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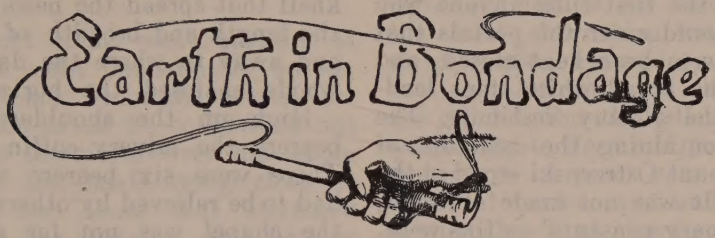
BELLES-LETTRES

WANDA WASILEWSKA

Earth in Bondage



At first, when the rumor spread about the villages, people refused to believe it. But before noon a string of carts wound its way towards the woods and laborers laid piles of tarry faggots all along the road from the boundary of Ostrzen to the estate itself. Children, always curious about everything under the sun, came running from the villages. Kolisiak, the manager of the estate, appeared at the gate and called the bigger children to him. He appointed each a place and told them exactly what they were to do.

People crowded in from Ostrzen, from Kaliny, from Grabowek and Mackow, from more distant villages and even from beyond the River Bug.

It was dark already when a shrill blast of a horn rang out on the road leading from the station. A mounted forester appeared almost immediately. Then the young fellows who were keeping watch over the piles of wood hastily smashed the bottles of kerosene and set the twigs alight. A pillar of flame shot up to the skies; another, and a third, and a tenth. The blaze lit up the night sky and the whole length of the road, from the station to Ostrzen, shone smooth and white out of the darkness. Then the hearse appeared. High, high above the heads of the people—above the roofs of the cottages, above the green fir trees, glided the coffin on the hearse, flecked with crimson in the light of the flames.

"Look, look. . . ."

"Mercy, how high up it is. . . ."

"Set up on poles, the shopkeeper says it is. . . ."

"And they've fetched it like this all the way from Warsaw?"

"What nonsense you do talk! They brought it by train, of course, and now they're fetching it from the station. Those are the count's horses, can't you see?"

The peasants bared their heads, and made way for the procession to pass. The women crossed themselves. The coffin passed, floating high above them, on its way to

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Published in an abridged form.

the castle, hidden behind clumps of dark trees. The fires died down fast. Night descended on the road once more.

Young Count Ostrzenski was being buried with great pomp. Surrounded by hothouse plants in tubs, the coffin stood for two days in the vestibule of the castle. The yellow-sanded walk was crowded with people. For the first time anyone who wished could enter the portals that had hitherto been kept closed, and mount the broad white steps leading to the gloomy vestibule. The coffin containing the remains of young Count Ostrzenski stood in the middle. It was not made of wood, like ordinary peasants' coffins were. It looked like silver; it had been wrought from sheet metal plates by craftsmen in Warsaw—no local man could have made it. Tall candles flickered and smoked. Flowers lay on the lid—white roses, like those that grew in the flower-beds in front of the windows.

Everyone expected that the coffin would be opened, so that they would have a glimpse of the face that was familiar to them—a lean, haughty face with black hair waving over the brow. But from the backstairs came a rumor that the lid was soldered down, and there was nothing left of the face to see; young Count Ostrzenski had aimed well when he shot himself in the mouth.

People came to the funeral from all the villages for miles around. The chance to see a count's funeral didn't come every day. Especially one like this. People said it wasn't certain yet whether the priest would allow the young count to be laid in the family vault in the cemetery. For the count had departed this life of his own free will. But then, why should the coffin have been brought in a special car all the way from Warsaw—as Matwiej the cook had told the maids in the kitchen. It was evident that things had been arranged beforehand with the priest.

Carriages began to arrive from Grabiuy, Podolenicy, Wilkow, and the gentry alighted from them in solemn silence. . . .

The crowd around the entrance swayed and parted as the coffin was carried out. The bell in the chapel tolled, a long-drawn-out moaning knell that spread the news of death the length and breadth of Ostrzen, and away to where the dark dense woods enclosed the horizon.

High on the shoulders of the bearers the silvery coffin swayed. There were six bearers and they had to be relieved by others, though the chapel was not far away. It was not surprising; the coffin was of metal, and the young count was no stripling.

The peasant women whimpered, as was expected of them. The count walked with his wife on his arm; it was long since they had been seen together like that. It was heavy going through the soft sand, especially when they turned into a by-way, and then along the cemetery paths.

The Ostrzenski vault, large as a house, stood immediately behind the chapel. The same name was traced in gilt lettering many, many times, varied occasionally with the maiden names of the wives of generations of dead and gone counts, and the wedded names of their daughters.

The coffin was lowered to the ground. The crowd was so dense that there was nothing to be seen. The priest chanted the service in muffled, sepulchral tones.

There was a creaking and a clattering as the coffin entered the black opening in the wall of the vault; not like peasants' coffins, that were just taken and lowered into the ground. It really seemed more fitting, too, to simply lower a coffin into the ground and shovel the

earth over it. But then this was no common peasant from Mackow, or Brzegi, or Kaliny, or any of the villages hereabouts; it was young Count Ostrzenski; things had to be done differently for him.

The crowd melted and the people drifted homewards, taking the paths leading to Mackow, Brzegi or Kaliny, or wherever they may have come from.

The old count went upstairs to his own room immediately on his return home. From the corner turret of the castle he could look out in three directions over his whole domain, the lands lying close to Ostrzen and those that stretched away in the distance. But he saw nothing. He stood there at the window with the great plate-glass panes that had at some time or other been brought there with such great difficulty, and his eyes were fixed on some invisible point.

And even if his gaze had been attentive, he could not have distinguished the figure of the woman on the sandy road, far beyond the ring of woods and the speck that was the village of Kaliny. Out of a distant world veiled in a blue haze, she was approaching him, drawing nearer to Kaliny and, consequently, to Ostrzen, to the plate-glass windows of the corner turret.

But Count Ostrzenski was not aware of her existence. From the window where he stood she was not so much as a speck on the road, a speck the size of a pin-head.

Anna could hardly drag her legs after her. Her eyes burned in their sockets, little shivers were going up and down her back. And what was worst of all, she was now attacked with pains that shot like knives through her loins and legs and would give her no peace.

"It's just from walking. It isn't that yet . . ." she kept on assuring herself through parched lips. But all the while she knew in her heart—deep down in the depths of her terror—that it was just that.

Her thirst became unbearable. Her feet sank in the sand. At times she fancied she was not moving ahead at all, but simply sinking her feet in that slippery, shifting, death-dealing sand.

She licked her cracked lips. To right and left of her stretched fallow land alternating with meager strips of green rye and rows of potatoes just beginning to show above the ground. But the village was not yet in sight. Here and there a ragged grove of pines rose amid the waste of barren sand and gave off a stuffy smell of pine-tar. But still the dazzling white road stretched away into infinity.

Then she caught sight of a strip of green by the roadside, where the bloodwort spread its broad leaves along the ditch. Anna went towards it and saw a dark puddle, now near the end of its days under the burning rays of the sun that filtered through the sparse shade afforded by the dusty leaves.

With great difficulty she knelt down; the sand felt scorching to her knees. She bent cautiously down to the water. An unpleasant musty smell assailed her nostrils. The water was warmish, and as soon as she touched it with her lips, the mud and evil-smelling ooze of the ditch rose to the surface. The taste of the earth was on her lips, the grit under her teeth. She pressed with all her might on her hands, feeling the blood rush to her head. Darkness wreathed and swam before her eyes. She got to her feet, groaning, and stood a while as though blind by the roadside, seeing nothing but whirling black spots that shut out the sunlight. She staggered like a drunken woman.

A moment later the glaring day reappeared out of the darkness and the road detached itself from the

haze before her eyes. Anna walked on again, struggling with the weakness that shackled her legs. She plodded along as if wading through thick seaweed, or through the slippery stems of water-lilies that twine about a drowning man and drag him down, down with irresistible strength.

She came to another little pine wood. For a moment she was tempted to sit down in the shade and stretch her exhausted limbs and wait until this agony of weariness had passed. But she knew that if she once lay down she would never rise again. And then there was really very little shade in the wood. The sun blazed down through the sparse boughs on dry ground strewn with pine-needles. So she trudged on, trying not to look at the road. It was a killing road—straight, even, without a single turning. It seemed endless—it held out no hope of any unexpected relief. Without a break, unbending, it ran on and on, as if never to end or to alter.

Suddenly Anna felt a new pain, a different one from the convulsive, prolonged attacks in her loins. It frightened her.

"No, no, it can't be that! It must be that water I drank!"

She strove with all her might to recall the putrid taste of the ditch-water to her parched lips. In the memory of the slime of the puddle lay her only salvation from the thought that *it* had come, that *it* was going to happen here on the white-hot, deserted road, here under the scorching rays of the sun, here on the shifting sand.

Then a new sound mingled with the shuffle of her own footsteps. She stood still, listening. Yes, it was a dog barking. It couldn't be anything else. The dry lips moved. She hurried on.

Now the pine wood came to an end, and the ring of distant blue forests opened right and left. Within their dark embrace the meager fields swam in the sun and a gleam of water caught the weary eye.

"A river," Anna whispered and tears rose to her eyes. For a moment her gaze rested on the silvery streak, the minute ripples that could be distinguished even at this distance, on living water, real water that the sand had not been able to drink up.

Then her eyes were drawn by the village slumbering by the roadside. There were the houses with grey weather-darkened thatch; the tall windlass of the well; a weathercock on one of the houses.

It was quite near now. Anna measured the distance with her eye.

"Will I get there?" she asked of herself, of her aching legs now bending under her, and of the pains that were growing worse, agonizing, flowing over her like the tide—steadily, monotonously, inevitably.

Every moment now the twisted, bowed plum-trees and low, spreading apple-trees grew more distinct. A dog barked, another answered, then another, till soon every yard resounded to deep sullen barks, complaining whines and wolfish howls.

Anna was not looking at the ground. Her burning eyes were fixed on the village—the village, where there were people, and houses, and all that she had longed for during the long, tormenting hours of her pilgrimage.

Careless for the moment, she slackened her pace. Every movement was agony now. She strove to hurry in the short intervals between the spasms, when the ruthless vise of pain released her a little and she was able to take her breath. But these intervals came more rarely now. The pains came on worse, racked her, devoured her, more mercilessly than ever. She wanted to fling herself down on the red-hot sand and scream and howl, so as not to think of what lay ahead, so as to smother that wild terror,

tame the fury that could mock a human being so cruelly.

The village was at hand now. Another ten paces or so, another five now, and Anna was in the village street with houses on either side of her. Here, at long last, the end was reached! She had reached her goal. Behind the crooked fence of the first house there were dwarf fruit trees, bent almost to the ground, their trunks covered with moss and lichens. A girl came out of the house, leisurely combing her thin greasy hair with a broken comb. She looked at Anna with the attentive, indifferent scrutiny of a stranger. And Anna could not summon up courage to walk in behind the crooked fence. Slowly, slowly, she passed by the house; the strange girl's eyes followed her. Anna knew, yes, she knew very well, what the girl was staring at so attentively.

The last scrap of energy that she could wring from her exhausted frame when she had been plodding toward the unseen village now deserted her. There was no longer a vestige of support of any kind, there was nothing more to strive for, and the pains were getting worse. She clenched her teeth. She had to drag every step out of herself now as if by the hair, as if pulling something up out of the very depths of her being. The perspiration gathered thickly on her brow.

A dog darted out from round a corner and flung itself in her path, barking shrilly.

Anna gave a start. This dog, little more than a puppy, a lean little mongrel, an extraordinary mixture of the most unlikely breeds, frightened her more than anything. A woman came to the door of a house and looked out; and again Anna caught the indifferent gaze of a stranger.

Now she was no longer thinking of anything. She moved along like a damaged, creaking automaton that was still working somehow. As through a fog she saw children playing by the roadside. Why had she ever come here? All she wished now was to get away again, to escape from this row of houses, these drab fences, drab roofs, drab people, to get out again to the sand, into the fields, to the pine woods, and fling herself down there and die, where no one could see her, no one would know, no one would look at her with alien, indifferent eyes.

Her clouding eyes could make out the silvery tops of tall trees and the river that swept in a wide curve around the village. A few more steps, only a few more steps. . . .

Then she stumbled. And something, somewhere in the depths of her body reacted to it as to one more undeserved blow, one more thing added to the burden that was already past bearing. She stumbled again—there were stones hidden under the sand. Her dry lips twitched like a child's. Her eyes filled with tears. She wept softly, weakly, complainingly, like a child. She could feel the salt tears pouring down her face. She stumbled a third time. And now she had no strength left to move and recover her balance. At the last house she sank on her knees in the middle of the road. Now she knew her time had come. She fell on her back.

Slowly and at first mistrustfully children appeared from nowhere. By twos and threes they came. Little boys, in shirts and torn trousers, approached within a few paces of her. And watched her.

A prolonged moan, a screech like that of some wild beast in pain, burst from the lips of the woman. The children started back. But overpowering curiosity got the better of their fear of the unknown: soon they were back again.

Anna compressed her white lips, but it was no use. Her moans,

which did not resemble those of a human being, came quicker, louder, rose to shrieks of agony.

A tiny boy bent down, picked up a stone, and moved a little nearer.

"Get up, you!"

Anna looked at him with bloodshot eyes. The stone flung by the little hand struck her in the leg. She screamed. Another stone struck her. A wild panic came over her. She tried to get up, but fell again. She could feel her skirt wet through, even the sand under her was wet. A moment more and *it* would happen, here in the roadway, under the blow of stones, flung at her by little children.

"Help, someone!"

Just then she noticed an old woman leaning against a fence and coolly observing what was going on.

"Have pity! . . ."

Shadows stirred. Through a mist she saw people coming towards her. She heard, though she could not distinguish the words, someone driving away the children.

The women stood a few paces off; there were five of them. A man spat out and moved aside.

"A vagrant, evidently. . . ."

"What a time to take to the road. . . ."

"She's going to have the child right now, that's certain. . . ."

"Send her about her business—that's what we ought. . . ."

"You can't send her very far now. . . ."

"She's not from Domaniewicy, is she?"

"No, she doesn't seem to be. . . ."

Anna spread her legs. That was better. No need now to keep down the pain, no need now to put off the time. Let come what come might!

"Well, I never did! The things you do see in this world, my dears," Mrs. Bani said in a condoling voice, shaking her untidy head.

"You're a midwife, go and help her," one of the women suggested.

The children, who had retired for a minute or two, now returned.

"What I say is—it's a sin and mortal shame," said Mrs. Bani, with a self-righteous quirk.

"She should at least be taken into a barn."

"Good-natured, ain't you! Take her into your own!"

"Saliniakc's is empty, we could put her in there. . . ."

This idea pleased everybody. The barn was all that was left of Saliniakc's possessions after the fire, and the man himself had gone to settle in the town. The roof of the barn was leaking, the door was broken down, but it was good enough for a vagabond woman.

"Kasimierz, fetch a horsecloth here!"

The old peasant hobbled home, and after rummaging in a closet for some time, brought out the length of coarse, striped linen that he used to throw over the seat of his cart. Together the women laid Anna upon it. The barn was not very far away.

"We ought to put a bit of straw under her. There's some in the corner."

All this time Anna was trembling with fear that they would go away and leave her alone. She felt nothing but a blind instinct of self-preservation. And at that moment she feared for two.

"Now lay her down!"

It was a relief to feel the coolness of the barn and the straw crackling beneath the tattered horsecloth. The pains came on again. She shrieked. She tried to keep back the shrieks, but that was beyond her power. She howled. The sound echoed among the rafters and was drowned in the rotting thatch. A muffled drumming of showers of stones on the roof could be heard.

"Chase those brats away!"

One of the women darted out and shouted at them. Inside the barn

Mrs. Bani was bustling about the woman.

"Fetch some water! Mrs. Rojek, you've got your stove on, haven't you? Maybe you can let me have some hot water?''

"I'll run and see."

"I'd need a few rags, too. . . . And now all you women can clear out of here, you're only getting under my feet. . . ."

The women went out. Some strolled home to look for rags.

Sparrows twittered in the thatch. The door creaked on its rusty hinges.

"It's a boy,'' said Mrs. Bani, as she straightened up from bending over the prostrate figure of Anna.

Anna's transparent fingers stirred. She could not utter a word. It was all the same to her whether it was a boy or a girl. The main thing was that she need no longer tramp along a dreary road; that she could lie still, free at last of the pains that twisted and coiled into knots, feel the thin warm streams of blood trickling down her legs, and drink the water from the tin ladle the strange old woman was holding out to her. An irresistible drowsiness came over her. Somewhere beyond the door the dusk must be falling, because it was gradually growing dark in the barn. The newborn child cried, but Anna did not stir. She cared for nothing now, nothing in the world. She lay stretched out on her back. Through a hole in the thatch she caught the pale glimmer of the evening star. She smiled at the star with a faraway, faint smile. There was a rustle in the straw; Mrs. Bani was examining the infant.

"And a fine boy he is, I must say. . . ."

Anna did not hear her. Mrs. Bani gave an angry little kick of annoyance to the edge of the horsecloth.

"These kind have all the luck. A boy—and you couldn't see a finer!"

The sparrows were quiet now. Evidently they had built their nests under the eaves, for from time to time there was a stirring in them. It was a bright moonlight night that looked in through the opening of the broken door. The women drifted out from their houses and gathered at the barn again.

"Fancy having a baby right in the middle of the road! Who ever heard of such a thing!"

"Maybe she didn't reckon right..."

"How could she make a mistake! Didn't reckon right, indeed! The baby's not come before its time, has it?"

"No, it's all right. A boy—and a perfect picture," Mrs. Bani bragged.

"A fatherless brat, very likely. . ." scraggy Mrs. Ignach sneered, pursing her lips.

"And maybe not. . . ."

"Oh, I'm sure! If he wasn't, she'd have stayed at home, wouldn't she, instead of tramping about the roads. . . ."

Brisk footsteps were heard outside.

"The alderman's wife is coming!"

The women retreated a little, turning hostile glances on the young woman coming towards them.

"I was at my mother's in Rosochi and I've just been told. . . . Where is she?"

"She's lying in there. . . ."

"Why, in the barn? Have you any consciences at all?"

"Why, were we supposed to take her into the house?" Mrs. Ignach snapped.

But their indignation was already dying down.

"Maybe I ought to bring her a drop of milk. . . ." Mrs. Plycina said thoughtfully.

"And you've treated her like a dog till now?" the alderman's wife reproached them, cracking her finger-joints in vexation. Then, with a rustle of skirts, she went into the barn.

"How dark it is, you can't see

a thing. . . . Hey, Staszek, where are you? Run for the alderman, and tell him to come here this very minute."

"You'll see, the woman will be put in your house yet, Mrs. Bani," one of the women muttered.

She was not mistaken. The village alderman appeared on the scene, and everything was changed in a trice. It turned out just as they had expected. The sick woman was carried to Mrs. Bani's house.

"You're a midwife and the woman needs looking after," said the alderman with a frown. There was no question of asking Mrs. Bani's opinion on the matter at all.

"I'd like to see who's going to feed and look after the child," Mrs. Bani grumbled, under her breath.

The alderman heard her.

"You don't have to worry about that. The village will pay if nobody else can be found to do it."

"Very free with the village funds, isn't he?" the women muttered among themselves, but no one attempted to raise any objections.

A cot was found and some milk, and things began to move quickly and in an orderly way. The village women hung about Mrs. Bani's house, peering in at the window. The strange woman lay like a corpse; her eyes were closed; the slim, emaciated fingers lying on the horsecloth never stirred.

"She'll die for certain," declared one of the women who had her face pressed close to the window.

But now Mrs. Bani had taken charge, and she drove them away.

"What are you gaping at, I'd like to know! There's nothing to see. You'd do better to go home about your own business. And you, too, Mrs. Rojek, I can hear your little boy screaming even here!"

The women retired from the window, but were in no hurry to go home yet; too many things were happening in Kaliny all in one day; there had been young Count Ostrzenski's funeral, and then this stranger nearly having a baby in the middle of the road. . . . The village gossips gathered at the fence and gave their tongues full rein.

II

Wincenty was on his way to the smith's house. Every day, as soon as he had to start teaching, a dull rage took possession of him.

Through the small open windows came the hum of voices in the classroom. It was like a hive. Bare feet shuffled over the matting. The boys by the wall were sparring. At the creak of the opening door, silence fell.

Wincenty sat down at the rickety table. Yes, of course, it shook just as much as it had yesterday, as it did every day. He leaned on it, and glanced beneath it. Yes, it was just as he had expected; the wedge had made no difference; the floorboards were warped and uneven.

One of the children snickered. Wincenty straightened up threateningly. It was always the same—he could not help but test the table to see whether it shook or not. . . . He knew that several score eyes were waiting just for that moment, that inevitable daily ritual. Yet he did it every day, automatically, as it were.

In a monotonous chorus, the children recited the prayers, gabbling the closing phrases. Wincenty looked at the dull, drab crowd of pupils and an uncontrollable, clinging boredom came over him. He opened the register.

"Present."

"Present."

"Absent."

"Absent."

"Is Stasiak away again?"

"He's got to mind the baby, his mother's gone out weeding!" squeaked Zarzewiak's little girl from the back form.

"Antoniak."

"He's minding the cows."

"Zacharzhuk?"

"He's gone out fishing with his dad."

Wincenty shrugged his shoulders. It was always the same. It looked like intentional, passive, stubborn resistance.

"They'll just have to pay the fine, that's all," he commented drily, noting down the names on a scrap of paper.

"The Stasiaks won't pay."

"Oh, I don't know. They'll pay sooner than the Zacharczuks!"

"No talking there!"

The buzz of argument died down. With a kind of revengeful persistence the teacher went on with the list of absentees. Let it go at that, then. They must take the consequences. This was the rule and that was all about it.

It was quiet in the classroom, except for little Anielka, who was never without a cold and snuffled all the time.

"Now begin reading."

A grimy boy droned meaninglessly, haltingly, spelling out the words, following the lines of print with a grubby finger. Indignation welled up in Wincenty, swept over him like a wave, gathered in a mist of rage before his eyes. He went between the benches and stopped by the reader.

"You were away again yesterday."

The boy looked up at him with his round expressionless eyes but said nothing.

"And you can't read yet. It's your third year."

The round cropped head nodded.

"Why don't you attend school regularly?"

"I went berry-picking. . . . You know, I have to. . . ."

"You're all the same. It's either the grazing or the berry-picking or minding the children—you do just whatever you fancy! But you've never any time to come to school. And what's the result? Have any of you learned anything? Not a thing! There's no sense whatever in my struggle against you, and wearing myself out over you!"

He stopped himself. What was the point of saying all this? The eyes of the pupils were looking into his—blue, grey, black and greenish eyes, indifferent eyes, in alien, hostile faces. Perhaps there was derision, too, in the look—they were amused by his "acting funny"—or perhaps it was only hostility.

"Come out to the blackboard."

The small clumsy fingers, red with the winter's frostbite, could not manage the chalk. The chalk was no good, either, it crumbled away like the whitewash on the walls of the smith's cottage.

Columns of white figures made their appearance on the board. And what was the point of them? It was doubtful if the trustee would drop in today; he would hardly give himself the trouble. The school year was almost at an end, the holidays were coming. . . . Well, and in the autumn, if all went well, smoothly, the new school-building that looked out on the road with its blind, broken windows should be ready, and they would be able to get out of this hovel, this tumbledown shack. Then . . . what then?

The chalk squeaked across the slippery surface of the blackboard, and at the same moment a heart-rending squeal was heard from the passage. The smith's wife was chasing the pig out into the yard and her scolding voice was clearly audible. The faces in the classroom brightened at once. Yes, this was

something at which they could laugh. If a hen flew up on the window-sill, or the smith could be heard quarreling with his wife, or a passing cow lowed right in at the window, then the guarded hostility vanished for the moment, and broad smiles wreathed the pale lips. The rest of the time stolid indifference created an insuperable barrier between teacher and pupils and froze the finest intentions.

"And what if the trustee should drop in?"

Wincenty felt an unpleasant shiver down his back. With startling clearness, he saw the long empty columns of absent pupils in the class-register, the soiled, blotted exercise-books with their carelessly corrected exercises, done by pupils who after three years of schooling could only spell out the words, the lessons conducted without the aid of any "materials" and apparatus for "object lessons," although it would be easy to collect them, if one tried—there were plenty of them in the woods and water and the meadow beyond Kaliny.

Yes, if only one tried! But why should one, if it came to that? Would that alter anything, would it have the power to bring about a change and break down the wall of indifference?

A sickening smell of cabbage penetrated through the chinks from the next room, and mingled with the odors of perspiration and unwashed bodies. Even opening the little windows with their rotting frames did not help. Out of doors the day was a shining green and azure glory, but here all was gloomy, and the stuffy atmosphere made one's head heavy. A carefree oriole was uttering joyous calls in the pine-trees across the way. But they sounded as if coming from another world, a world of fairy tales that crumbled and vanished the moment one entered the smith's cottage in the morning, not to leave it for many a long hour.

The schoolmaster closed the register with a bang. The children scrambled noisily out of their places, each striving to leave the room first. Gabbling the closing prayer as they went, they rushed like a crazy flock of sheep out into the green and blue and golden world, bony ankles twinkling along the road and the field paths.

Wincenty stood on the threshold, puffing leisurely at his cigarette. Meanwhile the next class was assembling. The same thing began all over again; the class-register, the list of absent pupils—the number of these mounted every day, independent of the season. At first the excuse was that the cows had to be driven out to pasture, then it was berry-time, then—when the grey mists of autumn veiled the fields—there were potatoes to be dug; frosts set in, and were followed by the spring-time, when the vegetables had to be planted. Then berry-time and grazing came round again. But it was not this that Wincenty regarded as most important. The school stood aloof from life, from the grazing, the potato-picking, the minding of younger members of the family, the berry-picking and the mushroom-gathering. Sheets of white paper with penalties and fines held a little crowd together, brought them to school at least once every few days. Without these, it was doubtful if any of the children would have turned up, with the sole exception of little Petronelka, whose aunt sent her regularly all the year round.

But, then—suppose all the children did turn up at the same time? Suppose a day came when it was not necessary to place a single cross in the register against the name of an absent pupil? Then the children would have to be divided into five or six groups, instead of into three,

as they were now, and the schoolmaster would have to sit at the rickety table in the smith's cottage not eight hours a day, but twelve or fifteen or even more.

He stifled a yawn of irritation, called a pupil out to the blackboard, and told him to write down figures; white figures on the shiny polished surface of the blackboard. The minutes followed each other reluctantly, with an effort. Like sticky tar or liquid dough they crept on, making no apparent progress. Wincenty glanced furtively at his watch. But the hands moved more slowly all the time. On the other side of the wall, the smith and his wife were sitting down to dinner. He could hear the smith eating the sour cabbage soup, sucking it off the spoon with a gurgle. Anielka squabbled with her brother, and then started to tell a funny story in a whisper; it must have been funny, because even the mother sniggered.

"It's probably about me," thought Wincenty, no longer listening to Kazimierczuk's reading. He tried to distinguish what they were saying on the other side of that chink-ridden wall, but he could not catch a word, only the hum of voices.

Flies buzzed annoyingly, circling in clouds in the open windows. The children stared at him sleepily. The strong sweet resinous scent of sun-warmed pines came in at the open window and pierced through even that dank cabbagy atmosphere.

The end came at last.

Wincenty waited awhile until they had all cleared out and gone their ways along the road and the footpaths. He did not like passing the children on the road. He felt that hostile eyes were following him, and he preferred to see them before him in school and not in the street, where he knew without looking at them that they were hostile.

The dry sand of the path creaked under his steps. He ought to go home, where dinner would be waiting for him. But he did not want to turn towards the village. Instead, he walked on in the direction of the woods.

The smell of the pines was hot and sweet and powerful. Overhead the branches, the fans of needles, the green tops of copper-colored trees rustled and whispered. A golden oriole swung on a bough. Wincenty raised his weary eyes. He took deep breaths of the perfumed forest air, the smell of the pine-needles, of the aromatic resin trickling down the bark, of the dry moss and the rusty needles underfoot.

The track led out to a meadow. A moment later Wincenty was wading through thick undergrowth, his legs hitting against the stems of wild flowers, starry dog-daisies, with their golden eyes turned up to the sky. Here the ground sloped gradually. He had to pick his steps in the slippery, marshy soil. It changed again in a minute and he came to the firmer ground of the bank that bordered the lake. Wincenty thrust aside the hazel bushes. The smell of water, sweet-flag and green dampness came to his nostrils. The still, dark lake lay in a frame of shrubs and trees, a thicket of reeds and the feathery stalks of rushes. The spreading leaves of the water-lilies lay flat on its surface and the white flowers stood out like stars on the dark background. Holding on to a branch of hazel, Wincenty jumped down to where a fishing-boat lay with its nose in the moist, slippery sand. He cleared out the water collected in the bottom with a rotting scoop, and got into the boat. The dark creek was only ruffled for a few moments, then grew still. He rowed slowly, languidly. The oar plunged into the water, the broad bow of the little craft moved silently ahead. Tiny wavelets broke at her sides and melted away. The depths

reflected the sky and the quivering alders on the bank.

The oar caught in the twining stems of the lilies. The schoolmaster freed it and drove the boat on.

Once the bay of a river, the lake stretched in a long narrow strip. On one side green flowery meadows sloped gently down to it, on the other it was bounded by a steep bank where the undergrowth and rushes were thick. About the trunks of the alders hop-vines crept, their sharp leaves catching on the thorns of the stunted arbutus. Myriads of tiny golden-brown cockchafers glittered on the wild rose bushes. The lilac flowers of the banewort drooped down to the water's edge, mingling with the yellow tongues of the iris. And all this green world hummed with gnats and cockchafers and gadflies—all the incessant choir of a summer's day.

The flags and reeds and rushes had advanced far into the water, claiming ever more of it, thrusting out boldly along the shallows into deeper water, forming a miniature green gorge through which the boat moved with difficulty. In addition, great clumps of sedge, its deceptive feathery leaves armed with sharp prickles, extended over the surface. Its delicate roots hung free in the water, while the leaves reached out and formed an almost impassable thicket. Every stroke of the oar demanded an effort. The water in the wake of the boat was clear for but an instant; then the parted plants closed in again over the secret of the waters and assumed their usual appearance of a green meadow.

The boat almost collided with the stakes on which a fishing-net was stretched in the water. Wincenty bent forward, but could not see if the treacherous net contained anything.

With a few strokes he was out in the clear breadth of the lake. On the dark water by the banks the immaculate whiteness of the lilies stood out. But in the middle of the lake was a clear expanse of tranquil, deep green water. Wincenty laid down his oar and let his fingers trail through the water. On the surface it was warm, but a very little deeper it was fresh and invigorating, chilled by a current that came from the bottom of the lake.

The water was alive. The fantastic shapes of the lake jungle could be discerned in the green twilight—marvelous trees of a fairy forest, resembling those that frost etches on the window-pane. From the bottom rose the sedge, a freakish cactus filmed with the rusty efflorescence of the ooze. Under the water the leaves of the lilies—supple, luxuriant flakes of light green—formed an impenetrable thicket. Slippery, snaky stems coiled up to the surface, expanding into smooth brown heart-shaped foliage. Wincenty had already learnt to distinguish between the rounded leaves of the white lilies and the pointed, beautifully-formed leaves of the yellow variety, which were more frequently met with and grew in large masses.

Under the water-lily leaves a little pike hung motionless. Through the translucent water Wincenty could see quite clearly the sharp outline of its jaw and the furtive greedy eye, watching the watery spaces. It did not move when the boat glided slowly by, propelled by a breath that could not be felt, but kept near the surface, looking like a bit of floating wood, motionless as death, but tense as a bow-string ready to release the arrow. Here at the surface little fish darted, flashing like quicksilver in unexpected turns and dives.

The bottom sank and the fairy forest vanished. Now the last clumps of lilies were sending up their white and yellow blooms to the surface.

All the rest was swallowed up in the depths. Ooze, sand, sharp gravel from the former bed of the river that had flowed here before the first settlers came to the meadows by the River Bug took the place of the forest under the water.

The boat rocked on the fathomless lake. Wincenty lay down on the wet planks and stared up into a cloudless sky. A gull screamed over the meadow, and the wild duck quacked in response from their haunts in the reeds. The bulrushes sighed and shivered and sang their own mysterious song. A big cockchafer hovered over the insignificant flowers of the arrowhead. The silence of the lake was filled with voices, music, scents. The splash of a fish could be heard from somewhere nearer the shore.

The teacher's eyes ached with gazing into the dazzling sky. The boat rocked drowsily. The day was engulfed in its own enchanting azure; the silence made one languorous, robbed one of the power to move. Everything was diffused in reverie, in color and glitter and the music of the lake-shore. There was no longer any school or village or Wincenty; there was nothing save a green and golden and azure world, softly, smoothly, lightly swaying. . . .

There was a violent splash. Voices rang out. Wincenty awoke. Drowsiness had crept over him so unexpectedly that he had not noticed it; now he was shivering. His clothes were wet, water had collected in the bottom of the boat. Oblique rays of sunlight were cast from behind the trees. Evening was coming on. The first of the evening shadows lay across the water, though the meadows were still in sunlight.

"Pull!"

The voice carried far over the water. Two people were standing in a boat, dragging out the stakes of the net near the shore. Slowly a long sack-like contrivance, stretched over hoops, was drawn to the surface. This was the ambush that had been laid for the wanderers of the watery depths. Wincenty watched them from his boat, working his oar feebly. He was hungry. He remembered that he had eaten nothing since early morning. But he was anxious to see what the fishermen had caught.

The water glittered for an instant in the meshes of the net with rainbow hues, each mesh a tiny mirror for a flitting second. Then there was a glimpse of the dark solid body of a well-fed tench, and the catch was flung into the boat.

Wincenty recognized the fishermen now: it was Zacharczuk and his son. His lips set in a thin, compressed line. The two noticed him. The old man took off his cap. Wincenty returned the greeting with a rather curt nod, but said nothing. It was not worth while giving vent to irritation just now.

The two had evidently been here for some time. Several bronze-colored nets were drying on stakes on the shore.

Wincenty watched them dragging in a second net, empty this time, and then a third, containing a pike. Once he caught Zacharczuk's suspicious eye on him. With a little shrug he turned the boat and rowed slowly back to the shore. The shadows were growing longer over the water, and the sky was lit up with golden light. The shores were silent, no life stirred there. Their sounds, their music and songs had died away. The water lay under the spell of silence. There was a chilly gloom in its depths, the bed had sunk, and beneath the boat a black abyss yawned. The plash of the oar was the only sound that disturbed the stillness.

Gradually a mist arose on the dark green surface. The lake breathed curling wreaths of grey vapor.

A solid white wall arose at the stern of the boat, and far ahead of her banks of mist were rolling higher. But that was still some distance away; at the spot where the oar was plunged into the water, there was only a transparent wreathing fog that skimmed lazily over the surface; there was the breath of the water, moist and chilling.

A light breeze blew from the meadows. At the turn, where the marshy fields cut into the forest ramparts, the fog crept further, retreating from the water and floating over the flat stretches of sodden grass, spreading thick like cotton wool over the plain. The other, narrower part of the lake remained clear of mist—the wind had slashed at the white wall with its sharp wing, with a breath from invisible lips, a cold breath from the side where the sloping meadows lay.

Wincenty moored the boat at a little marshy headland, and made it fast, twisting the chain around the bent trunk of an alder. The lock grated.

There was a stir in the reeds above. Wincenty looked up. Anna was standing among the hazels. He felt embarrassed.

"You didn't come home to your dinner."

"I wanted to go out rowing a little."

"Such a long time!"

He made no reply. Catching at the supple branches of the hazels for support, he climbed the bank, and went up to her.

"And I've been gathering Mrs. Bani's hay here."

"Has it all been cut now?"

"Yes. There wasn't so much of it."

They walked slowly. The day was dying. Shadows were gathering thickly here now. High above them the sky was a crimson radiance that looked like the glow of a distant conflagration.

"It's not cheerful, somehow . . ." Anna said unexpectedly. He expressed surprise, without pausing to think why.

"What's up?"

The mournful feeling came from the meadows; it was the sadness of evening; it was incomprehensible; it sprang from some undefinable cause. A bird stirred in the bushes. Anna started and then laughed at her own alarm.

"Every little thing frightens you of an evening. . . ."

And once more—how often it had happened already!—the melodious quality of her voice struck Wincenty. He shrugged his shoulders. There was no sense in that.

"Here we are at Kaliny."

The white umbrella-wort glimmered in the dusk; a deceitful flower, spreading its four petals around its empty heart and tempting unwary insects.

"It's very pretty here and it's still better in the daytime, but even then it's sad."

He glanced at her soft profile.

"You're always sad somehow. Are the neighbors nasty to you?"

She stooped down and plucked a head of scabious.

"Oh, what's that to worry about. . . . Nobody has such an easy time. Listen, this is a song we usually sing:

"As droops the hazel in the wood,
So my poor heart was drooping.
Say, heart, what makes so sad a
mood—
The sun the fields is gilding?
The sun's not mine, nor a field have
I got—
My portion is my bitter lot!"

Footsteps sounded behind them. Zacharczuk passed giving them a suspicious glance. Anna stood still.

"You go on home this way and I'll run round by the meadows."

"It's damp down there, and boggy. . . ."

"Never mind. There are paths."

She vanished, melted away into the darkness. Wincenty walked on slowly. Now the full burden of the sadness of the evening settled down upon him. Like a fog it floated from the black trees and the meadows enveloped in darkness. And through the sadness of the evening Anna's mournful, yearning voice echoed from a distance:

"The sun's not mine, nor a field
have I got—
My portion is my bitter lot!"

Wincenty reached the Rojeks' house at last. He passed the woman standing in the doorway and opened the door of his own room. It had a stuffy, unpleasant smell that could never be got out of it, no matter how much he aired it. Evidently the whole house was mildewed. He found the matches and lit the lamp. It illuminated a small circle within which stood a table, a chair and part of the floor. The rest of the room was in darkness. He sat down at the table and stared dully at the knots in the planed boards.

The evening was always the worst time. What was there to do? Correct the scrawls in the dog-eared, untidy exercise books? Write his report? Or prepare the examination papers for the close of the school year?

He felt no inclination to do anything. The last lessons he had set might in all conscience remain uncorrected. The miserable writing, the clumsy sentences, the appalling mistakes in spelling, about which the trustee had said so much only the last time he came. . . . And when all was said and done, what use was it? . . .

Yes, the evening was worst of all. Outside lay the warm summer evening, quiet, yet vibrant with sounds. What should he do to fill these evenings? He knew his few worn books by heart. And he had long since read that stupid novel, borrowed from Staszka. Should he simply go to bed, though he didn't feel at all sleepy?

The lads would be gathering now in the meadow above the Bug, where they would smoke and talk over their affairs. Or they would lounge by the fences and flirt with the girls. That was all out of the question for him.

He remembered a walk he had taken one autumn evening when he first came here. A fresh smell of apples came from the gardens. A thin sliver of icy moon hung in the dark sky. In the dark lane between the buildings near Plaziak's he had collided with a couple. Who they were he had never known and he never wanted to know. Two shadowy forms had risen before his eyes; they had no names or faces.

They had told him plainly that he had better not go wandering about in places where he had no business to be. He had no business here. There was a threat in the simple statement. Some time later he learned that Plaziak's daughter was regarded as the belle of the village and her dowry would be a good-sized piece of land and some money. A week later he saw her. He did not like her; she had a round, pink face, and a turned-up nose stuck between fat cheeks.

Even now, when he recalled that autumn evening, he shrugged his shoulders. He had hoped things would change. But they never did. As soon as he came up to groups of people talking on the road, they stopped talking. He was from strange parts, from another world. It was perfectly true that he had no business here. Sometimes the alderman would talk to him quite

pleasantly for a long time, but only in the proper way—in a cautious official manner.

He was not one of them. He was a stranger. They bowed to him as he went along the road, the women even tried to kiss his hand when they came to consult him about the complaints and fines, but he was always aware of the insuperable barrier that divided him from them. Mrs. Bani quarreled with the Ruslaks, Zacharczuk with Mydlarz, but they were all of the same clan. He was an outsider.

The only person to whom he could talk simply and naturally was Anna. She was an outsider, too. But it was not so easy to get to know her better; circumstances prevented it. Her grey eyes, pale mouth and high bust excited him. When she brought him his dinner, or tidied his room, he was always conscious of Mrs. Rojek's watchful little dark eyes, and of her ears strained to catch every word on the other side of the partition. She kept her eye on them, made excuses—such as that she needed the bucket or the matches—to come into the room, just when Anna was there. He had not the courage to snub the woman; finally it disgusted him so much that he used to leave the house, only returning when he knew that Anna would have gone back to Mrs. Bani, after setting his dinner on the table.

But the very worst of all was that he would have to stay here for the summer, and even the hours that were now given up to the slavery of the lessons would be his own. What was he to do with himself those two long months? He had been dreaming all the winter that he might be able to go away in the summer. But the nearer the holidays came, the farther his dream receded; it proved impossible of realization. His room, his board, and all those deductions for the Aviation Defense League, the State, the National Defense Fund, swallowed up his salary. With the greatest economy he had saved enough only to buy a suit, and that was all. And, then, where was he to go, and why?

He suddenly remembered the cold, empty, faraway flat in Elektoralna Street. Everything was cold and empty and faraway. And why should he go? What was the point in it?

He could go to see Staszka on Sundays. But she would very likely be going to her sister's for the holidays. . . . Yes, she was not an outsider in Buczyny. She had been able to find something in common with the people there, she could get along with villagers, she herself came from a village. . . . Still, there had been no sense in those kisses in the boat that day. He did not really care for her at all. Not with that oily skin and those rough, neglected hands of hers. She had a loud jarring laugh, too, and everything seemed plain and easy to her. At the same time, she wasn't the yielding kind. Well, then, what was he to do? Marry? On what? He found it hard enough to keep body and soul together as it was.

Wincenty got up and began to pace up and down the floor. The floor was warped and uneven and the boards creaked at every step. On the other side of the wall the Rojek children were saying the Lord's Prayer, yawning desperately over it.

