the typical characteristics of their groups, which remain constant as against the changeable qualities of the individual and are thrown into the strongest light. The psychological-individual conceptions of art that prevail in the west, however, require that the sociological motive shall remain in the background and create only a secondary impression on the dramatist and his audience.

The tragic conflict, therefore, is often to be found in the fact that the 'hero' fails to free himself from his social-psychic sphere or only does so too late, as in the case of the professors in Affigenov's 'Fear.' The total rejection of 'psychology' (which is a term of abuse in the Soviet Union) and the tendency towards sociological fundamentals caused the first plays of this kind—with their heroic peasants and middle-class villains—to be written in a broad naïve vein, which is now fast disappearing on

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account of the demand for well-depicted human traits in the characters that symbolise the social types. If that demand can be met successfully, we shall have a deeper and far more varied 'psychology' than the official western brand because of the pure contrast between the 'socialised individual' and the abstract 'humanity.'

This was the case in Oliesha's play. How many of the intellectuals in the audience would have recognised their own portraits in the actress Gontcharova? And yet there is not one of them who has not passed through a Gontcharova phase in the process of his development.

These intellectuals bring with them from the old world all the best that it has to give—its cultural possessions, its artistic and literary treasures—and run their heads against the hard wall of the new reality. It is extremely difficult to subject oneself to dictation by others; one asks oneself how many of the dictatorial measures are prompted by social necessity and how many by subjective caprice. One feels that one's personality is outraged when one is summoned to remodel oneself in accordance with the needs of others and fulfil tasks imposed from without. In one's childhood one read tales of champions of liberty, knights *sans peur et sans reproche*; yes, that sort of lofty heroism was shown in the civil war, but now one is ordered to share one's kitchen with an intolerable neighbour and gets no thanks for such sacrifices.

In the play Gontcharova, the actress, goes to Paris for study and recreation. Paris always

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stood high in Russian estimation, and now that it is so difficult to get a visa to go abroad, the French capital is a veritable Mecca. But when Gontcharova arrives there, she does what every female subject of the Soviet Union would do, irrespective of political convictions; she goes to a dressmaker. She orders a dress for a Russian ball—a ball organised by the Russian emigrants, and so a critical situation develops. Even though she is merely actuated by an innocent desire to dance with various partners unpolitically and to be admired unpolitically, we now discover that there is nothing unpolitical in this world. She soon begins to feel the consequences of her visit to the *émigrée* dressmaker, for she finds her diary missing.

This lost diary she has named 'The List of Benefits.' It enumerates a list of the benefits which the revolution has conferred on the Russian intellectuals and its counterpart—the list of the crimes for which they have paid penalties. But now Gontcharova undergoes a change; like so many others who have lived a long time in the Soviet Union, she grows bored with the comfortable but aimless, meaningless life abroad and longs to return home. It is too late, however, for the destiny created by her anomalous position has already overtaken her. The emigrants have printed the 'list of crimes' as propaganda against the Soviet Union, and the ambassador refuses to receive her. She is cut off from her home; the only road open to her is that which leads her to the society of the hostile,

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aimless emigrants. And so she seeks an effective death; with her eyes fixed on the Soviet embassy, where her rehabilitation is now accomplished, she falls from a policeman's bullet when leading a demonstration of the unemployed.

This end may seem melodramatic, but I could not visualise any future career for the individualistic, artistic personality of Gontcharova. It may be that the Soviet Union would consider the downfall of these highly-strung, non-constructive, pessimistic intellectuals as something self-evident, but all the more instructive is the lesson for the western nations that are seeking a way of escape from their impending catastrophe. How Gontcharova longed for the west and for its greatest artist—Chaplin, who personifies in himself the tragedy of loneliness, the tragedy of all humanity!

Of all humanity? Next to me sits a man, one of the men of the new era, who shakes his head at all Gontcharova's actions. In the cloak-room he asks me whether I ever had the opportunity of meeting emigrants abroad. I tell him of a small Berlin restaurant where both clients and waitresses speak a faultless Russian and every day the gramophone plays the only sad tune: "What an unhappy private trader am I!" Then we look at one another and burst out laughing. But the woes of the private trader are not responsible for our laughter; we simply have to laugh whenever we look at one another. We have risen superior, however, to Chaplin's tragedy.

We leave the theatre. The evening is mild, and Victor carries my foreign mackintosh, which

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I now like better on that account. The white nights are over. The half-moon in the dark sky looks quite Central European, while the Neva gleams like liquid metal. Here I often paid solitary visits to the 'Copper Horseman.'

We sit down on a bench; Victor's arm rests on its back. I sit as rigidly erect as the old type of Englishwoman, but the free arm behind me tortures me like a loose screw-vice that refuses to close. If only an earthquake came, the bench would rise aloft and we should be thrown together. I saw a similar incident in a film, in which a railway accident brought two shy lovers together.

"Aren't you cold?" I hear Victor say, and then he lays his hand lightly on my shoulder. I can feel the warmth of his fingers through my thin dress material. He is so close to me that I can sense his personal odour. Then I suddenly remember Gontcharova, the actress, and feel a need to tell him everything.

"Comrade Victor," I whisper, "I must explain to you . . . I did not come into the works because I wanted to get to know your lives there and help you . . . I was a friend of the American Spez . . . and, well, I wanted . . . this American . . ." My words become more and more confused, but they do not appear to cause Victor any surprise, and he does not withdraw his arm. But now that my tale is out I feel sure of myself again. Now let matters take their course!

"I was meaning to tell you that for some time," I continued. I looked him full in the

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face and saw that his eyes gleamed like the Neva. "The only thing which held me back was the fear that you might turn away from me."

"Why should I turn away from you?" he answers. "I knew it all the time."

"You knew it? Did you know about me and the engineer?"

"I guessed there was something of the sort."

"And didn't you despise me for coming into your works solely on account of a middle-class Spez? For merely using the tractors in order to . . ."

"Why should I despise you? Everyone can change. You can see that." I was hot with shame.

"And . . . Valya?" I ask. "Does she guess that I . . ."

"I don't know. Possibly."

I was perplexed. They had seen through me, and yet they treated me as a comrade. I thought of the Communist who sent his friend to find the desperate Gontcharova. "Hold her back," he instructed him. "Tell her in her own language that the proletariat is generous." But all the same it is stupid, girlish and ridiculous at the best to have co-operated in the fulfilment of the Five-Year Plan merely for the sake of a love affair. I became still more perplexed, but, as usual, Victor came to my rescue.

"We all know that you are now working for the cause," he said. His words calmed me, but even so I could not quite regain my self-control.

"I can't understand why you like me," I protested.

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"How do you know I like you?"

"I do not mean you personally, but the comrades."

Victor suddenly became mirthful. "Look here, now you are trying to wriggle out of it; not very brave of you!"

"You're wrong. I've even accused myself of making too few efforts to wriggle away from you. But if it interests you, I can tell you that I'm very fond of you."

Victor's eyes gleamed. "Is it true?"

"A hundred per cent. true!"

"I'm also fond of you now; a hundred per cent. fond!"

"Now? Weren't you formerly?"

"Formerly only twenty-five per cent.—just as an advance for the person into which you were going to develop."

"Did you believe I would make something of myself?"

"I was sure of it. You are honest and courageous."

I feel like a squire who has just been dubbed knight. I am as firm and clear as the newly-stripped iron. Neither death nor devil can harm me now. In such a mood heroes went forth, armed with but their lances, to do battle against an overwhelming host of foemen—and conquered.

What am I to do with these mighty forces now awakened within me? My decision was soon made.

"I shall stay on and work with you, Victor."

How gloomy his face had grown! There

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was a moist gleam in his eyes as they stared sadly across the Neva.

"I have often thought a lot about that in the last few days," he said.

"And?"

He shifted his position and sat with bent back and hands between his knees. "Nothing will come of it, comrade."

Now it seemed to me as if an earthquake had come and was tossing the Neva, the moon and our seat about in the air.

"Nothing will . . . come of it?"

"I will explain, comrade . . . I have a wife who belonged to the party and spied on the Whites for us . . . she was caught by an officer, the former manager of her works . . . when she was quite a girl she took an active part in our work . . . whenever the women employed by the firm put forward any demands, they always sent her to interview the director, and so he knew her well. They tortured her to make her give information about our positions, they beat her with the butt ends of their rifles . . . since that time she has suffered terribly from her nerves . . . how could I ever leave her?"

"No one would want you to, Victor. I would never allow anyone to suffer wrong for me."

"Then what were you thinking of?"

"I . . . to tell the truth, I had not thought of anything. . . . But I believe one can love different people in different ways."

"You see, comrade, it's difficult for me to discuss anything like that with you. I have

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given so little thought to such questions. Certainly you are right as far as your own countrymen are concerned. But how should we find the time here to love different people in different ways? You know yourself how much work there is to do. No, it isn't possible."

"Then we must part because you have no time?"

"That's not it, but how am I to explain to you? You would suffer, and that would not be right for me. No, if one loves a woman, one must be able to have her as a real comrade . . . to share one's life and work with her . . . a double life is nothing for a Communist . . . I find it difficult to say what I mean because I'm not accustomed to talking about such things. I have so much to say to you, but how am I to find the right words?"

"I understand everything you say. Go on, go on!"

"Yes, and then there's another thing. You have seen and experienced so much in our country; you will tell your own people about us and fight their prejudices . . . we need friends over there."

"You're wrong there. Anyone who has lived some time in the Soviet Union is no good as an agitator. One gets too used to finding oneself short of things, to discovering damages, to complaining about them and pillorying the offenders. Supposing I finished up like poor Gontcharova?"

"No, that's quite a different case. That actress felt herself personally insulted; she did

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not care for the community as a whole. We need practical criticism from which we can learn. And we can only get such criticism from someone who believes in us but knows all our faults thoroughly."

We rose and wended our way towards my community house. We were now nearer to one another than ever before, but all tension had gone. I was not unhappy, because I was convinced that Victor loved me. I could not be unhappy.

He halted at my door, thrust his hands in his leather belt and gazed at me. The house-door was open; someone had forgotten to lock it, although only yesterday our communal iron had been stolen from the kitchen . . . it was dark in the corridor and quite still . . . I cannot tell whether the idea came first to Victor or to me, but I saw his face change . . . he grasped my shoulders with his hands . . . then Wildab began to roar and a light appeared in the window left of the door. Granny Marfa's voice groaned in her sleep: "Oh, Lord God . . . grievous sins . . ."

Dina ran barefooted into the kitchen to get some milk for the little boy, and switched on the electric light as she went. The light gleamed on her tousled blond hair and encircled her slender, childlike figure with its radiance. . . .

Swiftly Victor bent down to me. "Farewell!" He kissed my hair hurriedly and clumsily, pulled his cap down over his forehead and hastened away with rapid steps. Not once did he turn round.

"Can my loved one dare to-day
To put my love behind him?"

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August 22nd.

I cannot stay at home. Something always draws me towards the works. Early this morning I remembered I had not yet got my doctor's certificate stamped. I had to take it to the office, and was sent to the director of our department. He was not in his room; I waited half an hour. At last he appeared; he was quite a young fellow, one of the men who had come up from the working class.

"Please don't lean on my desk," he remarked as he perused my certificate.

"I shan't hurt it," I replied rudely.

"You will not hurt it, but you are disturbing my work because you are between me and the light." I took offence in just the same way as Gontcharova.

In the outer office the girl explained to me that I should get my sick pay along with my monthly wages.

I found the party committee room empty and went to the works canteen for a meal. But there I had bad luck; the fish was salted, and all through my meal two peasants quarrelled about the state of things in their respective villages. One asserted that they had to give up all their milk and were not allowed to keep a single drop, while the other retorted that he had so much over that he could bathe in it if he wanted. Each was probably right as regards his own village, but each called the other a liar. A pro-Soviet foreigner would have probably put the complaining peasant down as a kulak's son, while an unsympathetic one would have classed the other as an agitator.

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Long experience has taught me that the statements of the native population upon which so many travellers' reports are based must be treated with the utmost caution. They are invariably products of the local conditions under which the person making the statement lives, and nowhere are conditions so varied as in the different parts of the Soviet Union. One also has to take into consideration the witness's political and psychological attitude; let us assume that in addition to these his stomach is out of order, a *tshistka* is in process and there is a new-born baby in the next room to his—and you will get the perfect pessimist. Often enough the information whispered into my ear by such a one proved to be only relatively true or even a gross distortion of the reality. In the same way many great positive achievements are checked or frustrated only too often by slovenly work, lack of organisation and materials, malice aforethought or a fear of taking responsibility.

I went back to the committee room, and this time I met Novikov, who eyed me with a curious look—how do these people get to know everything? I asked him for a loan of the memorial brochure published in 1926 in honour of the 125 years' jubilee of the Putilov Works and sat down in a corner to study it. At first I looked up whenever the door was opened, but soon I grew fascinated by the history of our works. On this aforesaid 125th anniversary the firm was given the Order of the Red Flag by the Central Executive Committee for "your distinguished

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services in promoting the growth of the industrial power of the Soviet Union." I must admit that I felt proud of that Order although it was bestowed long before my arrival in the works.

The original Putilov who gave his name to the works was one of the many owners of an establishment that often changed hands. For a time the concern belonged to a French firm; then the State Bank bought up the shares of this Russian Krupp. Engines were then manufactured as well as cannon, while ships were built in the neighbouring yard. In the autumn of 1914 the workshops were completely adapted for war work, but after the Peace of Brest-Litovsk production came to a standstill and the workmen left the premises.

Then came the ghastly years of famine and civil war. The pay roll had dwindled from almost 30,000 workmen in the spring of 1917 to 1,500 in 1922; most of the former employees were down south, fighting against the Whites, while those that remained organised a skeleton railway service.

But even then signs of the coming upward movement were not wanting. In that same 1922 the name of 'Putilov Works' was changed to 'The Red Putilovetz,' and the concern joined the Leningrad Machinery Manufacturing Trust. It was decided to turn the cannon foundry into a tractor workshop; as the tractors turned out there were built on the Ford principles they received the name of Fordson-Putilovetz.

But some time elapsed before the first model was completed. Not until May 1st, 1924, did

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the Russian Tractor No. 1 make its triumphal procession, beflagged and begarlanded, at the head of a demonstration of Putilov workers, to be greeted by the cheers and plaudits of the spectators. The Red Putilovetz then began its peace work, and year by year the production curve and pay-roll figures rose. The historian of Putilov's makes the following apt remark: "The chief stages of the general industrial advance throughout the land may be traced by the production statistics of the Red Putilovetz." And even more significant: "The history of the Putilov Works during these 125 years is the history of the Russian working classes and the history of the Revolution."

Round about the Putilov Works lay the beautiful mansions of Counts and Princes Shuvalov, Stroganov and Trubetskoi—the richest and most distinguished families in Russia. From them came the directors of the concern who sent their peasants to toil for 15 or 16 hours a day in its workshops. Their balls, masquerades and processions formed a glaring contrast to the misery of their oppressed serfs.