"Our Father. . . ."

"How are you saying your prayers? Don't ever go to sleep, Jozek, while you're saying your prayers, because you'll dream of the devil if you do. Now Staszek, it's your turn, you go on. . . ."

"Holy Mother of God. . . ."

"Really, these children are a

regular punishment to me. They're up and down and running like mad all day long, you can't get them home, and then they can't even say their prayers at night. Go on: 'Guardian angel' . . ."

"Guardian angel. . . ." the boyish voices lisped drowsily.

"Now then, what's the matter? You're getting into bed and who's to say 'forgive us our sins,' eh? Who, I'd like to know?"

"Ah, stop pestering them," Rojek interposed.

"Oh, is that it? You're just as bad as they are! It's no business of yours, and your children are to grow up disobedient, are they? The cows got into the blacksmith's grass again today."

Rojek growled out something in reply. Wincenty could not hear what. Then it grew quiet. A bed creaked; Rojek was going to bed. His wife had evidently gone out to feed the pigs. She made a clatter with the trough in the passage, and cursed as she stumbled over the threshold. Wincenty undressed slowly. He had to go to bed early because as soon as it was light the everyday echoes of other people's lives penetrated through the thin boards of the badly built walls. The landlady would wake up first and rouse the children with shouts for them to go and drive out the cows. Then she would start mixing pig-food in a bucket, and call the hens and ducks in her shrill voice.

"It would be nice to live at the school," Wincenty thought. But the school stood among the pines on the hillock, its broken windows looking out as though blind on the road. A few years before a general tax had been levied for the building of the school; the alderman had been very keen on it. After a lot of talking and trouble and evasion and complaints, the peasants had contributed a *zloty* or a *zloty*-and-a-half per *morg* of land. The walls were built and roofed in. The money was not sufficient to do more than that. When the bailiff was expected to come in the autumn, the peasants were cunning enough to try to manage things so that the authorities would pay for the finishing of the school. At the alderman's request, Wincenty had slaved three days to produce some verses, the first and the last he ever wrote in his life. In the end he had produced four verses, which, with immense difficulty, he had hammered into the dull head of Zosia Mydlarz. The bailiff had come—his car had almost stuck in the sand of the road. The whole village had turned out to greet him in the square in front of the school. The alderman had made an eloquent speech that led quite naturally to the subject of the school. Zosia had recited the verses in a wooden voice, forgetting them several times and having to be prompted by the schoolmaster. She reached the closing lines, however, in comparative safety: "And now plainly and simply I'll say from my heart: Welcome to my lord, welcome to the bailiff!" The great man had patted Zosia's head, presented her with a bag of sweets, uttered a few sentences containing some very lofty words, but dropped not the slightest hint about the school—and begun to take leave of them. It appeared that the grand dinner they had prepared (roast ducks and a big pike, caught by Zacharczuk) would be wasted, because the visitor had to be in Ruda by midday. The bewildered and disappointed peasants stood outside the unfinished school building and watched the big black car bumping over the ruts in the road. And the school had remained in the same state ever since, a four-sided box with a roof. Times had changed since the tax per *morg* had been levied, and now even the

alderman no longer entertained any hopes that something could be done by the villagers' own efforts. They had only wasted their hard-earned money on a building that would never serve its purpose. So they had to make up their minds in the end that the school would always be lodged in the blacksmith's house and the schoolmaster would live at Rojek's.

He lay on his bed staring through the darkness at the narrow slip of moonlight shifting slowly across the floor. From the other side of the wall he could hear Rojek's mighty snores and the wife's thin nasal whistle. Light, brisk footsteps passed by on the road. Someone was in a hurry, someone had business to attend to at that late hour. Voices were audible, the fishermen must be going down to the river. At first Wincenty had been interested in the fishing. The Bug, an enchanting silvery river in the moonlight, the regular plash of the oars, the barking of dogs, borne on the clear still air from the lakeside villages, the curiously woven nets and strings, the deep shadows, the mysterious lapping of the water, belonged to a nocturnal world, that was new and strange and in no way resembled the world of broad daylight.

But even here on the water, he felt himself an intruder. He knew that when he was not there the peasants' talk was of a different kind; he felt that he was in their way. "I simply imagine it," sometimes occurred to him, but the feeling itself was sufficient; he was conscious of being unnecessary, unwanted. So he gave up going out with the fishers. Let them go themselves then, let them catch their fish, let the black boat glide into the fluid silver of the night; it was no concern of his. He was an outsider.

It would have been pleasant just now to have had a chat with Anna, and heard her melodious voice. But Anna was asleep by now and besides, if they were to meet at such an hour, the whole village would be agog next day. Oh, how those women watched him! And then—what was the use?

The grey sadness of life, the gloom of hopelessness settled on his heart. What was the purpose of anything? You worked so that you might earn your food, and you ate your food so you might go on working. And so on, there was no end to it. . . .

At that hour Anna was awakened by a tap at the window. She jumped up in terror, her heart beating fast. The house stood right in the moonlight, the window looked like ice, and a black shadow lay across the planking of the floor. Anna sat up in bed, holding her breath. The child was sleeping peacefully in its cradle, a present from the alderman's wife. Anna could hear his even breathing.

Someone rattled the window-frame again. Anna's first instinct was to scream, to run out into the passage to the other room and wake Mrs. Bani. But this was no thief. Her teeth chattered as, flinging off the blanket, she crept cautiously up to the window.

A man was standing outside, she recognized him; it was the widow's son from Rozanka who used to come to drink vodka in Stefanowicz's pub. His face was flattened against the glass and he was staring in attentively. Then he caught sight of her standing there in her chemise, her hand pressed to her wildly-beating heart.

"Open the window!"

The voice was muffled, but all too clear. She waited, listening for a stir from the other half of the house, where Mrs. Bani and the children were asleep.

"Open the window this minute,

do you hear? Or else I'll make a row."

The rickety frame shook, the catch rattled; it had not been properly fastened. Should she scream for help? But who would believe her, to whom could she explain the thing—she, a vagabond who had born a bastard son out in the road?"

With icy fingers she opened the window. It creaked softly. The sound floated away into the velvety, silvery silence of the night.

There was a singing in her head, her teeth chattered. All she thought of was: would the sounds carry to the other side of the passage? What if Mrs. Bani should suddenly burst in and abuse her, and throw her out, fling the defenseless child out of its cradle and drive her out into the velvety, silvery, silent night?

If it would only be over soon; over and done with, so that she might close the window again, hear the retreating footsteps and know that all was quiet once more and that Mrs. Bani was still fast asleep and knew nothing.

There was a smell of vodka and sweat; the bed creaked loudly. "My god, if they should wake up!" She could feel nothing but a deadly fear that it was taking so long, that the bed creaked so, that every minute there would be a shuffling in the passage and Mrs. Bani would come in and then. . . .

"Next time I come, I'll tap twice, do you hear? And you open at once, see? Do many come here?"

Stiff and frozen, Anna sat on the edge of the bed. Not a word could she utter; she felt as if she was choking. Oh, hurry, hurry, hurry! Only let him go, oh, if he would but go! She was ready to say the most tender things—if it had been possible to say anything—she was ready to beg and pray humbly, if he would only go before the most terrible of all calamities happened, before Mrs. Bani woke up.

The window creaked at last. The black shadow vanished into the black of the night, sharply defined against the silver of the moonlight. Black shadows lay over the silvery grass, henbane whitened the black ditch, black trees stood out against a glassy, silvery sky. The grass rustled under his boots, and that was all. All was as before, as if nothing had happened. . .

Only now Anna understood with terrifying clearness that she had signed her own death-warrant. Now she would have to open the window to all who came. She was in their hands now, at the mercy of those who came to Stefanowicz's and sat in the room behind the bar, drinking vodka in secret; at the mercy of those who prowled about the roads and the village at night. They would know; there was no way out of the vicious circle. It was true now—what the women had said, what the whispering tongues had hinted at, what she had seen in the scornful glances, in the shrug of their shoulders, in sentences only half uttered in passing. . . .

There was no salvation for her now. How could she have done it, how could she? She should have called for help, roused Mrs. Bani, lit the candle, turned the dog on the fellow, run out into the road and called all the village as witnesses. . . .

Only—who would believe that things had happened exactly as they had, and not otherwise? That the widow's son from Rozanka had no right to come to her window? They would have believed him, the thief, the drunkard, and not her, not the vagabond who had given birth to a fatherless child on the road. . . .

She flung herself face downwards

on the straw-stuffed pillow. A stifled sobbing burst from her throat, a wild howling like a beast's, a heartrending moan. She would go out into the silver night, run through the dewy grass to the little wood above the river, jump from the high bank into the silvery water, down, down into its black depths—and put an end to everything.

The child stirred in its cradle. Anna got up and went to it. The moonlight fell on the little face and it puckered with displeasure. She moved the cradle out of the light. This little face bound her by links stronger than all else, by a chain that could not be broken, to Mrs. Bani's cottage and the life of every day. It cut off the way to the river. She would just have to stay in the vicious circle, there was no escape, there was no way out. Every night now she would have to listen for footsteps, and her terror would be a hundred times greater, would assume incredible proportions, poison every hour, every moment of her life. And in the end everyone would find out, and it would be proved that they had been right after all when they had cast scornful glances at her, shrugged their shoulders, wounded her with spiteful words thrown out, in passing. She was done for. For ever. He—the schoolmaster—would hear of it, too. And never speak another kind word to her. What was she to him now?

She would have to leave the place in the end. But where could she go? She would have to wander about the sandy roads, through the pine woods, through the land, the sunny, sweet-smelling, blooming land where poison bloomed like the henbane of the ditches, where bitterness grew, thick like the wormwood on the hillsides, where misery flourished like weeds in flax, where from out of the black and silver of the night, the rustling of aspens in the transparent air, the most frightful of all calamities could descend on a human creature.

The beam of moonlight shifted, the moonlit radiance faded in the house. It was still light outside, but within all was dark. She could hear the quiet breathing of the infant born in the road, swaddled in the cast-offs of strangers, sleeping in the cradle of a stranger. The moon would go down and the birds would awake, and out of the dark the sun would rise in a flood of rose and gold. The village would awake, the windlasses of the wells would be creaking, and another day would be born, a day like yesterday, like every other day. But for her it would be a different day: from morning till evening she would be going about, oppressed by the knowledge that the nightfall would bring neither rest, nor sleep, but a crushing weight of terror, a tormenting expectation, as she lay straining to catch every rustle in the grass of the garden; and then at last—the dreadful nightmare. . . .

She got up again and went to the window. Yes, if there had been any people in the road, they must have seen. If someone at the Ignach's had happened to glance out—they must have seen everything. . . How he tapped at the window, and she opened it, and without making the faintest protest, let in the widow's son from Rozanka; and how he had afterwards gone away...

In the morning they would all know. The news would go round like lightning, their suppositions would be proved true. Tongues would wag; the women were right, after all, what they had suspected was true, true, true. . . .

Anna went back to her bed. Her teeth chattered. Tears stood in her eyes, her dry lips moved, murmuring comfortless words. How

long ago it seemed now—the path through the meadows, the hazel copse, and the schoolmaster! He had always such a kind, welcoming smile for her. . . . Where had it come from, that carefree happiness in her breast, the joy springing from sadness, the longing to sing at the top of her voice, to send forth a song out of a full heart, that the hazel copse and the pine-wood might ring with it as in the old days, when things had been so different? . . .

III

Over the green meadow in the direction of the ponds strode Stefan Zielinski on his way from the manor village of Mackow. He whistled gaily as he went. Framed by the green of the meadows, the ponds lay smooth and mirror-like, one larger, one smaller, connected by a narrow channel. Stefan undressed quickly and entered the cold, still water. A shiver ran over him from head to foot.

"Br-r-r!"

Footsteps rustled and the young man looked round. The forester, Waler, was coming with his police dog, which ran sniffing along with its muzzle to the ground. Stefan calmly touched the water with his hands, hesitating to plunge in: it was like an icy hoop squeezing him below the heart.

"Hey, what are you going to do, swim here?"

"And what if I am? Am I in your way? There's no rule against it, is there?"

"Yes and no. If I say you can't, then you can't."

"Then put up a signboard, so everybody will know."

"Don't you try to teach me my business."

"And you—don't jump on me for nothing."

"Get out of the water! You hear?"

"I hear you. I'm not deaf, Mr. Waler."

"Get out this minute!"

"I'll have a swim and then come out."

The forester leaped at the young man and his knout whistled through the air. The blow raised a red welt on the smooth white shoulder of the swimmer. A rush of blood darkened his face.

"Grudge me the water, do you, bully? Come on in and drink it all!"

Waler turned purple with rage. He hastily grabbed up in his arms the clothing lying on the bank.

"Don't touch my clothes."

"Shut your trap, you hear?"

"And don't you bully me! When the people caught you by the Bug River, you begged for mercy on your knees, but you're mighty brave now, aren't you?"

Down the path ran a big, tawny dog of wolfish strain. It halted and waited for its master. Another forester, Sowiak, was running to help his fellow.

"Sock him in the mug, Alojzy, sock him. Teach the bully a lesson."

"Bully yourself!"

Zielinski, naked and blue from cold, dashed at them from the water. The dogs growled low.

"Give me my clothes!"

"Well, we'll see about that."

The young man clenched his fists. At once a hail of blows rained over his head, his naked shoulders and breast.

"That'll teach you, my bully! You better listen when a forester speaks to you. Grab him, Reks!"

The police dog lunged and with one mighty leap was upon the young man; sharp white fangs seized his calf.

"Ou-uch!"

"Oho! you see? Grab him, Sojka!"

The young man cast a hunted look around. Not far from the water stood a low, twisted acacia. Stefan tore his leg from the fangs of the dog and with great leaps dashed at top speed toward the tree.

"Reks, Sojka, get him!"

He heard the dogs panting behind him, felt the hot breath from their muzzles. With a sudden leap he flung himself into the air and caught hold of a branch. He felt the sharp thorns scratching his body, the scrape of the rough bark, while the green, prickly branches lashed his face. He drew up his bare legs beneath him as the dogs leaped into the air and slid back along the trunk.

"Reks, Sojka, bite him!"

"Don't split your throat for nothing, Mr. Waler. Dogs haven't learned yet how to climb trees."

A stone whistled through the air and hit the young fellow hard in the chest.

"O-o-ow!"

"You see? We'll get to you up there just the same, don't think we won't."

His eyes wide with fright, the lad stared at the foresters. They raged like madmen. From the forester's house nearby, Sowiak's two children ran out.

"Genia, Jozek, gather up stones! Bring them here! Come here, Grabarczuk, and see what kind of a bird is roosting up in the tree."

Grabarczuk, the overseer, looked up and laughed.

"Playing Adam in paradise? Give it to him in the guts, the bully, in the guts! Teach him something."

Again stones whistled and the leaves of the acacia fluttered to the ground.

"Mercy, men! What are you doing?"

"Oh! so that's the way now? You used different lingo before. Jozek, Genia, hurry up with those stones. Over there under the brush you'll find more."

"Mer-cy!"

"Holler away, why don't you! Somebody will hear you if you keep it up."

Barking furiously the dogs leaped at the twisted trunk. Sowiak came nearer.

"Get down!"

With bloodshot eyes the young fellow looked down at the raging beasts.

"The dogs . . ."

"Afraid of the dogs? Get down, you hear? Or else . . ."

The cleverly thrown stone hit the mark. A piercing groan broke from Zielinski's breast.

"Get down!"

And again a stone. The little Jozek came running back from the bank with a whole pile of them. A dark film dimmed Stefan's eyes; his mouth filled with blood, and his entrails were torn by a wild, unbearable pain. The dogs leaped higher and higher. In despair the lad felt that his fingers were growing weaker, that the harsh bark of the acacia was slipping from his fingers, that everything was swaying back and forth in front of him as if the tree were flung about in a raging tempest, its top bending to the very ground. He tried to say something, but from his bloody lips came only disconnected muttering, inhuman gurgling sounds. His numbed fingers relaxed and the branches of the acacia flew rustling upwards. The lad fell between the dogs like a bag of stones.

"Stand up! Back, Reks, back, Sojka."

"Why, he's not moving."

"He'll move pretty quick. Stir

him up with the knout, Waler, let him have it."

The forester stepped forward, but his uplifted lash hung in the air; two wide-open, glassy, unseeing eyes of a corpse stared at him from the blood-smeared face.

"Listen, Grabarczuk . . ."

The dogs sat back on their haunches, the fur ruffling on their spines. Waler wiped with his palm the sudden sweat from his brow.

"Has he croaked?"

"Sure not. You couldn't kill a bully like that so easy if you wanted to. He'll come to."

Grabarczuk took the lad's motionless hand, but there was no sign of a pulse. He lifted the eyelid.

"Looks like he's dead. . . . He's turned cold . . ." he confirmed in a voice that sounded strangely unlike his own.

"It's all your fault, Grabarczuk. . . . You egged us on. 'In the guts, the bully, give it to him in the guts,'" faltered Waler, stuttering and whining.

"I did? And who pitched into him before I ever came? Who told the boys to gather stones? Maybe it was me? You're caught in the act, Waler."

"Sowiak, too, Sowiak . . ."

"Don't try to get out of it, Grabarczuk," said Sowiak resolutely. "There were three of us in this business."

"I'm not trying to get out of it. Three, you say, then let it be three. One bully the less in this world—no harm done. Did anyone see it? No!"

Involuntarily they looked around. Golden sunlight shone on the solitary meadows, a thin trail of smoke twisted up from the chimney of the forester's house, the village loomed dark and far away by the road. Not a soul anywhere.

"What are we going to do now?"

"Throw him into the water."

"Someone will find him."

"Let them find him. Nobody saw anything. He drowned—and that's all there is to it."

"He's all covered with blood..."

"The water will wash it off. Come on, Sowiak, grab his feet."

Unwillingly, with repugnance, the forester grasped the skinny ankles. The dead man's hands dragged on the ground from either side.

"One, two—let him go!"

The body swung out and splashed heavily into the water. Circles spread ever wider and more distinct, and ripples splashed against the bank.

"That's that. You, Sowiak, shut the mouths of your kids so they won't go blabbing. Then into the woods with you and don't come back till evening. Nobody saw, nobody heard—and there's an end of it in the water."

Genia and Jozek, huddled together, trembled as in a chill and looked in fright toward the place in the water where the body had fallen.

"Did you hear what the *pan* overseer said? Don't you dare squeak! Not to your mother nor anybody else, or I'll beat the daylights out of you. I swear to god I will! Get home now, and remember, you weren't here at all. Understand, Jozek"

"I un-der-stand . . ."

"That's the way. Tell mother I'll be back in the evening."

The children ran to their house, and the foresters went toward the woods. Waler set out for the Dark Ravines; Sowiak and Grabarczuk, for Wilczinkow.

Only then did little Franek Stokowski venture to stir in his hiding-place among the lupines. The lupines gave off a heavy smell that made his head ache; everything was dark before his eyes, his limbs were numb with fear. At the very

beginning, as soon as they had let the dogs loose, he ought to have run back to the village and called people, and told them that the foresters were beating Zielinski. But he had not dared. More than anything else in the world he dreaded those dogs, with their frightful muzzles, their huge teeth, whiter than cheese, their long tongues hanging out of their jaws like a purple flame. And afterwards it had been too late. He had crouched down, trembling with fear that they might notice him. And then—he was certain—they would take him by the arms and legs and swing him as they had swung Stefan Zielinski, and throw him into the water to be eaten up by the fishes. His mother had known what she was talking about when she used to frighten him with the foresters whenever he did not want to mind the cows or rock little Zosia, or ran off to the pasture and started boxing there with Kazimierz from the shop. Well, now he knew what she had meant. He had seen it with his own eyes.

He scrambled very cautiously out of the yellow, perfumed, velvety waves of lupines and set off at full speed for home. The houses of the villages were drawing nearer. His mother would not believe him if he told her. He ought to tell his father. But gracious god, what then? What would happen then?

The nearer he got to the village, and the clearer the familiar outlines of the houses grew, the stronger the hold that his terror gained on him. The foresters would come and find out at once that it was he who had told. They would set the dogs on him, or shoot him with their guns as they had shot Paszuk from Gaje. They could kill anyone they liked, nothing would be done to them for it.

His feet felt very heavy. He could hardly drag them uphill. He remembered Sowiak's penetrating, sharp voice, saying: "Don't you dare utter a word, or I'll kill you, I swear to god, I will!" That was what Sowiak said to Jozek and Genia. What would they do with him? Perhaps kill him, perhaps put him in prison—a forester could do anything.

Zielinski's mother was coming towards him along the road. He recognized her at once but he was out of breath and he had not the presence of mind to slip round the back of the alderman's yard.

"Franek, did you happen to see Stefan anywhere? He went off without warning me and now the shopkeeper wants him to go to town to fetch goods."

Franek's knees were knocking together as he stammered through white lips.

"N-no!"

He stole past the old woman without looking at her. He felt sick and dizzy, icy shivers were running up and down his body. He crept softly under the windows of his own home and into the barn. There he climbed to the loft and hid in the hay.

"Franek! Franek—eh!"

He held his breath, even though his mother could not hear him. She must be calling him to go and drive the cows out. He could hear grumbling, but he was determined not to stir till it was all cleared up about Stefan. Someone would surely find him sometime. And when once they knew, they would not bother to ask Franek any questions.

He heard voices again; old Mrs. Zielinski was complaining to his mother.

"He went out first thing this morning and there's not a sign of him yet. And the shopkeeper's asking me to fetch him here this very minute. Isn't it a shame? He might get a bit of work to do."

Franek's teeth almost jumped

out of his head—they were chattering so. His whole body was shaken by a violent shivering he could not control. Hot and cold waves swept over him alternately. Let them go and search, let them find Stefan. Until then he was not going to get out of his hiding-place for all the treasure in the world.

"I'll go and ask at Lesiaks, he often drops in there to read the paper with Wladek; maybe he's sitting there all this time."

"I saw Wladek; he went for hay."

"Well, maybe he knows where he is."

The voices grew fainter and died away. A cart rattled by on the road, ducks quacked. The Kulawiec family was quarreling noisily. The old woman was bawling insults at her daughter-in-law. Some men were standing talking in the roadway. The narrow beam of light that pierced through the chink had moved farther along the wall. His mother came about five times and called:

"Frane-ek! Frane-e-ek!"

He huddled down still further into the fresh hay. He clenched his teeth. He wouldn't come out again for anything in the world. If he did they would notice that he knew something and start asking him questions, and goodness knows but what he might blab the whole thing out.

Gradually it grew dark. The boy fell into a troubled doze, and dreamed of the gaping red jaws of the dogs, the faces of the foresters and the naked body of the murdered boy falling into the water. Sowiak the forester was climbing a tree and dragging him, Franek, down by the arm. The boy yelled at the top of his voice.

"What are you roaring the throat out of yourself for? Why didn't you go out with the cows instead of going to sleep?"

Franek looked about the dark barn with starting eyes. Sowiak was nowhere in sight, but his own sister Wikta was scolding him.

"Come down this very minute! Oh, you're going to get it from mother for playing a trick like this!"

He nearly fell as he stumbled down the ladder, for he had hardly come to himself yet.

"There I went into the barn for something, and I heard something and listened and nearly fell down with the fright. Sounded like someone gabbling and groaning. I thought some tramp must have got into the hay. I climbed up into the loft and what do I see but our Franek. He'd got his head under the hay and when I woke him up, he let out such a yell!" Wikta was telling her mother.

Mrs. Stokowski looked sternly at her little son.

"I called you and called you, and you didn't take the slightest notice. Night's the time for sleeping. . . ." she began in a severe tone, then suddenly stopped. "Are you sick or what?"

Franek staggered to a bench, flopped down, and burst into wild uncontrollable sobbing that made him feel still worse. The tears poured down his dirty cheeks.

"What's the matter with you? Has anybody hurt you?"

"N-n-no. . . . I keep shivering—first hot and then cold."

"You must have caught cold out with the fishing yesterday. Wikta, heat up some milk for him in that blue mug. You'll drink it up and go off to sleep and tomorrow you'll be as well as ever."

Franek's teeth rattled on the lip of the tin mug as he drank a few mouthfuls. He could swallow no more.

"Drink it up. It'll warm you."

"I ought maybe to steam some linden flowers for him."

"He'll go off to sleep and feel easier. Oh, how red his face has gone!"

Franek pushed away the mug, huddled down under the blanket and turned to the wall. He could not fall asleep, but he pretended to. He did not even stir when his father came home. Now that he had told Mrs. Zielinski that he had not seen Stefan, the worst was over. He knew that no one would ever get the truth out of him. But the safest way now was to pretend to be asleep and sick, and not talk to anybody. Because—supposing his father were to guess?

He tossed about; and again he saw the gaping hungry jaws; and so it went on all night.

Mrs. Zielinski spent a troubled night, too. She could not understand what had become of her son. Since his return home, after finishing his term of military service, Stefan had seemed fondest of all of sitting at home, and went nowhere except to the Lesiaks'. And now he had not been seen there since yesterday morning.

"He must have been kept somewhere, perhaps went to a bit of a party with some of the lads. He'll be back in the morning," old Zielinski told her over and over again in his quiet, uncertain voice.

She tried to believe it, but it all seemed highly unconvincing to her.

Stefan did not turn up in the morning. No one had seen him anywhere. His mother was so worried that she could not get on with her work.

"Stas, run out and see if he's coming up the road. . . ."

"No, there's no sign of him."

"Zosia, see to the hens. There's the forester coming, I'll run and ask him."

Waler was coming through the village with his double-barreled gun over his shoulder. Mrs. Zielinski stepped out into the road in front of him.

"Mr. Waler, do you happen to have seen my Stefan anywhere about? He went out yesterday morning and there's no sign of him. . . ."

"If he went out, then he'll come back. I haven't seen him," the man answered curtly, glancing round to call his dog away from the geese belonging to the blacksmith's wife. "Come here, Reks! What are you after now?"

The woman sighed and went indoors again. By midday she could bear it no longer; she ran to the alderman.

"The lad's not come home yet! And nobody has even seen him."

"Well, he's not a pin, he'll be found. 'Tisn't as if he was only a little child, is it?"

Her lips quivered.

"He's only a child to me."

"Now look here, don't cry! Maybe the lad has his own business to attend to. He may have a girl somewhere. . . . Whoever heard of a fellow getting lost? There's no wild beasts hereabouts to tear him to pieces. There's nobody to rob him, either, he hadn't anything worth stealing. What could they take from him? His cap or his pants?"

She went home a little soothed, but towards evening her fears came over her again, gaining ground as the evening wore on until she was completely in their grip. Her hands trembled, a heavy weariness assailed her from within; there was a buzzing in her ears.

On the morning of the third day she suddenly heard shouts from the direction of the meadows down below. She stood stock still, her hands pressed close to her heart.

"What's wrong with you, mamma?"

"Nothing, Stas, nothing. Open the door for me."

Like a blind woman, she stumbl-

ed out into the passage, groping along the wall for support. People were running down the road; someone was shouting at the top of his voice. Wladek Lesiak was running, bounding straight through the alderman's millet field as if it had been a road.

Mrs. Zielinski picked up her skirts and ran along by the hedge. Someone rushed past her. She did not ask any questions. She knew already.

It was less than a mile to the ponds. Her lips would hardly take in the air; she collided with bushes, stumbled over stones. Once she fell on her knees, but she was up again in an instant. She sensed people going alongside and ahead of her, shouting, but she did not understand what they were shouting and she saw nothing. The blood hammered in her temples.

She got there at last. The shore of the pond was black with people. The crowd parted to let her pass and she tore through the passage thus made, straight to the water's edge.

Behind a heap of cut branches, not very far from the acacia, on the grassy shore of a little creek lay a naked corpse. She swayed and then with a low moan dropped in a crumpled heap on the ground. Her hands touched the icy dead feet. Blindly she groped for the feet, feeling them, and the arms flung wide, and the disfigured face, with great jets of congealed blood in the wet and slimy hair. She knew it was her Stefan. She had felt a presentiment of woe from the beginning, from the evening of the first day. The blindness passed and she could see her son's face. She saw the wide glassy stare, the blackened belly—hard as iron, the bruises on the breast, the clots of blood on the head.

"I just turned my horse's head—I'd been meaning to fetch those branches—when all of a sudden I see something floating. . . . Good god, thinks I, a calf's been and got drowned. I took a good look at it and—I can tell you—I very nearly dropped dead myself. . . ." a peasant from Liszki was telling them.

"Did he get drowned or what?"

"Drowned? No, it's easy to see he's been murdered."

The word struck cold to their hearts. Someone went up to the cart, took the horse-cloth from it and covered the corpse. Mrs. Zielinski was sitting on the grass, her eyes fixed in a glazed, unseeing stare on the blue fingers sticking out from under the cloth.

"Run for the alderman. . . ."

"He's been told already . . . he's coming. . . ."

"The police will have to be told. . . ."

"That's his business."

The head of the village, white and breathless, was coming through the meadow at that moment. He raised the covering and looked at the body.

"Who found it?"

"Martyna. He'd come over for wood."

"I'd just turned my horse's head—I'd been meaning a long time to come for those branches, when I see something floating. . ."

But the alderman was not listening to him.

"Two days at least he must have been in the water."

"How is it that no one saw him till now?"

"Who ever comes here? Nobody but the children fishing or somebody bathing."

"Since when has he been away from home?" the alderman asked Mrs. Zielinski. But she did not hear him. She heard neither him nor anyone else. She heard nothing but the persistent, terrifying

noises in her head, the strokes of powerful hammers bursting through her temples. It was someone else who proffered an explanation.

"Yes, that's right, she came round to us on Wednesday, too."

"It happened on Tuesday. . . . But what could have happened to him?"

"Can't you see? He's all beaten and bruised."

"His head's black with blood."

"Merciful god! . . . A young fellow like that . . ." the women were saying. "What'll become of the farm now?"

"The old man isn't able to work."

"And the rest of the children are too small for anything."

"Take Mrs. Zielinski home, you women."

"I've told her to come along, but she's not herself."

"Gone quite queer—she has—and no wonder."

More and more people were crowding in from the village. Martyna was telling for the hundredth time how it had all been and the same people were listening to him for the hundredth time with as much interest as though it were the first.

"But who would do such a thing, now tell me that?"

"Do you know if anyone had a grudge against him?"

"It's hardly likely. He was a quiet sort of chap, never went hanging about after girls, or drinking, or fighting, didn't even smoke."

"The world's coming to an end, surely."

Wladek Lesiak suddenly raised the corner of the horsecloth, and looked attentively at the feet of the dead man.

"Just look at the state his toes are in."

"The fishes must have nibbled them, eh?"

"Fishes nothing. . . . They're all chewed to pieces."

"Well, who else would chew them but fishes?"

"Dogs. . . ." said Wladek in a voice that did not sound like his own. There was a sudden silence and an icy breath passed over the crowd.

"He's right, they're dog-bites," old Czapla agreed. "Dogs with powerful great teeth, too."

The people avoided each other's eyes; this was a piece of evidence; it told a great deal; perhaps—everything.

"We'll have to let the police know."

"Jasiek, go and harness the horse, we've got to go to the police-station," the alderman said at last.

"And we'll take the body back to the village."

"No, we mustn't touch him till the police come. Let him lie there just as he was found. Salinski, you keep an eye on things while I'm away. Don't budge even if you have to stay here till morning. Nobody must touch anything. Everything must stay exactly the way it was. Martyna, you must stay for the night in our village. You'll be wanted as a witness."

"That's right. He found him. . ."

"Why, everybody's seen as much as I've seen," Martyna protested. "There he was floating, floating just as you see him lying there now."

The alderman was annoyed at this.

"Whoever has seen him, you were the first to find him. Everything's got to be done in proper order, see; it's easier for you to wait here than for us to have to send over to Liszki for you tomorrow and drag you back here again. . ."

The alderman went off and by degrees others followed him. Salinski sat down under the acacia.

"What sort of devil's work is this? Just look at all these stones!"

"Somebody must have thrown them."

"The stones mustn't be touched either. We don't know how it all happened . . ."

"It's clear enough, that that's the way they came here, and no other way."

"And you'd do better to keep your mouth shut if you don't know for certain! Did you see anything? No, you didn't see a thing! If it gets round that you've been talking, you don't know what they may do to you!"—the fat wife of the shopkeeper raged at her husband.

"Why, have I been saying anything? What a fuss you kick up about nothing! I never said a thing."

"As if there wasn't enough to do without that! The police will come and let them find out. It's nothing to do with you!"

"Maybe not, and maybe it has something to do with me. . . ."

All this time Mrs. Zielinski sat crouched down in the grass, deaf and blind to what was going on, rocking herself mechanically. People came and went, exchanged terrified whispers, attempted to raise the corner of the horse-cloth, and were sternly warned off by Salinski.

"Don't touch it! The alderman ordered everything to be left as it was."

"Nobody's touching anything. What are you making such a fuss for?"

"It's the alderman's orders, not mine."

"Well, who's the alderman, anyhow?"

The village was in a state of great excitement all day. And involuntary glances were cast in two directions: towards the foresters' quarters, plainly seen as a white spot in the grove beyond the meadows, and towards the castle of the Ostrzenskis.

"If there are no witnesses, nothing can be done to anyone."

"And there aren't any witnesses. Where could they be got?"

"Aye, there've been witnesses before this, and was anything done to them? That's the way it always was and always will be. . . ."

"Surely it won't always be the same. . . ."

"They're stronger than you are, aren't they?"

"We'll see about that yet."

"Maybe we will and maybe we won't."

When little Franek Stokowski heard the shouts, and saw the people running down to the water, his first feeling was one of relief, followed by a new and more hideous terror. The Stoczek children tried to persuade him to come with them to look at the corpse, but he did not dare. He went about half-crazed; and that night he was visited again by frightful dreams. His father roused him with difficulty. The lamp was lit.

"Now, Franek, you're yourself again, aren't you?"

"Yes."

"Now, listen to me, because this is no trifling business. Give me straight answers, only the honest truth, do you hear me?"

"Yes."

"Ah, leave the poor child alone," his mother said, coming forward in defense of her boy. "He can't know anything about this business."

"Hold your tongue. Listen, Franek. Tell me the truth—as if you were at confession. Where were you on Tuesday?" The boy shook now from head to foot. His father's strong hand closed around the trembling fingers.

"Where were you?"

"In the lupine."

"What lupine?"

"The Jaszak lupine."

"Way up, above the ponds?"

"Y-e-es."

"Did you see Stefan?"

"Y-yes."

A dreadful silence fell in the room. Wikta was staring at her brother with horror-stricken eyes.

"God almighty! God almighty!" Mrs. Stokowski breathed heavily.

"Who else was there?"

Franek made no reply.

"Are you deaf? I'm asking you, who else was there?"

"The foresters."

"Which?"

"Waler, and Sowiak and another . . . not ours."

"What did they do?''

"They beat him."

"Who? Stefan?"

"Y-yes."

"And why didn't you tell us all this before?"

"The dogs. . . ."

"Lord have mercy on us!" his mother wailed. "What did you want to go to that pond for? It's a punishment from god on us—and for what!"

"Hold your tongue, will you!" Stokowski interrupted her sternly. "Do you understand what it means to have a witness? It would all have been different if the lad had told us at once. But his conscience gave him no peace, and he's confessed the truth in his sleep."

"The poor child must have been frightened out of his wits."

"Why didn't you call someone? We could have come and stood up for you."

"Don't you go shouting at him now! You'll drive him into a fit of sickness. He's hardly been alive since Tuesday. . . . And it's no wonder . . . a little fellow like that and to see such a thing. . . . Lord, lord, to think of it—killing a man like that!"

Stokowski hastily threw on his clothes. The dark outside the windows was turning muddily grey.

"Get up, Franek. Let's go to the alderman. Staszek, run round to the houses and tell the folks to come there."

"What are you thinking about? Mikolaj, Mikolaj, be careful, it may bring trouble on us."

"Hold your tongue! You'd better to go round to the houses, too, and get the folks to come to the alderman's." The door creaked. The stars were fading already in the paling sky. A streak of dark crimson, like clotted blood, appeared in the east. A flock of geese awoke and set up a cackling.

The alderman himself opened the door to them. He listened to the tale and then said:

"We'll wait for the police. They're coming this morning."

"There's no need to wait for them. The police are the police, but the people ought to know."

"It may stir them up."

"Well, and what about it! It's not every day the count's servants stone a man to death."

The alderman fastened the belt of his trousers with trembling fingers. His head was going round. He felt powerless to protest when Stokowski went out before him and struck the metal disk hanging at the door. The sonorous booming resounded like a tocsin and carried far and wide. Again and again Stokowski struck the disk. Door-hinges creaked, voices were heard. People hurried, half-dressed, with wisps of straw in their tousled hair, to the alderman's yard, where they collected in groups, talking in low voices. They had heard the news from Wikta and her mother and they knew what it was all about.

Holding Franek, who was white with terror, by the hand, Stokowski was standing beside the alderman

on the steps of his house, in full view of the crowd.

"Good people," Stokowski began, and silence fell at once. "Good people, you all know what's been going on. The foresters shot Paszuk from Gaje, and they weren't punished for it. They set the dogs on Kotaj's wife and she had a miscarriage, and they weren't punished for it. They fired at Zosia Granicki, and they weren't punished for that, either. There's a lot of our blood and tears to be laid at their doors, yet they've never been punished for anything."

"And who was it had my man arrested?" a woman cried.

"And wasn't it the foresters who killed the Lins' cow, although she hadn't had time to nibble an ear of the count's crops?"

"And who beat the women in the wood till they were half dead and could hardly crawl home from the Dark Ravines?"

The crowd was getting warmed up, they were all talking at once. Stokowski waited a moment or two and then raised his hand for silence.

"Hear me to the end, there's something I've got to say."

"Shut up, all you women!"

"Sh-sh—"

"Yesterday morning Martyna found Stefan Zielinski in the water. Now I'm asking you, was Zielinski drowned in a pond where the water was no more than four or five feet deep?"

"No!" someone shouted.

"I'm asking: do drowned people have their heads smashed in, their bellies black like cast iron, and their toes bitten? No! The water couldn't have done all that! So I am asking you all, neighbors, who threw Stefan Zielinski into the water, after braining him, maiming him, disfiguring him and beating him to death?"

Stokowski's voice soared high over the yard and hung there in suspense. The people glanced at each other. What had happened? Why was Stokowski asking them openly the questions that had been whispered in fear and trembling since yesterday morning? What did Stokowski want of them? Did he want them to utter aloud the things that were on the tips of their tongues to say? They looked at each other in uncertainty.

Stokowski led his son out by the sleeve.

"Come out here, Franek, and tell them all about it. The whole village is listening to you, remember, all the folks here. And god preserve you from either lying or keeping anything back! Don't be afraid. We're here with you—your father and the alderman and the whole village."

"On Tuesday I was going fishing to the ponds. . . ." Franek faltered.

They all listened in silence. They looked at the little figure with eyes now clear of sleep. A woman wept. Someone heaved a sigh.

"So that's how it was. Here's the witness and it's all as clear as daylight. And now I'm asking you, good people, what are we to do?"

"The police'll be here soon from Rzepaki," the alderman interposed hastily.

That stirred the crowd.

"There's no need to wait for the police! They've known it since yesterday, they should have been here long ago. Come on to the foresters!"

The volume of voices swelled. And the crowd rushed out into the roadway, crushing down the fence as they went.

"Come on to the foresters!"

The alderman ran after them, protesting.

"What are you doing! Do you want to get us all into trouble?"

He clutched at them with trembling hands, blocked their way, but they pushed him aside, and ran across the dew-laden grass, through the meadows and the ponds to the other side, to where, invisible now in the early morning mist, the houses of the foresters nestled among the green trees.

"Fetch the pitch-forks with you, lads."

"Walek, run for the axe."

"Bring me a good thick stick."

"Look, Walas has a roller with him."

"There's no need for that. We'll manage them with our bare hands." The dense crowd swept along, the women in the rear, the children scampering after them.

"We'll put an end to their tyranny!"

"This murder of Stefan will be the end of them!"

"It's the last trick they've played on us."

"Where's old Zielinski? Run and fetch him, somebody!"

A minute later old Zielinski was marching with the rest, glancing about him anxiously through his big blue spectacles.

"Let him pass, boys, Zielinski ought to go in front of us all."

"So he ought, he's the father."

The old man allowed himself to be pushed into the front ranks, without any very clear idea of what it was all about.

"And from there we'll go on to the count's. . . ."

There was silence for a moment, and then the uproar broke out again.

"That's only right and fair. They're the count's men. . . ."

"It isn't their own they're guarding."

"The count pays them. . . ."

"For our blood, for our children!"

Many glanced towards the path leading to Ostrzen. They would have gone there at once, and not bothered about the foresters. The crowd was growing, and sounded threatening.

"The count's place won't run away, we've got to finish with the foresters first. . . ."

"That's clear."

"The count isn't an early riser, we'll catch him in all right," someone said, and a ripple of sinister laughter greeted this sally.

It was growing light. Through the grey of the morning a lark soared, and, suspended on widespread, quivering wings, burst into a joyous, ringing, full-throated song. Sunrise was gilding the tops of the trees, and half the sky was bathed in rose. Now the white walls of the foresters' quarters could be clearly seen among the green trees. The marshy soil of the water-meadows squelched under the marching feet. The barking of dogs came from the foresters'.

"Now, keep quiet, boys, and go to it, quick!"

Old Zielinski could hardly get his breath; they took him by the arms and dragged him along. Not a word was uttered as they tore through the low aspens, dived in among the birches and out to the clearing. All was quiet when they reached the foresters' place; it seemed deserted.

"Break down the door!"

They struck it several resounding blows. Suddenly there was a shout.

"They're in the barn! Come on to the barn!"

At the other end of the clearing, behind the house and a little to one side of it, stood a barn, and someone had noticed the door being slammed to as the crowd approached.

"They're hiding in the barn!"

"After them!"

"Look out! They'll clear out into the woods by another door."

The crowd surrounded the building. The dogs set up a howl within.

"Come out!"

There was no sound.

"Come out before we break down the doors!"

"We'll shoot," came the reply.

"Shoot, then! We're not afraid of you!"

"Zielinski, come here to the front!"

There was some confusion at this point. When you come to think of it, two double-barreled guns were lurking behind that door, perhaps three—if Grabarczuk had remained there overnight.

"Break down the doors!"

"Stop! Why break down the doors? We'll just set fire to the place and that's all."

There was a delighted murmur from the crowd.

"That's the way, set a light to it. Who's got matches?" Matches were found, and straw, too.

"Stick it underneath! There's hay behind that door. Now, Zielinski, you put the match to it!"

The old man waved his hands helplessly.

"What are you doing this for? The police will come and they'll be sent for trial. . . ."

"There's nothing to wait for! Light! You're his father, you've got every right to do it!"

"Don't argue about it, Konstanty," old Czapla urged. "You're the one to begin."

"You're his father. Only start the job and we'll finish it—here and at Ostrzen as well!"

"What are you scared of? There's no disgrace in it, even if they gave you twenty years for it."

"That's a nice thing to say! Twenty years!"

"Well, even so, we'd be finishing the whole lot off at once."

"Folks will be able to breathe freely."

"It'll go all over the world—the way we put things into order here."

"Look here, neighbors, I . . . why, what have I . . . the law-courts will deal with them. But burn them alive. . . . After all, they're people, too. . . ."

"They didn't think much of stoning your Stefan to death. He was a human creature, too, wasn't he, not a beast of the field?"

"There's no use wasting time talking to that old dodderer. Light the straw! It's all the same who does it."

"Sh-sh! Can't you hear a noise?"

They were silent, listening. Through the still air of the sunny morning a faint humming sound came from the distant road. The crowd forgot for a moment the men shut up in the barn.

"What is it?"

"Sounds like a motor car."

"It can't be."

But they were already in sight—two cars driving along the narrow, sandy road leading to the wood.

"It's the police!"

"Well, then hurry up, lads, before they get here."

The crowd stirred, but nobody was in a hurry to start the fire; the sun flashed on the muzzles of rifles.

The crowd fell back to let the cars pass; the village alderman was sitting beside the commandant of the station in the second.

"Look there! It was he who let the police know. . . ."

"Got scared, the swine!"

"We ought to have kept an eye on him!"

"Who was thinking of him at a time like that?"

"Fall back, clear out!" the police ordered. "What's the row about?"

"The foresters here. . . ." voices in the crowd started to explain.

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"We'll deal with them!" the commandant said curtly, looking attentively about him. "Gajewski, drive up from that side! Raniak, you stay here. Make room there for the prisoners!"

The crowd closed in around the car.

"What's this? Are we to let those brutes get clean away?"

"They'll be driven away like gentlemen—in a motor car!"

"Are we going to let them get away like this?"

"Listen, boys, this is a shame! If they're taken away now, the count will know where they are and put in a word for them! And things'll be no better than they were before. . . ."

"We're not going to let them be taken away!"

"Just let the police fetch them out of that barn—we'll show them! And things'll be no better than they were before. . . ."

"The police have gone for them now."

"Keep together, boys! This way!"

The big doors creaked. The crowd swayed. But no one came out. Suddenly an engine roared and a car shot out from behind the barn and turned off into a side-path leading to the woods. Everyone caught a glimpse of the green uniforms of the foresters among the blue of the police.

"Look, just look what they're doing!"

"They've got them out by another door."

"Come on after them!"

The crowd tore through the plantation of young saplings, leaped over the stumps of cut-down trees—till they reached the forest path. The driver of the second car took instant advantage of the confusion and set off down the bumpy road below the village. Clouds of dust rose from the sandy ruts. The more determined of the people kept on running, but it was already obvious that they would never catch up. So they turned slowly back, hot and angry.

"What's to be done now?"

"Nothing much. We've just let them get away, that's all. Now nobody will be able to do anything to them!"

"We shouldn't have wasted so much time over that old Zielinski, we should have set the place on fire ourselves."

"It was his right, he's the father of the dead boy."

"He's one of the *szlachta* himself, the son of a bitch!"

"If it had been a peasant's son they'd murdered like that, I'd have taken it on myself, even if I'd have got twenty years for it. But in this case the father should have started it. . . ."

Angry and downcast, they returned to the village. Zielinski, with head hanging, trailed at the very end of the procession. He walked slower than the rest, although he had farther to go—right to the far end of the village, to the squalid little hamlet of ten or a dozen houses, formerly the gentry's section. Here the Zielinskis, the Kozieradskis, the Granickis and the Stokowskis lived in houses even more squalid, and on *morgs* even poorer than the peasants', but still they were of the "*szlachta*." A slight, scarcely visible dividing-line existed between these families and families like the Lesiaks, the Martynas, the Zagajczuks, and the rest, who had been peasants for generations.

"It's always the way with these kind."

"If that had happened to any of our Mackow folks. . . ."

"Good lord, yes, neither the foresters' place, nor the count's would have been left standing by midday. . . ."

"True for you."

As they went, they glanced towards the ponds, where Salinski was still watching over the murdered boy, and Mrs. Zielinski was huddled like a heap of dirty rags.

"They'll come back yet."

"Yes, very likely. They haven't made their report or questioned anybody yet."

"And there's the dead boy—he shouldn't be left there like that on the grass."

"There's a stink like carrion from him."

"Yes, I should think so—dead so many days and the weather so hot, too."

A commission of inquiry came at last. The doctor held the *post mortem* in the alderman's barn.

"They say that the corpse has to be scalded first like a pig with boiling water. . . ."

"There's a fool for you! The doctor just cuts open the body and that's all."

"So's he can see what's been the matter.''

"You can see that from the outside just as well: the head's cut open, and the belly's all bruised."

"They have to find out if the fellow got any injury to his inside or not, and what. . . ."

"It's the foresters' insides they should be poking in like that!"

"If we could only lay our hands on them, we'd soon show them where their guts were. . . ."

"Aye, you're all very smart at talking, but when we had the men in our hands we let them be snatched away under our very noses. . ."

"How were we to know that the alderman had run for the police. . . ."

"He told us yesterday evening they would be here in the morning."

"That's what he said . . . but . . ."

That day no one went to the fields to work. The village was agog till late in the evening.

Only at the Zielinski's it was quiet. The mother had been led home as soon as the corpse had been carried away from the pond. The doctor would not allow her to be present at the *post mortem*.

"The father will be there and that's sufficient," he said kindly, giving her a powder to take. "And you'd much better go home." She swallowed the powder obediently, gulped it down with water and went home. There she sat, staring glassily before her, until her husband came in. Then she roused herself.

"Well?"

"It's just as we thought. . . . The head's been split open, and all his inside is torn and ruptured. . . . He was thrown into the water after he was dead, the doctor says. . . . Just like Franek told us. . . ."

Her thin, white lips tightened.

"Come here, children."

The children gathered round her. There were five of them.

"You know now that the count's foresters have murdered your brother. . . . They stoned him to death and then threw his body into the pond. He'll never come home any more."

Ten year old Helusia burst into tears.

"Yes, he'll never come home any more, never ride in the cart again, never run down through the water, never go out to plow the fields. Stas!"

The boy raised his clear blue eyes to his mother's face.

"What, Mamma?"

"How old are you?"

"Thirteen . . . you know yourself."

"Thirteen, gracious god, only thirteen."

She rose from the bench and took the boy by the hand.

"You're master here, now, Stasiek! You'll have to plow and sow, and

go to the forest for firewood, and take the horse to graze; all the labor's laid on your shoulders now . . . . Gracious god!"

"Leave him alone, Kazia, stop it," her husband interposed.

"What am I to stop? What am I to stop? Isn't it the truth I'm speaking? Who'll do the work, then? You, maybe? Can you see anything with those eyes of yours? Is there any strength in those arms of yours? Don't you get a pain in your liver when you lift a ladleful of water? And I—what am I good for? I'm dried to a chip, every muscle in my body trembles—how can I work? Once we had a head of the house, once there was a master here, my own dear boy, but they killed him, killed him, killed him! And for what? What wrong had he done? Wasn't he kind and obedient and willing to work? Lord Jesus! What am I to do now with all these children? We'll starve, we'll become plain beggars, we'll have to beg our bread from door to door. . . ."

She flung herself down on the bench and gave way to loud, heart-rending sobbing, that twisted the wasted body and set the thin shoulder-blades jerking. The old man went over to her and timidly stroked the bony shoulders under the rusty faded shawl.

"That'll do now, Kazia, that'll do."

"Oh Lord Jesus, was it for this I carried him under my heart? Was it for this I bore him and suckled him, that he should be stoned to death like a mad dog! That he should be thrown into the water like a dead cat! Oh, may god send down a heavy punishment on them, may they burn in hell for everlasting, may there not be one stone left standing on another of all their goods. . . ."

"That's enough, Kazia. They're under lock and key already, they'll be tried and they'll get the punishment they deserve."

At that she jumped up, her face red and swollen with crying, her hair disheveled.

"What punishment will they be given? What? Will it bring back my Stefan from the grave if they're sent to prison? And is that what's the matter—is it only them? It's up on the hillside you've got to look for all our ruin, all our misery, for the curse of the village, for the murderer of my son. . . . And will anything be done to him?"

The old man cast a horrified glance at the door.

"Sh-sh, Kazia. . . hold your tongue. . . . You've gone crazy with grief. . . . Someone may hear. . . ."

"Let them hear, let them know it! May his crops be blighted in the fields, may pestilence carry away his cattle, my god, deprive him of what's dearest of all to him—and punish him for my grief, and my child, my own dear child!"

Helusia wept at the top of her voice now; the little boys followed her example. Stasiek alone stood silent, round-eyed, staring at his mother.

"Kazia. . . ."

"What sort of a man are you, what sort of a father? 'Sh-sh'—that's all you know. You shouldn't be here—you should be there this long time, do you hear?"

"Where?"

"At the count's, of course. You should have gone there and told him what was what—and thrown our sorrow in his face."

He slipped quietly out of the house and wandered down the street. People looked at him curiously.

"When's the funeral to be?"

"Tomorrow, I expect. I've got to go to the priest."

"Haven't you been yet?"

"No, how could I? . . . Salinski hasn't made the coffin yet."

"Dear god, dear god!" the women sighed, watching the bowed figure hobbling with faltering steps down the sandy street.

"You should ask somebody to take you in a cart. It's a long walk in this heat."

"Maybe I'll get a cart. . . . Maybe. . . ." the old man mumbled, peering at the speaker through his blue glasses.

In the end the shopkeeper Skorzak took pity on him.

"I've been meaning to drive over to my son-in-law's for a pig. . . . I'll go today. Come, I'll go and harness the horse."

"God save you. . . . Walking's hard for me and just now it's more than I can do."

"Of course it is. I'll be ready in a trice."

The bell tower of the church gleamed golden in the distance, over at Ostrzen. The old man did not look in the direction of the castle. Its iron roof gleamed from behind the high stone wall with which the count had surrounded his estate a few years ago. The windows in the corner turrets were mere slits; strong iron bars, embedded in the bricks, guarded the few openings in the wall. The top of green trees could be seen above it.

The organist ran over to the priest's and the latter did not keep him waiting. He hurried out past a bed of flaming nasturtiums.

"It's Zielinski, isn't it? The father?"

"Yes."

"Ah, a bad business, a bad business. Well, how is he, do you think?"

"In what way, father?"

"Well, hm . . . what is he like?"

"He seems all right. A feeble old chap . . . nearly blind."

"I know. I know that," the priest interrupted impatiently. "But did he say anything?"

"No, I don't think he said anything."

"Nothing at all? Then that's all right, that's very good. I hope you took him into the vestry?"

"No, I never thought of it . . ." the organist said, startled. "He's waiting outside the church."

"You were always a fool and you're still a fool. You should have asked him into the vestry . . . into the vestry, do you hear?"

He broke off as he caught sight of the old man standing in the shade of the big lindens. The priest cleared his throat, stretched out his arms and advanced to meet him.

"God has indeed stricken thee sore, my son!"

"It's Stefan . . . I've come about Stefan, your reverence!" the old man mumbled, bowing to the priest's feet.

The priest raised him kindly.

"I know, I know all, my child, and I feel for you in your grief. But the lord lays his cross on those he loves. The lord sends us trials, but the lord comforts us. . . . He is our refuge and our defense. Let us go in and pray together and lay down your affliction before the altar of the lord our god!"

Within the church all was dim and deserted. The subdued light streaming through the stained-glass windows cast colored reflections on the stone floor. Led by the strong hand of the priest, and powerless to resist, Zielinski hobbled down the long strip of red carpet.

"Here, before the sorrowing mother of god, we will bend the knee, my son. For she, too, lost the son who was god's own son. He died in dreadful agony on the cross, and his holy mother was doomed to look upon his death with her own eyes. . . . She offered up her sorrow to god, submitted herself to his will and now she pleads for

us. . . . Have faith in her, my son, lay your whole heart open to her, and she will comfort you, and support you, and take your affliction into her holy hands. . . ."

At this point the priest's feelings were too much for him and he gave a powerful snuffle. Tears were flowing freely from under Zielinski's blue glasses.

"Weep, my son, weep and pray to the comforter of the afflicted, to our holy mother."

The lindens outside the chapel windows rustled softly in the summer breeze. The priest began to recite the prayers in a loud whisper. Zielinski crossed himself devoutly and beat his breast.

"And now let us go and talk about the funeral."

Zielinski had to be persuaded for a long time before he would consent to sit down. The priest wrote something down in a thick book.

"The funeral and the masses for the dead. . . . We'll have the mass on Sunday. . . ."

Zielinski was fumbling uneasily with the bag of money hanging round his neck. The priest understood the gesture and raised his hands in horrified protest.

"Oh, no, not a farthing! I wouldn't dream of taking a farthing! There can be no question of that!"

He waved away Zielinski's thanks and tearful gratitude. "No—and that's all! You mustn't thank me, my son, you mustn't thank me. Submit yourself to the will of god . . . think of him alone. Throw yourself on the mercy of the holy virgin. And I will not forget you, my son, I, too, will pray that you may find comfort in your affliction."

Zielinski came out of the vestry into the sunshine, completely dazzled by the light and overcome by the extraordinary kindness of the priest. The shopkeeper was waiting for him in the cart.

"Well, I'm ready. You've been a long time."

"He said he wouldn't charge me anything."

"What do you mean?" Skorzak asked.

"He won't take a penny, he says, either for the funeral or the mass."

Skorzak whipped up his horse, and they drove for some time in silence.

"You know what I'll tell you, Zielinski?"

"What?"

"The count must take the whole expense of the chapel and the priest upon himself."

"I don't see what you mean?"

"So that neither the government money nor the people's goes on it."

"Why?"

"Because. . . ."

They did not understand each other. The horse went at a brisk trot, knowing that it was heading for home, where supper and the stable were waiting. From time to time the pig in the sack gave a grunt.

That same day all the villages learned when Zielinski was to be buried. It was known not only in Mackow and Ostrzen, but in Gaje, Brzegi, Kaliny—everywhere; in all the villages over which Ostrzen towered, in all the villages that bordered on the lands, the ponds and the woods of Count Ostrzenski.

"The crowds there'll be . . . hundreds will come to it."

"As many as at a pilgrimage, very likely. . . ."

"More, a good sight more."

"They won't all be able to squeeze into the cemetery."

"And maybe they will."

"I wouldn't be surprised if Zielinski's funeral isn't a grander one than the young count's."

"Don't talk rubbish! The young count was buried in a silver coffin, and think of all the fires that were lit then."

"It's easy to light fires," Skorzak the shopkeeper remarked with an air of innocence.

"There's no sense in what you say."

"Maybe there isn't and maybe there is. Who knows but what something may happen there, when such crowds gather."

"And the place will be black with people, there'll be no end to them."

"You bet there will!"

In all the villages the people were getting ready to come to Zielinski's funeral. In Kaliny there was bustle and stir till late at night, oiling cart springs, calling to each other. It looked as though there would not be a soul left in Kaliny next day.

But when the day came, blue-uniformed police guarded the roads leading to Ostrzen and ordered the peasants to turn back.

IV

The Rojeks were returning early from the fair, it had been a poor day and there was nothing else to do in the town. The woman nagged her husband:

"Why don't you stir up that horse? He crawls along as if he hadn't had a bit to eat for three days."

"What's your hurry? It's early still, we'll be home in plenty of time."

"Wladyslaw has been home long since."

"That's because they went a lot sooner than we did—it was dark yet."

"Touch that horse up a bit with the whip, don't spare him."

"Do you want him to go at a gallop through this sand? See how he's sweating! Let him go along at his own pace and take his time. There isn't a fire anywhere."

"You're never in a hurry."

"And you're in too much of a hurry all of a sudden. Other times I can't drag you away from the stalls, and today—I don't know what's got into you. . . ."

She gave an angry shrug and wiped the perspiration from her brow with the corner of her brown shawl.

"Phew! How hot it is!"

The horse dragged itself with difficulty along the sandy road. Mrs. Rojek fidgeted.

"The road seems to be a bit better over the hill."

"Not a scrap. . . . Nothing but sand."

The badly-oiled wheels creaked. Rojek swayed sleepily on the seat, driving off from time to time the gadflies that gathered in clouds on the horse's flanks. The poor beast started; a thin thread of blood trickled from the bite.

"They do sting him so."

"There's sure to be rain."

"Where's it to come from? There's not a cloud in the sky."

The sun was slowly sinking; the cool breath of evening lay over the village when at last they reached home. The woman brightened up.

"Stop at Zosia's for a minute. And you go on home slowly while I drop in—I'll be home in a minute."

Rojek was surprised.

"Why, here you've been at me to hurry all the time, and now you want to traipse round to all the neighbors."

"Zosia asked me to find out the price of a shawl. I must run in and tell her."

"See you don't stay long then, it's supper-time."

"By the time you drive up, I'll be there," she assured him, climbing down from the cart outside her sister's house. He pulled the rein and drove off.

Zosia was scraping potatoes in the passage.

"Just back from the fair? Have you bought anything?"

"Oh, nothing much. Everything was terrible dear today. Adam took a measure of rye and a bit of bacon. But you know what I heard in the town?"

Zosia laid the scraper on her knee.

"What?"

"It's about Anna. You never heard the like. . . ."

Zosia listened open-mouthed. Then she jumped up from the stool, scattering the potato-peelings all over the floor. A chicken roaming peacefully in search of food flapped its wings.

"Wait, wait, I must just tell Mrs. Jozefow."

She ran to the threshold and, leaning both arms on the doorposts, called into the next garden:

"Mrs. Jozefow, come over here a minute! I've got something to tell you."

A short, faded woman straightened up from bending over a row of beets and called back:

"I'm coming."

Zosia's quick eye had caught a glimpse of a blue apron on the road.

"Mrs. Galinski, Mrs. Galinski, come over here a minute!"

They both entered the passage. Mrs. Rojek flopped down on the low stool and gave an impressive sniff.

"Well, just listen. My sister's just come back from the fair, where she's heard something about Anna. . . ." Zosia explained.

"What, that tramp-woman?"

"That's the one."

Mrs. Rojek settled herself more comfortably and began:

"I went into the shop for some bacon and Mrs. Wiesiolowski up and asks me—"

"Which Wiesiolowski?"

"Agniezrka! The one from Mackow that married the stonemason from Lipki. Mean to say you don't know her?"

"There's another one. . . ."

"From Brzegi? No, it isn't that one. Well, and so she asks me: 'Is Durmaj living in Kaliny now?' 'Who's she?' I asked her."

"Why, Anna's surname is Durmaj."

"How would I know? I never knew. Only afterwards I gathered bit by bit who she was talking about. And now I've found out everything."

The heads drew closer to the speaker.

"Well, and what?"

"And she told me everything, all how it was. This Anna—she's from Racuchi that's close by Lipki. Her father had a *morg* or two of land there, but of course that all went to her brother and not to her."

"Well and then?"

"Oh, nothing. There used to be a man called Michal Kania living in Racuchi—maybe you remember him, Zosia, our father bought a pig off him once? . . ."

"I don't remember . . ."

"Yes, he did, he bought one, I'm sure. We weren't married at the time. . . ."

"Well, and what about it?"

"Oh, nothing. But this Kania had a wife and they never had no children. Well, he threw out his wife and took up with this Anna."

"Lord save us!"

"I'm telling you the truth as I heard it from Mrs. Wiesiolowski. And she knows. They're nearer to Racuchi than we are to Mackow.

And Kania always used to bring his pigs to Lipki."

"Well, and then what?"

"Oh nothing, as you might say. She lived with him a couple of years, and maybe more. . . . Once Kania was lifting a sow on to the cart, and he strained himself and died—it's maybe two months since. And as soon as ever he died, back comes his wife with her brothers and tells Anna to clear out. . . . Anna was big with child then. The wife threw her out and gave her a good warming into the bargain. So out she had to go."

"Mercy on us!"

"That was the time she came to us and had the baby in the middle of the road. . . . And that's all."

Mrs. Rojek paused for breath and looked around with an air of triumph at the absorbed faces of her listeners.

"So they threw her out?"

"That's the very thing they did. And why not, I'd like to know? Was there any of her property in the place? Not a stick. And it all went to the wife."

"Was he well-off, that Kania?"

"I should think he was! He traded in pigs and he had a lot of land and a house. A stone house, Mrs. Wiesiolowski says."

"And the wife got everything?"

"Every single thing. They had no children."

"That Anna had the run of everything for two years."

"And now she's thrown out on the world."

"And it serves her right, too. And they gave her what-for into the bargain. . . . I should just think they would! Carrying on with a married man! She must have known he had a wife."

"You would wonder at it really—the things that go on in the world. So she just lived, without any shame, with a married man?"

"That's what she did."

"How did his wife stand it?"

"What could she do? Anyway, as soon as ever he was dead, she got her own back."

"The house is a stone one, you say?"

"Yes, a stone one, that's what Mrs. Wiesiolowski said."

There was much shaking of heads and marveling over this.

"To live in a stone house and to come to what she's come to!"

"Having a baby in the middle of the road!"

"If Kania had only lived, she'd have been living like a lady today."

"Better than ever, because they would have had a child, and Kania was cracked about children . . . that's why he threw his wife out."

"You don't say. . . ."

"People did say she'd been carrying on with a gentleman that came from the town for the summer."

"No, it was no gentleman at all, but Michal Kania from Racuchi."

"Well, there's a story for you. . ."

Mrs. Rojek glanced out of the door and jumped up.

"Lord, what am I doing—sitting here and it's evening already. Time I was home. Zosia, come and help me to weed the flax tomorrow, will you?"

"All right, but I'll only be able to come later on in the day, when I've finished my work in the house."

"You won't disappoint me?"

"No, I'll come for sure and bring Mrs. Staszek along with me."

"All right, my dear."

Mrs. Rojek went out in a hurry followed by Mrs. Galinski and Mrs. Jozefow. In another moment there was a call from Galinski's garden.

"Katarzyno come here, dear, and listen to what I've got to tell you."

"Mrs. Kazimierzow, have you heard the news?"

"Zosia, what has Mrs. Rojek been telling you?"

So the whispering tongues spread

the news about the village. The gossips discussed it over the worm-eaten wickerfences, and gaped and clasped their hard, work-worn hands in astonishment.

"Merciful god!"

"To think of that!"

"Who ever heard of such a thing before?"

The gossip about Anna reached Wincenty's ears, no matter whether he wanted to hear it or not. Mrs. Rojek and the others always managed to get in a hint, and rouse suspicion. Since Anna cooked for the schoolmaster and washed his linen, he had better know the kind of woman she was. And Wincenty found that it concerned him more than it ought, and this confused him. He would glance at Anna out of the corner of his eye while she was doing his room: she was always neat and quiet, she arranged his books dexterously, swept the floor with a kind of unconscious grace, briskly set the room to rights. And sometimes she brought him flowers which she put in an earthenware jug on the table.

"It makes one's heart lighter to look at flowers," she said in her musical voice. And Wincenty wondered why he had never thought of it himself. It was perfectly true, the room did look brighter; it glowed with color and began to smell less of the stinking yard and more of the sun-warmed meadow.

"It's a wonder your landlady wouldn't think of planting a few flowers in the garden here. . . . There's nothing but beets, beets without end. If she had even just a row of flowers under the window."

"So you're fond of flowers?"

"Yes, very. Who isn't?" She raised her big grey eyes to Wincenty in surprise.

He felt embarrassed. He tried to avoid her gaze, fearful that she might read something she ought not in his eyes. She might notice how he looked at her breasts, clearly outlined by her blouse, or at her white rounded neck.

"Who is she, when all is said and done?" he asked himself in irritation. "A village wench, like the others; and not only has she had an illegitimate child, but she's by all accounts immoral as well. . . . Even if the women are exaggerating as usual, there's never smoke without fire. Even if no more than a tenth of what they say is true, that itself is enough."

But still this did not give him courage; on the contrary, it raised the barrier between them still higher and he could not make up his mind to cross it. Sometimes he was filled with regret. She had seemed quite different the evening she had been gathering Mrs. Bani's hay down by the lake. So sad and so different from the others, she had sung her song about the hazel. A wistful air that haunted him still. What things he had imagined then; and now it had all turned out so different. Yes, Anna's mild, girlish face had lied, her pale lips had lied, her grey eyes that looked at him so frankly had lied. He felt as lonely as ever now; Anna had become a source of restlessness—foolish and out of place—that he observed in himself with no little annoyance.

"She pretends to be so aloof, too! What does she imagine, I wonder?"

Anna did not imagine anything. She liked coming here, she was fond of having a chat with Wincenty—he was different from the villagers. Sometimes she longed to run in and talk to him and look at him, but she was wary of the wagging tongues, not for her own sake—she had nothing to lose—but for his.

"They're very nasty people here," she said once, pausing in her sweeping.

"Why?" he asked in some surprise.

"I don't know. That's how it is."

"Are people in other places any better?"

"They must be, surely. There's more misery here, that's why the people are worse."

"Do people get worse because they live in misery?"

"Yes, it's quite understandable. If a person's weighed down with worries he has no kindness in his heart to spare for others."

"How are you getting on these days?"

"Oh, I make ends meet, somehow. But it's terrible to think of what will happen when the winter comes."

She went back to her sweeping. Wincenty took up a book and sat, idly, turning the pages.

"It's nice for you that you have books to turn to. . . . I'd like to read, too."

"I can lend you something."

Anna laughed.

"Why, I can't read."

He was amazed.

"What? Not at all?"

"Not a word. And I don't know how to do more than write my own name."

"But that's dreadful! Would you like me to teach you?"

Her eyes shone for a moment. Then the light in them faded and she said:

"No—it's out of the question."

"Why is it?"

"Better not. I would have to come here and the women's tongues would start wagging."

Wincenty was embarrassed.

"It would be all the same for me—what am I? . . . But they'd make your life miserable!"

"We could arrange it somehow. . . . Why—for a grown-up person not to know how to read and write! . . ."

"There are plenty like me in the villages. And you have plenty of trouble with those children as it is. I'll stay as I am now. I wouldn't be any better for reading, anyhow."

He said no more. . . . She set the broom in the corner, straightened the quilt on the bed and went out. He sat listening for a long time to her light step on the path and forgot again what the women had said of her.

But they reminded him of it at every opportunity. And his self-consciousness in her presence increased. He had disturbing dreams at night in which she constantly appeared to him. He made an effort to overcome this restlessness by thinking oftener of Staszka. Perhaps she was still in Buczyny? Perhaps she had not gone away to her sister's as she had intended? He ought to pay a visit to his colleague. After all, she was a decent girl, Staszka was. . . .

V

Days of cloudless, golden sunshine went by in the villages and melted into the shadows of the sparkling silvery nights. And as invariably happens at reaping time, fires broke out here and there. Far away, beyond the River Bug, the flames lit up the night sky and people in Kaliny stood in dumb horror, watching the emblem of ruin. At the same time they felt a great relief when they convinced themselves that it was a long way off in some of the alien villages they did not even know the names of; as if distance alone was a guarantee of security.

One night, as Zacharczuk was returning from the fishing he rapped at Rojek's and Galinski's windows.

"Get up, get up, there's a fire somewhere near!"

In the east it looked as though a crimson moon was rising. But these were moonless nights. The red light spread in a semicircle over the sky, shedding a sinister raidance.

"Lord Jesus!"

"That's a big fire!"

The red glow flickered and blinked like an enormous eye; evidently the wind was fanning the flames.

"Where is it?"

A crowd collected in the road.

"Is it Mackow that's burning?"

"How can it be Mackow? It must be Grabiny."

"Grabiny doesn't lie in that direction."

"It's Brzegi burning."

"That's right! It's Brzegi, and no other."

On hearing this, Mydlarz's wife, who had a married sister living at Brzegi, burst into loud weeping.

"Now don't take on so, maybe it isn't their place that's burning at all."

"But you just look what a fire! All Brzegi must be alight!"

Suddenly flames were seen shooting up through the red glow. They swept the sky in blood-red streaks, and leaped to an incredible height, where they hung for an instant before they sank, to leap up again with still greater force.

A woman started to pray. They all fell on their knees in the dust of the road.

"From pestilence, famine, fire and sword, good Lord, deliver us."

Wincenty was standing with the crowd watching the fire. The alarm and despair in the women's voices pierced him to the very marrow. Hopelessness and terror clutched at his heart; and it was their hopelessness and their terror. For a moment it seemed as if, like Staszka, he was blood of their blood and flesh of their flesh, a peasant's child; that some common misfortune, common calamity united him with these Rojeks and Mydlarzs and Banis—with all those who, up to now, had seemed so different and so alien to him. The fear that came over him was the fear of the village, and it required an effort to convince himself that he had no need to tremble for the grain in his barns, the cattle in his shed, the roof over his head, since there was nothing here belonging to him.

The glare spread. Even the sky over Kaliny was red now. Spirals of black smoke floated upwards across the blood-red spaces.

"The village will be burnt to a cinder."

"And the grain has just been got into the barns."

"Lord Jesus!"

The forest stood out like a black belt against the flaming sky. The reflection from the fire cast a blood-red light on the terror-stricken faces of the watchers and they seemed bathed in blood.

"We ought to go over there . . ."

"By the time you get there, nothing'll be left of Brzegi."

"Nothing but ashes and people's tears."

Mrs. Mydlarz burst into louder sobs.

"Merciful god, and my sister's eldest boy was laid up sick. He must be burnt to death, poor thing."

"Don't talk rubbish!" her husband snapped at her.

But the glare was growing brighter, and the woman began to faint. The neighbors sprinkled her with water and chafed her hands and feet.

"It's dying down."

"Not a bit of it."

It was, however, paling gradually, the tongues of flame were dying down and the smoke was thickening. It grew dark. The people waited a long time in the road, until the glare became a rosy light. Some

even hung on until the sky was dark and the stars that had been extinguished by the blaze shone out once more.

Very few people in Kaliny closed an eye that night. They kept fancying they smelt something burning, women looked into their stoves to see if there was a spark anywhere, or eyed their neighbors' roofs suspiciously for signs of treacherous fire.

It was just before daybreak when Mydlarz's wife, taking some bread and a piece of bacon-fat (left over from the time they killed the dying pig) set out for Brzegi.

"Look after the house and the children," she said to Teresca, her eldest girl. "I'll be back by evening, god willing."

Her feet sank in the sand, she was still very shaky after the fright and weeping of the night. When she got to the top of the first hillock, the breeze carried the smell of burning to her nostrils.

"God, god," she whispered with trembling lips. She knew that as soon as she got clear of the wood, she would see Brzegi, and she was afraid to look in that direction. But, in spite of herself, her eyes were drawn to it.

Brzegi was no more. Here and there a wisp of smoke curled. For one instant, though she knew it must be true, she believed it was all a dream.

Formerly the blacksmith's white cottage had stood on the fringe of the village, and behind it had stood that other, with the weathercock on the roof.

There was nothing there now. Only a black smoky thing—she could not make out what for the tears blinding her eyes. She picked up the tail of the long skirt that hindered her movements and set off running, though there was still a good piece of the way to go and her heart was beating fast from the quick walking. But she was no longer thinking of anything.

Brzegi was not there. Piles of charred beams lay the length of the road. Here and there among them, blackened flues could be seen. The smell of burnt straw hung in the air, soot was flying, and from the ruins of the village a wild sobbing, terrifying screams, a dismal and inconsolable wailing, rose to the very skies.

"Zosia! Zosia! Zosia!" she called, her voice rising to a panic-stricken shriek as she failed to recognize the familiar landmarks.

Black, smoke-grimed people were prowling about the ruins, scraping out the still-burning embers with sticks, separating the logs, propping up the remaining bits of roof. On the wreck of their houses, on the browned and in places blackened meadows, on the sandy hills and the ruined gardens the villagers had pitched their camps.

"Zosia! Zosia!"

"Who are you looking for?" someone asked her.

"My sister. . . . Oh, god!"

"She's alive. They're all alive. They're over there behind the well. Can't you see them?"

She made them out at last. She rushed towards them. They were all safe and sound.

"Oh Lord Jesus!" Zosia sobbed. "We're beggars now, we may as well lie down and die. The old man had only time to get one of the cows out of the shed and that's all we have. No clothes to cover our nakedness, no featherbed."

Mrs. Mydlarz stopped crying for an instant. The mention of the featherbed called up an unpleasant remembrance, of how she and Zosia had quarreled for so long over a featherbed. Zosia had always regarded herself as injured. When the elder sister had married, her parents had given her a huge fea-

therbed that was almost too big for the bedstead, while for Zosia they had not been able to collect enough feathers, with the result that she had received a thin, mean little mattress. But Zosia was not thinking of that now. The sisters burst into sobs and wailing again. Little Tadzik could hold out no longer. He plucked at his mother's skirt.

"Mamma, give me some bread."

"Where am I to get it? What shall I feed you with, my love?" Her sobs grew more violent. "There's nothing left, everything's burnt up—the grain, the hay, the hens, the pig, there's not even a grain of anything left."

Her sister hastily got out the bread and fat from under her shawl; she was surprised she had not lost it all as she was running out of the wood. The children crowded round her at once. There were five of them; she divided up the food, leaving a portion for Zosia.

"Eat it, you'll want all your strength. And where's your man?"

"The men have all gone to talk things over with the alderman. But what there is to talk over, god knows. Nothing's left of the village. One of the Banachs' children was burnt to death and the blacksmith is so badly burnt that it's doubtful if he'll live till evening. There are others as badly burnt. Old Mrs. Wasiak was burnt to death, too."

"You don't say!"

"She couldn't move, she's lain like a log since the spring, and who had time to think of her last night? Everyone had himself to save, and they'd hardly time to get the children out. The fire started in the middle of the night at the smith's, he was working till late—and that's where it started, I expect. But the judgment of god's come on him—he's so burnt he's terrible to look at. He grabbed whatever he could out of the fire, but what use was that? It blazed up in a minute, and the wind caught the flames and they spread in no time. . . ."

She munched the bread slowly, while big tears rolled down her soot-stained cheeks.

In the meadow the peasants were consulting the alderman.

"Something's got to be done. We can't leave it like that: the women and children sitting on the naked earth with nothing but the naked sky over them."

Old Wiercioch scratched his grizzled head; there was a big red scar on it.

"We can't think of anything else but for you, Roman, to go to the count."

The idea was not much to the liking of the peasants. But they knew that the count had had some dealings with the village alderman—perhaps the latter would be able to beg some little help from him.

"If he would even let us have a few cart-loads of potatoes and a little grain."

"You think he'll give it. Not a bit of it. . . . Not a bit of it."

"And what would it be to him? He has enough for ten distilleries. He can surely spare something for Brzegi."

"People from this place have gone to work for him before now, and he owes them their wages."

"Szydlowiec hasn't been paid for nearly two years."

"He wanted to pay Janicki in straw."

"Even straw would be better than nothing. And what a lot of grain he must have! The sun didn't burn his up—it's different soil there. And we have nothing to lie down on, nothing to sleep on, and look at all our children."

"Yes, even straw would come in handy."

"Before the insurance is paid the people will be at their last gasp."

"And in any case we'll have to go begging all winter till the spring."

"We ought to write a petition to the district office: when Stachowka was burned down, the people got help from the office."

"All in good time—we'll write to the office afterwards, but now we should go to the count."

The alderman pondered the matter for some time as he stood, scratching the back of his neck.

"We can go, of course. . . . If he gives us anything—well and good, if not—what can we do? No use knocking your head against a brick wall. But I can't go alone. Get a few folks together, and we'll make up a delegation.''

They argued the matter for a long time before they decided who should go. Then they chose Wiercioch, Skalka, Lazinski, Kucharczuk. The women pushed Skalka's wife forward and insisted noisily that she should go too.

"Let a woman go with you as well. Mrs. Skalka can speak up for herself: she'll tell him the why and the wherefore of it. She'll manage the wives' business better than the men."

Horses were sent from Mackow and the delegates set out in two carts to make their appeal to the count.

It was about the most unfortunate day they could have chosen. The morning before, the girl who worked in the count's kitchen-garden had run in to awaken the manager of the estate. Rousing himself with difficulty, he could not understand at first what she wanted.

"Oh, sir, the young trees beyond the park. . . . Oh, sir, every single one of them, sir!"

He jumped out of bed at last, and started to drag on his trousers. His hands shook so much that he could not fasten his belt and find the buttons.

"All of them?"

"Every one. . . . I looked up and I thought I must be dreaming. I thought—it can't be the same place, surely. . . . It doesn't look like itself!"

There was an expression of terror, mingled with a kind of exultation on the girl's face. She babbled on without stopping, spluttering and panting in her excitement.

"Run for the watchman, I'm going to the castle."

"God have mercy on us, what'll happen when the count hears of it?"

"And what's that to you?" the manager snarled at her, the veins in his temples standing out with strain. "You see to yourself. This is none of your business."

She recoiled, and hurried off to the barracks. The news had excited her, she would have liked to shout it at the top of her voice, but she dreaded the manager. She ran round by a path leading through tall red-currant bushes; there was a rare crop of fruit this year.

Meanwhile the manager was parleying with the footman.

"He must be asleep. There isn't a sound."

"Knock at the door. I've got to see him this very instant."

"It's forbidden to go in until he calls, don't you know that?"

"I'm telling you to do it this very minute, you blockhead! Knock! I'll answer for it. Tell him I must see him at once."

Onufry scratched his grey head and shuffled slowly to the door. But from behind it a voice suddenly called: "Onufry!"

The man hastily opened it.

"What's all that noise?"

"It's the manager, your excellency. He wants to see you."

"Why is he in such a hurry? Ask him to come in!"

The manager entered, bowing low. He did not look at the half-dressed count. His gaze wandered about the flowery carpet, as he plunged into the explanation of his visit.

"Your excellency, the young saplings in the plantation beyond the park have been cut down in the night."

"The young trees? The ones that were planted not long ago?"

"Yes."

"Many of them?"

The manager hesitated. For a few minutes he stood twisting his cap, his mouth hanging open.

"All of them?"

"Yes, all of them. They've been cut down with an axe."

The count began to dress hastily. His face was dark with anger.

"Where's the watchman?"

"I've sent for him. He'll be here in a moment."

"Dismiss him at once."

"Very well, your excellency."

"And the gardener?"

"I haven't seen him yet."

"Dismiss him at once."

The manager opened his mouth to speak, but closed it again without uttering a word. He glanced sideways at the big, frowning, bloated face of the count.

"Come with me!"

"Very well, your excellency."

The garden and the park were still grey with dew. Long rows of pale green and bluish vegetables extended to where the bee-hives stood. Entering the cool damp park was like entering a jungle. The spreading branches of great lime trees and ancient oaks, and the tops of the acacias met overhead and formed an impenetrable canopy. The path was like a green tunnel. It led out to an open space, a broad field that sloped gently down to the River Bug.

The count saw the trees from a distance. They were lying on the ground among the cabbage and cauliflowers, lying in regular rows as they had been planted two years ago. The count bent down and looked at the stumps attentively; they had been cut down cleanly with one powerful blow of an axe. The white pith showed—the fresh wounds, the frail young branches pointing upwards. The count straightened himself, took in the prospect at a glance, the piece of garden—ten *morgs* in all—extending to the neighboring hills. All was flat, unbroken; close to the ground itself stretched the row of curly steel-grey and bluish-mauve cabbage, but nothing grew above that level. The count walked on slowly, pausing from time to time; it was like a walk through a cemetery. Everything had been laid low; the Calvilles, the Golden and Grey Pippins, the Rosemaries—not even the Paradise Apple Trees that had been a mist of rosy bloom that spring had been spared.

"Have you looked for tracks?"

"There are some tracks. Will you have the goodness to look at them, your excellency?"

"What are you showing me, you blockhead! Those are horse's hoofs. But they needed no horses here: they haven't taken anything away, they were kind enough to do that."

The manager's face turned purple.

"There are no other tracks anywhere about, your excellency."

"Are you crazy?"

"Examine them yourself, if you please, your excellency."

The soft well-tilled soil of the vegetable garden showed the tracks of horse's hoofs, but they followed one after the other in the order of human footprints.

"They fastened hoofs to their feet."

The count chewed the end of his long yellowing moustache.

"Inform the police."

"Very well, your excellency."

"Where's the watchman?"

"There he is, coming."

An old bowed man was hurrying towards them from the park side. His trousers, baggy at the knees, flapped against his lean legs, his tousled hair stuck out in all directions.

"Where were you when the trees were cut down last night?"

The old man bowed low to the ground stretching out his arms as if to embrace the count's legs.

"Have mercy, your excellency. . . . Yesterday evening I went my rounds as usual. . . . I was in the park and everywhere. . . . About midnight the dogs ran over to that side, towards the hives, and started barking . . . a terrible row they made. I thought somebody must be interfering with the hives—because it's just the time for gathering the honey. . . . And I was delayed a bit there. And then the dogs barked by the kitchen-garden and round at the back of the castle and never stopped till morning."

"And it never entered your head to come and look around here?"

"But, your excellency, what could anyone want here? If they had hung around the stables or the castle or the hen-houses—I could understand it. . . . But there's nothing but young trees here. . . . There's not even an apple on them. What would anyone want here?"

His red eyes flitted about the long rows of ruined trees on the ground. Their branches looked like bushes growing up between the vegetables.