Discontent seethed and fermented in the works, but not until the late 'seventies did the first organised strike take place as a protest against the deductions made from the workmen's pay. In Holy Week of 1872 there was another strike; the workers demanded payment of wages held back by the management for the last three months. At that time wages were not paid in cash but in coupons for the shops run by the

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directors, who naturally fixed their own scale of prices. This strike ended with a victory, but now the government officials began to take notice—was not this refusal of the Putilov coolies to work a warning sign of riot, rebellion and revolution? Wooden huts were erected at the main entrance to the works for the Cossacks who tethered their horses to the doorposts. At the slightest sign of trouble within these Cossacks attacked the workers with their whips, while some of our present offices were actually used then by the police and Okhrana staffs, who examined in them the workmen that had been arrested.

But despite these measures of terrorisation the movement could no longer be checked. In 1885 a new strike broke out on account of the deductions for medical treatment. These amounted to 2 per cent. of the workers' pay, but no medical service was provided. The more enlightened workmen demanded a system of health insurance; the governor threatened to send them all to Siberia, and the strike crumbled away. The board of directors then instituted bonuses of sausages and vodka for every 100 puds of rails turned out.

At the end of the century came the economic crisis; on May 1st, 1901, the first organised Mayday demonstration took place. The vigilance of the Okhrana grew in proportion to the revolutionary movement; Trepov, the president of the police, drew up a policy for an effective campaign against disorder, by which 'spiritual methods' were to assist the *nagaiiki* (whips) of

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the Cossacks. "The police," announced Trepov "must work with the same methods as the revolutionaries." The Okhrana then began to found its training schools.

In the years 1903-4 Father Gapon made his appearance in the Putilov area. In December, 1904, four workmen were discharged for belonging to his organisation; Gapon called protest meetings and sent deputations to the works manager, the factory inspector and the Mayor of St. Petersburg. The works manager swore at the workmen and forbade them to interfere; the Mayor roared out "Revolution!" in his rage and fear. In his subsequent report he drew the attention of the state authorities to the fact that relations between capital and labour were not normal.

Agents provocateurs were sent into the adult educational circle of the works to spy out and denounce the progressive workmen. But the year 1905 was at hand; matters advanced so quickly that Gapon, who had now established himself in the '9th of January Garden,' now lagged far behind the demands of the revolutionaries' vanguard. The Putilov workers claimed an eight-hour day and the formation of a workmen's committee to regulate all the workers' demands at joint sessions with the board of management. Whereupon the chairman remarked, "If we give way to this, we shall turn all the shareholders into beggars."

On January 4th Putilov workers made their appearance in the vicinity of all large factories and works in the St. Petersburg area; they

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came to demonstrate their solidarity with the comrades of their class. And they did not come in vain; on January 7th, 150,000 St. Petersburg workers started a general strike. Gapon forbade his followers to read the leaflets of the political parties, but in spite of this veto the warnings issued by the Bolsheviks against peaceful negotiations found great approval and a wide circulation. Gapon then sent a deputation to the Minister of the Interior, who informed them that the Tsar declined to receive the delegates of the workers. The same night meetings took place in the vicinity of the Putilov works, at which resolutions were carried in favour of immediate peace negotiations with Japan and 'personal freedom' for all workmen.

Once again Gapon succeeded in checking the workers' revolutionary efforts. Despite the warning issued by the Minister of the Interior he led a procession of petitioners to the Tsar. But the shots fired at the Narvski Gate and the Winter Palace finally destroyed the illusions cherished by the St. Petersburg proletariat that conditions could be improved by lawful means.

Gapon took flight. He was unmasked as an *agent provocateur* and hanged by the Socialist Revolutionaries. Strikes and lock-outs then followed in rapid succession; workmen of revolutionary tendencies were not reinstated. On October 18th there was a mutiny in the works; the managers of two workshops were trussed up and thrown out into the streets with dirty sacks tied round their heads. The police

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turned Putilov's into a blood-bath; the workmen began to hold meetings on the premises; social-democratic agitators penetrated into the works and were greeted with enthusiasm. On November 14th the workers carried a Bolshevik resolution and introduced an eight-hour day; the management placarded the walls with notices prescribing a ten-hour day, but these were promptly torn down.

Then Count Witte, the Liberal Minister of the Interior whom the Tsar called his 'sly courtier,' issued a cordial appeal to the Putilov workers, in which he gave them a gentle warning to 'have pity on their wives and children.' Meanwhile the machine-guns of the guard regiments were shooting down the rebels at the Moscow barricades. The suppression of the Red Presnia Revolution was the commencement of that ill-omened epoch when the entire Russian proletariat was visited with penal expeditions and *pogroms*.

The Putilov Works' historian has no strike to record for the following year. Workmen were subject to a thorough scrutiny before they were taken on, as well as being forced to stand security for one another; black lists were also drawn up. In 1912, however, the revolutionary movement began again and brought with it the fight for better rates of pay. After this came the strike called to protest against the shooting down of the Lena goldminers, while about the same time the first number of the 'Pravda' came out.

Strikes grew more frequent; their nature showed how the class-consciousness of the Putilov workers and the entire Russian proletariat had

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grown apace. They did not fight merely for the improvement of their own labour conditions; in July, 1913, for instance, 3,000 Putilov workers started a strike in protest against the suppression of the workers' newspapers abroad. Such solidarity strikes became ever more frequent; one took place to support the cause of the female workers in the Treugolnik Rubber Factory, who were being poisoned *en masse*, while another championed the cause of the Baku workers who were mishandled by the police when they went on strike.

For a few months the war put an end to the epidemic of strikes. At that time the total number of employees was trebled—on paper, at least, but many of the newly-engaged hands hardly ever put in an appearance in the workshops; they were the sons of rich parents who had themselves registered as Putilov workers because no men engaged on war work were called up for the army.

In the autumn of 1915 Nicholas II visited the works in order to encourage all hands to turn out more cannon; the directors tried to organise cheers to counteract the grim silence of the workmen and lead their monarch to believe he had received an enthusiastic welcome. In the following years the authorities answered the strikes by sending the younger workmen to the front. The concern was militarised; the management was put in the hands of a Major-General. Later a General took command of it. In the winter of 1916-17 Putilov workers were arrested in masses, but after the February Revolution the workers held their meetings in the cannon foundry which is now the old

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machine shop. Lenin, Tchernov and Tcheidse spoke here in the days before the July Rising.

In October the works theatre was the scene of two meetings at which resolutions were carried to the effect that the Workmen's Councils should take over the reins of authority. At the beginning of 1918 the Putilov Works were socialised; in the subsequent civil war many of the workers occupied posts of responsibility. The name of Putilov became notorious to the Whites; on one occasion Judenitch had two captured Putilov workers shot, merely because they bore badges inscribed 'Putilovetz Armoured Cruiser, No. 6.'

Then followed years of depression while the land ravaged by war and famine slowly gathered strength for the work of reconstruction. But at the Metal Workers Congress in March, 1922, Lenin gave the signal for the forward movement with the words, "The retreat is over."

How many new workshops have been built since those days? How many thousands of dollars have been spent on machinery? How many *puds* of iron and how many human beings have been moulded into usable implements for the new world in the vast Putilov cauldron?

"You ought to have a talk with Kantor, our chemist," said Comrade Novikov when I handed the portfolio back to him, "he has worked here for thirty years and can tell you all sorts of interesting things." But I intentionally refrained from asking him where I could find Kantor so that I might have an excuse for coming to the committee-room again to-morrow. Where can Victor be? Is he perhaps ill?