"Get your things together and clear out," said the manager.

The old man shook from head to foot.

"Have mercy, sir! . . . My old woman's sick. . . . And I've been here so many years. . . . How can you do that to me?"

"We don't want any sluggards here. Why, they must have been chopping the trees down all night—there were so many of them, and you neither saw nor heard anything . . .

"Tell the police to keep the watchman under observation," the count said curtly. "They must find whether he wasn't in league with them."

The old man flung out his arms.

"In league with them? Why, how! With whom? I've worked here for forty years, forty years! I came here before you were married, your excellency, while the old count was still alive, when . . ."

The count walked away quickly towards the castle. The dewy leaves rustled; a faint crackling came from the crisp heads of cabbage that were just beginning to show the first curly leaves. The watchman—a small, stooping figure, gesticulating helplessly—ran after him.

"How can you do this? . . . And my wife's laid up. So many years I'm here. . . . Before you were married, your excellency. . . ."

The count waved him away.

"Tell him, do you hear, tell him that he must be gone before tomorrow!"

"Very well, your excellency. But, then. . . . Where are we to find him when the police come? They may not come today."

"Don't notify the police."

The manager looked surprised.

"What? Am I not to notify them after all?"

"That's what I said. And hold your tongue about this matter. Anyone who dares to talk about it is to be dismissed!"

"Very well, your excellency . . . but—"

"No buts. . . . Dismiss the gardener. He should have seen to things. The garden is in his charge."

"Very well, your excellency. . . . And what about the trees?"

"Have you lost your senses? Throw them out, of course. What are they good for now? And never open your mouth to me about it

again. Send Markowiak up to the castle."

"Very well, your excellency."

The windows of the castle were glittering in the sunrise as the count was nearing home.

"Onufry!"

"Yes, your excellency?"

"When Markowiak comes, send him to me immediately. And don't let anyone else in, do you hear?"

"Very well, your excellency."

The door slammed, the key grated in the lock. The count went to the window. From here the broad Ostrzenski lands and the dark patches of the villages were clearly visible. In the distance, behind a dark strip of woods, lay Kaliny; lower down and nearer the castle—Mackow and Brzegi, and Wadoly, and Rutka. The count made a grimace and looked again at what had always been an eyesore—the section of the narrow strips of land owned by the peasants, cutting into the count's broad fields of wheat, and the tangled tops of the osiers that outlined the peasants' gullet between the count's ponds. There was a tiny black speck on the Bug, evidently a boat. A cloud of dust arose on the road; someone was coming on a cart. A peasant's boat and a peasant's cart. . . .

He went to the door and unlocked it.

"Who is there?"

"Markowiak has come, your excellency."

"Good. Don't let anyone else in, do you hear?"

"Very well, your excellency."

Markowiak stood by the writing-table, twisting his cap. His cunning little grey eyes bored into the count's face.

"You've heard what has happened?"

The peasant made a low obeisance.

"They told me, your excellency."

"Who told you?"

Markowiak fidgeted nervously.

"Oh, I just heard it. . . . I can't remember now who told me. . . . People talk. . . . News carries like chaff on the wind."

The count's thick, grizzled eyebrows drew together.

"You must find out about it."

"Begging your pardon, your excellency, but have you notified the police yet?"

"No."

Markowiak was clearly delighted.

"That's good! If they had started to ask questions and listen and write down things, they'd never find out. But this way, when everything settles down, someone is sure to let his tongue wag."

He went closer and bent over the count in a familiar manner.

"Begging your pardon, your excellency, but—do you suspect anyone?"

"No. You find out in the villages. If you could get to know from which village he was, even."

"Oh, I'll smell it out, I'll do some pumping. But it'll take time."

"I'm in no hurry. . . . There's plenty of time," the count said in a resolute tone.

"Oh, that's true. Your excellency has plenty of time. . . ." Markowiak gave a snicker. "More haste, less speed. We'll do it little by little, we'll just take our time."

"How is the alderman getting on in Mackow?"

"You mean about the gullet?"

"Yes."

"Oh, as for that, you can rely on him, your excellency. . . . He tries his very best. . . . But the folks there are very stubborn, terrible stubborn."

"Tell him, I'll give two thousand."

"Two thousand? That's a powerful lot of money. The men would be only too glad to agree—it's a poor community. Only . . ."

"Only what?"

"If they didn't know, that your excellency, begging your pardon, wanted it so badly. But as it is. . . . There are those that won't hear a word from the alderman about it . . . about that gullet, that is. If you won't be vexed with me for saying so, your excellency, they'd let anyone else but you have it for a hundred *zloty*."

The bushy grey eyebrows drew together once more. The count breathed heavily, with an effort, it seemed.

"So you mean to say . . . you say. . . . Who are they?"

Markowiak thought for a moment.

"Begging your pardon, but . . . it's all of them. But as far as I see, the worst are . . . Skorzak, Lesiak, Karaba. And who else?" he began to count on his fingers. "Well, there's Stokowski and Kowalczuk."

The count nodded, and made a mental note of the names.

"Lesiak. . . . Lesiak. . . . What was it that I heard about Lesiak?"

"That the police had been making inquiries about him. Not so much about him as about his son. They say it was on account of—what-do-you-call-it . . . reading newspapers and being a revolutionary, and the like."

"Lesiak. . . . Keep your eye on him, do you hear?"

"I'll keep my eye on him. . . . And in case of anything turning up, begging your pardon, I'll let your excellency know."

"All right. But don't start coming here too often."

"Oh, I'm careful, very careful. . . . But they . . . they seem to have guessed something already. . . . And you know, your excellency, if you'll excuse my saying so, there's times when I get such a fear over me that in case of anything. . . ."

"Say what it is you want."

"Well, it's this way . . . if I could have some oats, begging your pardon. There's been such a drought, it's terrible, and I have a couple of horses."

"All right. I'll tell the manager. When my men go to town they'll drop a sack at your place."

"I'm greatly obliged to you, I'm sure, your excellency."

"You may go now."

"Yes, I'm going, but just one minute."

He bent over again to the count.

"I've mentioned it already to the manager. . . . There's that fellow who looks after the horses . . . Garada. . . . He ought to be watched. . . ."

"Is he a thief?"

"N-no. But it's said that he stirs up the folks . . . the farm laborers, that is. . . ."

"I'll look into it. Now go."

"My most humble respects to you, your excellency. And I'm much obliged for the oats, because I know I can be as sure of it as if it was in my own stable already. His excellency's word is his bond, for me."

"Go, go."

Markowiak retired, bowing frequently, but none too low, and none too respectfully. There was a mocking expression in the little grey eyes fixed on the count's big, flabby face. . . .

The delegation reached the castle at midday. The gardener called the manager. The latter tried in every way to hinder them from proceeding further.

"But it isn't you we've come to see, mister," Mrs. Skalka informed him. "We want to talk to the count. Go and tell him that a delegation has come from Brzegi, five of us and the alderman who's an official person."

"I don't know if the count will come out."

"We're not asking you, mister, whether you know or not. If you won't tell him we'll find the way there ourselves."

The manager got frightened and

ran into the depths of the castle. He was away a long time.

"They're in no hurry."

"Here we are standing at the door like beggars."

"And aren't we beggars?"

"When you have to beg, you have to swallow everything."

"Perhaps the count's still asleep."

"Why shouldn't he be? He hasn't got to hurry out to the fields, his cow isn't lowing in the shed for him."

"Ours aren't lowing any more, and now they never will!" Mrs. Skalka wailed, and the hearts of the peasants contracted.

But at that moment the door opened, and the count came out. He stood at the head of the steps, a tall, broad-shouldered man, and from under the grey eyebrows the reddened, purple-ringed eyes scrutinized the little delegation.

"What do you want?"

Wiercioch prodded the alderman.

"Talk up, Roman, you're the alderman."

The latter advanced to the foot of the steps and made a low bow.

"We're from Brzegi, your excellency. A great misfortune came upon us last night."

"I know."

"The whole village is burned to the ground."

"What is it you want?"

The alderman hesitated. But Mrs. Skalka came forward.

"We've come here, your excellency, a delegation, as you might say, for there are five of us and the alderman, to ask for help."

The count frowned and pursed his lips beneath his grey mustache.

"And why should I be expected to help you?"

Mrs. Skalka's tongue was paralyzed. But Wiercioch came to the rescue.

"Because when misfortune comes on people, others help them. But who is to help us if we are all as poor as birds? It's been a droughty year, crops are bad in the villages, it's as much as the people can do to keep alive. . . . And it would be nothing to your excellency to give us a few potatoes, straw and some timber."

"So you've come to me for this?"

"Who else could we go to? To those who haven't enough for themselves? We've come to him who has something to give."

"You've got more land and timber than you can reckon," Mrs. Skalka said with a sigh.

"So that's what you suppose," the count said calmly, looking at them all attentively: at the tattered clothing, the scarred hands, the great fresh wound on Wiercioch's head.

"Kolisiak!" he called.

"Yes, your excellency." The manager came forward with his customary servility.

"Give these people two cartloads of the potatoes that were put aside yesterday for the pigs. And give them . . . give them . . ."—the count's breath was coming thickly now. "Give them six hundred young trees, do you hear? Six hundred young trees!"

The manager turned pale.

"Young trees? What young trees?"

"Don't you understand? The Calvilles and the Golden Pippins and the Grey Pippins, and the Paradise Apples . . . give them the six hundred. . . . From the whole ten *morgs*, do you hear?"

He clutched at his throat, and tore the collar that was choking him. Then he turned and shut the door with a bang that echoed through all the room.

The peasants stood thunderstruck. Then, as if at the bidding of a magic wand, the count's people appeared on the scene, the foresters ran up with their guns, and before the peasants had time to gather their

wits about them, they found themselves outside.

Old Wiercioch was blue in the face. Mrs. Skalka shook her fist at the closed gate and, beside herself, shrieked curses in her exhausted voice upon the head of the count, upon his castle, his lands, his woods, his ponds and everything that was his.

VI

Wincenty had a somewhat easier time now that school was over and with it—the endless writing of forms for fines, and the hopeless conversations with parents, who nodded agreement to everything he said and went on doing what suited themselves. For the time being he ceased to be one who kept their children away from the minding of the cows, the berry-picking—at which they could earn a few coppers, from every kind of labor where the children's help was needed.

The murder of Zielinski and the affair of the peasants from Brzegi took a stronger hold of Wincenty's mind as time went on, and he, too, gradually came to see the Ostrzen castle as a nail driven into the living green body of the land.

Soon the Brzegi affair took up all his attention. When Brzegi peasants, with sacks on their backs and their women with children in their arms went to the riverside villages, then they began to hang around the church and the corners of the streets, in the barn, and with tearful voices begged for alms, protests were raised in Mackow—always the first to respond to any disturbance, in Kaliny, in Grabowek and in all the surrounding villages.

"This can't go on! Are people to go begging because the count refuses to give them any help?"

"Are folks to die without the count's help?"

"Is there nobody and nothing but the count here?"

They talked so much and so noisily that the village alderman called a meeting. Mrs. Skalka raved like a crazy woman.

"That's not what the matter is, nobody's asking for anything. But are we to let the count see that we can't get on without him? Me and my husband—we've dug a pit by the cellar and I won't get out of it if I have to die there. Why should we give him the chance to gloat over the burning of our village—he's delighted that there's nothing left of Brzegi. And I'll tell you another thing, too; his excellency's turned everything over in his mind—he's very clever, that fellow is! He's been talking to the alderman already—tell them it's true, Roman, and said he wants to buy up the land. . . And there are those here who may be tempted if they haven't a bit of bread to eat, and they'll sell!"

"Dead certain they will! And by the spring the money will all be gone and the people will be beggars then for good."

"And he won't pay much, either! Next to nothing, but folks will fall for it, and he'll get the land for a song."

"What does he want with it? Hasn't he enough of his own?"

"He wants to buy this," the alderman growled out reluctantly. "He says he'll buy a lot of it, right up to the wood, so as to level it all."

"He'll wait a long time till we let him have it! Level it, indeed!"

Wincenty sat there, quietly listening to the talk, but he could feel the blood mounting to his face.

"We've got to think of something to do," Skorzak said.

"What can you think of?" Mrs. Skalka shouted. "I've been telling the people: if any one dares to sell his bit of land, I'll scratch his eyes

out. He won't get much satisfaction out of his Judas-money!"

Plyciak rapped on the floor with his stick.

"It's easy enough to say you'll scratch people's eyes out. But what is a man to do when he hasn't a roof over his head, nor a mouthful of bread, and there are five or six children screaming in his ears?"

"Let him die!" screamed Mrs. Skalka, beside herself with rage.

"Dying is the easiest of all. But what we want is to find some way out."

"We must write to the Rural District Office."

"We've written, but what use was it? So far all that came of it was a notice received yesterday by Skubinski, reminding him that he's got to pay the tax. And Skubinski is lying covered with burns, hardly able to move, and there are four children and his wife is nearly out of her head."

Wincenty said uncertainly:

"And supposing someone was to go to town and see about it?"

"He's right. The paper may be lying there, and nobody has ever looked at it, nor ever will. But if someone was to go to the head offices, it might do some good. The insurance office might also be forced to pay."

"But who is to go?"

"It ought to be the alderman."

"Ah, the alderman again! You'd like to go, Roman, wouldn't you? Like last time, when the village wasted so much money on you and you didn't do anything."

"There was nothing I could do then. . . ." Roman growled.

"Of course you couldn't. And you were going about the village drunk for two days afterwards."

"Don't start a row now, you women, else we'll never get anywhere. Somebody must go, there's no two ways about it. I think it should be the alderman and the schoolmaster."

"The schoolmaster?" someone said in surprise at first.

"And why not? The schoolmaster will be better able to talk to them, you have to know the ins and outs of everything there, and country folks like us don't know them. It's better if two go together. So let's say—the alderman and the schoolmaster."

"But it's a double expense."

"I shall pay my own expenses," said Wincenty in a rather husky voice, reckoning up his financial position mentally. ("If it comes to that I can borrow from Staszka, and pay back by installments," he thought.)

"Oh, well, that'll be all right, then," someone in the crowd exclaimed with satisfaction. But the others protested.

"No, that won't do, if you're going on the business of the village, the village should pay."

"There's the railway ticket, to begin with. We won't count the cart from here, but there's the railway fare there and back. And stopping in the town—they don't give you anything for nothing there, either."

"Yes, it'll take a good penny."

At last they came to an agreement, and appointed a day.

"There's no sense in putting it off. The sooner the better. Let them send the commission before we're all scattered over the face of the earth."

"Listen, folks, it's all right to go to Warsaw, and it's all right to see about the insurance. But something's got to be done here on the spot, too."

"The insurance money won't be paid before the harvest is over, and then we must all set to work and build the houses before winter."

"Perhaps the ministry will give something."

"Yes, but when will that be?. . .

And meantime there isn't a bit of bread."

"We ought to make a collection."

"Where will you collect?"

"Has anybody got in any crops this year?"

"Nobody has anything for himself, let alone anything to share."

"That's really not so. Nobody is asked to give a bushel of rye or potatoes. But if everybody in all the villages gave something—we could collect quite a lot of everything."

"And who'll divide it all up? Not the alderman, surely?"

"I should think not! It might stick to his hands again."

"It mustn't be the alderman on any account. Better choose two to do it."

"Why choose again? A delegation was chosen once to go to that villain on the hill. Let the same people do the dividing up."

"That's right! Why should we choose them the second time?"

"Only it should be done fairly. . ."

"Of course it'll have to be done fairly! Let every village bring its contribution to its alderman, with everything properly recorded, and then the stuff should be brought to Brzegi."

"Linen as well?" a woman asked.

"Yes, of course. Each should give whatever he can no matter how little, only everyone should give something."

"And help people. . . ."

"Yes, it'll help people and it'll show the count that we can get on without his charity."

"And who was it that was all for our going to the count? Wasn't it you?"

"Who could have known how it would turn out . . ."

"And how else could it have turned out? He looks upon people as cattle, worse than cattle."

Right after midday the carts started out and drove from door to door. People knew the errand they had come on, so the drivers did not even have to climb down. The peasants gave potatoes, grain, lengths of home-woven linen, flax, loaves of bread, whatever they had.

They all gave. Old Mrs. Lesiak brought a hen, Zacharczuk—a sucking pig. Even the poorest of the poor gave. Anna came out of her shed with a baby's shirt in her hand and laid it on the cart.

"Maybe it'll come in handy."

"Of course it will. They're all naked and bare-foot."

She lingered there, with her son in her arms. She glanced at Wincenty, who was sitting in the cart, then her big grey eyes dropped to the little head on her breast. Wincenty turned away, for he noticed that the women were watching him closely; he busied himself tying up a sack of grain.

They collected until evening. Early in the morning, while it was still dark, the schoolmaster was awakened by a tap at the window. It was the alderman from Brzegi. They drove together to the railway station. It was a long drive through the chilly grey of the early morning, by the dew-besprinkled meadows and the birch-groves where branches hung low over the path. Far, far away stretched the undulating green plain, the wild thyme-covered hills, with folds that showed like ripples; a pearly light lay over the river; the ponds in the meadows were like dark calm eyes waking from sleep, still holding in their depths the golden reflection of the stars. Larks were singing, birds twittered in the branches of the pines; a flock of wild ducks rose from the water, and flying bats sailed high over the tree-tops. As always in the early morning, the evening and the sultry noons, Wincenty was enchanted by the beauty of this land, this green and azure and golden land, ringing with the songs of birds, smelling

of flowers, weeping with the delicate boughs of the birches, frowning with the shadows of the pines.

They had to wait at the station. The train was almost empty.

"Nobody's traveling much now—it's not the time of year. But there are times when it's that crowded—when there are excursions from Bialowiez. Look—there's the distillery."

"Count Ostrzenski's?"

"Who else would it belong to? This is all the count's estate round here. On the other side of the line, too. Look at that fine forest over there."

Wincenty looked out. The train was puffing and racing along at a good rate, but they still could not get out of the count's domain. It glided past in twilit forest, green meadows, vast stretches of tilled land; it crowned the hills with grey windmills, and curled up to the sky in the smoke of distillery chimneys. And within it were wedged the narrow beets of villages where the peasants lived—they were like tiny islets in a limitless sea. Ostrzensky's domains seemed boundless, endless, they stretched as far as the eye could reach on either side of the railway. And these fields and meadows and woods kept getting mixed up in his mind's eye with the meager holdings of the Kaliny peasants, the marshy meadows above the Bug, the scurvy-rotted gums of Mrs. Liberat, the swollen stomachs of the potato-fed children of Kaliny. And then the green and gold and blue was clouded with a dull ache, an almost physical disgust. He breathed more freely when at last Roman informed him:

"This isn't Ostrzenski's land any more . . ." Adding after a moment: "But the count has another estate in Podolia, only he doesn't live there, he only goes there sometimes. He's got a place in France, too."

Wincenty made no comment. His head ached, the train rattled and the swaying of the cars was dreadful. On the bench opposite a toothless woman was sleeping with her mouth wide open. There were no other passengers. Wincenty dozed. When he awoke, the train was slowing down.

"Well, we're there. It must be five years since I was here last. It was that rainy year when I came to see about the postponing of payment of the taxes."

"Did they postpone them?"

"N-no," the alderman admitted reluctantly. Remembering the things the women had called out at the meeting, Wincenty asked no more questions.

"Where are we going now?"

"I happen to know a lawyer here, he'll advise us."

"That's right. A lawyer is sure to know the ins and outs of these things."

Then it began: the tramping from place to place, the knocking at hundreds of doors, the repetition of the same tale, the long hours of waiting in corridors. All the alderman did was to nod his head in agreement or shrug his shoulders; the burden of the business fell on Wincenty's shoulders. In the evenings he was footsore and exhausted. He talked until he was hoarse, explaining, pleading—but he was only knocking his head against the stone wall of indifference, rules, and lack of understanding. In those few days he became more intimately associated with Kaliny than in the course of a whole year of life in the village. He felt a sense of responsibility; people in Mackow, in Kaliny, in all the villages, and most of all in Brzegi, were waiting for him. The women who had grown dark with care and grief, the hungry children, the men driven desperate—they were waiting for him amid the black ruins of what once were their homes. They had trusted him and he must bring their affairs to

a successful conclusion even if to do so he had to break through the closed doors and the stolid heads of the bored gentlemen who sat there behind their desks. Here, surrounded by the bustle of the big city, he felt as alien and as much off his balance as he had at first in the village. He knew that to these people he seemed absurd, sentimental and narrow. They were accustomed to affairs of this kind and they saw them from their own viewpoint, from their desks where everything looked quite different. These things ceased to be fresh wounds and turned into a dry line of letters in a report, into a petition written in the wrong way and sent to the wrong address. Here, in the town, the Brzegi folks lost their familiar faces blackened with smoke and burnt by sparks from the fire, branded by despair—and became grey ciphers. Here, the village was not a wilderness of barren sand and useless bog, not the birthplace of children deformed by rickets and eaten by lice, the home of women who were old at twenty-five, and of men who were crushed to the ground by fruitless toil; it was a dot on a map, a note in a column, a thing lifeless and meaningless. With despair and fury and indignation he strove to call up before the cold eyes of the officials the picture as he had seen it—the village's living, truthful, heartrending image. They smiled at him coolly—some because it was nothing new—nothing startling or unexpected to them; others because they did not believe him. They did not want to believe him. It was much more comfortable for them not to believe it.

Now, as he climbed hundreds of flights of stairs, and hurried along hundreds of streets, Wincenty realized more and more clearly that over all lay the sinister, all-powerful shadow of Ostrzen. What could be the outcome, what could be the solution of the problem? Even if everything were arranged in the best possible way, would it be more than an insignificant plaster on a great, inflamed, running sore? And in the future, when the village would be rebuilt, would hunger cease to look in at the windows of the houses every spring? No. The children's teeth would go on crumbling, and the women would die in childbirth, the peasant stock would continue to degenerate, and a man would set fire to his brother's house, because of four cartloads of grain—and all this would go on as long as Ostrzen, a luxuriant green oasis in the midst of drab villages, remained like a nail driven into the living body of the earth, a parasite sucking up even the little that belonged to the peasants, eating into the green and golden land on the banks of the Bug.

After five days of running hither and thither, of talking, and working with stifled rage, something was wrung out of the officials. Roman was radiant.

"I always said we ought to come ourselves. You can do a lot more on the spot than by writing. A petition gets stuck away somewhere and it's doubtful if anyone will ever read it. But if you go there yourself and put the matter in a reasonable light, then you get things settled."

The alderman's pompous, triumphant air irritated Wincenty. He had pottered all the time to no purpose whatsoever and now he was as pleased as if everything were already settled. Everything? Wincenty tried not to think; he retreated before the final answer. His reason told him clearly how the evil could be remitted. But he pushed the thought away, avoided it, put it off.

He often thought of Staszka and every day intended to go and see her, and consult her. He felt helpless, faced by the running sores on the children's heads, the deep

wounds made by scythes and axes, the "inward pains" that defied definition. But there was no time. The ringing of axes was heard in Brzegi now from morning till night. There was a smell of fresh timber everywhere. Peasants came in a body from other villages to help rebuild Brzegi, so that the new houses would be roofed in by winter. The goods collected from the surrounding villages had to be divided up. With a writing-pad and a constantly-breaking pencil in his hand, Wincenty stood over the piles of gifts and, together with the delegation—Skalka and his wife, Kucharczuk, Wiercioch, and Lazinski—allotted the things. Human spite and envy again crept out to the surface.

"Petronela has only two children and she's been given more than me."

"But you saved something out of the fire and she didn't."

"That's no business of anyone's, is it? Even if I did have time to get a few pence out from behind the crucifix, surely I oughtn't to be given less than others because of that."

"It was all Wroniak's fault that the fire started and yet his children are going about well-fed."

"Run along, Walek, and see if you can get some more meal, maybe they didn't write it down last time."

"These potatoes are rotten. They weren't worth taking."

"Look how the schoolmaster fusses about. . . ."

"Why shouldn't he, I'd like to know! You may be sure he's making something out of this . . ."

"You don't mean to tell me! . . ."

"True as I'm standing here! They say he's being paid by the District Office for every minute of his time."

"Those kind of people have a fine life of it."

"And who can be sure that they didn't keep something for themselves when the collection was being made."

"You're all liars! At every collection there was someone of our women from Brzegi."

"Oh, even then, they could easily manage to squeeze something out for themselves. . . . Especially if somebody like Mrs. Jedrzych was there. They could stop her mouth with anything that happened handy. Why should she look after other people's things once she'd got something herself?"

"Everybody for himself, of course."

"It's only natural. Everybody looks out for himself."

Nevertheless the axes rang merrily and the walls of smooth pine-logs rose rapidly. The black charred remains of the village were gathered into one great pile; a thick carpet of fresh shavings lay underfoot, thin streams of sawdust trickled from under the saws. Meals were prepared in iron pots and cooked over bonfires, lit on the sites of the old houses. Here and there the grunting of pigs and the clucking of hens could be heard. The wounds received in the fire were healing, weeds sprang up thickly out of the fire-blackened earth. Life was gradually returning to its old course, though the dread of winter showed in the exhausted faces of the women, and cut deep lines in the faces of the men. But Brzegi was rising anew in the pale gold of the fresh timber of new walls, new roofs. People moved into the new houses two and three families in a house, for there could be no question yet of building enough houses for the whole village.

VII

The breath of autumn grew more noticeable in the air. In the morning a transparent grey fog veiled the fields; evenings grew chilly; the limes shed their yellow leaves, though it was not yet time. Still the sun shone down relentlessly, the passing showers hardly moistened the white sand and were over almost before the people watching the cloud had time to lower their gaze. The ground cracked and turned grey. The bogs alone were as green as before, and the oaks, for they had roots that could reach further down than the drought and escape it. The crops were gathered in earlier than usual and soon threshed. After that it was possible to calculate what they had brought this year. There were those that did not get back even the amount of seed sown. The dry ears of wheat and rye contained tiny hard seeds or the poisonous ergot. The oats rustled with the dry hollow rustle of empty husks. Neither the millet nor the buckwheat nor any other seed sown in the autumn or the spring with such high hopes had escaped. There was no hay; all that could be collected in the barns amounted to a few little heaps of dry grass like straw, more suitable for litter than for fodder. They reckoned up how many cows would have to be sold, for even the better-off peasants could not hope to keep their cows till spring. Even now, in the summertime, the cattle were growing thin, and bony, the cows gave no milk. The price of cattle dropped, and it was obvious that at every succeeding fair day it would fall still lower, since all the sun-scorched villages along the River Bug would try to get rid of their cattle. The cows lowed plaintively as they were driven along the sandy roads to the market-town, but often enough they returned in herds to the villages; few buyers were to be found. Dread came over the people, increasing as they thought of the winter. Although it was after the harvest, they were no better off than before the plowing. With all this they had to manage until the next harvest, and yet they would have to take the grain they needed now for bread and set aside some of it for sowing. The grain was barren, dry, and unsuitable for sowing. The Mackow mill which, in other years, was busy day and night, now hardly moved at all—there was almost nothing to grind. And what little flour was ground was black and bitter and uneatable.

People withered from hunger and despair. The children's faces became darkened and disfigured, there seemed to be nothing left of them but great eyes, burning with fever. The grain and the flour were kept under lock and key out of the way of temptation, because there was still the autumn, the winter and the spring to be got through. No one could depend now upon the potato-crop, there had been no rain to save even this. Women wandered about the fields and ditches, gathering pig-weed and every kind of weed that could be boiled for food. Men spent most of the time fishing, children helped themselves as best as they could, catching gudgeon in the shallow creeks of the Bug, stealing the eggs of hens, searching for birds' nests, gathering the hard roots of spear-grass from the freshly plowed soil. And this was the harvest-time, the season of plenty, of feasting and weddings, when Stefanowicz the tavern-keeper had always been able to reckon on big takings, and often had to go twice a week to town for beer, vodka, tobacco and salt. In past years the village had resounded to songs at this time and the lads had been larking about the roads of an even-

ing. Now a dismal silence reigned in the village; people went about, surly and taciturn, each wrapped up in his own affairs and his fears for the future. Thefts began. Stefanowicz's window was taken out and some sausage, bacon, rice and other goods stolen from his store-room. All Plaziak's hens were stolen and it was clear that the thief had been no stranger, for the dog had not barked once. Even the Rojeks had a pig stolen from them. The culprits were hard to find; they might be from the same village or from some other that was likewise faced with the specter of starvation.

Zacharczuk's wife wept in secret; he was never at home of a night now. He would take the gun so cleverly hidden under the eaves that it could not be found although the police had come twice to search for it, and go after hares. Several times he was lucky enough to shoot wild duck down on the lake. At these times there was meat in the house, but there was also the constant fear that the husband and father would be brought home dead. But what was to be done? He was not the only one who lived in danger. Radziuk, Mydlarz, and Stasiak roamed the forest at night and in the small hours watched in the marshes, rowed among the thicket of reeds in the lake. The foresters and gamekeepers saw this wholesale poaching going on under their very eyes, saw, too, the gangs of women and children who came after berries and mushrooms. The count's men dashed hither and thither in pursuit, but hunger had endowed the villagers with a superhuman agility and alertness and they slipped through their persecutors' fingers.

Times were hard for Anna now. The harvest over, she could not hope to earn anything. The village was more hostile than ever; there had been too many mouths as it was and now here was another—none of theirs, an alien. All she had was what she earned washing and cooking for the schoolmaster. . . . And the baby was far from well. Yellow and tiny, he looked as if he would never be reared; he lay in the cradle, the bald head rolling on the thin stem of neck, the little hands quite blue. Anna would start up in terror in the night and light the lamp and look to see if he was still alive. He slept so quietly and his little body was so cold that she herself turned numb with fear as she touched him. Then the lids would open and she would heave a sigh of relief when she saw his black eyes — Michal's eyes— looking sleepily up into her face. She was very anxious about the child, he was all she had in the world, all that remained to her of those happy days in the stone house, of Michal who had died and would never, never be able to rejoice in the child he had yearned for.

She had very little milk left now, and the child often cried when she took him off the empty, dry breast. She knew he was crying of hunger and her heart bled for him. She herself ate very little, spending all she earned on milk for him. And she had to pay dear for the milk. The cows were not giving much now, it was hard to get, and if she wanted it for her brat, she could pay for it, the villagers decided. Though sometimes Mrs. Ignach, out of pity for the infant, would pour some into her jug in a neighborly way, and take no money for it.

When she fancied that the child was worse, she would wrap him in her shawl and hurry off to the doctor's in the town. He took a very small fee from her, but even that was all she could scrape together. He would listen to the child and tap it here and there and shout at her. The child was wasting from hunger, he told her. And that was all. Next day she stole two *zloty* from Wincenty's box. She was as white

as death when she came out of the room, clutching the money in her hand. Unseeing, she made her way home somehow by the shortest cut. The child was quiet, playing, clasping and unclasping his thin, helpless, comical little fingers. She dropped down on her knees by the cradle.

"I won't let you die, I won't let you waste away, my one and only chick. . . . Though I may have to beg from door to door, and steal from people, or murder someone, I won't let you starve. . . ."

Day by day, Wincenty watched what was going on in the village, and it filled him with terror. He was ashamed to look at the full pans in which Anna brought him his dinner; he tried to eat in secret.

He wrote to friends in Warsaw, to former comrades, to government departments, to societies, to offices. In the majority of cases he received no replies, or merely curt explanations to the effect that the drought had hit three provinces and that Kaliny was by no means an exception.

Yes, that was all very well in theory. Kaliny might be no exception, but he could not see the people from the three provinces and he could see these. Not the people of three provinces, but those of Kaliny passed by his window, glanced timidly into the room, gathered at the alderman's. He saw them at close quarters, observed day by day how they wasted before his eyes, how the women's clothes hung on them as if on poles, how the blood soaked through the scurvy-eaten gums, how the village—this and no other—was dying out, fading into oblivion. He simply could not imagine such misery anywhere else. Kaliny and the surrounding villages seemed a kind of cursed slough, the very dregs and bottom of life, gruesome specter of villages that struck horror into all who looked upon them. At last, he got something done: a commission was appointed to determine the losses caused by the drought. The gentlemen arrived, went around the fields, glanced into the barns, and made calculations. It was clear that in the case of Kaliny payment of the taxes might be postponed or perhaps even waived altogether this year. But what of it? Nobody, except perhaps Stefanowicz, would have paid them in any case. What was needed was substantial help for people who were starving to death, worn out with privation, before one's very eyes. Somewhere far away, someone at a desk would relieve Kaliny from the payment of the taxes, but what would that give Kaliny? Nothing at all. But, evidently, even that was regarded as a great deal.

VIII

Vague rumors had been going about for a long time, and people discussed them, though no one took them seriously, especially since everyone was in a scare nowadays, and any old woman's gossip spread far and wide and disturbed people. Children fancied they saw werewolves in the river meadows and women swore that they had seen the same thing. That mysterious things were happening there was not the slightest doubt; who could have wrung the neck of one of the Rojeks' hens and scattered the feathers about the yard? It was neither dog, nor fox, the women were certain of that. The Evil haunted the fences by day and screeched in the fields by night, marked the door of a house with its black finger and next morning someone was sure to be taken sick in that house.

Born of fear and despair, exagger-

ated, distorted, unlikely as they were, these rumors spread. It would be asserted that some person or other was dead and in an hour or two he was walking hale and hearty down the street . . . and no one could deny that.

It was the same with this affair: people said all manner of incredible things, but no one treated them as true.

At last, the village alderman came home from town one day and, without uttering a word to anyone, flung himself down on the bed and lay without moving. His wife went about the room on tiptoes. And before the afternoon, there was a loud barking in the street and Omiarek, one of the count's gamekeepers, appeared in the village and announced:

"All boats are to be taken away from the lake. If there's one left on it by the morning I'll sink it!"

"What's all this? What right have you to do it?" Stasiak demanded, coming forward boldly.

"The count has rented the whole extent of the waters," the forester explained.

"The lake and the ponds?"

"The village water-supply?"

"Has he asked the district if we're agreeable?"

"Has he got the permission of the assembly?"

"He must have been talking it over with the alderman. Come on to the alderman's!"

A crowd collected in no time. It filled the two rooms and the passage and overflowed into the road.

"What's all this?The gamekeeper's come and ordered us to take our boats away from the lake. . . ."

"Half the lake's ours."

"It belongs to the village. . . ."

"It's been like that for generations. . . ."

"Our grandfathers fished in it."

The alderman flung out his hands helplessly.

"The count signed an agreement with the rural office to rent the Bug."

There was an uproar.

"How can that be? Where are we going to fish?"

"The villagers never had any legal right to fish in the Bug," Omiarek declared. "It's the rule everywhere that people pay for the right to fish."

"But we've always fished there!"

"Well, you won't now. It was unlawful, I'm telling you!"

"Unlawful, indeed! Why, did the count make the water? Did he put the fish in it? Are the fish his property?"

"Wait a minute, folks!" Rojek interposed. "The river is one thing, but I'm asking you what about the lake? That's the property of the village, isn't it?"

The alderman avoided the eyes of his neighbors and fixed his gaze on the brownish markings of the grain of the tabletop.

"There's a law that says whoever rents the river has the right over the creeks as well."

"You mean to say that lake's a creek?"

"See how they twist and turn things!"

"How can it be a creek? It's fed by springs from under the ground."

"Sure, near the Radziuk the water is as cold as ice."

"And it's the same down by the hazel-copse too!"

"And by your meadow, Wladyslaw."

"Who ever heard of water fourteen metres deep in a creek?"

"Yes. . . . Look at the depth of it!"

"It's not for the likes of you to judge. The count has rented the Bug from Kaliny to Ostrzen from the district office. They've marked it down on the map that the lake and the ponds by the wood belong to the Bug creeks."

"They've marked it down on the map? It's a lie! We won't stand that!"

"That's no concern of mine," said Omiarek. "My business is to tell you that there mustn't be a boat of yours on the lake by morning." And off he went, in his squeaking patent leather boots and a shiny new belt. The peasants remained in the alderman's house.

"What shall we do now?"

Again the alderman flung out his hands in a gesture of despair.

"We can write an application. But nothing will come of it, it's only a waste of time. I went to the town today and found out."

"So we're all to starve to death?"

"You won't have to, Josef, you've got nearly ten *morgs* of land."

"And what about the Rojeks, and the Zacharczuks, and the Stasiaks, and Ignachs, and all the folks that live on that side, on the hill?"

"If the count has rented the water, we'll never be let near it now!" came in a despairing scream from Mrs. Rojek, who had followed her husband here as soon as she heard the news. "It'll be the same as with the woods—where they fire at anyone who comes after a mushroom or a berry. They won't let us even go into the water after mussels. They'll kill us the same as they killed Zielinski."

"That's the gospel truth!"

"And it isn't only the Rojeks and the Zacharczuks and the Stasiaks . . . we'll all perish of hunger."

"The lord cursed this land with barren sand, gave us nothing but the water to live on."

"Where we could catch fish and gather mussels to feed the pigs."

"Looks like this means the end for our pigs, too."

"We're going to have to fill the youngsters' mouths with sand now. . . . That's all that's left."

"That's the end of us. The count's going to finish us all off now. . . ."

"There's nothing for it but to take the beggar's wallet over our shoulders and go from door to door."

One after another the women ran in from the fields, weeping and wailing, and their husbands had no heart to stop them now. What could they do? The ground was being cut away from under their feet.

"You are the alderman—you ought to tell us what we should do. . . ."

"Maybe he's in league with the count himself."

"Who was it took the money for the cows that shouldn't have been paid by right . . . ?"

"Before he was elected he was as sweet as honey, and now all he does is run off to the town and the police-station."

"He's a big official when it comes to scaring women with fines, but as soon as anything is wanted he's not there nor anywhere."

"Sh-sh, there, you women! Don't make such a row!" old Mydlarz ventured to remonstrate, but recoiled in terror as his daughter flew at him like a fury.

"What right have you to interfere? Of course, all you care is for yourself—as long as you have enough for yourself, it's all right, and as for the rest Anielka can go and get it where she likes. You're always the first when there's any eating to be done, but you haven't a grain of sense in your old noddle! Why do you want to open your mouth where there are wiser people around. You are only fit to hobble along at the tail of a cow and that not your own."

The old man squeezed into the midst of the crowd, fearful lest she should tear his eyes out. The alderman raised his hand for silence.

"We'll not get anywhere by shouting. I'll write an application and take it to town tomorrow.

There's nothing else that could be done."

"There's only one thing will help here," Zacharczuk said. He was frowning and his voice sounded ominous. There was instant silence.

"Well, speak out."

"It's either him or us."

"He's right!" screamed Mrs. Bani. All the women shouted their agreement.

"What else are we to wait for? Why should we put it off? Away we go to Ostrzen!"

"Come on to Ostrzen!"

With noise and shouting they rushed out of the door. A flame-like breath was given off by the heated faces. The dogs set up a racket of their own. Every living soul darted out of the houses. With shaking hands and white face the alderman ran by back ways to Wincenty's lodgings.

"They've got to be stopped, else god knows what may happen!"

Wincenty ran helplessly about the room in his confusion, looking for his cap. Meanwhile, the news had spread from house to house like wildfire. Mrs. Ignach ran out into the yard with her infant in her arms and fell down by the dunghill.

"Oh god, oh god, we'll all die of hunger! We'll never see the spring! Oh may he be struck by lightning as a punishment for his greed! For the poverty he's brought us to, for all we've suffered!"

The wailing of the women could be heard in the yards and the little gardens and all along the road. Mrs. Ignach jumped up with an air of determination, wrapped the child in her shawl, and, muttering: "Well, if we're to go, we'll go!"—set off after the rest.

Anna ran out of the door and joined the crowd of women. She was trembling with uncontrollable excitement. At that moment she forgot everything: the stones the children had flung at her when she lay in the road, the spiteful words and scornful glances of the women. Their weeping and wailing touched her to the very depths of her soul. She saw clearly that Kaliny had received its death-warrant, and all her resentment had melted away. For the first time she stood with the crowd of women as their equal.

"On to Ostrzen!"

A few of the women made a feeble attempt to sing a hymn. It quavered over the dusty road.

"Beloved Mother, our holy guardian!"

At the turning where the unfinished schoolhouse stood, the alderman and the schoolmaster tried to bar the way.

"Think what you're doing! Come to your senses!"

"We'll try to arrange things somehow," Wincenty cried hoarsely.

"It's your duty to go with us—the peasants—and not against us!" Rojek shouted in his face.

"Whoever lives in the village let him come along with the village: if not, let him clear out!"

"On to Ostrzen!"

Latecomers ran to join the crowd. Clouds of dust arose from the road, and the noise could be heard for a long distance.

Wincenty stood staring like one turned to stone.

"There'll be plenty of trouble," the alderman said. His lips trembled. He plucked the schoolmaster by the arm. "Come, let's go, there's nothing we can do here."

They turned and went back leisurely to the deserted village. The doors of the houses were gaping wide. Except for the aged and the sick, hardly a man remained. And many of the women were gone too. The children stood in crowds along the streets, crying and screaming, unable to understand what had happened. Two pigs ran out of

Janowicz's stye and started to root in the road, flinging up the dust. The dogs, excited by the noise, strained at their chains and filled the air with their wild barking.

"They'll be there in an hour or two," said the alderman. The thought sent a cold shiver down Wincenty's back.

"It's impossible. . . . Something should be done. . . ."

The alderman shrugged his shoulders.

"There's nothing to be done. I'll go to the police and notify them. . . . But they'll never be in time now."

Wincenty helped him to harness the horse. Stas, the alderman's man-of-all-work, had gone. The alderman's wife stood on the threshold, weeping softly.

"Lord Jesus, what'll come of it all?"

"Don't cry, I'll be back in the evening. . . . Maybe you'll come with me, sir? . . . No, better not—there's nobody left in the village."

Old Plyciak was wandering along the road tapping his stick.

"Terrible goings-on, sir, terrible goings-on . . ."

"Why didn't you talk them over, Plyciak, why didn't you keep them back?"

The old man raised his misty eyes to the schoolmaster's face.

"As if I could have kept them back or talked them over? Poverty and hunger will put the axe, the faggot and the sword in any man's hand. . . . I'm going to sit under the pine on the hill, I'll be able to see from there."

"Why, you won't be able to see anything from there."

"From there I can see all over. What a host of people went, the whole village—all but a few."

The old man climbed the thyme-covered hillock with difficulty. Wincenty followed mechanically. He seemed robbed of all will-power.

"Looks like as if people that own a great deal of everything go cracked with it. Everything around here is Ostrzenski's: the land, the woods, the water. And his land's not like ours, it's the real thing. Yet, it seems, it's all too little for him—he must have more. It's the count's woods and the count's fields and the count's ponds. And all we've got is bare sand and pines, and that drop of water that isn't ours, doesn't belong to the village any longer."

He sat down on a tree-stump and laid his stick before him.

"You sit down, sir, too. It makes your legs ache, standing does."

Wincenty sat down beside him. The wild thyme, warmed by the sun, smelled very pleasant. From the lilac flowers came the drone of bees, creeping, peeping into the tiny cups. The pines stood motionless in the sunshine, filling the air with their strong, invigorating perfume. Far below them gleamed the river, reflecting in its unhurried, almost motionless waters, the tops of the silvery pussy-willows.

"How quiet it is. . . . Blessed quiet!" the old man remarked.

Wincenty marveled at the sweet sunny calm of the end of summer. There was no other sound but the humming of the bees. It seemed as if one could almost hear the golden drops of resin trickling down the boughs of the pine and dripping to the ground, to the slippery carpet of pine-needles. A squirrel skipped up the trunk. Craning her neck, she fixed her beady black eyes on the men sitting motionless below. Evidently something did not please her, for she leapt swiftly up the swaying branches, and with a flash of russet tail, vanished among the green tree-tops. From high over the river came the complaining, piercing call of a gull. The clear fine summer's day floated over the country. For a moment this seemed

to Wincenty the only reality . . . the smell of pines and wild thyme, the humming of bees, the russet tail of the squirrel and the cry of the gull over the water.

Suddenly the old man raised his hand and pointed.

"There . . . look! I told you we should see everything from here."

Wincenty was thunderstruck. Far over the blue crest of the distant woods where Ostrzen lay, a slim pillar of smoke rose into the transparent blue.

The pines oozed resin. The trees' aromatic life-blood trickled down in strings of tiny golden beads. Not the faintest breeze stirred the broad dark tree-tops. A bird perched on a twig, an oriole whistled in the wood, the hot sunny summer's day gave off its intoxicating perfume.

But over the dark woody crest the tall column of smoke uniting earth and sky grew denser.

The village had seen the smoke, too. The people that remained came out to look at it. In profound silence they walked to the hillock and, standing under the pine, gazed with horror-stricken eyes at the clouds of black smoke. The startled squirrel ran across the road and took refuge in the bushes on the other side; and not a child turned to look at it. A fairly large crowd collected on the hill now; yet Wincenty could still hear the humming of the bees hovering over the grasses.

"Let us pray, neighbors," said old Mrs. Lisin in a penetrating voice. She knelt down the first in the sun-warmed grass. The others followed her example. Only Plyciak and Wincenty sat as if nailed to their tree-stumps.

"From pestilence, famine, fire and sword . . ."

It resembled the night that Brzegi burned down and white-lipped fear fell upon Kaliny. But now there was no fear in the prayer. The words had a threatening sound, reaching far into the sparkling day, pregnant with meaning and power. Pale and stern were the faces; gloomy, well-nigh sinister, the prayer. Something irrevocable was taking place, and it was not with prayers for mercy that the hillock resounded this day.

A lump rose to Wincenty's throat. His chest heaved with tormenting stifled sobs; chilling alarm and wild despair seized his heart. He was awed by the calm of the praying people. Yes, they were calm—the mothers and wives and sisters of those who were now far away beyond the blue line of woods, from whence the dark swaying column of smoke rose to the sky. There was something majestic in the exhausted, darkened, wasted peasant faces.

Gradually the sun sank and its crimson glow spread over the sky. The black streaks of smoke stood out in stronger relief against the purple of the sunset. The Bug flowed with living blood, the tops of the willows reddened, the rowan-tree by the roadside flared up like touchwood, the boughs of the pines were touched with red and the veins in the golden trunks trickled blood. The world was ablaze with sunset and fire, and all grew still, weighed down by an oppressive incomprehensible terror.

Darkness descended on the earth, twilight blotted out the colors of the sunset. In the west the sky was still bright, but it was hard to tell whether it was from the last rays of the sunset or the glow over Ostrzen. The faces were swallowed up in gloom. A chilly breath came from the river. The people stirred and, wordlessly, betook themselves homewards.

Wincenty lingered until the steps died away on the road. Only then did he move. The tops of the pines rustled mysteriously, hardly audibly, black shadows hid under the

trees, the terror of night came from the woods, driving the water-nymphs out of the swamps, lighting will-o'-the-wisps over the meadows and striking fear into the heart of man. There was something irrevocable, something inevitable, something unknown, going on in this darkness and silence, and it sent icy shivers through Wincenty's frame. As he went along the road, he controlled himself with difficulty from glancing back over his shoulder as he used to, long ago in childhood when the world had been peopled by wraiths and specters. The echo of his own footsteps sounded like those of another and he breathed more freely when he discerned the dark contours of the first houses.

He reached the Rojeks' house at last and, bumping into the barrels and knocking down various household utensils, he groped his way to his room.

He could hear heavy breathing on the other side of the partition. Mrs. Rojek was not asleep yet. Her breathing sounded like that of a wild beast lying in wait. It was no longer Mrs. Rojek who was breathing painfully, with difficulty; it was the darkness that panted and lay in wait, it was alarm that stole up with the cat-like tread, and that hovered in a bat-like flight over the village. It became unbearable—this soundless gloom, and Wincenty had to clench his teeth to prevent himself from crying out, from calling people to him.

He lay down without undressing but could not close an eye. His straining ears caught the faintest stir.

Long hours passed in silence. At last, a stealthy, hardly noticeable movement could be felt in the village. Boots creaked on the high road, doors grated on their hinges. Wincenty went to the window. No lights were lit anywhere. But he could sense quite clearly that something was going on.

Those muffled sounds—the signs of human presence, the evidence of life—brought him a certain relief. But still he could not sleep. He tossed from side to side on the hard, rustling, hay-filled mattress. Cautious steps passed his door, he could hear whispers, the window looking on the river was opened and then shut again. A bed creaked. Wincenty got up and opened the window, which had been closed for some reason or other. The fresh night air rushed into the stuffy room.

It was late. The moon had come up and a silvery night lay over the world. The willows stood like white ghosts in the still air. He could hear the faint babbling of the brook racing through thickets of mint and burdock to join the river. For a moment Wincenty forgot everything. The aspens quivered, whispering secrets known to them alone. The grass sparkled with dew and under the trees lay black, impenetrable shadows. The world seemed unreal, untrue, a world made of icy webs and solid blackness. The night breathed tranquillity and silence.

Then a whispering became audible from the other side of the partition and the silvery silence of the night was broken as if by a signal. Hurried steps were heard on the road and shadows moved on the pile of boards by the neighboring wall. Mrs. Bani's door creaked on its hinges and women's excited voices carried down the road. Wincenty sighed and went back to his uncomfortable bed. He waited a few moments, straining his ears; perhaps someone would come or call out, but soon all was silent, except for the lads down on the river whistling their signals to each other. The rustling of the

aspens was like a fine thick rain.

The moon went down. It grew dark. A light breeze arose and the rustling in the aspens became louder. A bird started to twitter—a brief, spasmodic twitter—then as suddenly ceased, as if ashamed of its own forwardness.

Little by little the daylight began to creep out of the darkness, filling the room with a pallid twilight. The birds twittered, at first shyly and uncertainly, then, emboldened by the light, more loudly, until at last the world around quivered and brightened with bird-voices. . . . A rosy light flooded the silvery tops of the willows.

Wincenty got up, feeling a weariness in all his limbs. His hands and fingers trembled with vague alarm, with anticipation of the unknown trouble that was hanging in the air, the inevitable, irrevocable thing that was about to happen. He smoothed down his tousled hair and went out. Mrs. Rojek opened her door and glanced out in alarm, but retired at once. Wincenty looked about him and went out on the road.

The village appeared to be slumbering peacefully in the rosy light of the dawn. The houses dozed quietly at the side of the sandy road. The stars of the henbane were folded in spikes of flame. The yellow flowers of the night-candle closed and shrank into themselves. A grey mist hung over forest and meadow. The grass shone as if covered with hoar frost. The schoolmaster fancied that he caught a glimpse behind a fence of Mydlarz's head, with a white bandage round it. There was a scuffle as if someone was hiding in the wild gooseberry bushes. He shrugged his shoulders and strolled away in the direction from which the black cloud of smoke had been visible the day before. There was a prickling sensation in his eyes as if there was sand in them—the effect of a sleepless night.

He heard a creaking on a little-frequented bye-road. The curtain of mist parted for a moment and a cart came out into the glow of daybreak. The badly-oiled wheels creaked and the sound seemed to cut the still air. Again Wincenty felt the gnawing anxiety that had not allowed him to close an eye all night, and had dragged him from his bed before daylight.

There was nothing out of the ordinary about this cart—it might be anybody arriving at the village, even if the hour was rather early. And the horse was not a local one; it was a big one and grey; none of the Kaliny horses.

The creaking grew louder. The horse's great head bobbed up and down in a slow, measured way. A tall peasant walked beside it with the reins in his hand. Wincenty looked at him attentively, but it was not until the cart was quite near that he recognized Skorzak.

The horse moved slowly, its head bent, as if it expected to find food in the grass. The cart was covered with a horse-cloth. The reins hung loose in Skorzak's hands. When he saw the teacher he quickened his steps, and greeted him with a nod of his head. His sheepskin cap was stuck on sideways.

Without pausing to think why, Wincenty quickened his pace. They met at the foot of the hillock with the pines, behind the unfinished school-house that stared at the road through the blind eyes of its broken windows.

Skorzak threw the reins on the lean withers of the bony horse and thrust his hand into his pocket. In a leisurely, phlegmatic way he drew out his tobacco-pouch and cigarette-papers, and began clumsily to roll a cigarette in his thick fingers.

Wincenty understood. Dark patches showed on the horse-cloth thrown over the cart. One corner of it was turned back a little, and, without realizing it, he found himself staring at Anna.

She was lying face upwards on the very top of the loaded cart. Her lips, always pale, did not differ now in color from the rest of her face. The loosened hair lay like an aureole about her head. Every movement of the horse, obstinately sniffing the sand with quivering nostrils, made the head of the dead woman sway to and fro as if in persistent denial. Blue fingers stretched out stiff by her head, but the hand did not look like Anna's.

It seemed to Wincenty that he was falling into an abyss, a bottomless pit. The world rocked before his eyes, and with an effort, he flung out his arms to keep his balance, otherwise he would have fallen. It all seemed like a dream; surely it was a nightmare from which he would soon awake? He must awake, and then he would find that nothing of what he had seen in his dream was real, could never be real, particularly out here on the road, not far from the schoolbuilding.

But the head of the dead woman kept shaking in obstinate denial and Wincenty was forced to grasp the fact that it was no dream. He looked up at the tall peasant with horror-stricken eyes. Skorzak was smoking; the grey tobacco smoke curled upwards into the dewy air. His small grey eyes rested on the schoolmaster's white face.

"So that's the way it is, sir!" he said, and his red mustache lifted in a grimace that distorted his whole face, and exposed the yellow teeth that were set wide apart. "Ho-up there, horsie!"

The horse moved on reluctantly, lazily. The wheels sank in the sand and resisted. The grey skin rippled, the dry muscles playing under it, and the horse gave a great heave. The resulting jerk threw Anna's head sideways. There was a wound in the back of it. The hair was clotted with black blood.

"Ho-up there!"

Now it went better; with the wheels again in the dust, the cart creaked on ahead as if of its own accord. Skorzak strode leisurely alongside, spitting from time to time into the ditch, where henbane and the serrated leaves of the bear's-breech grew thick.

He glanced round over his shoulder when he did not hear the schoolmaster' footsteps behind him.

But Wincenty was standing as if turned to stone, his eyes fixed on Anna's face, though he had long since ceased to see it. She had slipped unnoticed out of his field of vision and gone, shaking her head in obstinate denial, away to the village. But Wincenty's eyes still remained fixed on an invisible spot above the road at the level where the face of the dead woman had been a few minutes ago. The bloodless lips, the ghastly wound on the back of the head, the song about the hazel copse—were all mixed up in incomprehensible confusion. It was not Wincenty who was thinking; something detached from himself was thinking for him; all he felt was wonder and horror, and he could not seem to understand that he ought to move, gather his wits about him sufficiently to drag himself away from this spot and find out things, and convince himself that it had been true—the song of the hazel-copse—and the dead face in the aureole of light hair and the gaping black wound with the clotted blood in the back of the head. As yet it was all unreal—even the dead face that stood out

over the road so sharply, so importunately, so distinctly—more distinctly than anything else, for nothing else engaged his eye, nothing else reached his consciousness.

There was a sudden noise from the houses. Wincenty did not hear it. There were shouts and the tramping of many feet on the road. The people had seen the cart, and grasped its meaning, and run out to meet it. And high above the rest of the voices rose the piercing shriek of Stasiak's wife:

"Antos, Antos!"

Wincenty did not hear. He stood motionless at the side of the road, his eyes fixed in a glassy stare on the invisible point somewhere between the sky and the earth from which the dew was drying.

He only came to himself when the dust on the road rose in clouds from under the wheels of motor-lorries coming from the direction of Rzepaki, and the tocsin was sounded in the village and rang out—loud, alarming, sinister.

The village came to life. People ran out of their houses, united in a solid grey wall and stood shoulder to shoulder in deathly silence, watching the road. . . . There were those in tattered clothing, with heads bound up with rags, who had gone to Ostrzen the day before; and there were those who had stayed at home—the old men, the women and the children. The tolling of the alarm bell floated over the dewy meadows, over the huddled village, over the river gilded by the dawn and the hazel-copse, bathed in blood by the rays of the rising sun.

Wincenty started as at a sudden command. It was stronger than the dictates of reason, stronger than the pain of his heart; it was an irresistible whirlwind, sweeping him along, independent of his will, giving him no chance to think, breaking down all barriers.

His feet sank in the sand, his hair stood on end with the icy dread that crept over him. For the space of an instant he saw them all before him; for that instant hundreds of eyes were fixed on him. And he took his place among them, stood shoulder to shoulder with them in their close ranks, facing the approaching dust-clouds on the road.

The tolling of the bell was solemn, grand and threatening. It seemed as if it must be heard far beyond the bounds of Kaliny, at Brzegi, at Mackow, throughout all the Ostrzen villages, throughout the domains of the lords of Podolenicy, Grabowek, and Wilkow, throughout the whole of the river-side lands, the golden, green and azure lands where hunger and privation reigned.

BORIS LAPIN

On the River Bank

A few steps away from the river the marshy jungle began, a wilderness of twisted mildewed willows, bright green rushes, long-stemmed kendyr, solitary poplars and here and there a clump of hazels. And among the scrub and the prickly-leaved bushes one often came across tracks of wild beasts, the haunts of the river-fowl, and clearings trampled by boar.

When the boatmen from Muinak went to the district center to deliver their fish, the jungle seemed to pile up above them like low blue billowing downs. At two or three points the local people had tried to burn a road through the scrub, but the fire had crept fifty paces or so in another direction and died out. The boggy soil was endowed with prodigious vitality. The scorched ground was overgrown with shrubs in no time. Burnt tree-trunks put forth branches; the broken soil teemed with life—undergrowth, grasses, every kind of useless insect—till one was almost afraid to set foot on it.

Queer tales were told in Khoresm about the jungle. It had a bad name. Newcomers sometimes disappeared forever in it.

On the fringe of it there were two fishing settlements, inhabited by what were known as "them Ural folks," Russian Cossacks who had been exiled to these parts in the nineteenth century for their stubborn unorthodoxy.

The "Chestnov Hundred" who had fought against the Soviets in 1918 belonged to the wealthy strata of the Ural Cossacks.

In my time the Chestnov band had all either been wiped out or had run away. Their chief, Pavel Chestnov, was in hiding somewhere. The remaining Ural Cossacks earned their living by fishing. Some had joined the Amu-Daria Boatmen's Union and took cargoes down river.

That winter I met some of the Ural folks in Khoja-Bergen; they were bearded, good-natured fishermen who had nothing in common with Chestnov's bandits.

The episode I am about to describe occurred in 1924, just before the marking of the national boundaries in Central Asia. I had just changed my job for one in the statistics department, where I was appointed traveling registrar. My job consisted, in the main, of "ethnological registration." Together with sixteen other registrars I was sent to the lower reaches of the river. The statistics we collected were intended to assist in determining the boundaries of the republics.

As it happened, I had to visit the banks of the Semyonov Channel, an arm of the Amu-Darya.

In former days there had been

a broad reach here with a very swift current. But in the course of the last five years it had grown feebler. The river, in the words of the oldest inhabitants, had "struck out to the right," and with irresistible force was splitting up into new channels and water courses. The Amu-Darya is a capricious stream; the local people called it *djin* which means in those parts "half-crazy."

I stayed about three weeks on Semyonov Channel, making my rounds of the fisheries in a rowing-boat and returning at night. My work was done, but I was in no hurry to go. The reason for my lingering was a woman, Lusha by name.

She was a stalwart, mocking Cossack lass with a bonny face and strong arms. The first time I saw her was down on the river. Blowzed, untidy and perspiring, she was towing a heavy boatload of fish upstream. When I came alongside her, I offered to help. The Cossack woman halted on the steep bank.

"God save you, comrade! Here, take the rope . . ."

I harnessed myself clumsily, tested the rope, and started dragging the thing. It proved no easy task. She walked behind,. asking me every minute if she should take the rope from me again.

I wasn't, I suppose, a very lively sight in my city cap and my canvas boots that got soaking wet after the first few steps in the clay of the bank. Stumbling, and tugging at the rope, I dragged the boat until, after we had gone about fifty paces, she said: "Aw, give us it, then," and taking the rope determinedly away from me, dragged the boat ahead. After this I used to meet her several times a day, either down on the river or with the fishing cooperatives. Once after a Cossack party we went down to the river together, and roamed along its banks and kissed. Two days after that she came to spend the night with me. Soon we hardly parted with each other. A week later I was head over ears in love with her.

She was no older than I was, but far more experienced in the ways of love.

"You're not my first, nor are you my second," she said when I asked her something about the manager of the Agricultural Bank who had been living here the year before. "You'd better not mention him to me. As far as I'm concerned he might never have been in the world at all."

I did not believe that Lusha loved me, so I often brought up the subject. It was very foolish, no doubt, and must have lowered me in her eyes.

"It can't be that you like me, Lusha, I'm not handsome and I am awkward, and it's no fun for you being with me," I said. "And I haven't much money, either, as people here look at it—I'm poorer than any Semyonov man."

"Why should I keep company with you," she objected, but with some reluctance, "if it wasn't any fun?"

But as a rule she passed it off with a joke, and pretended to agree with me.

"No, of course it's no fun . . . being with you . . . and of course you're terrible poor—a rich fellow's worth seven poor, and a horse into the bargain. Soon as ever you go away I'll forget you and that's all there is to it."

At this point, however, I began to raise objections.

"You're only joking," I would say, "tell me the whole truth."

Then she would be silent and just smile, or perhaps make some trifling or soothing remark in reply.

What I admired about her was "the way she grasped everything"—as I expressed it in those days. I was a townsman and felt a kind of citified superiority over the dwellers in the outer darkness of the provinces. This secret I jealously guarded from even the best of my local friends and therefore I could never be perfectly frank with them. Lusha alone understood everything. She grasped any idea and could find an answer before the words were well out of my mouth. She told me she loved listening to stories, and she was certainly a grateful listener—always attentive and sympathetic. But there were occasions when I observed a queer kind of indifference in her; at the beginning she would listen attentively and then, suddenly, in the middle of a word her attention would wander, she would lose interest in the tale and begin to look about her absently.

After a minute or so she came back, as it seemed, from somewhere or other and with sudden eagerness asked: "And what next? What came after that?"

It made me indignant to think that this remarkable girl—as I regarded her—could not even sign her own name. Once I gave her a long lecture on the disadvantages of illiteracy.

"What's the sense in book-learning?" she said, thoughtfully. "It only makes you old before your time."

I asked her—begged her, in fact—to marry me and let me take her to Moscow with me. She agreed to marry me at last. I believe she was willing from the first, but she did not care to go to Moscow.

"I'd have to leave all my girl friends. It'd be terribly lonely. You know what?—You stay here! That'd be all right, wouldn't it? The chiefs like you—you've only to ask them and they'll fix you up in a job. They will for sure, won't they?"

The village was situated on a narrow tongue of land at the river side. Everybody was in full view. So whenever I wanted to be alone with Lusha, I rowed down the shallow channel to a spot agreed upon and waited for her. Once, before my departure for the district town, we wandered nearly to the fringe of the jungle.

We were sailing downstream between the bushes. I was rowing slowly and cautiously, Lusha was keeping us off the shore with the boat-hook. The sky overhead was still light; but twilight reigned in the jungle; the channel was in deep shadow; gnats swarmed over the banks.

The river flowed tranquilly on ahead of us; every stir in the bushes, every snap of a twig, every faint sob of the jungle, could be clearly heard.

We came to a noisy whirlpool. A bird, black with green under the wings, darted out from the shore and flew over the channel.

"Stop rowing!" said Lusha. I laid down my oar on the edge of the boat. The girl got a firm clutch of the land with the boat-hook and dragged us close.

"Jump out!"

We clambered out and moored the boat to the twisted trunk of a tree that hung down low over the water.

"Now, come with me," said Lusha, and, thrusting aside the prickly wall of brushwood, she led the way. I followed her reluctantly. There was something sinister in the jungle twilight.

The cold and damp struck through me. A mosquito hummed and hovered about my ear; its chant ended abruptly and I felt a bite on my cheek. "Probably a malarial mosquito," I thought to

myself. A prickly branch hit me over the head at that moment.

The untamed jungle lay all around us; its wildness was not that of the desert—majestic and awesome, but something different, more terrifying. It was not exactly wildness, perhaps, but something primitive and savage, of the elemental nature of a bog where water is not separated from land.

I had not gone twenty paces before I felt my strength giving out. At last we came out on a narrow track. Usually there is something cheering about lighting upon a track in the forest. You lose that sense of remoteness; people use this track, you think, so there must be a way out of the wood. . . .

But here I did not feel this. After a minute or so I understood why. The track led into the jungle like a narrow cutting; at every step I encountered broken boughs, there were fresh wounds on the tree-trunks where the bark had been recently torn off, but there were no footprints to be seen. The wet, vivid green turf, untrodden as yet by the foot of man, yielded and squelched at every step.

"What sort of a path is this, anyhow?" I demanded.

"Why, stupid, this is where the wild boar has been. Can't you see the ruts?" Lusha answered, without turning.

"Come on, let's get back to the boat as soon as we can."

"Frightened of the jungle?"

"What's the sense in tramping through a bog? What pleasure is there in it?"

"My dear," she said unexpectedly, halting so I could catch up with her, "and what's the sense in carrying on with me?"

"I love you," I replied, shivering with cold.

"You do? You really love me?"

"Yes, I really do."

"We say hereabouts—'there's no loving without flogging.'"

"I don't love you that way."

"And what way, then?"

"The real way."

"How can you love me when you don't know me," she said with a curious smile. "Supposing I'm a witch . . ."

"There are no such things as witches . . ."

"But I am a witch," she said, looking me steadily in the eye.

"Then I love you even as a witch, Lushenka."

She came closer and pressed against me. I could feel the rise and fall of her warm breasts.

"Lushenka," I said, "let's go back to the boat."

"You're—true to me," she said, without giving me a direct reply. "I won't fool you."

"Come on back to the boat. . . ."

"You'll be all right," she went on, almost in a whisper. "Me and you—we'll be like a wolf and his mate, there'll be no dividing us, no, not if we had to be hacked in two. It's right—what I'm saying, isn't it?"

"Of course it is," I agreed.

"Then I can tell you everything?"

"Yes, everything, Lusha."

"You'll stand up for me, you're plucky. I'm terrified of the folks hereabouts . . ."

"What nonsense, Lusha . . ."

"If I was to tell you—'come away from everybody into the bog, an' let's hide ourselves there like the wild beasts,'—you'd come with me, wouldn't you?" she persisted, as if trying to assure herself of it.

"What are you talking about, Lusha? What's this bog? This isn't what we ought to be making for . . .''

"I can't somehow understand," she said, staring at me.

"One's got to live among people," I said, rather sententiously. It struck me at once that I was talking sheer nonsense.

"Oh, so that's it, is it?" she said. "So you wouldn't come with me, then?"

"That'll do! Don't talk any more rubbish. Let's go back to the boat!"

"Tell me, would you come with me or not?"

"Lushka, my love!" I cried, and tried to put my arms around her.

"No, tell me! . . ."

"It's more fun for us indoors than out on a bog," I said.

"Go to—you know where!" she burst out roughly, and, pushing me aside, set off at a run to the river-bank.

"Wait a bit, Lushenka! Lushenka! How silly you are, Lusha . . ." She did not speak to me for the rest of the evening, neither in the boat nor when we returned to the village. Next morning, however, the conversation on the bog was forgotten. She was all tenderness again, caressed me and kept laughing for no apparent reason.

On the eve of my departure she came to Tuzhilkin's, where I rented a bed behind the partition. She cried a while. Then she helped me to get my things together, mended my coat, and sat looking very mournful.

"It's decided, then, Lushenka—I'm coming back soon. Don't start carrying on with the Cossacks while I'm away . . ."

"Clear out quick," she said, "you're only tearing the heart out of me . . ."

Her face was so tearful and pathetic that I wanted to caress her.

"Lushka, what a sly thing you are! Hypocrite . . ."

She came down to the river to see me off. The boatmen sang as they leaned hard on the boat-hooks and the long, flat-bottomed vessel glided down the channel.

In the district town I began my preparations for transference to the lower reaches of the river.

Everything seemed to be turning out splendidly. The Fish Trust was opening a new trading center on the channel. There was a job to be had as receiver. The office did not raise any objections to my leaving, since the staff of registrars was being greatly reduced.

I was in a kind of fever all the time, thinking of my handsome Cossack girl. Her image grew more attractive and vivid with every day. I was in love.

About three days after my arrival, I was invited to supper by Sasha Reshlevsky, who had formerly been chief of the Criminal Investigation Department in Khoja-Bergen. He was somewhat of a celebrity on a local scale, the kind who is hail-fellow-well-met with everyone, a good sport, a connoisseur of all "good stories," a former staff-commissar in the army—one of those who found it difficult to settle down to peace-time conditions, a fellow who had—as he expressed it—sucked in Soviet principles of government with his mother's milk and was "ready to lay down his life and a year's salary for these principles." I always felt a bit shy of him, but I tried not to show it.

When he met me in the street, he greeted me breezily:

"Hallo! I'm glad to see you well and hearty! Where've you come from? Downstream? Well done, my hearty! Getting a bit of polish, are you? That's right! Nothing like it. Come on over to my place, we can sit down and have a chat."

As soon as ever I opened my mouth about wanting a transfer to the channel, Reshlevsky got on his guard.

"Well, well," he said, twitching his nose as if he caught a

whiff of an unpleasant smell. "Tell us all about this plan of yours, Ignatyev . . ."

I told him I liked the life on the river and that I had asked for a transfer downstream.

"Oh, I don't advise you to go there," said Reshlevsky. "Those Semyonov Cossacks are all *kulaks*, they've all been rich, and they're all bandits. Honestly, they are."

"No, not all of them, surely!" I said.

"Half of the folk are bandits, bear that in mind! I lived four months in the jungle."

"A good many have been cleared out, did you know that?"

"The big chaps have been cleared out, but there are plenty of the smaller fry left. There are six houses full of Chestnov's relatives alone, my lad. And where did you get this idea of shifting to the channel?"

I mumbled some reason, not the right one.

"They'll drag you into something, you fool," said Reshlevsky in a commiserating tone. "You've been listening to their palaver, you simpleton. The Soviet Government doesn't trust them and they want to have their own man so as to find out what we're intending to do and where we're intending to go. Do you want to be a tool for the *kulaks*? It's said that Chestnov and his gang have appeared again in the rushes. They'll kill you down there as good as look at you. . . ."

"I'm not afraid of that."

"Oho! Just fancy that, now! You're not frightened, aren't you? They'll kill you and not so much as a 'thank you.' See? They go through the bog on skis of plaited bast that leave no tracks. Try and catch them! There was another attack on the mail the other day. You mustn't go there under any conditions. . . . Where did you lodge down on the channel?"

"I rented a bed at Tuzhilkins," I replied. I was quite bewildered.

"I know them well, too!" Reshlevsky exclaimed. "Their brother-in-law or—what would you call him?—the uncle of the nephew three times removed was a horse-breeder of Chestnov's. It is the Tuzhilkins who persuaded you to go and live down there permanently?"

"Tell me, did you happen to know Lusha Philenova?"

He gave me a quick glance at that.

"How did you get to know her?"

I told him of our meetings in the scrub, of the friendship that had sprung up so quickly. And at every word Reshlevsky's face lengthened.

"So there's no other way for me—I've got to go back to the Semyonov Channel," I concluded.

"You've told me everything now?"

"Yes, everything."

"Well, now, shut up and listen to me," said Reshlevsky sharply. "Listen and then put what I tell you in your pipe and smoke it. I didn't interrupt you on purpose, so as to give you a chance to spill the lot. To begin with, you're not going anywhere. Philenova's the worst trollop to be found the length and breadth of the Amu-Darya."

"You're lying! It's impossible."

My voice broke in my consternation. The blood rushed to my head. I felt very hot all of a sudden. I spoke loudly to hide my agitation.

"What do you know about her?"

"Don't get excited," he said, raising his voice, too. "You've only yourself to blame, losing your head over a *kulak* woman."

"She's not a *kulak* woman. She's an orphan; she's been working since she was a child."

"But for *kulaks*, hasn't she?" Reshlevsky persisted.

"Eh?"

"She's been working for *kulaks*, I'm saying, hasn't she? And you're going to work in team with her."

"Can you tell me anything about her, about Lusha herself, and no one else?" I shouted.

"Don't get worked up," said Reshlevsky, "I can do a bit of that myself."

"Well, let me tell you, I regard your behavior as filthy and disgusting . . . there's nothing Soviet about it. . . ." I said, rising. "I suppose you got told off there and now you want to slander the poor girl. Well, nothing will come of that. See? Nothing at all."

"Look out, then," he said. "I've warned you. Do as you like now."

I left him without even saying goodnight. As I went home I tried to fight down the suspicions that Reshlevsky's words had aroused.

I couldn't sleep a wink that night.

I lay in bed thinking over Reshlevsky's talk. I was at the age when there are no intermediate stages between one's feelings. At the very moment when I was shouting indignantly at Reshlevsky, I was overcome by contradictory feelings, and my indignation was giving way to uncertainty. I was now, in fact, almost convinced that Reshlevsky was right, though I still hated him.

I recalled everything that Lusha had ever said, her confession: "You're not my first, nor are you my second. . . ." her strange conduct. . . .

I got up and poured cold water over my head; I was in a state hovering between despair and rage. Just before daylight I slipped on my clothes and went out to roam about the dark, deserted streets of the town. Gradually I got myself in hand and strove to think of her soberly and coarsely.

"A lying slut, a prostitute, a *kulak* woman! I was a kid . . . a mealy-mouthed ignorant boy! She took me along the track in the bog that time to meet her gang. Did she mean to tell me everything, I wonder? Maybe she really was fond of me? . . . Or was she simply hoping to make me a go-between for the Chestnovs? No, it can't be! . . . She didn't care a hang for me."

I wandered about the town and the neighboring cotton plantations till ten o'clock. Then I went to my job, worn out and thoroughly miserable and worked on my report, a summary of the ethnographical investigations made in the river districts.

My chief asked me if I intended going downstream.

"No," I said as calmly as I could. "I have decided that it's not really worth it. I'm not particularly anxious to bury myself in the rushes."

"And you're quite right, too," the chief agreed. "I was surprised when you asked me."

When I went out during the dinner hour, I met Reshlevsky in the street.

"Well, got the old brain into good working order again?" he inquired just as if nothing had happened.

"Don't be angry with me. I know you couldn't have spoken differently, you're that kind of a chap."

"I'm not angry at all," he replied. "As a matter of fact, just this morning I was talking about your affair to a fellow who has a responsible position here. You know what? . . . As a matter of fact you might go there. We talked it over. There's no definite, verified information available about Philenova's political leanings. . . . You're a sturdy, reliable sort of

chap. Go, of course, if you haven't any self-esteem . . ."

"That's enough of beating about the bush," I said. "What's the game? Perhaps you were mistaken yesterday, were you?"

"Who knows?" he said, with unexpected indifference. "Anybody can make a mistake. She's a pretty wench, and as for her having a weakness for men, that's all to the good. After all, you're hardly more than a kid, Ignatyev. If I were to tell you the information we've got against Lusha, you'd go and blab it all over the place."

"You've got me all wrong," I exclaimed, almost ready to cry. "I'm strong-willed enough to find the right way."

"That's splendid!" said Reshlevsky. "Well, I wish you all the best, I'm sure. Stick to what your revolutionary conscience tells you to do, as the saying is. I'm not giving you any advice. Otherwise you'll be accusing us of taking your sweetheart away from you."

I said goodbye and returned to the office. I felt as a man recovering from a bad illness—apathetic, indifferent to everything, insensible to either grief or love.

Several months passed before I allowed myself to think of this episode. I decided that on the whole, I had done the right thing. Only once, one sleepless night, it occurred to me that perhaps Reshlevsky had been mistaken. I remembered Lusha's words: "I'm terrified here among these people." It was as if she had asked me to come to her aid against the Chestnovs. Reshlevsky must have been mistaken; she had not been making fun of me that evening.

"I threw the girl over," I thought to myself. "She must think I threw her over. . . ."

Then came the abominable thought that perhaps everything had worked out for the best.

After all, one couldn't spend one's life in the jungle, and Lusha did not want to go away from there. And then, when all was said and done, she had herself declared that she would soon leave me. I had not done her any actual harm. Perhaps she was long since married to some Cossack or other, and here was I—unable to forget her. . . .

It might as well be admitted at once that a good deal of water ran under the bridges after the day we parted, and the attachment evidently had not been a very strong one. Still, I could not get her completely out of my head for a long time. More than once subsequently I was tormented by the thought that I had behaved dishonestly. But, of course, all that wore away in time.

I was reminded of it by a casual meeting.

Last year I had to go to Turtkul on some business connected with the newspaper, for which I had to collect some information. One day, as I was just coming out of the Regional Executive Committee, I heard someone call my name. I looked round and saw an old acquaintance, with whom I had parted fourteen years before. He had altered a great deal, grown thin and bald; and I was no beauty, either, by this time.

In the course of conversation he asked me whether I remembered the jungle down on the Semyonov Channel.

"The jungle? Why, of course."

"There are four gangs of our fellows down there now," he told me. "I'm working in the Fishermen's Union, you know. . . . We want to build a canning plant on the place where the *kulaks'* village stood. You used to stay there, didn't you? Remember Lusha?"

"Which Lusha?" I said, embarrassed.

"Why, don't you remember her? That's funny."

"Oh, yes, I remember now," I said. "Lusha! I know the girl you mean—a dark, long-legged Cossack girl from the Semyonov settlement. I call her to mind now. Where is she? Still there?"

"No, they're all new people there now. She left the place seven years ago. A nice-looking girl. I forget whether it was Tashkent or Samara she went to . . ."

"And what became of Reshlevsky?" I asked.

"Fancy remembering him! You must keep all sorts of rubbish in your head. Reshlevsky's down there long since," he pointed to the ground. "You can guess what I mean, I suppose?"

"What was the matter?"

"He was shot together with the Chestnov gang. His name wasn't Reshlevsky at all. He was Nikolai Chestnov, Pavel's brother—you've heard of Pavel? Well, while the brother was hiding in the rushes with his gang of robbers, Nikolai was working in the Criminal Investigation Department. Between them, they kept our people away from the canal for three years. . . . What are you blinking at? Just remembered some of his anecdotes?"

His words seemed to scald me. Instantly memory awoke and with it a confusion of feelings—despair, love and vexation—that for me were connected with the Cossack girl of the Semyonov Channel Setlement.

Gorky and Music

Gorky's whole life was deeply imbued with music. He had a fine knowledge of music in all its variety. He loved it sincerely and fervently. He associated with many eminent composers and performers. He wrote much on the subject. Finally, his very style was musical. A whole book could and should be written on Gorky and music. In this essay I shall relate only a little of what could be told.

I

Music surrounded Gorky from his early childhood. It was the folksong first of all.

We have written in detail elsewhere about Gorky's association with the folksong. Here, we will simply mention that there was a highly-gifted folk-singer in Gorky's own family—his grandmother, Akulina Ivanovna Kashirina. She knew a great number of lyrical folk songs and could render them with rare inspiration. The writer's home town, Nizhni Novgorod, later renamed Gorky, and the surrounding districts were very rich in folk songs. Gorky often remembered the blind beggar, Nikitushka, whose wanderings often brought him to Nizhni Novgorod and the Kashirin homestead. Gorky loved to hear him sing. He was also eager to listen to choral folk songs.

In his autobiographical novel *In the World* Gorky tells how, as a boy, he used to run to the local barracks to listen to the wonderful songs of the Don Cossacks.

"The song was long, like a long street, and as level and as broad and as wise. When I listened to it I forgot everything else, whether it was day or night upon the earth, whether I was an old man or a little boy, everything else was forgotten. The voice of the singer died away; the sighs of the horses were audible as they grieved for their native steppes, and gently but surely the autumn night crept up from the fields, and my heart swelled and almost burst with a multitude of extraordinary feelings and a great, speechless love for human creatures and the earth."

At the ikon-painters' where Gorky worked as a boy, there was an artist by the name of Kapendukhin, who had a very fine voice. "He sang rarely, but the power of his tempestuous songs was always the same, irresistible and triumphant."

In the same book Gorky tells of unique contests between folk-singers which were held in the 'eighties at a certain tavern in Nizhni Novgorod. "The best singer—his songs were always especially good—was a small, wizened saddle-maker by the name of Kleshchov . . . His voice was small, but indefatigable: it pierced the dull, gloomy hubbub in the tavern like a jet of silver, his words of sadness, groans and outcries overcame all present, even the drunks became surprisingly serious, gazing before them at the table tops, while I felt my heart bursting,

overwhelmed with the powerful emotions which good music always awakens in it, magically searching the depths of the soul. The tavern would become as quiet as a church. . . ."

Soon after, Gorky himself began to lead a small choir.

I. A. Kartikovsky, one of the friends of his youth, tells how he spent many a summer evening in Nizhni Novgorod with Gorky and other young friends. "Here, too, Maximich was our teacher and leader. He was passionately fond of singing and was ready to sing without an end, oblivious of his surroundings. Some of this passion was communicated to us. We sang not only with enthusiasm but with as great feeling as we were capable of. We sang sad songs exclusively. We kept good time and by all appearances sang not badly at all, for the local people would congregate in the dell where we sang, and would encourage the young choristers." Gorky was then about fourteen years old.

Some years later, in the autumn of 1888, when Gorky was a young man of twenty working as a watchman on the railway, Petrovsky, the stationmaster, and his friends used to hold drinking parties which they called "Monkish moments."

In an autobiographical story by Gorky, *The Watchman*, we read:

"Petrovsky used to take me away from duty so that I could participate in the 'Monkish moments' because I knew so many good songs and could do them justice. . . .

"'Rattle 'em off, Peshkov!' he would shout. I would lean against the wall and 'rattle 'em off.'

"Purposely choosing the most moving and mellifluous, I would 'tell' my songs, striving to bring out the beauty of language and the emotion hidden in songs."

Church music, too, was part of Gorky's environment in childhood: the singing he heard during the forced attendance of vespers and mass. The famous Rukavishnikov church choir was singing in Nizhni Novgorod at the time, and Sasha Kashirin, Gorky's cousin, was a soloist in it.

Like Chekhov, young Gorky loved the sound of bells. In his short story *Spring Ice*, describing scenes of labor on the Oka River near Nizhni Novgorod, Gorky recalls how "the soul-stirring sound of bells, softened by distance, penetrates into all other sounds." Then he adds, "I stood gazing at the river and at the town under the hills, as I listened to the bells. Rearing themselves aloft like the organ pipes in my favorite Polish-Roman Catholic church, the steeples of the town had their crosses dimly sparkling . . ." Take note of this striking and unusual trait: this predilection for organ music in a young boy.

2

Gradually new tastes were developed among the journeymen and small shopkeepers—the plebeians of the town. When grandmother Kashirina praised the good old songs she was firmly contradicted: "Fashions are different nowadays, *Matushka.*" And now the Kashirins sang fragments from romances and couplets heard at vaudeville shows.

Musical talent in this gifted family took various forms. Yakov Kashirin, Gorky's uncle, was a splendid guitar player. In Gorky's *My Childhood* we are told that this uncle used to play at the family gatherings in his grandmother's house:

". . . Lightly touching the chords, he played something disjointed, involuntarily rising to his feet as he played.

"His music demanded an intense silence. It rushed like a rapid torrent from somewhere far away, stirring one's heart and penetrat-

ing it with an incomprehensible sensation of sadness and uneasiness. Under the influence of that music we all became melancholy, and the oldest present felt themselves to be no more than children. We sat perfectly still—lost in a dreamy silence."

Of course the boy had opportunities to hear other kinds of instrumental music. He must have listened to band music in the parks on "gala days," and to strolling musicians as well. Those were the days when harpers played in the streets and taverns of the towns. Young Alexei probably heard them while washing dishes on the river boats.

In *In The World* Gorky relates how he slipped out of church one night during the spring thaw and, wandering through the streets, heard music of an unusual tone, new to him and strange.