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Our workshop looked completely different to-day—just as a friend seems to change when you learn his past history. One day he tells you the story of himself, his struggles, defeats and victories, and it is as though a veil was withdrawn from his face; for the first time you understand the tones of his voice, the look in his eyes, the meaning of his words and his life. And what could be more beautiful than the development of this works from the gloomy place of bondage where serfs were forced to toil to the lofty castle of the revolution, to the joy of energy, to the work that is building the future!

August 23rd.

Victor was not there. From the committee-room window Novikov showed me the red brick building that houses the laboratories. There I found Kantor, the chemist, among his books and phials, looking like a Jewish Faust with his greyish-black beard and brown visionary eyes. He belongs to the generation that left the houses of rich parents to 'go among the people,' to teach illiterates to read and write, an action which was then regarded by the authorities as revolutionary because nowhere have popular education and politics gone so closely hand in hand as in Russia. Comrade Kantor told me something of his educational work.

He has personal experiences of a large slice of Putilov history, because he has sat in his laboratory ever since 1899, with a brief interruption of several months in 1914, when he was in prison. He lives in the vicinity of the works,

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among 'the people behind the Narvski Gate,' as my White Guard friend with the Œdipus complex puts it contemptuously. From the tones of the latter's voice I gathered that this was an expression commonly used by the St Petersburg 'Upper Ten' to designate the proletariat.

Kantor told me about the semi-legal adult evening school which was attended by the workers belonging to the revolutionary parties and suppressed by the police every now and then. It was managed by Eugenie Flekel, one of the grandmothers of the Revolution. Close by it was a building where a group of engineers with liberal tendencies (including a number of members of the Cadet Party) held the 'Polytechnical Course of the Society of Engineers.' In this the director and teachers gave their services gratis, while workmen paid fees of 5 or 6 roubles.

The work of education on a large scale did not begin until after the revolution. In March, 1918, the Works Committee charged Kantor with the task of founding a school for young people of the working classes. He had no light task; the pupils sent to him by the Poor Relief Committee were mainly war orphans and homeless children who literally stormed the tramcars and the vehicles of the peaceful Finnish peasants on the first day they attended. He divided them into 25 classes of from 14 to 17 individuals and gave them sturdy Putilov workers for instructors.

Gradually the school sorted itself into three sections, the middle, the senior and the transitional departments, the last of which contained

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the worst rowdies, including a number of girls. The classes were held in the former director's house, where a number of foreign specialists now lodge. In the years of the famine the main thing that made the children attend regularly was the fact that they got a meal of sorts. Many of them afterwards served at the front.

In the period of the 'Nep' (New Economic Policy) the courses of study were prosecuted more seriously, and in 1922 (a remarkable year in the annual of our firm) this school developed into the works school of the type known as the F.S.U. (Factory-Mill School), where juveniles are taken in after passing through the Seven-Year School to continue their studies at the expense of the works. They receive three hours' theoretical instruction a day; for another three hours they do practical work for a small wage, which is increased according to the capability shown, so that at the end of their apprenticeship many of them earn almost as much as an adult worker. Our F.S.U. has already passed out several yearly batches of highly skilled workers, some of whom are continuing their studies at higher technical institutes. Golubev, for instance, who began as a turner's apprentice in the cannon foundry, is now an engineer in the Marti Works, while Lomonosov, who started in the Young People's School is an engineer in the Urals. Kantor's eyes gleamed with something like paternal pride when he related these facts to me.

"Are you a member of the party?" I asked him. It is the commonest question in the

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Soviet Union and is never considered an indiscreet one. I guessed the answer in advance, however, because it is not difficult to distinguish Communists from non-party individuals, but I was interested to hear the reason this veteran revolutionary would give for not belonging.

He stated that a Communist must devote his entire life to the party and subordinate his private interests. "And I have many private interests," he added. The affectionate glance he bestowed on his books, phials and test-tubes showed clearly what he meant.

But there is another reason why so many old revolutionaries do not join the party. The fighting tactics have changed so completely in the last fifteen years that a number of them have dropped out because they cannot work along the new lines. It is astonishing how quickly they are forgotten; to all intents and purposes Trotsky's name is erased from the history of the Revolution, while the Socialist Revolutionaries and Menshevists are only suffered to exist as caricatures. This is not merely due to the fact that the authorities intend them to sink into oblivion; the tempo of life is so swift that it permits no dead weight to be carried and thus eliminates all who cannot take an active part in the movement.

Kantor called after me when I was at the door: "Don't forget to have a look at the F.S.U. workshop."

The F.S.U. is housed in a single-story building, which can only be visited by those

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who obtain permission from its director. It was a fine sight; at the lathes and drills in a long, bright room stood a number of lads and girls, with the charm of youth plainly written on their cheerful faces. Now I realised why I never saw young people working as apprentices in our shop; unskilled juvenile workers are no longer employed in any town in the Soviet Union.

A little sixteen-year-old fellow showed me the dining-room. A mid-day meal served from the F.S.U. kitchen costs only 15 kopeks, the price being regulated in accordance with the low wages paid.

Then I had to go off to my own work. Our shift was not yet complete, but from the way in which those present ran about from one to another or stood in groups discussing some matter with grave faces, I gathered that something was very much amiss.

"What's up?" I enquired. Valya gave me no answer; Subinsky shook my hand heartily, but pretended not to hear my question. It was evidently some internal affair.

I know the principles of our Communists; they take all their worries to the cell, but keep silent outside it. But in the mid-day pause I learn the cause of the trouble; a girl tells me the story behind the teapots.

The head cashier had credited herself unlawfully with several days' work. When her younger assistant noticed this and faced her with it, she went to the management and contrived to have her subordinate dismissed. As

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soon as the workers got wind of the business, they made a fuss; as the head cashier was a Communist, the affair came up before the party committee. And then followed the climax, for the delinquent was let off with a severe warning and transferred to another department.

This news came like a slap in the face to me. I felt myself so much part and parcel of the works that I could not criticise sharply without hurting myself. But when I passed the sorters' table on my way to my machine with the tools I had fetched from the store-room, I halted at Valya's seat.

"I know everything," I told her. "You are showing solidarity with a scoundrel instead of kicking her out."

Valya raised her head and looked at me gravely. "This is not the place to discuss such matters, comrade," she said. "The day after tomorrow is our free day; if you care to look me up then, we can go into the business thoroughly."

"I am curious to hear the explanation," I said, and shrugged my shoulders. Then I went back to work.

Gradually I grew calmer. I saw that I must listen to what Valya had to say before forming my own judgment. And after all, Victor, who was anything but lax in such matters, belonged to the party committee. Perhaps the best thing would be to ask him myself.

To ask him? Something within me quivered with pain at the bare idea. For two whole days I had not seen a sign of him. What could be the matter with him?

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Mechanically I changed my drill for an awl, thinking all the while of the old folksong about rings and broken hearts. I was in such a melancholy mood that I found no joy in my polishing work.

That evening the editor of the works newspaper came in and had a few words with Valya. I gathered that a conference of workers' correspondents was to be called. Afterwards I asked permission to look through the previous years' numbers of the works paper, and was told to come the following morning.

I shall ask Novikov about Victor. He can think what he pleases.

August 25th.

I was convinced he had gone away, but too cowardly to admit it to myself. If I had not been compelled to leave on September 1st when my *visa* expires, I do not believe I could have summoned up courage to ask Novikov. Why do people say that suspense is the worst of all? It is happiness itself compared with loss of hope. I shall never see him again!

Novikov was not there. I sat down on a bench by the dispensary where I could observe everyone who came to the committee-room. I had no hope of seeing Victor; I merely waited for Novikov.