"It sounded as if someone were singing loudly with his mouth closed—which floated out through the *fortochka*[1] together with a warm steam. The words were indistinguishable, but the song seemed to be familiar and intelligible to me; but when I listened to that I heard the stringy sound which languidly interrupted the flow of song. I sat on the curbstone thinking what a wonderful melody was being played on some sort of insupportable violin—insupportable because it hurt me to listen to it. Sometimes they sang so loudly that the whole house seemed to shake and the panes of the windows rattled. Drops fell from the roof and from my eyes also.

"The night watchman had come close to me without my being aware of it, and pushing me off the curb stone. . .

I got into the habit of running to this house every Saturday, but only once—and that was in the spring—did I hear the violoncello again, and then it played without a break till midnight. When I reached home I got a thrashing!"

In his boyhood Gorky often heard the piano played by the woman next door neighbor, the handsome widow of "a man of great note." Gorky christened her "Queen Margot" and later immortalized her in his striking memoirs.

"What I liked best was to look at my lady when she sat at the piano, alone in the room, and played. Music intoxicated me, and I could see nothing but the window and beyond that in the yellow light of the lamp, the finely formed figure of the woman, her haughty profile, and her white hands hovering like birds over the keys."

The boy also heard some fine violin playing at the same place, the apartment of "Queen Margot." "Her least frequent visitor was a tall, unhappy-looking officer, with a furrowed brow and deep-sunken eyes, who always brought his violin with him, and played marvelously—so marvelously that the passers-by used to stop under the window, and all the dwellers in the street used to gather round."

3

Later in his youth Gorky left Nizhni Novgorod and went to Kazan. Here, in this large university town there was an opera house, and we know from Gorky himself that he sang in the chorus there for a whole season.

"I had a pretty good voice for second tenor in those days," Gorky told one of his friends, K. Levin. "And I really did sing in the choir. And in general I enjoyed singing and could sing at the time." One

[1] A small square of glass in the double window which is set on hinges and serves as a ventilator.

opera season in the chorus was, particularly with his talents, sufficient to give him a good knowledge of the standard operas, the orchestra and vocalism.

One of the results of this operatic experience was that the young man tried to become a musician at the time he was slaving at a bakery in Kazan, which he described in *My Universities*. "As an outlet for my low spirits I started to learn the violin, sawing the strings every night in the shop, to the discomfort of the night watchman and the mice.

"I loved music and applied myself to it with enthusiasm," Gorky added. His teacher played the violin in a theater orchestra. As it happened, these lessons were soon discontinued.

Young Gorky had such a passion for music and pined so much without it, that he was always ready to listen to it even in the most extraordinary conditions. In his autobiographical story *Music* Gorky tells how he was arrested in his youth and taken to the colonel of gendarmes to be examined. There, in the colonel's residence, during a break in the proceedings, when the colonel left the room, he discovered a brilliant pianist—the colonel's wife.

"At first the melody eluded me, the alto and tenor parts sounded incoherent, the heavy sighs of the bass seemed to be speaking of something sternly and insistently, but the total effect was that of an autumn scene: a cold damp wind was sweeping the bare fields, striking cold tremors in the forest trees which shed their last golden leaves. The bell of an invisible church tolled plaintively in the distance.

"Then a bare-headed man appeared in the fields. His hands raised, he ran as if pursued by the wind, looking over his shoulder all the time. A dark deep rumbling accompanied him while the vistas grew wider, reaching back further and further until, shrinking to nothing before them, he vanished from the earth.

"The woman stopped playing and sat still, her hands by her sides—thus she sat for a long time.

"I looked at her through the flowers, my mind a blank, the beautiful echo still stirring within me, yet realizing one thing: not to move.

"Then her right hand floated down to the keys again, slowly and reluctantly as it were, and I was again in the spell of her solemn chords. I listened with my eyes closed.

"I seemed to hear a great multitude praying to someone in a single, harmonious voice, praying with tears of anger and despair. This was very heavy and powerful music, and I thought it strange that a chit of a woman as she was could play so powerfully.

"And this piece completely deprived me of all sense of reality."

4

The time drew near when Gorky became a writer. As a critic and columnist for the *Samara Gazette* in 1895, the young man often touched upon the subject of music, notably a production of Faust, the singers Unkovsky, Mazini, N. Figner, a concert given by the harpiste Eichenwald, the Mraz orchestra and operetta. He contributed a large number of articles to the *Nizhni Novgorod Listok* at the time of the All-Russian Exhibition in 1896, among them the titles: "Music at the All-Russian Exhibition," "Popular Concerts," "Concert of Croat Students' Orchestra," "Concert by Glavach."

Among these articles we find an unknown sketch, entitled "The Solo." Here, giving rein to his imagination, the young author writes a synopsis for a tone-picture *The Forest*

Awakes, excerpts from which we are quoting below.

"The strings launched it in a tender, dreamy *pianissimo*. Day was just breaking, the sun was still far away but the forest could already feel the morning, and stirred drowsily in anticipation. A whistle from the piccols—the note of some early bird. A phrase from the bassoon—like an owl taking leave of the darkness of night. The oboe repeated it like an echo; the horns joined in and the piccolo sang louder and louder. And the forest rustled—timpani, double basses and violoncellos filled the air with beautiful sounds, turbid but soft. . . . The *cor anglais* sang in its melancholy tone a quiet, dreamy melody repeated by muted violins. The bassoon wailed mournfully, then its note died away. The sound of the violins grew louder and clearer. . . . The sun rose, its first rays flashed in the sky above the forest and the voice of the forest swelled louder and louder to welcome the morning. . . . A gust of wind swept through the awakening forest. Then the sad moaning of the old trees, already indifferent to the sun, the loud rustling of foliage, the blithe warbling of birds. And the garden itself seemed to grow noisier from this morning salute of the forest to the mighty sun."

Compare this fantasy with the passages in the story *In the World* in which Gorky describes his youthful wanderings in the woods outside Nizhni Novgorod. Note the truly musical perception of the life of nature, the sounds of the forest, the song of the birds, which manifested itself in his later work as well as in this youthful essay. Note also his knowledge of the instruments used in the orchestra.

In a letter to A. D. Grinevetskaya, August 24, 1900, Gorky wrote of planning an article on music and opera, In a letter to K. P. Pyatnitsky, July 25, 1902, we read the following: "I am learning to play the piano in order to master the harmonium; I am sure I will learn. This is essential because I have an idea for a one-act play, entitled *Man*, the characters being Man, Nature, the Devil and an Angel. This will need music, as it is to be in verse. . . ."

The well-known writer Skitaletz (S. Petrov), who used to sing and accompany himself on the *goosly* (a kind of psaltery), relates an interesting episode of 1900 in his recollections about Gorky.

"Once he even sang a whole musical sketch to us, playing all the parts himself, introducing it as a one-act operetta by an unknown composer, which had been printed somewhere and produced at some theater. It was so droll that we all laughed till the tears came to our eyes. Later I discovered that no one had ever written such an operetta and even the singer himself could not remember the contents of it which were evidently impromptu.

"Gorky was very musical by nature," wrote Skitaletz. "And had a fine musical instinct. I happened to be present at a discussion of music he conducted with musicians and composers of world fame, a conversation lasting several hours, in which Gorky displayed a thorough knowledge and understanding of the history of classical music; it is possible that in addition to his native musicality he knew the literature on the subject."

To the above story of Gorky's musical improvization in 1900, we may add that Gorky had tried his hand at composition before this.

According to E. S. Ivanova, who knew him in Samara in 1895, there was nothing he liked better than a sing-song in congenial company. "The song he sang most of all was

Beranger's *Spring and Autumn*, incidentally to a tune of his own:

Nature, herself, dear friends,
The pleasure time has appointed.

The composer A. A. Spendiarov, who met Gorky several times in the Crimea in 1902, relates that Gorky's house in Oleidze was frequented by musicians as well as men of letters, among them, along with Spendiarov, Rakhmaninov and Chaliapin. "Gorky was passionately fond of music. Whenever I invited him to my house, I organized concerts at his own request. Once we had an evening of quartettes rendered by soloists from the symphony orchestra in Yalta. Of all our evenings, Gorky liked this the best, and of the quartettes—Beethoven's. In general Gorky preferred the classics. Quite a number of musical evenings were held at his own house where Chaliapin readily obliged."

5

In later years, too, Gorky constantly associated with musicians. In token of their admiration for Gorky as a writer, these musicians were always ready to play for his enjoyment. In an unpublished letter to D. V. Stassov, July 5, 1911, the pianist N. E. Burenin wrote:

"I am very busy with music. There is a piano and I am sweating away at Grieg's and Beethoven's sonatas, and I am also expecting some other things—all with violin because at Capri I want to give Alexei Maximovich [Gorky] some good music. He hasn't heard all Beethoven's violin sonatas and I had promised to play them for him a long time ago. Now an opportunity has presented itself. My St. Petersburg friend, Vincento Sorgato, has come to Italy, a versatile musician, a fine violinist, an expert in classical music. We played together occasionally in St. Peterburg, and we have a feeling for each other's playing to a remarkable degree.

"I am now inviting him to Capri. He is bringing sonatas and variations by Corelli and Veracini, the Bruch and the Saint-Saens concerto, and the last one by Glazunov, which he is still practicing. As you see, we have a big repertoire. Add to these Voitenko, Mussorgsky, Dargomyzhsky, Grechaninov and some others—a plentiful program for musical evenings.

"I should like to hear what Alexei Maximovich will have to say after these concerts—he will probably end up with whole lectures on art, let him only start. We are still living here, but all our thoughts are there—at Capri."

On arriving at Capri N. E. Burenin carried out his intentions, playing for Gorky almost every day. From Capri he wrote to Stassov again on August 12 of the same year, 1911. "In a month's time I am due back at St. Petersburg, so I won't be luxuriating here much longer. I need not tell you that my present environment has been a great experience for me. Alexei Maximovich always has something very interesting to say and sometimes we have visits from interesting people whose conversations are worth hearing. . . . I can hardly bear the thought of leaving. I am not practicing very much but I play quite frequently for A. M., he is particularly fond of Grieg, and he has a very fine way of talking about music."

In 1912, Gorky made the acquaintance of the famous soprano A. V. Nezhdanova, who is now a People's Artist of the U.S.S.R. Not long ago she told of her meetings with Gorky.

"I spent July and August of 1912 in Italy on the Adriatic coast, in Rimini, where I had been going almost every year. . . . Among the Russians living in Rimini that sum-

mer was Alexei Maximovich Gorky. I met him a number of times. When we were introduced I invited Gorky to call on me.

"On that memorable evening several people from Moscow had gathered at my house, and as usual they asked me to sing something. I sang some Russian romanzas and Alyabyev's *Nightingale*. Alexei Maximovich listened with his eyes closed, visibly stirred—tears flowed from under his eyelids. As he was leaving he asked permission to drop in during my lessons with Professor Mazetti. He came a number of times, sat on the veranda, listening to my singing and deep in thought. . . . When Alexei Maximovich came to the U.S.S.R. after the Revolution we had many friendly meetings."

Gorky had other kinds of meetings with people of the musical world. In July 1935, during his stay in Moscow, Romain Rolland said he would like to meet Soviet composers and hear their latest works. This was arranged at Gorky's country house, and an account of the meeting was recently given by the composer B. Shekhter. "Kobalevsky (playing four hands with Bely) performed the second movement of his second symphony, Neuhaus played several preludes by Shostakovich, and the *March Funèbre* by Metner, Feinberg gave the *adagio* from an original sonata and Knipper played *Poliushko (Rolling Green)*. Bely played his *Song of a Partisan Girl*, Veprik his *Song About Kotovsky*, Kochetov an excerpt from the suite *Tyl Ulenspiegel*. I too contributed with excerpts from my opera *Year 1905* and the second part of my *Turkmenian Suite*."

This meeting is significant to us not only as another example of Gorky's close association with the musical world and his interest in contemporary music. It is memorable for the opinions expressed by Gorky in the course of the evening spent with these Soviet composers. For instance he demanded that composers should themselves create plots for operas, and not be subservient to professional librettists. "Another theme of our discussion with Gorky," wrote B. Schekhter, "was the question of the folk idiom in music, the contact between the composer and folklore. Alexei Maximovich earnestly advised composers to look for heroic subjects in folklore, base operas on the epics dealing with the Russian legendary giants, which are a vivid reflection of the heroic past of the Russian people. . . . Discussing with me my plan to write an opera about the events of 1905, Alexei Maximovich returned to the question of the folk idiom in music, speaking with great emotion. He reproached me with depicting only an amorphous mass in my opera. 'The heroism of the people,' he said, 'must be represented by a character embodying the heroism of the mass: the plot should be constructed as in the folk epics in which the *bogatyr*, the giant, is the incarnation of the heroic traits of the whole Russian people.' Incidentally Alexei Maximovich told Soviet composers to look to folk art not only for the choice of a subject, but for their musical language as well."

We learn a number of valuable facts in an article on Gorky by the composer U. A. Shaporin: "Never shall I forget the hours I spent with Alexei Maximovich when he sang song after song of the old Volga. That was in 1932 after the rehearsal of my symphony, at which Gorky had been present. We spoke of symphony music, and Gorky expressed the thought that it would be a good idea to write a symphony of labor.

"This symphony, he thought, should be in two movements: the first representing the inordinate,

slavish toil of the past; the second a song of the joyous, happy labor of the present. Gorky suggested that the most colorful effect would be obtained if this symphony were based on traditional songs of the Volga. Here, warming to the subject, he drew a picture of a toilsome, joyless day's work. The doleful songs of the tillers of the soil and of the boatmen are wafted from the river banks. . . . Alexei Maximovich, zealous in this as in everything, began to recall some old traditional songs. He sang for about two hours, wonderful melodies which I copied down and still have in my possession.

"Unfortunately, no Soviet composer has yet written a symphony of labor. Neither have they carried out another idea of Gorky's—a heroic opera based on the traditional Russian epics—the *bylinas*.

"Gorky was continually urging composers to look for heroic opera stories in folklore, the epic tales of the Russian giants, vividly reflecting the heroic past of the Russian people.

"'Our remarkable Russian mythology is treated only in the one opera *Sadko*,' Alexei Maximovich said to me. 'The fable of Sadko is characteristic of mercantile Russia. But there are very interesting fables which show other sides to the Russian character. What wonderful material for a libretto, for instance, is the legend of Vasili Buslayev!'"

Lack of space does not allow us to quote all the references to music which could be collected from the works of Gorky and from facts in his biography.

Throughout his eventful life Gorky adhered to his love for music, constantly increasing his knowledge of the subject.

In his celebrated novel *Mother* (Part II, Chapter 3), Gorky described a performance of a piece by Grieg on the pianoforte. Again, in his excellent memoirs of Lenin we find the following significant passage. "One evening in Moscow, in E. P. Pyeshkova's flat, Lenin was listening to a sonata by Beethoven being played by Isaiah Dobrowein, and said: 'I know nothing which is greater than the *Appassionata;* I would like to listen to it every day. It is marvelous, superhuman music. I always think with pride—perhaps it is naive of me—what marvelous things human beings can do!'"

In an undated letter which appeared in our press but was addressed to an unidentified composer Gorky wrote: "Your music—and your masterly execution of it—stirs me with overwhelming force, uplifting my soul as if by magic. This is real Russian music profoundly chosen by you, but you have succeeded in adding strength to it, in endowing it with a universal, all-embracing significance. Listening to you, I hear complaints, groans and the fatal problems harassing a universal soul, its untamable revolt, and if you wish for world fame—I am certain it is awaiting you. You must work, work with abandon, thinking of nothing save music, cherishing your talent passionately and tenderly as you would your beloved to whom you wished to devote your soul, every inch of it. I am an ignoramus in music, true, but I have gone through a great deal, I have lived and felt, and I am no stranger to art, and the province of art means to me most deep and profound joys. I have heard a great deal of music, but very seldom have I experienced the all-embracing sensation of beauty and joy as I do when I listen to you. My dear friend, from the very depth of my heart I wish you strength and courage to overcome all the petty and contemptible obstacles which stand between the artist and the complete dedication of his self

to the holy cause of serving art. Be well and do not doubt my sincere love for you nor my amazement at you—the artist. I press your hand warmly. *M. Gorky.*"

6

Gorky loved Beethoven's music. In 1916-17 he often urged Romain Rolland to write a biography of Beethoven for young people. Gorky was to publish the book in a series he had planned for the purpose of inspiring the young generation to love and believe in life, "to teach people heroism." Gorky also had a very good knowledge of Bach, Mendelsohn, Grieg, as well as Sibelius and Cesar Franck.

We know how fervently Gorky admired folk music. But if there was anything he hated and despised uncompromisingly it was philistine music, or, as he called it, "music for the fat." It is significant that as long ago as 1906, when Gorky first came in contact with the philistines of the West, he evaluated "music for the fat" as one of the most typical features of bourgeois culture in general. In his American sketches of 1906, the chapter entitled "The Kingdom of Boredom," Gorky gave a vivid and mercilessly satirical description of Coney Island, the pleasure ground of New York, a city which Gorky described as a "lifeless magnificence of spiritual poverty." Gorky also described the music he heard there.

"Music thunders, tearing the air to tatters. The orchestra is rotten, the musicians are tired, sounds fly out of the brasses without connection, as though they are lame and to go smoothly is impossible, they run in a ragged line, jostling, overtaking, overturning one another. . ."

And here is the mood which such music awakens in a free man:

"This music of beggars for the entertainment of slaves produces strange fantasies. You want to snatch the largest tuba in the band and blow it with all your might, a long, loud, terrible blast to set them all running from their prison, goaded by horror at that frenzied note."

Even in this early article one notes the gift of broad generalization possessed by this thinker and fighter who set out to battle the old world. Let us recollect that 1906 was the year in which Gorky in the West made his first publicist attacks on the bourgeois governments.

Long observation of the musical culture of the decadent European bourgeoisie only strengthened Gorky's aversion to "music for the fat." Twenty-two years later, in 1928, he wrote an article in *Pravda* about this "music for the fat."

After giving a poetic description of a summer night in Italy "when the perfect peace and beauty dispose one to solemn thoughts," Gorky goes on to describe what he hears from the radio in the next door hotel room. "Suddenly in the delicate hush there comes the sharp tapping of some idiotic mallet—one, two, three, ten, twenty knocks and after them, just like a piece of dirt falling into pure, transparent water, comes a sound of wild shrieking, whistling, rumbling, howling, roaring and rattling.

"Then a sudden inrush of inhuman voices like the neighing of a horse, the grunting of a pig, the braying of a jackass, the amorous croaking of a monstrous frog; this offensive chaos of frenzied sounds follows a scarcely audible rhythm and after listening to it for a minute or two one begins to think that this is an orchestra of erotomaniacs conducted by a human stallion. What I heard was the radio set in the hotel nearby, cheering the world of those who are fat, the world of human carnivori, bringing to them over the ether a new fox-trot played by a Negro

orchestra. This is music for the bloated. To this rhythm, in all the glorified drink-shops of 'civilized' countries the people who are fat, cynically moving their hips, imitate what passes between men and women in the act of procreation. . . . Along comes a fat vampire, a parasite living on the toil of others, a subhuman with the slogan 'After me—the deluge,' along he comes and tramples under his fat feet all that has been created out of the finest nervous tissue of great artists and educators of the working people. . . . Here we have the evolution from the beauty of the minuet, the life and spirit of the waltz to the cynicism of the fox-trot with the spasms of the Charleston, from Mozart and Beethoven to a jazzband of Negroes who probably are laughing up their sleeves to see their white masters retrogressing to the savage state which the Negroes of America have left and are leaving further and further behind."

Here, angrily spurning this putrid "music for the fat," and the putridness of philistine culture in general, Gorky brings the thoughts of the reader back to the solemn beauty of the southern night, inspiring "solemn thoughts of the inexhaustible power of labor which performs all the miracles in our world."

Then he speaks of the "triumphant music of world labor, labor performed by men great and small," the "wonderful song of modern history—the wonderful song so boldly begun by the working people of my country."

Gorky was musical in his writings. After reading some early stories by Gorky, the discriminative Chekhov wrote to him in 1895: "*Your stuff is musical.*" In our own day A. V. Lunacharsky said of Gorky: "He is undoubtedly—a *musician in prose.*"

This is a fact: Gorky's literary pieces, including his earliest, are rhythmical, melodious, singable. In his youth Gorky wrote a great deal of verse, then for a long time he fell under the sway of "rhythmic prose." Gorky has left quite a lot of lyrical and impassioned verses and poems in prose, perfect in form. Composers have set some of them to music.

Having absorbed in his childhood the songs his grandmother sang, Gorky imbued his literary work with echoes of these folksongs.

We still have a lot to learn about Gorky. And when we study him we are amazed at the fullness and versatility of his spiritual life. Such is the case with regard to folklore and painting. Such is the case with regard to music: we have now discovered what profound ties Gorky had with this sublime art.

NIKOLAI PIKSANOV

"Finnegans Wake": The Latest Book by James Joyce

Before attempting to discuss the new book by James Joyce and giving an account of its reception by the press and critics in England, it will be wise to explain to the Soviet reader just how *any* book is received.

For the Soviet reader a book from a Soviet author of the standing of a man like James Joyce would be an eagerly anticipated event. Newspapers and journals would devote columns to discussion of the book. Leading authorities and critics would review the work at great length. In the clubs and even in the parks circles would gather and talk about the event. Probably the author would join in the lively exchange of opinions.

Not so in a country like England.

Here, every book published of any importance enters life with a chance similiar to a very weakly child. It is not accepted into the culture of the country, neither is it hailed as an event. It is at the mercy of the newspapers.

Each newspaper boasts a literary editor, but few raise their voices in praise of their literary pages. Those responsible for reviews of books must be responsive to certain unvarying conditions which hedge a capitalist newspaper—news of books must be snappy, anything sensational in a new book must not be missed, and the advertiser must never be offended. Consequently, when a book enters a newspaper office in search of life-giving notice it enters an alien and hostile world. No matter how great the work, its claims cannot exceed the amount of space given to the literary editor. *Only in circumstances, such as tremendous topicality, extreme sensationalism, or where the work has earned the condemnation of the editorial conference, does the book news overflow on to the news pages.* Unless a book makes news it is never news.

Books for review arrive in their hundreds, each bearing a slip of paper stating the date of *publication* and asking specifically that no review of the book appear before that date. The selection is made, essentially arbitrary, but conforming to the conditions. Those publishers who regularly advertise in the paper naturally receive first consideration. *The rest are anxiously pored over to see that nothing is missed in the way of sensation or extra salacious content.* The established author demands "a show" and gets it somehow. But it is a hopeless business. Two hundred books and twenty column inches.

The selection made, the books are passed on to the members of the paper's panel of critics. The pay is none too good, but the reviewer can eke out a few shillings by selling the books to the bookseller who is none too scrupulous about abiding by his agreements with the publishers. The reviewer takes his half dozen books home. He cannot read them; he can only taste them. This matter of reviewing becomes a practised art. By running a practised eye over the chapters and making free with the highly commendatory words on the jacket of the book—those words which are lumped together under the offensive epithet, "the blurb"—he can produce a tolerably efficient article.

I recently borrowed a newly published book from a friend of mine who works on a newspaper in London. He had given this book a most enthusiastic review, and no doubt many of his readers followed his urgent advice to get the book. As I took it away from his home he urged me to return it as soon as possible as he had not had time to read it so far!

It can be seen that under the conditions described James Joyce had a fairly good start so far as publication discussion went. In the first place, Joyce was regarded as a character. He was the author of *Ulysses*. And *Ulysses* had had a rather stormy life. Five hundred copies had been burnt in New York; four hundred and ninety-nine had been seized by the Customs authorities at Folkestone; it was banned; it cir-

culated in thousands over the Continent, and almost every person interested in literature who had made the tour abroad had smuggled his or her copy into the country. *Ulysses* was regarded as being, not salacious, but pornographic. (Of course, it was quite conveniently forgotten that *Ulysses* had been published in England about two years ago by The Bodley Head, and can now be obtained openly on the book market at 25/- the copy.) So Joyce's newest book, *Finnegans Wake*, started out by being *news*.

Being *news* it was impossible for the newspaper to miss it. To have done so would have been a crime. There is no greater calamity in English journalism than missing a story.

And here again we must pause to illuminate the enormous pretensions of journalism under capitalism.

It had been consistently rumored—the rumors gaining currency in the newspapers from time to time—that Joyce was bringing to a close his great work called *Work in Progress*. Queer little stories fluttered here and there about Joyce's near-blindness, his inditing his manuscript in red pencil on huge sheets of paper, and his strange manipulations of not only his own language but most of the languages of the world. And, as if to assuage the intemperate impatience of his many admirers, the great man allowed various chapters and excerpts from the manuscript to be published in pamphlet form. The publication of the chapter under the title of *Anna Livia Plurabella* absolutely crowned the edifice.

No one could make head or tail of the chapter, except the devotees, and these gentlemen—generally gentlemen—began to frequent the queer little book shops and dram shops around Bloomsbury, and of course, the cocktail parties, and give readings of the chapter. *It was generally agreed that the one with the strongest Irish brogue got the greater interpretation of the chapter.*

Then it occurred to *Joyce himself that the best interpretation* of the chapter would be gained if he read the last bit himself in his own brogue. A gramophone company gave the necessary encouragement and now it is possible to buy the record.

What more, then, than that the critics should save their own time reading the book and reviewing it by searching out that well-known part in *Anna Livia Plurabella*, sticking it down again on clean white paper, and saying to an interested public: "There, what do you make of that? Jargon, isn't it?"

Here is the excerpt, and I will almost guarantee that out of all the reviewers who wrote about the book in the English press not a dozen failed to laugh at this excerpt:

"Can't hear with the waters of. The chittering waters of. Flittering bats, fieldmice bawk talk. Ho! Are you not gone ahome? What Tom Malone? Can't hear with the bawk of bats, all them liffeying waters of. Ho, talk save us! My foos won't moos. I feel as old as yonder elm. A tale told of Shaun or Shem? All Livia's daughter-sons. Dark hawks hear us. Night! Night! My ho head halls. I feel as heavy as yonder stone. Tell me of John or Shaun? Who were Shem and Shaun the living sons and daughters of? Night now! Tell me! Tell me, tell me, elm! Night night! Tell me tale of stem or stone. Beside the rivering waters of, hitherandthithering waters of. Night!"

There it is! Each reviewer, almost without exception, found that excerpt, published it, *and condemned "Finnegans Wake" out of hand.*

And in the workshops and offices men and women discussed this new phenomenon. It invaded their world of Hollywood celluloid. They were not shocked. They took it as just another wickedness inflicted upon them, and let it go at that. One girl read it and brought it to me. "Have you read this?" she asked, displaying Robert Lynd's *News-Chronicle* criticism before me. "Yes," I said. "But it is poetry! It is poetry!" she cried. And so it is.

Some of the newspapers made an attempt to criticize the book. Most of the reviewers gave it up after openly declaring it to be beyond their comprehension. Robert Lynd, a foremost critic of English letters, declared it to be Joyce's most obscure book. In that he was wrong. It is Joyce's *first* obscure book. The *Times* belabored *Finnegans Wake* with a frown. In a leading article in the *Times Literary Supplement*, the frown was made more manifest, the august eyebrows went a shade higher. The *Manchester Guardian* got over its own difficulties by quoting from the old Irish song called *Finnegans Wake* and declared how patently it had been pained by the publication of the book. The *Daily Telegraph* grunted. And the book was passed on to the weeklies where criticism flourishes dankly still.

I will quote from two reviews, one English and one American, to show how really bewildered James Joyce has left his admirers. From their remarks it will be possible for the Soviet reader to judge the fuming anger of his critics.

The Observer (London) for May 7, 1938, gave pride of place in its review columns to Oliver St. John Gogarty, a famous Irish writer, to express his opinions on *Finnegans Wake*. Starting with a long disser-

tation on Joyce, the man, he begins to approach the book near the end of the second column. Then in the remaining column he tries his best to appreciate what Joyce has written. He also includes the famous Shaun and Shem passage quoted above!

"Joyce's language is more than a revolt against classicism," he says, "it is more than a return to the freedom of slang and thieve's punning talk. *It is an attempt to get at words before they clarify in the mind.* It is the language of a man speaking, trying to speak, through an anaesthetic. It is presumed to be the language of the Subconscious mind, whatever that may be." (My italics. *H. H.*)

There! There, in an article of nearly four thousands words long, Gogarty says all that he has to say *meaningly* of his friend's work.

At the end he enquires what is the motive force behind the book. (A "wake" by the way is a funeral rite practiced by the Irish people.) Gogarty wonders if it is the wake as well as the panegyric of civilization, but he does not go on to answer whether it is or no. But . . . ah! we must not miss this: "Resentment . . . against Life which Finnegan *may* represent, created this literary Bolshevism which strikes not only at all standards and accepted modes of expression whether of Beauty or Truth but at the very vehicle of rational expression."

That remark . . . literary Bolshevism . . . was bound to come. It could not be helped. He had to place Joyce in some category, so why not a Bolshevik one? How the Soviet critics must laugh, not at James Joyce, but James Joyce's friends. But let us pursue Gogarty to the bitter end. And let him speak his own words.

"It is impossible to read the work as a serial. It may have a coherency and a meaning. What is wrong with the meaning that it cannot be expressed? Ripeness cannot be all in this instance, nor can a myriad-minded man full of infinite suggestion satisfy the reader with suggestions alone. Perhaps it is wrong to look for a meaning where there is every meaning. It may be un-modern to expect sense. *Lewis Carroll stopped short brilligly, but this goes on lapsing as everlastingly as Anna Livia.* There is nothing new under the sun: it is only exaggerated. This is the most colossal leg-pull in literature since McPherson's *Ossian.* Mr. Joyce has had his revenge."

So!

But what does it all mean? How one would love to italicize the phrases of that summing up, that contradiction seeking cover in as wild and woolly a jumble of words as are to be found in *Finnegans Wake* itself, just to show that Gogarty, Irishman, Patriot and Friend of Joyce, just couldn't make head nor tail of the book and didn't like to say so.

The New York Times handed the book to a writer not unknown in the Soviet Union, Padraic Colum, and in over two thousand words he tried to sum up *Finnegans Wake.* But alas, and alack! Mr. Colum is discursive. Surely, there he must seize on the *Anna Livia* chapter and tells us all about it—that Anna Livia is really the *river Liffey*—and to give us the famous *Shaun or Shem* paragraph all over again. With a flourish of pen, ink and typewriter, Colum gets down to his main problem, saying:

"The problem of the writer of today is to possess real words, not ectoplasmic words, and to know how to order them. *They must move for him like pigeons in flight that make a shadow on the grass, not like corn popping.* And so all serious writers of English today look to James Joyce, who has proved himself the most learned, the most subtle, the most though-going exponent of the value-making word."

Proceeding to develop this point, Colum makes what might be the only *obvious discovery*:

"Joyce," he goes on to say, "approached the problem of the word not only as a writer but as a musician, a linguist trained in scholastic philosophy in which definition and rigorous literalness are insisted on. And this concern with the word has brought him far as a literary technician."

But is he a literary technician?

It may be true that the approach is that of the musician, but the further suggestion of definition and rigorous literalness is discounted by further arbitrary uses of letters, as for instance when he lays letters on their backs! What kind of rigorous literalness is this? Could Colum, despite his pretentiousness tell us what "rigorous literalness" there is about this quotation (p. 18)?

"Furthere, this little effingee is for a firefing called a flintforall. Face at the eased! O I fay. Face at the waist! Ho, you ife! Upwap and dump em, ace to ace!"

Padraic Colum has nothing further to say about the book. True he endeavors to explain it, and, being an Irishman, he endeavors to thrust his own boyhood experiences into Joyce's face in the timid hope that the great man will accept them as explanations of his own gigantic incomprehensibilities. "I see the title of a film . . . " "Where I grew up in Ireland . . . " "I got into a train at Buffalo . . . " And so on. But Joyce merely stands and grins.

In a final scream of despair, Colum puts it: "We have novels that give us greatly a three dimensional world: here is a narrative that gives a new dimension."

I like that. Yes, I really do like that. The word "greatly" pleases me greatly. As for calling *Finnegans Wake* a narrative, well. I like that also, but not so greatly.

What is its effect upon the reader?

I can only give my own reactions. There is no story, no narrative. There are no characters. The chapters are not numbered, nor are they named. Joyce could have gone further; he need not have numbered the pages. Words roll on endlessly, a great vast world of words, whirling and twisting themselves into fantastic jumbles and forms. Languages leap their barriers and are made to join in one wildly screeching tumult over James Joyce's unprotesting pages. Sentences have no beginnings and no endings. The book itself ends on the word "the." One sentence is made to stretch and enfold the entire cosmos. A nightmare has been imprisoned. And yet there is a certain somnolent, mystifying poetry about it all, a queer, uncertain music, as if the man had attempted a great symphony with words for musical symbols. The word has been offered up on the altar of this man's inscrutable ego, and when the fires have died down nothing is left but a vast heap of twisted, maimed and mangled letters. There are words which once bore a similarity to the real words begotten of men. Once one tries to chase these products of the new, Joycian *coignage to their real beginnings the spell of this "Joycian music" is gone.*

Colum, out of his infatuation for the man, Joyce, has called it a narrative. There is no narrative. "It cannot be read as a serial," Gogarty has asserted. True; it cannot. One rises from one's chair and lays the book aside, *and one is aware—no, not painfully aware—emptily aware that one has encountered no new experience.* Literature has perished in the hands of James Joyce, because his pen has ceased to be a weapon. It has become a plaything, an instrument which the *maestro* can only idly strum, because he cannot play it properly. The great, living, dynamic energy of literature which one experiences when Gorky is present has lapsed in the hands of Joyce into a palsied, stricken thing which deserves no better fate than the harsh blow of a worker's *hob-nailed* boot and the *salutary* expletive bellowed after it as it shrieks along the sidewalk *like a chastized mongrel.*

"But, vrayedevraye Blankdeblank, god of all machineries and tomestone of Barnstaple, by mortisection or vivisiture, splitten up or recompounded, an isaac jacquemin mauromormo milesian, how accountibus for him, moreblue?"

Would Padraic Colum say that that "was rigorously compounded"? Perhaps not, but I doubt if he would agree that Joyce is merely idling.

HAROLD HESLOP

DOCUMENTS

Letters of V. I. Lenin to Inessa Armand

The two letters of V. I. Lenin to Inessa Armand printed below were written in January 1915 in connection with an outline she had sent him of a pamphlet for working women which she was planning to write.

These letters are an extremely valuable contribution to the material on the Communist outlook on questions of such importance in the life of the working people as marriage and the family.

Lenin demands a serious Marxist approach to these questions. He treats the vulgar philistine attitude towards them with revolutionary scorn, and he particularly warns against the "modish" views and demands, which seem revolutionary and "Left" on the surface, but are reactionary and bourgeois at bottom, such as the demand for "free love," etc.

Lenin gives a profound class analysis of demands like these. He points out that as a rule "bourgeois women" interpret "free love" to mean freedom "from the serious things in love," from "childbirth," and "freedom of adultery." He considers "free love" a bourgeois demand, and thinks that it should be "thrown out altogether" from a pamphlet intended for working women.

In these letters Lenin contrasts to "sordid and obscene marriage without love," not the demand for "free love," and not "transitory passion and connection," but the "*proletarian civil marriage of love.*"

These letters will have a valuable effect in strengthening and developing the Socialist family, in furthering the Communist education of the masses, and in the fight against the survivals of capitalism in the life and minds of people.

They are of particular interest to the vast army of Soviet intellectuals—to the teachers, writers and literary and art workers—to all those who in the words of Comrade Stalin, should be "engineers of the human soul."

MARX-ENGELS-LENIN INSTITUTE
Under the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (B).

I

(January 17, 1915)[1]

Dear friend! I would seriously advise you to give the outline of the pamphlet in greater detail. Otherwise too much remains unclear.

But there is one remark I must make at once.

§ 3—I would advise you to throw out the "demand (of women) for free love" altogether.

It is really not a proletarian, but a bourgeois demand.

For what do you mean by that demand? What *can* it mean?

1. Freedom *from* material (financial) considerations in matters of love?
2. Ditto *from* material worries?
3. from religious prejudices?

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[1] The dates of this and the following letter are marked in the originals in Inessa Armand's handwriting. *Ed.*

4. from the veto of papa, etc.?
5. from the prejudices of "society"?
6. from the narrow restraints (peasant, or philistine or intellectual-bourgeois) of environment?
7. from the fetters of laws, the courts and the police?
8. from the serious things in love?
9. from childbirth?
10. freedom of adultery? etc.

I have enumerated many shades of opinion (not all, of course). What you mean, of course, is not Nos. 8-10, but either Nos. 1-7 or something *along those lines.*

But a different term should be selected for Nos. 1-7, for free love does not express this idea exactly.

The public, the readers of your pamphlet will *inevitably* interpret "free love" to mean something along the lines of Nos. 8-10, even *though that is not your intention.*

It is just because the most noisy, vociferous and "prominent" classes in present-day society interpret "free love" to mean Nos. 8-10 that this is not a proletarian, but a bourgeois demand.

The proletariat is most concerned with Nos. 1-2, next with Nos. 1-7; but that, strictly speaking, is not "free love."

The point is not what you *subjectively* "would like to understand" by it, but the *objective logic* of class relationships in matters of love.

Friendly shake hands!

V. I.

2

(January 24, 1915)

Dear friend! I apologize for the delay. I wanted to write yesterday, but I was detained and had no time to sit down and write.

With regard to your outline of the pamphlet, I said that the "demand for free love" is unclear and that, irrespective of your wishes and desires (I stressed that by saying that the point is the objective, class relationships, and not your subjective wishes), it would, under present-day social conditions, be a bourgeois, not a proletarian demand.

You do not agree.

All right. Let us consider the matter once more.

In order to make clear what was unclear, I enumerated some ten *possible* (and, in view of class differences, inevitable) interpretations, and I pointed out that, in my opinion, interpretations 1-7 would be typical or characteristic of proletarian women, and 8-10 of bourgeois women.

If you want to refute this, you must show (1) that these interpretations are wrong (in that case you must substitute others for them, or point out which are wrong); or (2) that they are incomplete (in that case you must add those that are lacking); or (3) that the division into proletarian and bourgeois is not the proper one.

You fail to do either the one or the other or the third.

You say nothing about points 1-7 at all. Consequently, you admit (in general) that they are correct? (What you say about prostitution among proletarian women and their dependence—"it is impossible for them to say no"—is fully covered by points 1-7. Here we do not seem to be in disagreement.)

Nor do you dispute the fact that this is the *proletarian* interpretation. There remain points 8-10.

These you "do not quite understand" and you "object": "I fail to see how it is *POSSIBLE* (that's what you write!) to *identify* (!!??) "free love" with point 10. . . .

So it turns out that it is *I* who "identify"—and you set out to confute and demolish *me*?

Why? On what grounds?

Bourgeois women interpret free love to mean points 8-10—that is my thesis.

Do you refute it? Then tell us what *bourgeois women* do mean by free love.

But you do not tell us that. Do not literature and life *prove* that that is exactly what bourgeois women mean by it? They absolutely do prove it! You admit it tacitly.

But if that is so, then the whole point lies in their class position, and it would be hardly possible and rather naive to "refute" *them*.

You must *distinguish* from, and *contrast* to them, the proletarian view. You must bear in mind the objective fact that otherwise *they* will seize upon these passages in your pamphlet and interpret them in their own way; they will use your pamphlet as grist for their own mill; they will distort your ideas in presenting them to the workers and *"confuse"* their minds (by inspiring them with the fear that *you* are offering them *alien* ideas). And they have a host of newspapers, etc., at their disposal.

Yet you, entirely forgetting the objective and class point of view, set out to "attack" *me*, accusing me of "identifying" free love with points 8-10. Strange, very strange. . . .

"Even transitory passion and connection" is "more poetical and purer" than the "kisses without love" of (vulgar and conventional) spouses. That is what you write. And that is what you intend to write in your pamphlet. Splendid.

But is this contrast logical? The kisses without love of vulgar spouses are *sordid*. Agreed. They have to be contrasted with . . . what? . . . Kisses *with love*—is that not so? But you contrast them with "transitory" (why transitory?) "passion" (why not love?)—and so it turns out, logically, that kisses without love (transitory) are contrasted to the kisses without love of spouses. . . . Strange. Would it not be better, in a popular pamphlet, to contrast philistine—intellectual—peasant (that is, point 6 or point 5, in my letter) vulgar and sordid marriage without love to the proletarian civil marriage of love (adding, *IF YOU ABSOLUTELY WISH*, that even a transitory connection or passion may be sordid or may be pure). What you have is not a contrast between class *types*, but something in the nature of a "case" that might possibly occur, of course. But is it really a question of individual cases? If you want to take as your theme an individual case of sordid kisses in marriage and pure kisses in a transitory connection—that is rather a theme to be elaborated in a novel (for the whole *point* here would lie in the *individual* circumstances, in an analysis of the *characters* and mentalities of the *given* types). But not in a pamphlet, surely?

You fully grasped my idea as to the unsuitability of the quotation from Key[1] when you said that it would be "absurd" to play the part of "pro-

[1] Lenin refers to a quotation from the works of the Swedish author Ellen Key, who wrote on the feminist movement and child education.—*Ed.*

fessor of love." That's so. But what about playing the part of professors of transitory, etc.?

Really, I am not anxious to start a controversy. I would gladly leave this letter and postpone the subject until we have a personal talk. But I want the pamphlet to be a good one, so that nobody might *be able* to tear phrases from it that would be unpleasant to you (sometimes a *single* phrase is like a spoonful of tar in a barrel of honey . . .), so that nobody might *be able* to *mis*interpret you. I am certain that here, too, you wrote "in spite of yourself," and I am sending this letter only in the hope that you will give more thought to the outline as a result of the letters than as the result of talks—and, after all, an outline is a very important thing.

Have you a Socialist Frenchwoman among your acquaintances? Translate to her (pretending it is from the English) my points 1-10 and your remarks about "transitory," etc., and watch her, listen to her attentively: it will be a little experiment to find out the reaction of *outside* people, their impressions, what they expect from the pamphlet.

I grasp your hand and hope you suffer less from headaches and get well soon.

V. U.

P. S. As to Bougie, I do not know. . . . It is possible that my friend has promised more than he should. . . . But what?—I don't know. The matter has been postponed—that is, the conflict has been postponed, *NOT* eliminated. We shall have to fight and fight!! Will we succeed in dissuading them? What is your opinion?[1]

[1] Lenin refers to a conflict with the treacherous Pyatakov-Bukharin group who were trying, behind Lenin's back, to start their own group paper. The members of the group lived in Bougie, Switzerland. — *Ed.*

The Festival of Armenian Art

In the course of the last few years, ten-day festivals of the national art of the various peoples of the Soviet Union have become a feature and practically a tradition in the artistic life of the country. Following on the Ukrainian, Georgian, Uzbek, Kazakh, Azerbaijanian and Kirghiz festivals held in recent years, the festival of Armenian art, held at the opening of the present theater season in the Soviet capital, was an outstanding success.

The culture of the Armenian people is one of the oldest in the world. Though the most ancient examples of the creative art of the people could not, unhappily, have been preserved to this day, history tells us that Artavazda II, the son of Tigran the Great, wrote plays in the Greek tongue, in the first century before our era. The splendid examples of literature, painting, and architecture that are known to us, date as early as the fifth century, and the great Armenian epic of *David of Sasun*—a poem worthy to rank with epics of world-wide renown such as the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey*, and the *Nibelungenlied*—belongs to the period extending from the seventh to the tenth centuries.

In the introduction to *The Poetry of Armenia*, published in 1916, one of the important Russian poets of our time, Valeri Brussov, who accomplished a great deal towards popularizing Armenian literature, wrote:

"Without exception, every century of the last thousand years has been worthily represented in Armenian poetry. . . . Grigori Narek (tenth century), Nersess the Joyous (twelfth century), Fric, and Constantin Yerzynkai (thirteenth and fourteenth century), Mkrtich Nagash (fifteenth century), Ovanes Yerzynkai (fourteenth and fifteenth century), Grigori Ahtamar and Naapet Kuchak (sixteenth century), Nagash Ionatan (seventeenth century), Sayat Nova (eighteenth century), and the best poets of Armenia of today are names that should be remembered, and honored by all to whom poetry is dear as the lyric poets of other nations—Sapho, and Ovid, Hafiz and Omar-Khayam, Petrarch and Ronsard, Shelley and Tyutchev, Heine and Verlaine. . . . "

Oppressed as they were in later days by the Russian tsar, the Armenian people yet found sufficient creative force for the creation of a great literature. The nineteenth century can boast some notable writers: Khachatur Abovyan, Mikael Nalbandyan, Perch Proshyan and Raffi; in the second half of the century, Gabriel Sundukyan (after whom the best theater in Armenia has been named) wrote his plays on the everyday life of his country. In the closing years of the century the genius of Armenian music, Komitas, composed his best works.

However, it was only following the liberation by the October Socialist Revolution of the oppressed national minorities of tsarist Russia that the art of the Armenian people, an art which has its origins in the far-distant past, was placed for the first time in history in conditions favorable to a free and effective development.

II

The music of the opera *Almast*, which launched the Festival of Armenian Art in Moscow, was written by Alexander Spendiarov, a prominent Armenian composer who died in 1928. The last ten years of his life were devoted to this remarkable work.

One of the most talented pupils of the great Rimsky-Korsakov, Spendiarov dedicated his outstanding gifts to the national art of his own country. He first conceived the idea of writing the opera in 1916; his meeting with the great Armenian poet, Ovanes Tumanyan, served as a stimulus. Spendiarov was captivated by *The Taking of Tmkabert*, one of Tumanyan's longer poems, written in the style of an epic of the warriors of old and their doughty deeds. In sonorous

verse Tumanyan tells the half-legendary, half-historical tale of the brave and independent Armenian prince Tatul, and of his wife, the beautiful and treacherous Almast. The plot of the opera is based on this poem.

Spendiarov's *Almast* marked an important stage in the development of Armenian opera. It has been generally recognized as a work on the level of European music as regards technique. The rich and expressive medium of grand opera is employed to advantage in *Almast*. It is built up of fairly long scenes, logical in sequence and clear-cut in form. Singing, particularly in the mass scenes, is made the most of, and the same may be said of the music for the orchestra. But the contribution of *Almast* as an opera does not end here; Spendiarov has applied European professional technique in creating a new and characteristic national style; the opera's strength lies in its living connection with the music of the people, with its ideas and images, and its emotional make-up.

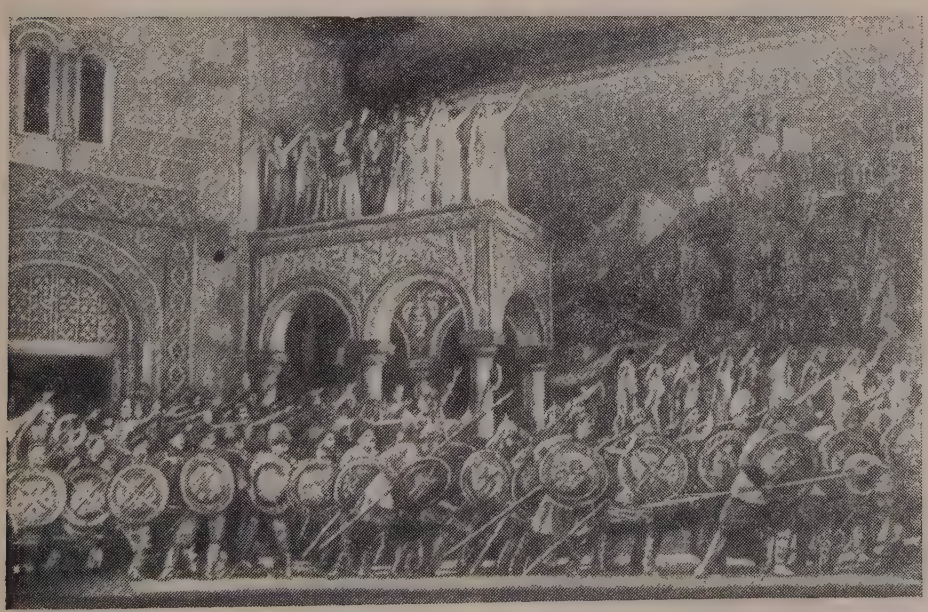
A prominent Soviet musician, Professor Alexander Goldenweiser, the director of the Moscow Conservatoire, observed that the charming refrains of the folksongs and dances are not merely tacked on, as folklore, to Spendiarov's compositions, but merge organically with his own musical ideas to a degree that makes it difficult for even the most expert audience to distinguish where the composer is using genuine folk-airs and where he is simply composing "in the style" of Armenian folksongs.

Good taste and a thorough knowledge of folklore saved Spendiarov from the over-spiciness of harmonic language common to many composers of "oriental" music.

Almast indicates the further development of the Armenian opera, which, new in theme and ideas, is an art with a musical style of its own. It is natural that a work of the kind of *Almast* presents immense difficulties to both producers and performers. The collective of the Erivan Opera-House Theater have proved themselves capable of coping with these difficulties and of making a brilliant success of the opera. Each in his own field—the producer Ovanesyan, the conductor Budagyan, the artist Saryan, the architect Tokarsky, and the master of the ballet, Arbatov-Yagunyan—they all displayed a profound understanding of the conception of the opera, mastery of their media, and exquisite taste. In *Almast* the realistic interpretation of the emotions and natures of the characters is satisfactorily combined with brilliant scenic effects.

III

The poetry of Ovanes Tumanyan inspired also Armen Tigranyan, the author



Last scene from the opera "Almast". The Armenians rush into battle for fatherland and liberty

T. Sazandaryan in the role of Almast

of *Anush*, which was performed by the Erivan Opera Theater during the Armenian Festival in Moscow. Tigranyan belongs to the older generation of Armenian composers. He wrote *Anush* over thirty years ago. It was produced for the first time in Alexandropol (now Leninakan), in 1912. At that time Armenia had no opera house, no professional singers and no orchestra. Operas were performed from time to time by amateurs, in halls ill-adapted for the purpose.

Nevertheless, in a few years' time this opera became known all over Transcaucasia, and airs from it were sung in the most obscure corners of Armenia. This is not to be wondered at; Tigranyan's music is folk-music; the airs are haunting, melodious, with a clearly-marked, expressive rhythm, conveying the lyrical charm of Tumanyan's poem.

The poem gives a picture of the downtrodden life of the women of old Armenia, of the squalor and ignorance of the village of former times, and describes against this gloomy background the romantic love of the young shepherd Saro and the beautiful Anush. This poem is a great favorite with the Armenian people. Other Armenian composers, among them the famous Komitas, have been inspired by it, but Armen Tigranyan has been the most successful in his treatment of this touching lyrical poem. His opera has become as popular as the poem itself; many of the airs from it have become so well known that they are widely sung by the people, are, in fact, popular songs in the true sense of the word. An exacting musician might not, perhaps, find an unusual wealth of symphonic development or variety of musical form in the score of *Anush*, but the choruses are strong, dynamic, and vivid, the parts of Anush and Saro are characterized by rare emotional freshness and melodiousness.

The producer, A. Gulakyan, has been able to endow the production with those touches of romanticism that harmonize so well with the opera's dominating theme of tragic love. The wonderful directness and chaste simplicity that distinguished the opera as a whole won for it the warm sympathy of Moscow audiences.

IV

The third opera performed during the Festival of Armenian Art in Moscow was *Lusabatsin (At Dawn)* dedicated to a heroic revolutionary theme. The opera, written by the young composer Aro Stepanyan, reveals great realistic power in the depiction of the famous rising of the Armenian workers against the Dashnak rulers in May 1920—one of the most remarkable and glorious pages in the history of the Armenian revolutionary movement.

Aro Stepanyan is a master of chorus music. In this field he is the direct successor of Komitas and Spendiarov, the classics of Armenian music. Following the finest traditions of the Armenian classics, Stepanyan builds up his works on a basis of folksongs, applying them in new ways. Where, for example, in *Anush*, Tigranyan employed for the most part the couplet form, in *Lusabatsin* Stepanyan's treatment of the folksong is much broader and freer; and takes the form of long dramatic arias and monologues. The revolutionary theme impels the author to seek new media of musical expression. In Stepanyan's *Lusabatsin*, the first Armenian opera on a Soviet theme, the heroes are vividly drawn in terms of musical characterization.

V

The performances given during the Festival formed a cycle, a kind of epopee, presenting the principal stages of the history of the Armenian people. Thus, *Almast* treats of the heroic past, of Armenia of olden times, *Anush* reflects the everyday life of the pre-revolutionary village—left in a state of abysmal ignorance and neglect, and enjoying no rights;

in *Lusabatsin* we are shown the heroic struggle of the Armenian people for their freedom; but the theme of the fourth production—the ballet *Happiness*—is the joyous happy life of the Armenian people in the country of Socialism.

The libretto of the ballet was written by G. Ovanesyan, the talented director and producer of the Spendiarov Opera Theater, who is responsible for the production of *Almast*.

The unusually vivid music of this—the first Armenian ballet on a Soviet theme—was composed by a young Armenian, Aram Khachaturyan. Taking folk-music as his starting point, he has created a genuine dance-symphony. From the very first sounds, the music captivates with its liveliness and expressiveness; it seems to waft us—now to the gardens of sunny Armenia, now to the rugged summits of the mountains on her borders, now to the vineyards of the collective farms. The plastic melodies and varied rhythms endow the music with its remarkable "danceability." Khachaturyan must have made an exhaustive study of folkdance music to have been able to combine in such a masterly fashion Armenian, Russian, Ukrainian and Georgian dance tunes in his ballet, while preserving at the same time his own peculiar style, the individual handwriting of a gifted artist.

VI

The success of the performances given during the festival was, naturally, due in a great measure to the performers, the most outstanding of whom, Aikanush Danielyan, bears the proud title of People's Artist of the U.S.S.R. In the part of the unhappy Anush, Danielyan's voice sounded so young and fresh that it made the audience forget the age of this great singer of the older generation. Aikanush Danielyan is extremely popular in Transcaucasia, and not only as a singer; she has shown unusual ability in training young vocalists. She has been elected Deputy to the Supreme Soviet of the Armenian S.S.R.

Leon Isetsky-Ionisyan is one of the most gifted of the Armenian singers. In his youth he was interested in social sciences and graduated from the University of Brussels in 1915. When Diaghilev's famous ballet company was touring Europe, Isetsky and his comrades invited the artists to an evening party. At this he sang several songs by the Armenian composer, Kara-Murza. The young amateur was a great success, and that evening proved a turning-point in his life. Isetsky entered the Brussels Conservatoire. A year later, on his return to Tiflis, (now Tbilisi) he continued his studies at the conservatoire there, and was shortly afterwards accepted in the Tiflis Opera. Here he created memorable portrayals of Boris Godunov, Mephistopheles, and others.

The young singer's gifts were, however, allowed full scope for development only after the Revolution. The Soviet Government showed how highly Isetsky's talent was appreciated, by sending him in 1926 to Milan for further training. He met with great success in Holland, where he went on a tour with an Italian opera company.

In 1933 Leon Isetsky took an active part in the organization of the Erivan Opera House. His unusual gifts as a vocalist and his great creative energy placed him in the front rank of Armenian opera. During the Festival his rendering of the part of Nadir-Shah in *Almast* won him enthusiastic applause.

The role of Saro in *Anush* was performed by Shara Talyan, who sang this part twenty-seven years ago at the first production of the opera in Alexandropol. One cannot but marvel at the youthful freshness and spontaneity this artist has managed to preserve in his rendering of this part and indeed in all his singing. His Bolshevik engine-driver, Grikor, in *Lusabatsin*, is a noble and memorable figure.

As early as 1912, when he was only a youth of nineteen, Shara Talyan contrived to produce *Anush* with a company of amateurs, in Alexandropol. He started his stage career as a member of the chorus, and soon became the leader. At one time he organized, together with Isetsky, Danielyan and Melik-Pashayev (the well-known conductor of the Bolshoi Theater in Moscow), the first Armenian opera company. The son of an *ashug* or bard, Shara Talyan has devoted a great deal of his energy to popularizing Armenian folksongs. The ensembles he directed have frequently toured the Soviet Union. Gramophone records of almost all his songs have been made and are widely known in Armenia. The active part he has always taken in social work led the people of Armenia to elect him, an Honored Artist of the Republic, as their Deputy to the Supreme Soviet of the Armenian S.S.R.

The singer who gave us such a brilliant rendering of the part of Almast is twenty-three. She bears the same name as the mountain peak in faraway Zangezur where she was born. Tatyevik Sazandaryan received her early training from the local bards, and the magnificent beauty of the mountain songs captivated her soul when she was still a small child.

She made her debut as a solist at the age of ten in the folk-chorus of the composer Demuryan, in Baku. On leaving school Tatyevik became a turner in a Moscow bicycle works. At the same time, she kept up her singing lessons in the studio attached to the Palace of Armenian Culture in Moscow. In 1937, when she graduated, she was accepted in the Erivan Opera House. Here she sang in a number of leading roles—Zibele in *Faust*, Olga in *Eugene Onegin*, and Gaiane, the confidante of Almast.

And now, seven years from the time when the workers of the Moscow bicycle factory first saw the young Armenian girl, Tatyevik, working at her lathe alongside them, they recognized her in the rich clothes of the Princess Almast, in the leading role of a wonderful opera, performed on the stage of the Bolshoi Theater. It is difficult to believe that a girl as young and retiring as Tatyevik could interpret with such profound understanding a character containing elements so conflicting and in such strong contrast to her own as that of the treacherous spouse of Prince Tatul. Yet her rendering of it was masterly, permitting one to state that she has the makings of a first-class actress.

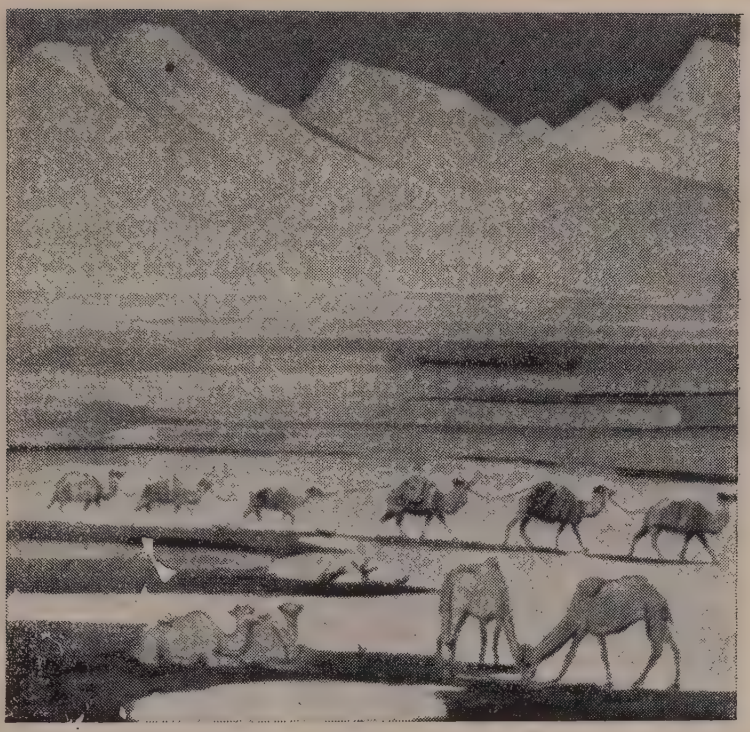
Interesting is also the career of Nikolai Serdobov, another young member of the Armenian opera collective. For a long time he worked as a hospital dresser and first-aid man, and simultaneously took part in amateur musical performances, choruses and the "Blue Blouse" groups. Subsequently he appeared in public in the opera theaters of the Ukraine and the Urals. When he arrived in Armenia in 1935, he did not know a word of the language. He must have put in some hard work on the study of the language, customs and manners of the country to have worked his way in so short a time to a place among the leading artists of the Armenian theater. He has sung in thirty-six different roles, and gave a stirring rendering of Mossa in *Anush* and Grikor in the second set of performers in *Lusabatsin*. His brilliant vocal performance was combined with excellent acting.

Among other talented performers belonging to the Armenian Theater of Opera and Ballet we must note Pavel Lisitsyan, who took the part of the brave Prince Tatul in *Almast*, Lydia Avetisyan, an effective understudy of the great Damelyan in the role of Almast; and L. Voinova-Shikanyan, the exquisite dancer who took the role of enchanting Karine in the ballet *Happiness*. There were many, many others—but space does not permit us to mention them all.

A great deal of credit for the success of the productions is due to the brilliant

Fishing on Lake Sevan *Painting by S. Arakelyan*

Caravan



Painting by Martiros Saryan, Peoples Artist of Armenia

colorful settings. The picturesque mountain landscape designed by Ananyan for *Anush*, the gloomy colors laid on with unsparing hand by Arutchan in the prison, and armored-train scenes in *Lusabatsin*; the sunlit vineyards of the collective farms of the Ararat Valley, painted by Alajalyan for the ballet *Happiness*—all contributed in a high degree to intensifying the impression created by the Armenian theater, and bore witness to the good taste of the Armenian artists and their ability to employ to the fullest advantage the scenic possibilities of very elaborate productions of widely-differing nature.

The first violin, however, in this orchestra of color, is unquestionably Martiros Saryan, People's Artist of the Armenian S.S.R., and one of the foremost painters in the Soviet Union. His originality and talent, together with the erudition of the architect, N. Tokarev, yielded remarkable results. The settings afforded us an opportunity of seeing exact models of the architecture of mediaeval Armenia, and the rich furnishings of the ancient buildings.

VII

The visual art of Armenia was represented at the festival not only by the artists responsible for the settings for the Spendiarov Theater, but also by the painters, black-and-white artists and sculptors. A special exhibition of Armenian art was opened in Moscow for the duration of the Festival. There were over six hundred exhibits, including masterpieces of miniature painting on ancient Armenian manuscripts, old frescoes and artistic metal work.

The section of painting and sculpture opens with the work of pre-revolutionary artists. There are a number of portraits from the brush of Akop Ovnatanyan (1809-81), known for his charming portraits of women.

Another interesting painter of the middle of the nineteenth century is Stefan Nersesyan, in whose work some have discovered an echo of the manner of Watteau. The influence of the French painters of the eighteenth century is still more noticeable in the pictures of Zakar Zakaryan, who died in 1921. He was sometimes called the "Armenian Chardin," on account of his style developed through the careful study of the work of Chardin.

Two artists, V. Surenyan and E. Tatevosyan, who recently died, both pupils of the great Russian painter Polenov, were well represented at the exhibition. Surenyan's work was often to be seen at the traveling exhibitions. They were elaborate compositions on tragic episodes from life in ancient Armenia. Tatevosyan, who began to exhibit at the end of the nineteenth century, labored unceasingly to perfect his original and striking style.

His best canvases are those painted in Soviet times; they include an excellent portrait of the popular Armenian poet Shirvan-Zade, a self-portrait, and a portrait of Akop Akopyan.

Prominent among the older generation of artists of Soviet Armenia were S. Agajanyan and P. Terlemezyan. The former studied in Paris at Julien's. One of the most arresting of the works executed on his return to his own country is his portrait of Joseph Vissarionovich Stalin. Terlemezyan is represented by some excellent landscapes of Soviet Armenia. His canvases are realistic, the color schemes extremely interesting, the figures delineated with great feeling.

An entire hall is dedicated to the work of Martiros Saryan, but even this is, naturally, by no means sufficient to allow one to form a complete idea of the joyous vivid creative work of this great artist. Saryan invariably paints in a major key; the minor key is foreign to his nature; the powerful color schemes of his canvases seem to have absorbed the southern sunlight, the blazing hues of semi-tropical Armenia. A picture by Saryan can be recognized at first glance, yet each succeeding work of his possesses a wonderful freshness and newness.

Every period of his work is represented, though not very extensively, at the exhibition—from the early still-life pieces to his Paris studies and Soviet landscapes, portraits and compositions. In recent years his paintings have been keyed still higher and are, if anything, more joyous than formerly. The best of his 1939 paintings is the portrait of Reuben Simonov, the well-known actor and one of the directors of the Vakhtangov Theater, Moscow. He acted as one of the art directors of the Festival.

A special hall is devoted to paintings depicting scenes from *David of Sasun*. The finest painters of Soviet Armenia have contributed to the commemoration of the thousandth anniversary: of their country's greatest folkepos. One of the most striking of these canvases in conception and composition is S. Galstyan's "David's Appeal to the Troops of Msra-Melik." Interesting, too, are A. Kojoyan's "The Battle With the Arabs," K. Simonyan's "The Slaying of Yussuf."

A large number of the exhibits in the black-and-white section are on the same subject. The fine illustrations of S. Rashmajyan, M. Abegyan and E. Kochar express the grandeur and pathos of the epic. There is something monumental, heroic, in these illustrations of Rashmajyan's. Abegyan's drawings are distinguished by a plastic quality. Strikingly original are the illustrations by Kochar; they give the impression of drawings from ancient basalt sculptures, cracked and worn with time, but they are not; they are simply executed in a style of the artist's own invention.

The sculptures which were represented at the exhibition are the work of the more prominent sculptors of Soviet Armenia. The portrait-busts exhibited by Sarkisyan, especially those portraying Melik-Pashayev and Tigranyan, show great skill and mastery of his medium. There is fine poetical feeling in S. Stepanyan's work; the youthful Tsovinar-Khanum, the mother of Sanasar and Bagdasar—the two first Sasun heroes—is a beautiful and lyrical piece of sculpture.

The Exhibition of Armenian Art, like the entire Festival, is convincing evidence of the creative power of the gifted people who in olden times gave the world some of the finest examples of literature, architecture and painting.

DMITRI KALM

Scene from the fifth act of the opera "Anush"

"The Great Citizen"

There are artists who in their creative work ever follow the line of greatest resistance. Easy victories do not allure such artists, and they do not create ephemeral works that appear one day and are forgotten the next. The path of such masters of art is a thorny one. Not all hold out to the end, but grateful memories cherished for many generations await those who do.

The Soviet film world knows many outstanding masters, and among them Friedrich Ermler holds a foremost and highly honored place. He belongs to the group of artists described above. In reviewing his latest work, the second part of the serial film, *The Great Citizen*, it is fitting to examine his career as a film director. The release of this film coincides with the fifteenth anniversary of Ermler's activity in motion picture work. Ermler attracted attention already in the days of the silent film with several exceptionally interesting productions in which his talent began to assert itself. *The Paris Shoemaker*, *Fragment of Empire* and later *Counter Plan* stand out as the works of a gifted director. For his films Ermler sought such themes as would allow for the most typical portrayal of cardinal features of the new life, features of Socialist society in the process of construction.

As a film director Ermler has always been noted for creative daring and for boldly raising problems. The attacks on Ermler's *Fragment of Empire* come to mind. What a noise certain ill-starred critics made about those scenes which showed a splendid factory dining room, a well-designed comfortable factory club, modern shower baths and so on. They accused Ermler of over-coloring reality, saying that such dining rooms and centers of culture as he pictured in the film were not to be found in real life. At that time, in 1927, these reproaches proved irrefutable. But some five years passed, and, to the humiliation of these woe-begone critics, dining rooms and clubs surpassing anything imagined by the creative intuition of an artist in 1927 were to be found not only at the giant plants erected during the years of the Stalinite Five-Year Plans but also at a large number of old renovated enterprises.

In art Ermler is not an empiricist. One might say that he is a "winged" master, often going ahead of events. By laying hold of what is basic, decisive and typical in life, he is able to discern the new in embryo. Ermler never separates the future from the present. He is, on the contrary, quite able to disclose how the future organically emerges from the present day. The characteristic traits of Ermler's talent are most completely evident in his latest work, the second part of the serial film *The Great Citizen*. Here is a picture of which there is every reason to declare it one of the most impressive and powerful documents of our day. Future generations shall turn ever and ever again to Ermler's film in their desire to understand the greatness of our struggle for the complete triumph of the idea of Socialism, the sharpness of the class struggle, as well as see portrayals of the epoch's great people.

Two fundamental points distinguish this film from others. It is generally accepted that the visual image is the chief element in cinema art, to which the spoken word is subordinate, as it were. Ermler boldly breaks with this tradition. Such a solution of the problem harbors not only victory. To fail to notice that Ermler has not as yet achieved the requisite harmony of word and visual image would be self-delusion. His most significant contribution, however, lies in having demonstrated and proved in his picture that cinema workers ought not to hesitate to throw the door wide open for literary dialogue in films. One cannot but observe incidentally that the big shortcoming in this solution, a shortcoming not easy to eliminate as yet, is that such films are least accessible to auditors and specta-

tors of other lands; because that picture in which the director creates his impressions chiefly by a poetic flow of words naturally loses in effect, when the actors' dialogue is conveyed by concise subtitles. This must not be overlooked. While making wide use of literary text in films, cinematographists must labor indefatigably to solve the problem of how to retain the international accessibility of their art.

The second outstanding feature of the film *The Great Citizen*, is that in aiming to recreate the image of one of our epoch's remarkable figures, Sergei Kirov, Ermler did not follow the usual line of staging a biographic film, which is a rather well-developed art. Ermler says that he conceived the idea of *The Great Citizen* on that tragic December 1, 1934, when a shot fired by one of the mercenary bandits of the contemptible band of Trotskyite-Bukharinite scoundrels put an end to the life of a person beloved by the Soviet people, the leader of the Leningrad working people, Sergei Kirov. The idea of the film arose as the artist's natural spontaneous reaction to this crime. Ermler resolved to engrave on the screen the image of the people's beloved leader who was killed by the enemies of the people.

When the first part of *The Great Citizen* appeared on the screen, many spectators were puzzled and said: "What a strange title! Who is this great citizen?" The first part of the serial gave no reply to this question. We saw there only what seemed like the early life story of a great hero. The events of the film took place in the memorable years of 1925-27 when under most difficult conditions the best people of the Communist Party led the work of building Socialism in our country, exposing and repelling the vicious attacks of the enemies of the working class. The central character of the film, Shakhov, grew to manhood and influence. From secretary of an urban district in a large industrial center he grew to be an important Party leader and statesman. On seeing the second part of *The Great Citizen*, people who knew Kirov personally, and such people are numbered in hundreds of thousands, never think of this film as one in which the name of Kirov is not even mentioned. The showing has hardly begun before one is conscious of the familiar and beloved image of Kirov, near to the heart of the

Unforgettable scene depicting Shakhov (played by N. Bogolyubov) on the outskirts of the woods, talking to the woodman (artist Zhukosvsky) who accompanies him on his hunting trip

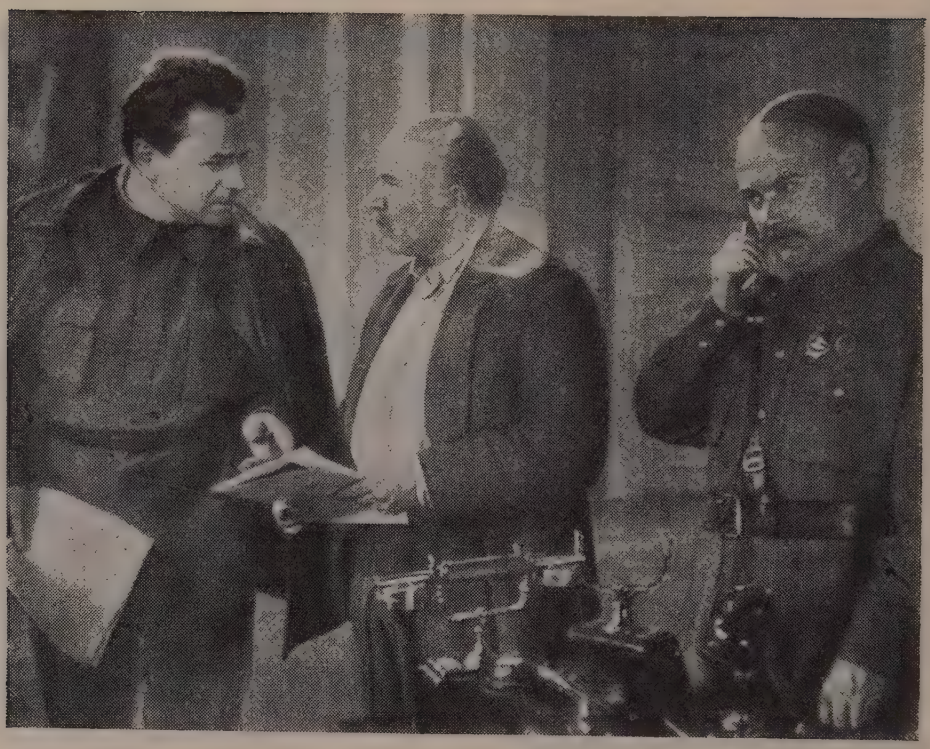
Shakhov and Kolesnikov (played by Semyonov) chief of the construction of the great canal, admiring the grand panorama of the majestic construction.

Soviet people. The image of Shakhov blends with Kirov's image, and when in the finale, the director shows the assassin lying in ambush, every one has an irrepressible desire to shout warning and to prevent the crime.

The authors of the film—Ermler, Bolshentsev and Bleiman—by not using the biographic method, were able to create a broad canvas on which they convincingly depicted those traits most typical for a hero of our time. This hero is not Shakhov alone. The authors emphasize constantly that Shakhov is a man of the people, promoted by the people to leadership, and retaining the closest daily contact with the people. In the film we see Shakhov during the most varied moments of his life. He is a man of action, full of tireless energy, inspired by a high purpose. However, while engaged in working toward that society of which mankind's best representatives have dreamed for centuries, he is not one to disregard the everyday needs and demands of the people who together with him and under his guidance are advancing to realize this new society.

The purposefulness of the hero is consistent and in harmony with another distinguishing trait, his high sense of optimism. For this optimism, simplicity, firm will, unbending character and the humanness of everything about him, the people loved him as only the people can love. This love of the people was a mighty support and a reliable shield to Shakhov. The campfire scene on the edge of the forest, when during a brief rest Shakhov converses with the woodman who went out hunting with him, is unforgettable. The latter confesses that he was to have killed Shakhov but was powerless to raise his hand. The vital truth of these words is driven home to the spectator, and he understands that only the vilest renegade could raise his hand against a Bolshevik so sincere and a man so pure as was Shakhov, as was Kirov.

Every deed of Shakhov, every word was natural and straightforward. His was a simplicity and naturalness such as is inherent to persons of high principles, persons whose ear is most sensitive to the least suggestion of sham in the behavior of other people, of those



Shakov talking to the old Bolshevik, Katz (played by Altus). At the telephone, the head of the local department of the Home Office, Vershinin (artist Kuznetsov) who arranged the unmasking and arrest of the provocateur and spy Zemtsov, the traitor Kartashev and other enemies of the Soviet power

who are near as well as those who are remote acquaintances. For this reason the scene rings true when Shakhov alters his attitude to Zemtsov, the second secretary of the regional Party committee, his closest assistant. In the words of Zemtsov, Shakhov noted something false, enough to arouse his suspicions. As a result, Zemtsov, an old tsarist provacateur, was exposed.

For spectators abroad the second part of *The Great Citizen* has exceptional interest. As none other, this film demonstrates vividly the methods of insidious and subversive work employed by the enemies of Socialism, of the working class and of the Party in their attempts to disrupt the building of Socialism in our country. Very convincingly the film shows the path trodden by these enemies of the people, from the first steps directed against the general Party line until they became direct weapons in the hands of foreign intelligence services and espionage network. Among the most memorable scenes in the film is the one in which a chauffeur, an agent of a foreign intelligence service, approaches Zemtsov and tries to recruit him, not knowing that Zemtsov has himself long been engaged in espionage. In the second part of the serial we again meet Kartashev and Borovsky, who in the first part get their start on careers of treason and betrayal. The characters of these traitors become evident in the second part. The masterful acting of the actors who appear in these roles complements the creative design of the scenario writers. Kartashev and Borovsky are despicable dwarfs whose malicious vanity and venemous hatred are made use of by enemies of the U.S.S.R. in order to cause the greatest damage possible to our country.

The showing of certain episodes by indirection is done with great artistic skill. We do not see the explosion which Kartashev and Borovsky set off on the canal construction, an explosion in which many people lose their lives. Nor do we see the scene in which Shakhov was assassinated. But these omissions do not weaken either the impression created by the film of the holy hatred one feels against the enemies of our people,

the enemies of mankind's future.

Shakhov was killed but the ideas that inspired him remained alive. Hundreds and thousands of people came to bid farewell to his ashes and to vow loyalty to the great ideas, the great cause of Lenin and Stalin. The film portrays the exposure and arrest of Kartashev, Borovsky and many other enemies. But in the crowd of grief-stricken people who come to pay their last respects to the foully murdered leader we see also one of the spies who is still at large and unexposed. With this the authors wish to say that although the enemy suffered a crushing defeat, the people must not grow lax in vigilance since the capitalist encirclement of our country continues.

In their article *How the Film Was Made*, printed in the *Pravda*, the authors tell in detail how much they are obliged to the works of Comrade Stalin, a careful study of which enabled them to produce a historically true and artistically valuable film. In this connection it must be emphasized that the work of Ermler is not a kind of artistic illustration to theoretical principles or political slogans. By no means. That would be a relatively easy matter, such as Ermler would have nothing to do with as an artist. The people in the film are very true to life, and their truth lies in their being theoretically and philosophically conceived in the light of the great teachings of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin. The success of *The Great Citizen* is a graphic illustration of the exceptional role for the artist of the mastery of Marxism-Leninism.

Ermler worked four years on *The Great Citizen*, years of great persistent work by an exacting artist. He ought to be satisfied with the results achieved. A splendid film has been created, a film about the days of our stern and glorious struggle for the happiness of all mankind. An excellent and stirring memorial has been erected to one of the great persons who head the columns storming the last abutments of the old world.

On leaving the theater after seeing this film, every spectator retains in his mind the remarkable words by which the authors of the film characterize the features of this hero of our days of struggle for Socialism. The words are spoken by an old Bolshevik over the bier of the murdered Shakhov.

"Piotr Mikhailovich Shakhov is dead. He was the same as we all are, only a trifle higher. He had eyes that were the same as ours, only a bit more keen-sighted. He thought about what we think of, only much more deeply.

"Of some it is said, a great thinker has died; or it is said, a great artist has died. But he, he was a citizen, just as we are, only bigger. He was a great citizen. He had great faith, great love and great hatred, and this he has bequeathed to us—great hatred toward our enemies, great faith in our victory and great love for the people, for the Party, for Stalin."

TIMOFEI ROKOTOV

Zoya Fedorova as Nadya Kolesnikova, one of the most important personages of the film, who owing to her energy, knowledge, ability to organize the masses and to make the most of technique becomes director of the most important industrial enterprise

CORRESPONDENCE

Celebration of the Shakespearean Anniversary

I have been reading over again in the Shakespearean anniversary number of *International Literature* and the *Ten Days of Moscow Theater* magazine articles presenting and analysing the remarkable growth of Soviet interest in the great, or more truly, the greatest poet of the Middle Ages. And my wonder grows when I recall that the extraordinary attention now being given by the Soviet Union to Shakespeare's work, to its study, presentation and interpretation, is but little more than twenty years old. It dates from the Revolution, in fact. It is true that before the war Germany gave so much attention to Shakespearean plays and England so little that it was said Shakespeare was born in Germany. But today the case is altered and it may be said truly that Soviet Russia might reasonably claim that Shakespeare was born in Russia. He is no longer the great romantic figure who was born in England and entertained the masses of his time with patriotic plays illustrating the social changes and wars. He is the cultural spirit of Soviet citizenship born three centuries in advance of the greatest social revolution the world has known. In a short twenty years Shakespeare has proved his right to be considered a Soviet citizen rendering the highest Soviet service as an educational-cultural force in historical interpretation, in poetry, in the drama, in histrionics and in dramaturgy. In these and other ways, he has united the many and varied peoples of the vast Soviet Union in the collective drive for cultural-educational power.

It may be truly said that Shakespeare's theatrical and cultural leadership has never been so fully developed and manifested in any country as in Soviet Russia since the Revolution. To the old Shakespearean tradition he has added the new Soviet Socialist tradition. For centuries the interpreters of Shakespeare's plays in the theatrical countries of the world have been concerned with five traditional Shakespearean features.

1. His creation of character.
2. His dramaturgical power and skill.
3. The beauty of his poetical language.
4. His philosophical thought and idea as constantly quoted.
5. His staging, originally designed to give full play to his speech, but gradually changed by producers with formalist aims.

To these old features, especially dramaturgy, histrionics and production, it has been reserved to the Soviet Union to add features peculiarly its own.

1. Marxian interpretation of history. Large fragments of real history with revolutionary and evolutionary values contained in Shakespeare's content. Such as the analysis of the class struggle and changes of Shakespeare's time. An analysis of the transition from State and Feudalism to State and Property (or small capitalism). Features having the flavor of actuality and the stimulus of a call to action.

2. Shakespeare for the masses. That is, the right Shakespeare for the masses. In Shakespeare's day there was a wrong Shakespeare for the masses. The nobles sat on the stage and the masses sat in the pit. Since then Shakespeare has been mainly a playboy for the rich. The Soviet Union has replaced the isolation idea with another—the collective Shakespeare for *all* within the Soviet Union. Shakespeare as the national product of Socialist mass cultural striving.

3. This means that Shakespeare has been used to confer on the Soviet people great signal advantages in the field of cultural education. Thus Shakespeare's plays have participated in the unprecedented rise of a new intelligentsia, of a community of intelligent-minded human beings who appreciate everything that is good in science, in history, in art, and in literature, and exhibit a taste and judgment that is miraculous when compared with the illiterate state of mind of the masses in 1917. All this and more is clearly shown or suggested by the two issues of the celebration magazines, *International Lite-*

rature and *Ten Days of Moscow Theater*, which are but a tiny atom of the entire manifestation of literary and other positive appreciation on his three hundred and seventy-fifth birthday.

In view of the immensity and universalism of this manifestation, I think that the very admirable and comprehensive article, *A Contemporary of Eternity*, should be called "Shakespeare's Conquest of the U.S.S.R." and Turgenev's Speech About Shakespeare, which follows, might be called "Shakespeare's Conquest of the World," that being, I imagine, the idea in Turgenev's mind. This apart, all that is said in these two articles and a third by Sergei Radlov, shows that the Soviet Union has an extraordinary faith in the cultural merit and power of Shakespeare's plays, that culturally Shakespeare belongs to the Soviet citizens and they follow his dramatised ideas and principles. The article *A Contemporary of Eternity* provides an admirable summary of the kind of Shakespeare the vast Soviet community has got, and a survey of the many fine things which make him supreme in the U.S.S.R. The illustrations and evidence of his inspiration and influence form pictures of Shakespearean interests that have no comparison in countries outside the Soviet Union. There is for instance the particular picture of this year's festival held in seven hundred and ninety theaters, performances in many, speeches in those where no performance was given. Surely an unequaled tribute to the memory and merit of a great dramatic poet that deserves immortal record. Then there are the particular special performances in Moscow, the big special conference of producers, the exhibition, and so on. The interpretations by leading players and producers in the old and new traditions shows how successfully Shakespeare serves to bring new men and women of the theater face to face with problems and concrete experiences from which they learn something from the Shakespearean vision of humanism and life.

Then the general picture reveals much that is extraordinary. We see the workers, peasants and soldiers deriving theatrical interest and vitality from Shakespearean performances. And we see the small nationalities handing out Shakespeare's humanism and wisdom in their own languages. Ivan Turgenev's speech is a brilliant example of the effect of Shakespeare on a great writer. It is a paeon of praise to Shakespeare of the mid-eighteenth century, at which time he was, as Turgenev tells us, the poet-conquerer of the world. Perhaps literally this was not the case. Turgenev may have meant that Shakespeare was performed in theatrical cities of importance, but Shakespeare had not conquered the world in the sense that he has conquered Soviet Russia. He had made a deep impression on Germany and was exciting the attention of scholars, and poets like Goethe, and men of the theater. But he was far from being Shakespeare for the masses. His position in England was very bad owing to the nearly two hundred years war in the theater between the majors and minors. From 1660 to 1843 the English theater was enslaved by a monopoly granted by Charles II which conferred on two theaters, Drury Lane and Covent Garden, the sole right of playing Shakespeare and Otway. The result was a fierce struggle for nearly two hundred years between the two patentees and numerous independants, the possessed and dispossessed, for possession of Shakespeare and Shakespearean actors. Among the latter was Garrick who revolutionized the histrionic method. There was much competition by the conflicting parties for his services. Theatrical conditions got so bad towards the end of the struggle that leading Shakespearean players either fled or were banished abroad. Shakespeare's plays were mutilated and altered, *Macbeth* was changed to a ballet of action with music. The monopoly ended in 1843, but Turgenev does not refer to it.