A group of workmen passed by me, laughing as they went; a girl with a bandaged hand ran to the dispensary. I thought of my first accident and my subsequent visit to the 'Hermitage.' How long ago and how childish it all seemed! It

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was as though I had grown older and more mature to-day.

A huge poster stared at me from the opposite wall: "COMRADE, HAVE YOU ENROLLED YOURSELF IN THE TECHNICAL COURSE FOR PRODUCTION (P.P.K.) AND THE TECHNICAL COURSE FOR SKILLED WORK (R.T.S.)?"

The P.P.K. is a course of instruction which imparts general and technical knowledge to the unskilled worker and teaches him a number of practical knacks, so that he can qualify as a skilled worker of the fourth grade. The object of the R.T.S. is to supply to unskilled workers (in the 2nd or 3rd grades) such knowledge as will qualify them for the higher grades. It takes them as far as the 7th grade, and those who pass its final examination can go on to the technical high school. Course and school open on September 15th.

Several paces away there was another poster which invited enrolment for a course in trade unionism. Then I saw the posters of the various club circles, followed by the one which announced a course for female turners. After that came the Party School course . . . but I could not make out the other posters beyond it.

On the wall by the entrance door I could see the humorous drawings put up last June to caricature the zeal shown by the various workshops in subscribing for the State Loan. The furnaces, which had the highest figures, were represented as an aeroplane, while the foundry was symbolised by a railway engine. Behind them came the dyers, represented by a motor-

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car, while other departments were shown as tramcars and horsemen. The rear was brought up by a donkey, a cripple on crutches and a snail creeping slowly and comfortably towards the Five-Year Plan. Luckily our own workshop was not depicted as one of these last three, although it lagged some distance behind the aeroplane.

I saw an undersized workman picking his way across loose boards and earth-heaps towards the committee-room. My heart began to beat quickly; it was Novikov. I jumped up from my seat and ran to meet him.

"Tovarish Novikov!" He turned round, amazed.

"Comrade Novikov . . . first of all . . . good morning . . . yes, and can you tell me where I . . . where I can find Victor Michailovitch . . . I mean . . . Comrade Soloviov?"

"Soloviov was transferred to the Stalingrad Works a couple of days ago." Novikov's figure, the snail, the donkey and the P.P.K and R.T.S. posters all danced together before my eyes. Then I found myself at the entrance to our own workshop and immediately took to my heels.

For half an hour I wandered aimlessly around the Putilov labyrinth. It began to rain, but I hardly noticed the drops; I stumbled over heaps of wood and metal refuse; an old workman called out something to me which I could not understand. At last the glow of the furnaces brought me to my senses; all unawares, I had stumbled into the smithy, where a firework shot showers of sparks in all directions. I

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did not get out of the way. . . I felt an intense need of some physical pain that would alleviate my mental tortures.

"Hello, citizeness! what are you standing there for like a log of wood?" I heard an irritated voice say. "Move out of the way! Have you lost anything here?"

"Let her alone, Mishka! Can't you see she's looking for her husband? He hasn't been home since last pay-day!" The workmen chuckled.

"Don't you worry, auntie. Your peasant went off to the islands with a pock-faced girl. I saw him stand her a bottle of lemonade. 'Strike me dead if I'll go home to-night,' he said as he watched her put the stuff down."

"You take care you've got your goggles properly on your nose and not on your forehead. If a spark gets into your eye, you won't be able to pry any more into other people's business," I retorted.

That repartee turned the laugh on to my side.

"Hallo, hallo, that's a bright lass! You take care, Nikola, or you'll be asking for trouble!"

Nikola made an effort to retrieve the situation. "D'you think I'm an engineer that goes about the place wearing goggles?" he asked with a shrug of his shoulders, but the remark left his hearers cold.

For a time I stared at the red glow. It was thrilling to watch the molten metal being poured out and to reflect that a single drop would suffice to kill a human being. It was as exciting as any other dangerous operation is to the onlookers, and at the same time there was something about

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the perspiring grimy figures moving about in front of the fire and finding time for jests and laughter in spite of the heat, the danger and the hard work that brought me consolation . . . life was carrying on. . . .

August 26th.

To-day I went to the Foreigners' Passport Office to obtain my *visa* to leave the country. I learnt there that I had to supply written confirmation of my proposed journey from my community house and the works, in addition to depositing several photographs.

In the afternoon I visited Valya Shimko. She lived in one of the new buildings in Strike Street. The architecture of these vast tenements reminded me of the buildings recently put up in Vienna and Berlin. As a matter of fact the architects are generally Germans, but the interiors of these Soviet houses are very different from similar buildings in Germany. There the Russian habit of doing things on a large scale finds expression and shows itself as lavish in regard to space as it is in all other respects. The rooms are large and lofty, but the old housing system has been retained; several families share a flat and use a common kitchen and bathroom. Central heating is provided, but the huge courtyards have unkempt appearances. There are no green avenues or pretty little gardens in them; the cultural idea of home which finds scope both inside and around the house is not as far advanced in the Soviet Union as in the West.

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Valya looked quite a stranger to me without her red headband, even though her beautiful head and wavy blonde hair showed to better advantage. She is like the peasant girls whom the poet Nekrassov has described as "Faces full of calm dignity, movements of harmonious strength." I admired the gesture with which she invited me to take a seat and the turn of her neck when she called out into the corridor, "Put the water on for tea, mother." There was something complete and self-contained about this Putilov working girl that reminded me of the figures of antiquity or the Renaissance; so might Goethe have pictured his Iphigenia. She was certainly no older than I was, and yet I felt like a child in her presence.

"What are you looking at me like that for?" she asked.

"I was wondering about your social origin. Are you an intellectual or do you come from the working classes?"

"I am a worker's child, but I have been through the Nine-Year School. I also understand German; no, I can't speak it—those auxiliary verbs at the end of a subordinate sentence make me feel quite stupid."

"Would you find English easier?"

"Yes, but we can't all learn English. Germany is to-day the focus of Europe's proletarian revolution."

Her mother came in with the tea . . . an old, harassed working-class woman. She seemed excited.

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"Valyusha," she exclaimed, "they're selling pigs' heads to-day in the co-op. I didn't get one because I didn't know whether you think there's too much fat about them. But they can be boiled down and . . ."

"Do what you like, mother. No, no, they're not too fat for me. I'm quite fond of them," she added on seeing the old woman's disappointed face. "And do you like fresh gherkins?" she added as she poured out tea. "I'll peel you one."

As we ate, she plunged into her subject. "You're surprised that Bobkina, the head cashier, was not dismissed. She is excellent at her work, and for the moment we have no one to replace her."

"But it's a matter of principle, Comrade Shimko. We must agree about our aims. Are we out for profits or for a new world?"

"The profits made by our red industries are the foundations of the new world."

"Which won't look very different from the old one if types such as the Bobkina are allowed to work in it."

"And do you really think we can sift our workers according to their moral qualities? I know some very decent folk who are quite incompetent. Are they in your opinion better qualified to take over responsible posts?"

"I only know that slanderers and sneaks oughtn't to be in a revolutionary movement."

"But of course you'll find them there. Every healthy organism has its parasites . . ."

"Which poison it if they're not exterminated."

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"We shall exterminate them all right when we're strong enough; you needn't worry about that."

"If you only knew how such persons discredit the revolutionary movement in foreign eyes!"

"Discredit us, do they? They are only little pimples in comparison with the huge ulcer of Capitalism. You must look at these matters from a higher standpoint, comrade. When are you leaving us?"

I sensed the futility of further discussion. "On the first, presumably," I answered. "Do you know when Varya Timofeyeva will be back?"

"Oh, Timofeyeva? That's a girl for you! We wanted her to be our delegate to the Trade Union School in Moscow, but she won't go. She'd have had a place in a community house there and a monthly stipend of 175 roubles."

"Why don't you go?"

"Because I've specialised in cultural work. And then we want to go along the latest lines laid down by Comrade Stalin and give the non-party people a push up."

"And why are you working as a sorter instead of taking some responsible post?"

"Oh, I like being in the works. I've got a large sphere of influence there. Putilov's are a tradition in our family; my father and grandfather both worked there." She was silent for a few moments, and then added in a low voice: "My father was beaten to death by the Cossacks in 1905. He was the leader of a strike."

At this moment her mother returned from the

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co-operative with despair written in her eyes. "Valyusha, the pigs' heads are all gone," she exclaimed. "Just think of it, the Minkina from Number 5 snapped up the last of them before my very nose. What an old fool I was to come back and ask you about them! But I was so afraid they'd be too fat for you!"

"Never mind, mother," Valya consoled her. "We've got some tinned fish."

"Tinned fish! Do you call that a meal? I never touch the stuff! And how can I make soup without any meat?"

I tried to give her the recipe of a Viennese flour soup, but she only spat contemptuously and went off to the kitchen to seek consolation from her neighbour.

Valya escorted me to the door. We parted with a long and warm handshake.

August 27th.

To-day I have at last witnessed an arrest by the G.P.U. I have waited a long time to see such a thing; it would have been too silly to have actually left the Soviet Union without acquiring some experience of the ways of these much-discussed officials.

I was alone in Marya Petrovna's room. She had gone out marketing, and all the others were at work. Suddenly I heard a knock at the door (the bell was out of order), a particularly loud knock as I afterwards remembered. I opened the door and was confronted by a man in uniform who wore a lilac cap.

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When he asked for old Anutchkin, my first feeling was one of disappointment. I thought perhaps he was enquiring after some newly-arrived relation. His round, good-natured peasant face seemed to suggest something of the sort.

But no, he refused to tell me the reason of his visit, and when we found the peasant family's door locked, he began to pace up and down the passage. I asked him in (delighted at the prospect of an interview), but he refused.

"Nitshevo, I can stand," he replied when I offered to bring him a chair. His amiability displeased me: where was this far-famed Reign of Terror? He had not even a life-preserver with him. I sat down and resumed my work in a most dejected mood.

Then there was another knock. With one bound I was at the door.

"Have you noticed whether Anutchkin knits stockings, citizenship?" enquired the G.P.U. man. Then he buttoned up his overcoat and began to fumble in its pockets . . . surely he was going to pull out his revolver! But he merely extracted a tobacco pouch.

"No, I've never seen him do that," I replied, still feeling thrilled. What was going to happen next?

"Can you give me a match?" he asked, and that was the end of our conversation.

It was my second encounter with the G.P.U. My first took place in Stalingrad. We had just arrived there and could not find a room anywhere . . . all the hotels were full up. That happens in every town; the best thing is to get

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one's organisation to reserve rooms in advance, and hitherto the Society of Authors had very kindly made arrangements for us. But we were strangers in Stalingrad, and no one could tell us where the club premises of the Society of Authors were to be found. "Then we'll go to the G.P.U.," Ralph decided. We entered a friendly-looking bungalow that looked like someone's summer residence; it was neatly decorated in blue and whitewash, and its wooden varnished floor was clean. On one door was inscribed in someone's handwriting: "Commandant of the G.P.U."; the "t" and the "U" were embellished with small, droll flourishes.

Ralph knocked and entered. At a desk sat a blonde young fellow, engaged in receiving a report from a Young Communist with a most luxuriant crop of hair.

"Good day, comrade," said Ralph.

"Good day," answered the blonde fellow in bored tones, and took no further notice of us. Only when the Young Communist had finished his report did he turn to us.

"What's the matter?" he asked.

"I'm an American. I'm a stranger here, and I want a room." The hirsute Young Communist went to the telephone.

"Hallo! Here, G.P.U. I want a room for two Americans."

Presumably the hotel replied that all rooms were engaged, because he then roared, "Wrecker!" and threw down the receiver in a rage. But the second hotel he rang up appeared more hopeful.

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"Not 'perhaps' but 'certainly,'" he called down the telephone.

"I'll ring up again in a quarter of an hour. Listen, Petika," he addressed the blonde commandant, "ring up the October Hotel in a little while and tell them they've got to take the two foreigners in. I'm busy now. And don't be afraid of making yourself objectionable to them, otherwise you'll get nothing done. Well, for the present. . . ."

"For the present," mumbled Petika, with his nose in his papers.

Although I often heard of arrests and house visitations during my sojourn in the Union—I remember the woman in the Rostov train who waited till she could catch me coming out of the lavatory in order to give me an account of the G.P.U.'s activities—and in spite of the information that is whispered into every foreigner's ears by those who are opposed to the Soviet Government and the frequent assurances in the works that the G.P.U. is one of the mainstays of the proletarian state, those two handsome young fellows in the blue and white room had always retained an idyllic savour for me. This impression was not effaced by the present incident. So many authors have bad luck!

When I heard another knock at the entrance door, I rushed out. This time it was the young peasant wife.

"Here is Comrade Anutchkina," I explained, introducing her to the G.P.U. man.

"Look here, citizenship, I've orders to search your room," he said.

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Comrade Anutchkina did not seem greatly surprised. She merely parted her lips in a queer smile and unlocked the door. Then they locked it again from within. I walked up and down outside, but as I could not hear Anutchkina's voice, I began to suspect something quite unpolitical might be taking place on the other side of the door, although it is a Bolshevik basic principle that there is nothing unpolitical in the world.

As a matter of fact old Anutchkin was really arrested. He spent the night at the G.P.U. station, and when he reappeared the following morning, he presented such a woebegone aspect that an interview was out of the question. I cannot even say whether he continued to knit stockings.

August 28th.

After the night shift I told the foreman I was leaving. His face was stern and forbidding as he asked: "Why?"

"Because my permit to reside in Russia expires next month."

"You can get it prolonged." But I showed him a letter from the Society of Authors requesting my discharge. He sent me to Smirnov, but when I reached the door I heard the sounds of a mighty row. A woman was screeching at the top of her voice, and when I entered I found her to be the repulsive Jewess, who was pouring the vials of her wrath upon Smirnov.

"Did you ever hear such an insult?" she yelled. "They promised to give me work in the office, and now a delicate woman like me has

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got to go on doing this rough work. My back's all swollen up!"

"I have already told you why we cannot employ you in the office. There are three grammatical mistakes in your application for a transfer."

"Grammatical mistakes! Why, I finished up at the high school with a silver medal!"

"Then you must have forgotten all you learnt there. You are no use to us, citizeness; you simply run round complaining and interrupt the others at their work."

I could not have believed that her small body possessed so mighty a voice. I thought her screams would break the windows.

"Such a dirty trick! Such an insult! To tell me that . . ."

"Alexandrov, save me from this woman," Smirnov implored the man sitting opposite him. Alexandrov wrinkled up his forehead as he considered the matter.

"I'll write her out a discharge form," he proposed.

"Citizeness Ritztal, will you take your discharge, or will you do your present work without grumbling?"

"I don't want to be discharged, and I don't want to go on doing my present work. I want to be in the office."

"Write out her discharge certificate, Alexandrov," said Smirnov, resignedly. "What is it?" He turned to me, and I handed him my documents.

"Well, you've not stayed long with us," he grumbled.