Sergei Radlov's article is an excellent example of the effect of Shakespeare and his dramaturgy on the mind of the Soviet producer who is also a teacher of dramatic technique. He gives the impression that quite unexpected interpretations of Shakespearean plays may be expected from the producer who takes the trouble to find out what Shakespeare knew and meant. If he succeeds in doing so he arrives at an ideal result as foreign visitors who have seen Radlov's productions must agree.

Much more could be said on April manifestations of the wide interest in and attention to Shakespeare's personality and plays. There is the research, the literature for the masses, the translations and many other sources of comment and interpretation to be considered. But what I have said will be enough I think to show that I am convinced that the Shakespearean demonstrations, performances and accounts in the U.S.S.R. prove that Shakespeare has come to serve and be served by the entire peoples of the Soviet Union. He is in truth Shakespeare for the workers.

HUNTLEY CARTER

[1] No. 6, 1939

NEWS AND VIEWS

U. S. S. R.

NEW MARX AND LENIN DOCUMENTS

Last year the Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute put out several hitherto unpublished writings of Marx, Engels and Lenin. Among them are Marx's *Chronological Notes* (Volumes V and VI of the Marx and Engels Archive Series), containing a review of the history of the world from the Roman Empire to the end of the fifteenth century and letters by Engels relating to the *Criticism of the Gotha Program*, written by Marx in 1875.

The Institute has also published letters by Lenin to Inessa Armand (they appear in this issue of our magazine) and his notebooks on imperialism. A large volume contains the notebooks in which Lenin jotted down the notes and quotations while working on his book *Imperialism the Highest Stage of Capitalism.*

Academician M. Mitin, Director of the Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute, informs the *Izvestia* that the Institute is preparing to publish further works of Marx, Engels and Lenin. Among them is a Marx manuscript relating to the years 1857-58 which is of great theoretical importance. It is rather a voluminous essay on the principles of political economy which Marx wrote, as he says himself, to clear up the problems for himself.

New notebooks on the *Chronological Notes* by Marx are being made ready for press. These are notes on the history of the Reformation, the Religious War, and the Thirty Years' War up to the Peace of Westphalia. They include chronological notes on Russia up to the beginning of the seventeenth century. The Institute is also preparing to publish the minutes of the General Council of the First International.

Of great importance also are some notes by Marx prepared for press relating to the Peasant Reform of 1861 in Russia. These notes were extracted from several Russian books read by Marx, among them Chernyshevsky's *Unaddressed Letters.*

The Institute will also publish a new collection of Lenin's writings dedicated to the fortieth anniversary of Lenin's important scientific work, *The Development of Capitalism in Russia.* This volume will afford an interesting illustration of Lenin's research methods and show what an enormous amount of work Lenin did in preparing this work, which has provided the scientific foundation for the program, strategy and tactics of the revolutionary struggle in Russia.

THE LENIN MUSEUM

The Lenin Museum, Moscow, has acquired several new Lenin manuscripts, documents, photographs and works of art. Hall 7, which deals with the period from the outbreak of the war in 1914 to the February Revolution, has received twenty-eight new documents, of which twenty-three are Lenin manuscripts, among them writings on the national problem and the State; plans of lectures on "Imperialism and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination"; a number of manuscripts relating to Lenin's struggle with Bukharin during the imperialist war on the subject of the State and a plan for an article "On the Role of the State."

In Halls 8 and 9, dealing with the period from April 1917 to April 1918, are exhibited the manuscript of Lenin's *Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Government* written in March 1918, and in Halls 11 to 14, embracing the period from December 1918 to December 1920, telegrams from Lenin to the Revolutionary Military Council of the eastern front, instructions for regimental commissars at the front drawn up under Stalin's direction in August 1919, and other documents. Twenty new documents are exhibited in Hall 15, including the manuscript of Lenin's notes on the provisioning of Moscow and Petrograd in February 1921, and Lenin's article *The Meaning of Militant Materialism*, written in March 1922.

Other new materials relate to Lenin's activities in the sphere of science, culture and technology, and his struggle against bureaucracy and bribery. Among the new paintings are "Lenin Speaking at a Factory Meeting," by Radimov, and "Lenin At the Testing of the First Soviet Electric Plow, at Timiryazev Agricultural Academy on Sept. 22, 1921" by Finogenov.

REMINISCENCES OF MARX

The *Molodaya Gvardia* Publishing House is bringing out a book of reminiscences of Karl Marx, the founder of Communism, by his contemporaries. The book is mainly intended for the youth. It consists of three parts: the first contains recollections by Paul Lafargue, Wilhelm Liebknecht, Eleonora Marx, August Bebel and others; the second, recollections by people entirely alien to Marx and Marxism, such as Kovalevsky, the Russian historian and jurist, the Russian Annenkov, the German democrat Karl Schurtz (later bourgeois politician in America), and the Spanish anarchist Anselmo Lorenzo. The third part consists of articles, notes, letters and speeches by Friedrich Engels relating to 1883, the year of Marx's death.

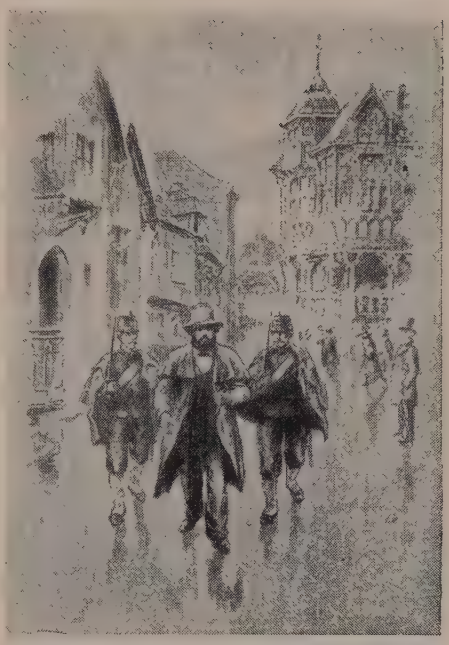
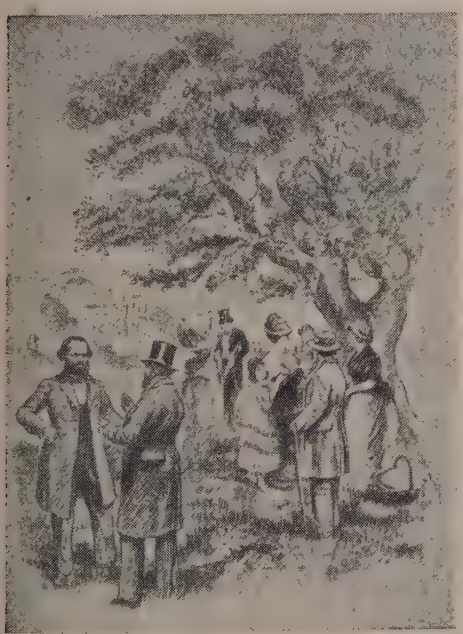


Illustration from the book "Reminiscences of Marx" ("Molodaya Gvardia" Publishing House). Arrest in Brussels, 1847

PUSHKIN AND JOHN WILSON

The Pushkin Museum, Moscow, has acquired the manuscript of Pushkin's *Feast During the Plague*, which was considered lost. Writing in the *Literaturnaya Gazeta* a group of Pushkin experts state that "this manuscript is important not merely because it is a new addition to the original Pushkin autographs, although already known in printed form, but even more so because it bears fairly considerable traces of the poet's creative methods. . . . Of greatest interest are the numerous, initial variants contained in the manuscript, which Pushkin struck out and altered in the process of working out the final text.



A stroll in the suburbs of London. (Marx, Wilhelm Liebknecht, Jenny Marx with Eleonora, Laura and Lassalle and the maid in Marx's house, Lenchen) 1856

"As we know, the *Feast During the Plague* is a translation of one of the scenes of the long three-act dramatic poem by the English poet John Wilson—*The City of the Plague*. The greater part of the translation follows the original fairly closely (in some places almost line for line)—but it has been done by *Pushkin*. Pushkin selects from Wilson's rather long, drawn-out play only one episode of the plot. But it has been so chosen and presented as to constitute the psychological culmination of the play. In the *Feast*, Wilson's text is reminted and repolished in Pushkin's inimitable style, mainly with an end to greater laconicity. In two key passages—Mary's song and the famous chant by the president at the *Feast*—Pushkin deviates so much from the original that they may be rightly considered his own creations. As a result, the *Feast* is a unique poetic production. While outwardly following the English text in almost every detail (except for the Song

and the Chant), Pushkin converts this fragment from Wilson's in no way remarkable work into one of the most remarkable creations of world literature. . . .

"The discovery of the original manuscript of the *Feast During the Plague* is a subject for congratulation. After Pushkin's death his manuscripts fell into various private hands and underwent all sorts of vicissitudes. Many were scattered among different cities and countries; a large number were lost altogether. Then began the slow and often difficult work of retrieving the various manuscripts for the State, a work that has gained momentum ever since the October Revolution and may now be considered as practically completed. . . ."

SEVEN LETTERS BY ANTON CHEKHOV

Among the many Chekhov manuscripts found in the Central Archives are seven hitherto unpublished letters of the years 1897 and 1898, including letters to Suvorin, the publisher, and to the Serpukhov Census Commission, in which Chekhov was active.

Of considerable interest is also a manuscript by the writer's father, P. E. Chekhov, entitled "The Life of P. Ch." There he tells in chronological order of the most important events in the Chekhov family, an account of the writer's birth, of his trips abroad and to Sakhalin and of the several schools which he built at his own expense in Melikhovo, near Moscow, where he lived, etc.

The writer's unknown autographs and the manuscript "The life of P. Ch." will be published in the magazine *Red Archive*.

UNPUBLISHED ARTICLES BY M. GORKY

The State Literary Publishing House is preparing a collection of Gorky articles which were not included in his complete works or in other collections of his articles. They have been collected from various magazines and newspapers of the pre-revolutionary and Soviet period, and are of great interest. They deal with almost every branch of literature: literary theory, folklore, Russian classical literature of the nineteenth century, twentieth century literature, Soviet literature and the literature of practically every country and period. They further represent nearly every form of literature—prose, poetry, drama, short story, journalism and criticism.

The Oriental Department of the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R. is preparing for the press a collection of articles on "Gorky and the Literature of the Soviet and Foreign East."

The Gorky Museum has acquired several valuable exhibits. Over forty photographs and portraits have been received from the United States relating to Gorky's visit to America. Several rare photographs of the years 1898 and 1899 have been presented to the Museum by the widow of the actor Tikhomirov of the Moscow Art Theater; A. Gerasimov has donated a sketch of his painting "Stalin and Gorky in the Village of Gorki," which was exhibited in the Soviet Pavilion at the New York World's Fair.

ALEXANDER BLOK'S LITERARY REMAINS

The commission appointed by the Leningrad Writers' Union to take over Alexander Blok's literary remains (after the death of the poet's wife) has completed its work. Many manuscripts and material of considerable value to literary history have been found. The rough and clean manuscripts of almost every one of Blok's writings have been preserved, among them ten notebooks in which he entered his poems year after year.

Of special interest are several numbers of the *Vestnik*, a hand-written magazine issued by the poet in his boyhood, hitherto unpublished.

MARIA KRASNOZHENOVA, FOLKLORIST

Maria Krasnozhenova has spent half a century collecting Siberian folklore.

"It cost me much effort," she says, "to win the confidence of the old men and women and have them describe to me the old marriage and christening ceremonies and the songs they used to sing."

In the course of fifty years Maria Krasnozhenova has collected over two hundred tales, several legends, and thousands of songs, riddles, proverbs, sayings and jokes. Much of it has already been published. Another book, *Folk Tales of the Krasnoyarsk Region*, was published in 1937. Maria Krasnozhenova is sixty-eight years old and she is now engaged in preparing this enormous material for publication.

NEW BOOKS ON ARMENIAN ART

The *Iskusstvo* Publishing House has brought out several books on Armenian art, among them A. Svirin's *Miniatures of Ancient Armenia, Essays in the History of Armenian Art*, and a collection of his articles on Armenian mural decoration, ancient sculpture, painting, the fine arts and sculpture in pre-revolutionary and Soviet Armenia. This house has also published four books on the Armenian theater and a volume on the Spendiarov State Opera and Ballet.

IN THE NATIONAL REPUBLICS

FIRST BYELORUSSIAN PICTURE GALLERY

The First Byelorussian State Picture Gallery has been opened in Minsk, the capital of Soviet Byelorussia. In its twenty-three large halls specimens of painting, sculpture and the fine arts are exhibited, among them paintings by the best Russian masters—Repin, Surikov and Kramskoy, sculptures by Rastrelli, Antokolsky and the modern sculptor Manizer. The Moscow and Leningrad museums have donated paintings of the Flemish, Dutch, Italian and other schools from their reserve. The Hermitage and the Pushkin Museum have donated engravings by some of the best European masters (Dührer and others) and by Soviet artists.

Big space is given in the Minsk Gallery to the work of Byelorussian artists—Pan, Gruger, Volkov, Zaitsev, Pashkevich and others. It is expected that the gallery's collection of paintings will shortly be replenished from the mansions of Western Byelorussia.

ADEGEI FOLK SONGS

About five hundred folk songs and melodies have been collected in the mountain villages of the Adegei Autonomous Region. The *ashugi*, or bards of the Adegei and Cherkess highlanders demonstrated to the collectors folk songs and tales in the most varied styles. Shaban Kubov, an Adegei writer who has memorized some three hundred folk melodies, Teuchezh Tsug, the celebrated eighty-five year old *ashug*, Djamirze Ibrahim, story teller of the *aul* of Asipsip, Pago Khazhunok, accordion player of Hatashukei and many others helped the collectors to gather the ancient songs of the national heroes and modern melodies. The legend of the folk champion Khmyshok Patareze has already been written down as has also *The Free Peasant*, a long work-poem

Rappoport, a young sculptor of Belostok recently completed this monumental figure of a Red Army man

relating back to the period prior to the subjugation of the Caucasus by the tsarist government, and many heroic, lyrical and satirical songs.

THE LITERATURE OF SOVIET MOLDAVIA

Moldavia had no literature before the Revolution. The people were ruthlessly exploited by the tsarist authorities and illiteracy was almost universal. The Moldavian masses voiced their protest against the oppressors of their country in songs, laden with sadness. Their ideal of social justice was expressed in Haiduk songs. These songs celebrated the popular heroes who championed the people against the rich and the exploiters.

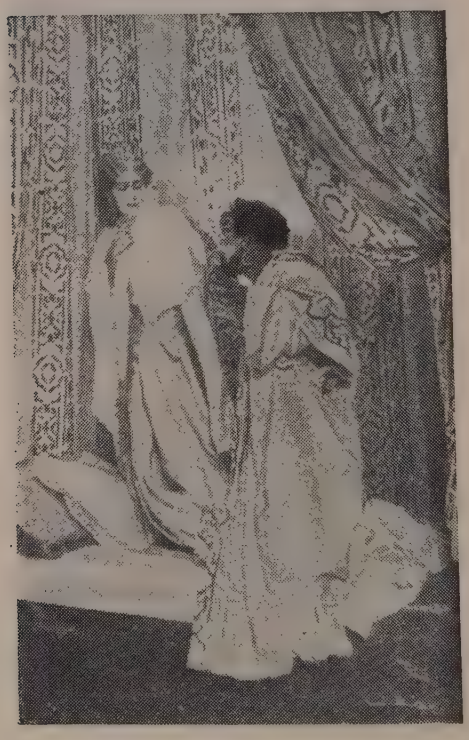
The birth of Moldavian literature coincides with the formation of the Moldavian Autonomous Soviet Republic, fifteen years ago. A Moldavian newspaper, the

Plugarul Rosh (*The Red Plowman*), was founded, and began to foster literary talent in the young republic. The literary page of that newspaper was soon found inadequate and was replaced by the magazine *Moldova Literare*. Another magazine, *Oktyabr*, the organ of the Union of Soviet Writers of Moldavia, has been published since 1932.

The young Moldavian literature has grown out of the ancient folklore of the nation and is being steadily developed and enriched under the ideological and artistic influence of Russian and Ukrainian literature.

N. Tsurkan, a young poet in his twenties, the author of several powerful poems, enjoys great popularity. His style is rich in imagery. Another favorite is the poet M. Polubok who has written many songs for the Moldavian national theater and choir. These songs are also popular among collective farm choirs.

One of Moldavia's outstanding poets is L. Kornfeld, who has published six volumes of poetry. For the directness and purity of the style his verse has close affinities with folklore.



Shakespeare's "Othello" at the Lakhuti Tadjik State Theater at Stalinabad. Artist M. Kasymov in the role of Othello and S. Tuibayeva in the role of Desdemona

Two prominent among the prose writers are I. Kanna and I. Chaban. Kanna's stories are airy, simple and exciting, dealing with episodes of the Civil War, and the creation of the new man and the new life. Chaban's writings are full of a mellow humor. He writes mostly on collective farm themes and children.

In recent years, the lyrical poems of Pushkin and Lermontov, and writings of Gorky and Shevchenko, Swift, Maupassant and Defoe have been translated into the Moldavian language.

NENETS LITERATURE

The entire European Arctic region, from Archangel to the Northern Urals, is inhabited by the Nentsi, a small nationality of some 15,000 people in all. The Nentsi have no national songs and dances. On the other hand, they have created a remarkable folklore full of profound poetic feeling. The best specimens are the long epic tales characteristic of many of the northern peoples.

In past years a group of talented young writers (the poets Georgi Suftin, Maria Feierovich, and Igor Dobrotvorsky and the prose writers V. Yershov, A Kuznetsov and others) centered round the Nenets *Naryana Vynder* (*The Red Tundra Dweller*), which did a lot to foster literary talent among the Nentsi themselves; and today the names of the Nenets poets, Sobolev and Chuirov, and the Nenets prose writers Vonguev, Taleyev and others are known far beyond the confines of the tundra.

IN THE LIBERATED LANDS

A group of Soviet Byelorussian composers, including Aladov, Shcheglov and Polonsky, have left for Western districts of Byelorussia to help draw up plans for the development of music among the population of the liberated regions. It is proposed to open several musical schools with classes in singing, the violin, 'cello, viola, wind instruments and folk instruments. A traveling musical troupe will be formed to visit the villages. Branches of Soviet orchestras and Soviet variety concert parties will be formed in the large centers, in which the services of Byelorussian folk talent will be enlisted.

The Department of Culture of the provisional city government of Baranovichi has made the necessary grants for the reconstruction of the local theater, which was in a state of bad neglect. Under the Poles this theater had a troupe of only five actors. The troupe is being

At a concert given by the children of one of the first nurseries in Belostok

greatly enlarged. A circus troupe has also been formed which, until premises are available, gives its performances in the cinemas after the showing of the films.

A regional Ukrainian theater with a troupe of seventy-four actors has been formed in Tarnopol. Professor Krikh, the well-known Western Ukrainian musician, has been invited as musical director. Polish, Ukrainian and Jewish theaters have opened in Lvov. On the twenty-second anniversary of the Great October Revolution the Ukrainian theater played *Platon Krechet*, by the Soviet Ukrainian playwright, A. Korneichuk; *Truth*, by the same author, was given at the Polish theater. The Jewish theater, which had been closed by the Polish authorities, has resumed its performances with great ceremony. It has been named after Sholom Aleichem.

The Leningrad Marionette and Puppet Theater is now touring Western districts of the Ukraine and Western districts of Byelorussia.

A Polish theatrical group under the direction of the Polish motion picture actress, Nora Nay, has been formed in Belostok, where there has never been a Polish theater before. A Jewish theater has also been opened in that city, the provisional city government assigning the old Palace Theater for its use and granting 400,000 rubles for reconstruction purposes.

The provisional government of Belostok has started art workshops employing seventy painters, sculptors and stage decorators, many of whom are talented artists who have studied in Paris and Berlin and have exhibited in New York, Venice and Paris.

A Child Art Center has been opened in Lvov, in the former mansion of Count Glukhovski. The services of Western Ukrainian writers, poets, artists and teachers have been invited to direct the music studios, dramatic circles, workshops and studios.

KAMERNY THEATER IN THE FAR EAST

The company of the Moscow Kamerny Theater, headed by A. Tairov, People's Actor of the R.S.F.S.R., is at present in the Far East, performing for the units of the First and Second Special Armies, the Pacific Fleet and the Transbaikal Military Area. They are giving plays by Gorky, Vishnevsky, Scribe, O'Neil and others.

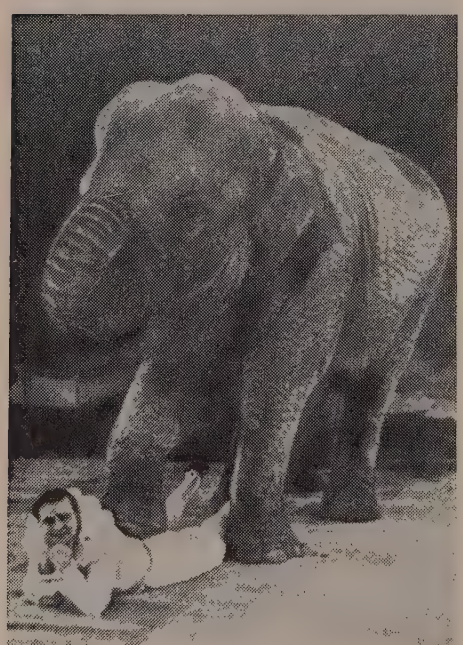
The company has formed separate groups to serve not only the big Far Eastern centers like Khabarovsk, Vladivostok and Voroshilov, but also remote frontier posts and isolated vessels of the navy. In addition to performing, the actors give advice and assistance to the amateur dramatic companies of the army and navy.

Tairov, director of the Kamerny Theater, says: "We believe that this direct contact with the life of the heroic protectors of the Soviet frontiers, this direct acquaintance with the gallant men, commanders and political workers of the Red forces, will enrich the creative abilities of the theater and help us to do justice to the great Stalin era on the stage."

While in the Far East, the Kamerny company is working on some new additions to its repertoire, among them Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, adapted by Alice Koonen, People's Actress of the R.S.F.S.R., Mayakovsky's *The Bug*, with a prologue and intermezzos in verse by N. Aseyev and O. Brick, Molière's *L'Avare*, Lermontov's *Masquerade*, and others.

THE BALTIC FLEET THEATER COMPANY

The performances of the Baltic Fleet Theater Company are very popular among the sailors of the fleet and the coastal forts. This company evolved from amateur dramatic circles which once existed in the fleet. Today it stages Russian classics and Soviet plays. The majority of the actors received their training in amateur dramatic circles, and some had been through regular theatrical schools before being called up to the navy. The actors are sailors and follow the regular life of a sailor on board. They go through their physical drill in the morning with the rest; then come the rehearsals. They have special workshops on board where the wigs and scenery are made for new plays.



The famous tamer V. Durov and his elephant Max

Days on which there are no performances are devoted to lectures on the Soviet theater, discussion of new Soviet plays, and an analysis of the work of members of the company. The company is always ready for a performance and is prepared at a moment's notice to visit warships and distant forts.

Last year the company gave three hundred and seventeen performances and concerts.

THEATER MUSEUM IN KIEV

A new Theater Museum has been opened in Kiev. It contains interesting exhibits relating to the ancient types of folk theater in the Ukraine and to the performances of the folk plays *The Throne*, *Tsar Maximilian* and others. Recently it was found that some old people in the village of Golovkovka had taken part in *The Throne* and with their help the play was recorded, the costumes restored and the method of acting studied.

The Museum contains some rare material on the Ukrainian theater of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and on the first performances in the Ukraine by the famous Russian actors Mochalov and Shchepkin. There are a large number of exhibits in the "Taras Shevchenko" section. This section shows the history of the performances of this great Ukrainian writer's plays, his views on the theater and his close friendship with the actor Shchepkin. There is considerable material relating to the work of the old Ukrainian theaters—the Kropivnitski, Sadovskoi and Saksaganskoi—and to the famous Ukrainian actresses Zankovetskaya, Zatyrkevich-Karpinskaya, Linitskaya and others. Of great interest are the unpublished letters of M. Kropivnitski, the founder of the Ukrainian theater, relating to the period of 1889-1909. They tell of the difficulties of the Ukrainian theater under tsarism.

Four large halls are devoted to the Ukrainian theater in Soviet times. Drawings, models, sketches and photographs illustrate the development of the Ukrainian, Russian and Jewish theaters in the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic.

Lola Hodjayeva, one of the most popular young performers of the Soviet circus

THE SOVIET CIRCUS

The twentieth anniversary of the Soviet circus was celebrated in Moscow on October 30 last year. There were thirty circuses in Russia before the Revolution, mostly belonging to foreigners. The performers were also foreigners as a rule. Russian artists had difficulties in making their way, and they too usually adopted foreign names.

Following the decree of August 26, 1919, signed by Lenin, nationalizing the theaters and other places of spectacular entertainment, the circus buildings in Moscow, Tula and Nizhni-Novgorod were confiscated. This marked the beginning of the present system of Soviet State circuses.

Today there are in the Soviet Union sixty-nine stationary circuses, fourteen traveling circuses, ten collective farm circuses and twenty circus troupes. Last year they gave some 22,000 performances, attended by over 20,000,000 people.

Writing in connection with the anniversary of the Soviet circus the newspaper *Izvestia* says:

"The circus in our country enjoys great popularity. Strength, agility, beauty and vivacity—those inalienable ingredients of a circus performance—are always highly appreciated by our audiences, and the skill of their favorite Soviet artists is keenly applauded. We need only mention Vladimir Durov and Boris Eder, animal trainers; Volgin and Stratos, trapeze artists; the Mayatskys, motorcycle acrobats; the Makeyev and the Yalovy brothers, the acrobats; the Yakutskys, rope dancers; Shrai and Manukov, pole performers; Tuganov, Serge and Manjelli, horseback riders; Karan D'Ash (M. Rumyantsev) and Mussin, rug acrobats. The majority of them are young people who have learned their art in Soviet times."

The first circus school in the world for the training of circus artists has been opened in Moscow. There are at present 2,500 performers in the State circuses.

In connection with the jubilee, the Government awarded the highest reward—the Order of Lenin—and the title of People's Artist of the Republic to a number of circus artists. Among them is I. Poddubny, veteran wrestler, S. Shafrik, animal trainer, N. Nikitin, horseback rider, the acrobats Ptitsyns, tightrope walker Tarasov and many others.

YOUNG ARTISTS' WORKS EXHIBITED

An exhibition of the diploma works of students of art institutes was recently held in the Moscow Fine Art Museum. The Leningrad, Moscow, Kiev and Tbilisi schools were represented.

Paintings by young Leningrad artists dominated. The most colorful canvas was the "Review of Young Talent" by L. Ostrova. Both design and composition were good; the painting rather immature. Sidorov's *Rest* reveals an artist of promise. It was one of most interesting painting at the exhibition.

Professor A. Kravchenko, writing in *Soviet Art*, says that "there is a strong trend toward illustration among the young artists and in this field many show a fine sense for literary theme and graphic expression. Of equal value are Rodionova's illustrations to *Romeo and Juliet*, Kuznetsov's to *Anna Karenina* and Komarov's to *Notre Dame de Paris*. The depiction of individual characters, however, is far from adequate; the inner soul is poorly expressed. Rodionova's images of Romeo and Juliet are very charming. Ilyina's illustrations with their unexpected composition and accurate sense of period are not soon forgotten. . . . The Moscow Institute of Fine Art may be proud of its latest graduates. Book, poster and album have acquired some new realistic masters."

Writing of the work of the young sculptors, Professor Yakovlev says: "The exhibition shows that many have chosen themes worthy of the maturest masters of Soviet sculpture. Youthful daring has enabled some of the sculptors to secure quite satisfactory results in the treatment of their themes. . . . S. Klyatskin's 'Farewell' is based on a complex psychological idea. It is youthful and lyrical with a broad appeal. The theme of 'Stepan Razin' was chosen by the Kiev sculptor Mukhin and the result is a spirited image of the peasant leader. It must be stated, however, that the young sculptor has not been able to avoid a cetrain theatricality.

"I was disappointed with Kozlovsky's 'At the Finish.' The theme has not been adequately treated, and what we have is a study rather than a finished piece of work. The sculptor wanted to depict the finish of a long and exciting contest, but the figure of the runner is static and cold. One does not feel that he has given sufficient study to his theme in life.

"Special mention should be made of E. Belayeva's 'Dancing Uzbek Girl.' The artist has succeeded in portraying free plastic motion of the Uzbek girl symbolical of the woman emancipated by the October Revolution."

"Tale of the Fisherman and the Fish." Illustration to Pushkin's poem by I. Zubkov of Palekh

EXHIBITION OF PALEKH WORK

An exhibition of work by Palekh artists is to open in Moscow. Many new pictures and designs on papier-maché, both by skilled masters and beginners, will be shown. I. Vakurov is preparing a painting on canvas, "Uzbek Dances." A. Kotukhin is working on a papier-maché painting, "Collective Farmers Studying the Constitution of the U.S.S.R." I. Markevich has completed his "Stormy Petrel." P. Bazhenov is making sketches for his picture "Comrades Stalin and Voroshilov on the Tsaritsyn Front." The Palekh artists will also exhibit portraits of Gorky, Jamboul, Shchors, Suvorov, Kutuzov, and Stepan Razin.

NEW FILMS

Kavaleridze, producer at the Odessa Film Studio, is working on the scenario of *Taras Bulba*, based on Gogol's famous story. A. Fadeyev and Olga Lazo are writting a scenario on Sergei Lazo, the hero who died in the Far East at the hands of the Japanese invaders during the Civil War.

The Leningrad studio "Tekhfilm" is preparing a popular scientific film, *The Conquest of the Pole*. The producer is Maria Kliegman. It will deal with the conquest of the North Pole, beginning with the attempts of the earliest expeditions to the Pole down to the celebrated work of the Papanin heroes. The film will include original shots taken by the Sedov and Amundsen expeditions.

NOTES

Forty-two new motion picture theaters have been in course of construction this year in various cities of the Soviet Union. Some have already opened their doors to the public, others are to open early this year. The latter include a theater in Saratov with three halls, seating 1,200 people, and theaters in Simferopol, Smolensk and Stalin, each with two halls, seating 1,000 people.

A textbook on arithmetic by Anani Shirakatzi, an Armenian scientist of the seventh century, has recently been discovered in the Central Museum of Ancient Manuscripts of the Armenian Republic. It consists of three parts: Addition, Subtraction and Multiplication, the theoretical part followed by problems, and mathematical "Riddles." This rare textbook will be a valuable contribution to the study of the history of Armenian culture.

The Saltykov-Shchedrin Public Library, in Leningrad, has prepared for the press a volume of correspondence between the two great Russian composers, Chaykovski and Rimsky-Korsakov. Many of the letters are being published for the first time.

The Union of Soviet Composers has started a fund to assist rising Soviet composers.

The Oriental Institute of the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R. is preparing a number of dictionaries of the modern languages of India. Specially interesting are the Hindu-Russian, Bengali-Russian and Marathi-Russian dictionaries.

The Timiryazev Agricultural Academy is opening a museum to the great scientist after whom it is named. It will contain material on Timiryazev as a scientist and public man, and the instruments and equipment he used in his work. Of great interest is his report of his foreign voyage in 1868, which was considered lost, but has been recently discovered. There will also be the hitherto unpublished files of the Moscow Secret Police on Timiryazev.

A collection of Karelian folksongs has been published in Petrozavodsk by the Cultural Research Institute, which will also shortly publish a collection of Karelian runes and the first volume of folk stories of the Karelian White Sea Coast.

The first round of the contest for performers on folk instruments has just been held in the Azerbaijan Conservatoire. The instruments employed included the *kemancha*, *tar*, *zurna* and *nagara*. The contest has helped to reveal a number of talented performers: Latif Aliev, sixty-five year old virtuoso on the oriental harmonica; Akhmed Akhmedov, tambourine performer, and others. Zarif Gaibov, a talented *tara*-player, has been admitted to the Baku Conservatoire.

A new opera and ballet company has been formed in Moscow, consisting of two hundred and forty performers. Besides playing in the capital, the company will tour the cities of the Moscow Region which have no permanent opera of their own.

An exhibition of the work of amatuer artists of the Minsk Region has opened in Minsk. It consists of about two hundred paintings, sculptures, wood carvings, etc.

LITHUANIA

SOVIET FILM, SONGS AND BOOKS IN LITHUANIA

It is a firm belief of the Lithuanian people today that the Soviet Union is the only country pursuing a correct and peaceful policy toward other nations. That is why everything Soviet is highly popular in Lithuania. A demonstration of films will often end in a spontaneous outburst of sympathy for the Soviet Union; and whenever Stalin appears on the screen, the audience applauds wildly.

Whether in Kaunas or the provinces, after the American farces and love dramas which constitute the staple fare of the Lithuanian cinema, the demonstration of Soviet films is a real event. The best Hollywood hit will rarely last over a fortnight on the Kaunas screen, whereas the Soviet films *Circus*, *Seekers of Happiness*, *The Thirteen*, *Peter the Great*, and *Gorky's Childhood* have been demonstrated to full houses for three or four weeks. Tickets for the premieres of Soviet films are not easy to get. Long lines of people form at the ticket offices, for most want to see the film on the first day.

Here are some comments in the Lithuanian press on Soviet films demonstrated in that country. *Lietuvos Jinios*, which has the widest circulation of any Lithuanian newspaper, wrote of *Gorky's Childhood* as follows:

"Those who have read Gorky's works, including his trilogy *Childhood*, *In the World*, and *My Universities*, will be acquainted with the life of that great Russian writer. It was unusually varied; he knew poverty and suffering, interspersed with bright moments of hope. The film is confined to that period in the writer's life when he lived with his grandfather, and it ends with his going out into the world. Some of the scenes of

A dance from "The Red Poppy" in Tallin (Estonia)

the film are unusually emotional and moving, but not sentimental. The playing of the actors, whom we in Lithuania see for the first time, is perfect and finished. Even the smallest detail is accented. Only the Russian soul can create such films. *Gorky's Childhood* is a fragment of the terrible days of tsardom."

Of the film *Peter the Great*, the paper writes as follows:

"In the artistic and technical sense the film is perfect. The historical events have been rendered with unusual accuracy. This film will perhaps be the hit of the season."

Writing of the comedy *The Bear*, the newspaper *Laikas* writes:

"*The Bear* shows once more how remarkably Soviet actors can play. The public was in a constant roar of laughter. It is no stunt that arouses the laughter, but the artistic handling of the situations. How different this is from the insipid comedies with which our screens are crowded! Such films need no advertisement!"

Writing of the film *Song of Youth*, depicting the Moscow sports parade, the critic of *Lietvuos Jinios* states:

"It must be admitted that such films are not to be seen anywhere else. In Western Europe they like carnavals, and they are often decorative and colorful, but judging by this film the sports parade in Moscow, in addition to its profound significance, surpasses anything of the kind witnessed until now. Color, variety. . . . the best sport achievements of the youth of the eleven Soviet republics. . . It is easy to imagine what pleasure to the eye such a parade must offer in actual reality!"

Soviet films and radio are carrying Soviet songs into Lithuania. Melodious, engagingly simple, meaningful, enthusiastic, and sparkling with the fire of the October Revolution, Soviet songs are finding many ardent admirers among the Lithuanian youth. When traveling through Lithuania, one may hear a stone-breaker by the wayside, a driver of an autobus, a schoolboy or a cobbler singing *If Tomorrow Bring War*, *Tachanka*, *Field of Mine* and other Soviet songs. Every workers', peasants' or school orchestra, however small, has several popular Soviet songs in its repertoire. Even people who know no Russian will often learn the full text of the song by heart.

A similar popularity is enjoyed by Soviet books in Lithuania, books telling of the new youth of mankind, of the new life pulsating in one-sixth part of the earth. Maxim Gorky, of course, is the greatest favorite. Translations of his works appear in several editions, The last two parts of his trilogy, *In the World*, and *My Universities*, have recently appeared in the bookshops. *Culture*, a progressive magazine, has published a collection of selected stories by the great writer, as a supplement to the magazine. Gorky's articles on culture, humanism and the art of writing are constantly appearing in the progressive magazines.

Spaudos Fondas, the largest Lithuanian publishing house, has brought out translations of *Diamonds to Sit On* and *Little Golden America* by Ilf and Petrov. Almost simultaneously they published Katayev's novel *A Lone Sail Gleams White*, translated by A. Ventslov, a great popularizer of Soviet authors in Lithuania. *Moksleiviu Varpai*, a liberal magazine, read by the progressive youth, published a review of Katayev's novel, from which we quote the following:

"V. Katayev knows children well. He does not try to depict his personages as heroes, he paints them with all

their faults, and human failings. It is only the just cause of the struggling poor and the sensitive soul of the child which instinctively draws them into the struggle, that makes heroes of them. . . . Moreover, V. Katayev describes nature skillfully. In every detail—be it a rolling wave, a flower swaying in the breeze, a cloud, a city street, and even a stone in the pavement—the author finds so much color, sound and fragrance, that the reader opens his eyes, in wonder at this hitherto unperceived beauty and meaning. . . ."

Alexei Tolstoy enjoys exceptional popularity. His *Peter The Great* has been translated by the poet K. Boruta, the best translator of Soviet writers in Lithuania. *Lietuvos Jinios* has published A. Vinogradov's *The Condemnation of Paganini* in installments. A translation of Sholokhov's *And Quiet Flows the Don* has been published by *Sakalas*.

Hitherto it has been Soviet children's writers who were translated most in Lithuania. It is interesting to note that Marshak has a number of followers among Luthuanian children's writers. Solomea Neris and K. Binkis have made excellent translations of his *The Post Office*, *The Foolish Little Mouse* and many other of his poems.

A scene from the Soviet ballet "The Red Poppy" performed in Tallin

International Politics in Soviet Caricatures

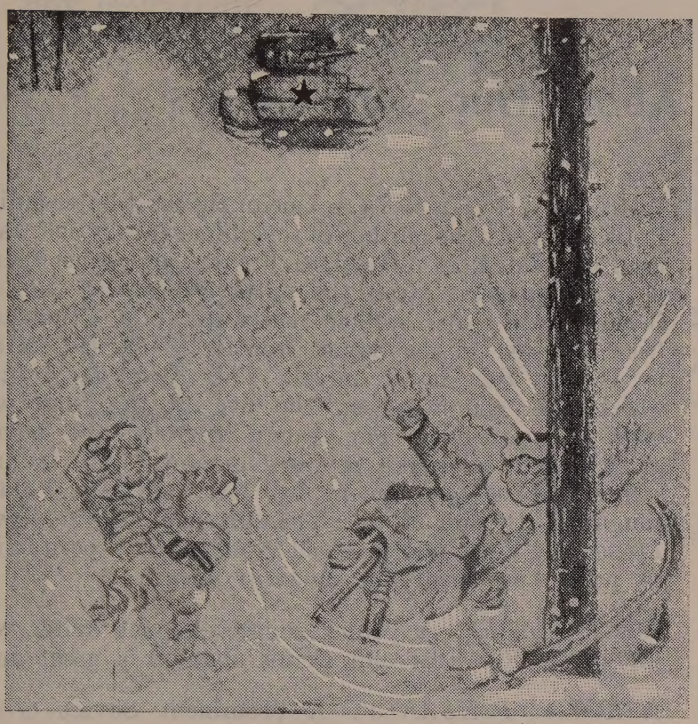
THE RACE OF THE AMERICAN GUN MANUFACTURERS.

"Ready! Set! Go!"

Drawing by Kukryniksy

Courtesy of *Pravda*

NEW YEAR'S EVE



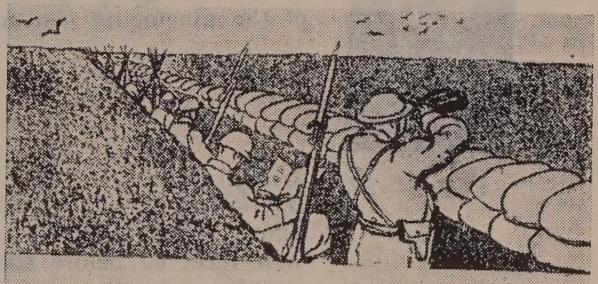
"We lost our way, colonel. Should we take the direction of the star?"
"No, away from the star."

Drawing by a Red Army man N. Zverev

Courtesy of *Crocodile*

WAR

On the front



In the rear

Drawings by Kukryniksy

Courtesy of *Pravda*

About Our Contributors

WANDA WASILEWSKA. One of the most outstanding Polish writers, the author of several novels which have been translated into Russian, French and other European languages. After the outbreak of the Polish-German war, she walked eastward 600 kilometers from Warsaw to the Soviet frontier. Now she resides in Lwow. Her latest novel, *The Swamps Ablaze*, which she completed on the eve of the war, will soon be published. The second part of the novel, on which Wasilewska is working now, will include scenes she has seen during her last trip over Poland caught by the fire of war. The editors of *International Literature* have just received Wasilewska's permission to print her novel *The Swamps Ablaze.*

BORIS LAPIN. A young talented Soviet writer who knows the Far East and writes about it a great deal.

NIKOLAI PIKSANOV. A prominent Soviet critic, corresponding member of the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R. An authority on Russian literature of the nineteenth century.

HAROLD HESLOP and HUNTLEY CARTER. Well-known British literary men. The letters from them were received before the present war in Europe.

Associate Editor TIMOFEI ROKOTOV