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"I have learnt a lot, comrade," I replied warmly.

"Such a dirty trick!" whined the Jewess again. "Such a mean trick!"

But meanwhile Alexandrov had filled out her discharge form.

"Shall I sign it, Citizeness Ritztal?" enquired Smirnov, still hesitating.

"No!" suddenly screamed the woman. "I yield to force. I'll go back to my teapots. If I get a stroke, you're to blame. But I forbid you to make a speech at my grave and praise me as a 'heroine of labour.'" She went out and slammed the door behind her.

"You must bring me a stamp from the library, stating that you have returned all books loaned to you, another from the sick-fund, another from the relief fund to certify that you do not owe them any money, and then one from the director of the tractor department, one from the director of the transit office, then one from the works council and . . ."

"Good Heavens, Comrade Smirnov! I shan't get through the business in a week. What's the good of all this foolery? I've never seen such red tape!"

"Yes, we do that on purpose," explained Smirnov, "because we want to make it difficult for workers to leave. For a time it was an awful job, with them constantly coming and going. We had hardly taught a man anything before he was off. Now we try to bring moral pressure to bear on them."

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"You call that moral pressure? Why, you're running me off my legs! Good-bye, Comrade Smirnov."

"Good-bye, comrade. Start a revolution in your own country soon."

As I had to go to the passport office, I deferred collecting all the various signatures to the following day. In the passport office I was put through a long cross-examination; I had to tell the girl in charge there everything I had done in the last eleven months. She wanted to know what my means of existence were and where I had lived and demanded documentary proofs of my statements, which I considered a most superfluous proceeding because neither the passport office nor the blue and white G.P.U. office could possibly check their accuracy in a couple of days. I should have liked to draw the girl's attention to the futility of the whole business, but refrained. In the works it was different: I belonged there and so had a right to criticise, even a duty to do so. But here it would have been tactless because I was only a stranger. I shall have to get accustomed to being a foreigner again!

August 29th.

I did not get to bed until two o'clock: I was more dead than alive. I ran about the whole morning, trying to get my stamps from the various organisations. Some of their officials were not there: one of the directors had a meeting and kept me waiting. I was seething when I left his offices. Over the pay-box there hung a notice: "NO MONEY PAID OUT TO-DAY. COME

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BACK TO-MORROW." What shall I do if there is no money to-morrow either?

I had better luck in the editor's office. I even received an advance for several contributions that were accepted but had not yet appeared. It amounted to such a large sum that I decided to book a seat in an aeroplane of the Leningrad-Berlin service, and even so I had enough money left over for a second-class ticket from Berlin to Vienna and a pair of snowshoes.

My friend with the Œdipus complex is most envious when I tell him I am going to Germany. "The cleanest country in the world," he exclaims. "Such orderliness! Such punctuality!" The actress asks me to send her a few fashion journals, while Natasha bids farewell to me because she is going off to Moscow with her thin husband.

"Good-bye, my golden treasure," she says, clasping me to her ample bosom, "and hurry up with the revolution over there. I can't understand why you people aren't tired of Capitalism yet!"

"If we had a Lenin . . ."

"That's not a Marxian way of looking at it, my golden treasure." The thin man came with her cloak.

"A pleasant journey, comrade. And if you find an opportunity to send me a fishing line, I should be extremely grateful to you. And a few cartridges for my gun would . . ."

"Nonsense, my golden treasure, how should she be able to send you cartridges? And anyhow it would be better for you if you stayed at home more and finished your book."

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In the night shift my machine was 'running empty' once more, and I was put on to the work of transferring cylinders from one case to another. It reminded me of a childhood's experience when I wanted to sew like the grown-ups and my nurse gave me a needle without any thread, with which I was allowed to operate on an old petticoat.

Yes, I have much to thank that nurse for. Not only did she teach me to sew, but she also taught me to appreciate heroism and tenderness and take an unprejudiced view of things. She ran me about through fields and woods, quoting verses from Corneille as she went, and in the evening she did not mind sitting down in male company to sew her flannel knickers for the next winter.

Marfa and an old peasant whom I did not know were put to work with me. They had rationalised their work; they placed all the cylinders on a long iron bar, of which each took one end, and so they carried them to the case. When we were on this work, a Young Communist brought us a number of our works paper, 'The Red Putilovetz.' It was still wet from the press.

"Kras-ny Put-i-lo-vetz" Marfa spelled out.

"What! Can you read now?" I asked in amazement. "You were so obstinate about learning!"

"Well, what's there in that? I was against learning to read, and now I can read. What of it?"

"Perhaps you've changed your mind about the collective farms as well?"

"Yes, perhaps I've changed my mind about the collectivisation as well."

"Well then, I'd like to send our Tyrol peasants

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here to you. They are conservative to the marrow, even the poorest of them."

"And what are you doing for them, my dear?" asked the peasant. "One has to explain things to them, to say, 'You're cutting your own throat if you hang on with the big farmers.' Maybe they'll laugh at you the first time you say that to them, and the second time, perhaps, they'll spit and tell you to go to the devil, but the third time they'll listen to you. That's how it is, my beauty."

The works photographer came along in the morning to take a picture of our shock brigade for the paper. I asked him for a copy, whereupon he took the opportunity to snap me as well after I had borrowed a clean bandeau from Valya. The workmen gathered round us, and then it came out that practically none of them knew I was a 'foreign intellectual.' It caused a great sensation when they found out, and the man who had sent me off to the meeting with the remark that my writing did not matter even apologised. I was very much surprised because the party committee, all the active members and Subinsky and Kolya knew it. Finally the lads decided to devote the interval to-morrow to me, as it is my last day—or, more correctly speaking, my last night.

August 30th.

My dear Varya who stood by me when I came into the works helped me over my last hours in them. When I had finished all the formalities and wanted to get my money from the pay-box, I

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found yesterday's "NO MONEY" notice still there. I was in despair: to-morrow is my last day, and I shall have so much running about to do then. I stood at the door of the transit office, wondering what to do, when suddenly I saw a workgirl with a woollen bandeau round her head crossing the street.

"Varya!" I called out, and we rushed at one another.

She came back from the Rest Home yesterday. The weather was bad, and she felt homesick for her boy again. I asked her advice.

"Yes, the first is pay day, but don't worry: you shall get your money beforehand." She took me into the committee-room, where we were lucky enough to find the overseer.

"Listen," said Varya, tapping him on the shoulder, "here's a foreign worker who's going home to-morrow. She must be paid off to-day."

"Take her along to Walkin, who's in charge of all the foreign business," he replied.

We found Walkin to be a fat man in European dress. I had not seen a suit of English material since Ralph left, and it reminded me at once of a vanished world into which I must now return, a world where there was everything you wanted to buy, but where you were left to your own resources and continually got into financial difficulties. While I meditated with some aversion on my forthcoming journey, Varya put my case to Walkin.

"What! They're not giving you your money? A nasty, mean trick!" exclaimed the corpulent Spez.

But now I felt like the woman in Molière's play, who calls out, "I like being thrashed by

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him," when the neighbours try to save her from her husband's blows. I was on the side of the works and against the fat man who was on my side.

But finally Walkin gave me a form which enabled me to get my wages from the savings-bank, so that I was now able to settle up my debts at the community house. I thanked Varya cordially and asked her whether she would pay me a farewell visit on the morrow and take the silk chemise. She grew embarrassed.

"No, you know, I don't want to beg from you." I saw that the influence of Valya Shimko had been at work.

"Then if you can't take it as a present, give me something in exchange for it."

"What could I give you?"

"You said once that you'd give me a red bandeau."

"A red bandeau! Of course, of course! We all got presents of red bandeaus on May 1st. I've only worn mine once because I've still got the one from the previous year. But I say, isn't it too shabby of me to give you an ordinary bandeau for a silk chemise?"

"It will be a souvenir of the works. You can't call that shabby."

"Then thanks so much. I shall love to have the chemise. You know, my Italian came back when he got that letter. He was most touched and kept on saying 'Karakara,' which means 'Dearest' in his language. And then he asked whether I'd like to marry him. I shall be Signora Varvara Afanassievna Ventili. Won't it be fine?"

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"I'm glad you've made up your mind, Varya. Will you get registered?" (the new expression for 'getting married').

Varya was silent for a moment. "No, I shan't do that, you know," she said at length. "I haven't made up my mind. I . . . can't."

I asked no further questions on that point. I likewise did not ask her why she refused to study in Moscow. I knew that there was something stronger than she.

In the community house Vera surprised me with the news that a collective wedding was to take place on the next free day. She was going to marry Kostya, and there were two other couples. When Kostya asked me triumphantly whether I had 'noticed anything,' I hesitated to reply, for I thought of the door that was locked the other day.

Later on Dussia, one of the brides, came in, sat down on my sofa and drew me into a confidential talk. Vera and Kostya had gained some little experience, but neither Dussia nor Fedia had gone into the sexual problem practically or theoretically.

"But now you will liquidate your ignorance," I remarked.

Dussia nodded gravely. "We do not take the view that a Young Communist must be expert in sexual matters. Intemperance is somewhat middle-class . . . the characteristic of a decadent class." I gave her the red beads upon which Fokina had cast her eyes.

To-day I am going to the works for the last time.

LIFE IN A SOVIET FACTORY

August 31st.

Farewell! Farewell!

Farewell, my beautiful iron, farewell, you tractors, farewell, party committee and little Novikov, Valya, Varya, Kolka, Subinsky, my drill, my awl, all you levers, you noise at the benches, you smell of oil, you smithy with Nikola and Mishka, you foundry, fitters' shop, dyeworks, polishing shop, old tractor machine shop, thermal shop, repairs and accessory repairs shop! Farewell, you key to the bucket store! Farewell, you metal cylinders with which we try the drills and which the foreman calls skittles. Farewell, you old, tired pre-revolution workers whose strength was sapped by bloodstained demonstrations at the Narvski Gate, Cossacks' whip and fourteen-hour working days! Farewell, you joyous younger generation, you girls with the red bandeaus, you culture and party workers, farewell!

Kolka consoles me. "I am going too—going into the army."

"What, you a soldier?" I ask in my surprise. "But are you twenty yet?"

Kolka adjusts his embroidered cap with a nervous gesture. "I beg your pardon, comrade, but I'm not going to be a soldier. A soldier is a mercenary. I shall be a Red Army man."

A member of the shock brigade delivers my farewell oration. He says all sorts of flattering things about me, and my vanity makes me record them. "At last we have met a foreign intellectual who was not satisfied with just

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fitting through our works and gathering statistics, who took the heavy burden of our toil upon her back and was willing to share our life. We charge her to tell the workers of her native land about us, to tell them our bad as well as our good points. They must know everything about us. We entreat them to follow our example and establish free factories and mills."

The last part of his speech was mainly concerned with Fascists, imperialists and social-democrats.

'Will you reply, comrade?' enquired Nastya.

It was a torture to me to reply. Words failed me, and some sort of shame held me back from reeling off the protestations and declarations that the meeting expected. And so my embarrassment caused me to say something which gives me pain even now when I think of it: "Don't forget me; write to me!"

The sentence I have heard so often at stations when trains move off . . . it must have fixed itself mechanically in my mind . . . I gave as my farewell to the Putilov workers! I was so shocked when I had said the words that I sat down at once. What a good thing they were all so impersonal and did not see me as myself but as a symbol of the workers in the west with whom they desired to fraternise. And so no harm was done by anything stupid that I might have said.

When I had cleaned and oiled my machine for the last time and shaken all the hands that were so grimy and hard I left our works for

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ever. At the entrance I showed my green workbook instead of the pass-out check that I usually gave up.

The rattle of the machinery grew fainter and fainter behind me as I passed out to Strike Street. It was a windy autumn morning. Before I went to the community house I bought sausages, ham and cheese in the Foreigners' Store.

When I got in, I had a wash in the kitchen. As soon as my hands were clean, I saw the cracks and scratches on them, I noticed that they were clumsy and stiff. I remembered the song 'Bricks,' which describes how a young working girl washes her hands before going to her lover. Yes, the washing of her hands plays a large part in a working girl's life, and it is no easy matter for her.

Varya came at five. I had laid the table in our room, so I boiled tea and made her eat. But she refused to take anything except some compote and biscuits: whenever I offered her other things, she repeated, "If it's all the same to you, pack it up, and I'll take it home to my boy." Then from the paper in which she had carefully wrapped it she extracted the red bandeau. It had a white pattern round its edges . . . not flowers, but strokes and circles that looked like levers and wheels. She packed up the silken chemise as carefully as though it was some great treasure. Then suddenly her face fell.

"What's the matter, Varyusha?" I asked her. And then, seeing the tears in her eyes: "When shall we meet again?"

Although I knew from my own experience

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that tears are not always a sign of great sorrow, they touched me deeply. I was so trained to saying farewells that I could take the present one fairly lightly. "You don't grieve for your hair when your head is off," says an old Russian proverb, and the parting from Victor had taken away the pain from all other farewells.

I tried to console Varya by promising to come back and asking her what clothes and underclothes she would like me to bring her on my return. It was a fearful piece of boasting on my part, because I knew I should never have the money to buy her everything I promised, but I only wanted to distract her.

She shook her head. "No, no, I don't want anything, but you must come back soon." Then she wrapped her warm shawl round her again, and I went with her to the tram, as I wanted to go and see Marya Petrovna. For a while we stood hand in hand at the stopping place: at last the tram with the unproletarian route came along, and Varya made ready to depart. "Then good-bye!" she said, and the tears choked her voice. "When you're back there, stand by us. If we have faults, it's because we're still poor . . . but think what we're doing to make up for it . . . and you will think of that, I know . . . and then you'll work for us . . . and tell the others . . . and soon you people outside will be building up works like ours. . . ."

We embraced in silence.

On the following morning I left the U.S.S.R.

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in a German aeroplane. The pilot, who could speak no Russian, reviled the Soviet Union.

A strong wind blew from the Gulf of Finland. Below us lay the northern plain with its scattered villages, behind us the city of Lenin through which ran the metal ribbon of the Neva. The roar of our engine sounded to me like a farewell greeting to our works.

In an old wall newspaper I found a few days ago a poem which was evidently a product of the smithy. Perhaps it was written by the Nikola who bantered with me. Perhaps by Misha. But it might have been written by any of our 32,000 Putilov workers.

“ Where the furnaces flame,
Where the dynamos roar,
Where the red, molten metal is glowing,
All thoughts that may lame,
All cares that may gnaw
To their doom in our fires I am throwing.

The clatter and glare,
The iron and the steel
Are links that in labour unite us ;
So my heart is as air,
And new courage I feel
To toil for the cause that delights us.

The siren's shrill blare
Gives the signal at last ;
Now hushed is the din and the clatter.
Everywhere, everywhere
See our comrades have passed
To the gateway, and homeward they scatter.

But to-morrow, newborn
—How blessed my state—
I shall labour with mighty endeavour.
No longer I mourn,
For the joy to create
Has banished my sorrows for ever.”